

## Phase out of live sheep exports by sea: My Submission 29<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

Consistently since the first investigations into Australia's live-export industry, Australians, and people worldwide, have borne witness to the suffering and deaths of sheep aboard export ships. Our country should have no part in continuing this trade. Ending the live export of sheep is long overdue.

- **Animal welfare:** live export by sea is one of the deadliest elements of animal agriculture. Overwhelming evidence confirms that the live export trade involves unacceptable suffering and cruelty. This is notably so during long sea journeys; sheep exported from Australia to the Middle East are sent on one of the world's longest sea journeys. Most Australian sheep are exported to the Middle East. Though voyages to the Middle East take an average of between 20-21 days, some can take up to five weeks. During that time, sheep leave the Australian winter and arrive in the Middle East's summer, where temperatures can climb over 40°C. Industry reports indicate that mortality rates on these voyages are approximately four times greater than for shorter voyages.
- **Ethical considerations:** the live export industry has been plagued by numerous cases of animal cruelty which have caused significant public outrage, both domestically and internationally. It's been over a decade since the shocking cruelty of the live export trade was exposed on national TV. In response, the government implemented the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System ('ESCAS') - a system that requires approval before animals can be live exported internationally. It has been an utter failure – the untenable cruelty on live export ships and overseas abattoirs continues unabated. Yet, the suffering doesn't end for those who survive the journey. Because there are virtually no laws protecting animals in the countries they're sold to, they're often subjected to terrible cruelty, pain and abuse. Most suffer horrendous deaths by methods of slaughter that are illegal in Australia.

- **Environmental impact:** the long-distance transportation of sheep by sea consumes substantial amounts of fossil fuels, contributing to greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation. Phasing out live export by sea aligns with Australia's goals to combat climate change, reduce carbon footprint, and transition to more sustainable industries. By reducing the carbon footprint associated with long-distance transportation and the environmental impacts of large-scale live export operations, Australia can contribute to mitigating climate change and preserving its natural resources.
- **Live export is a dying industry:** the live export trade has experienced a significant downturn. Live sheep exports fell from over 7 million sheep in the late 1980's to just over 1 million in 2018. Between 2016 and 2020, this figure decreased even further by more than 50%. The Australian government has spent decades - and millions of taxpayer dollars - trying to review and reprimand an industry that systemically abuses animals. Yet sheep continue to suffer. The government has had ample opportunity to crack down on this irredeemable industry, yet the abhorrent suffering continues. We must not allow any more animals to endure this agony. The Albanese Government must stand by their word and ban live export - not in the next term, but right now. What happens if labor does not win the next Election?
- **The Albanese Government must honour its Election commitment:** ending the live export of sheep has been a policy of the Labor party since 2018. It was made in response to footage of a voyage that killed over 2,000 sheep the previous year. More recently, Labor recommitted to its policy of phasing out the live export of sheep if elected in the lead-up to the 2022 Federal election. Yet, the new Labor government has already backflipped on this promise. Rather than following through, the Albanese government has pushed back its ban, saying that it won't happen before 2025. The industry has seen this as an opportunity to reverse the decision entirely. Two years out from the next federal election, Labor is already banking on winning the

next election, and gambling with the lives of thousands of sheep during the interim years. **This isn't what we were promised.** New Zealand's landmark ban proves that ending this trade without delay is possible, and past investigations and reviews indicate that a swift shutdown is necessary to prevent the prolonged suffering of sheep. Prime Minister Albanese and the Labor government must honour their Election promise and set Australia down a kinder path by ending the live export of sheep during this elected term and work towards a future without *any* live-animal export.

- **Ending the trade is urgent:** Labor has refused to commit to a timeline. In order for the Albanese Government's commitment to be met, it must be accomplished within their first term in government. Delaying the phase-out would result in prolonged suffering for sheep.
- **Ensure a just transition:** the success of the phase-out of live sheep exports from Australia hinges on the support provided to farmers during the transition process. It is essential to ensure that farmers receive adequate assistance and resources to navigate this significant change effectively. By offering support, including financial aid, access to alternative markets, and guidance on transitioning to more sustainable agricultural practices, we can facilitate a successful transition away from live sheep exports. This support will not only protect the welfare of animals but also help farmers adapt to new opportunities and maintain their livelihoods in the evolving agricultural landscape.
- **Economic opportunities:** while the transition away from live export by sea may present initial challenges, it also opens up opportunities for the development of alternative industries and export markets. By transitioning away from an industry whose social licence is deteriorating, Australia can enhance economic resilience, create jobs, and meet the growing demand for ethically sourced products. Embracing alternative industries, including plant-based production, can foster innovation, create new jobs, and stimulate

economic growth. By investing in technologies and practices that prioritise animal welfare and sustainability, Australia can position itself as a global leader in producing and exporting ethically sourced products. By supporting farmers in this transition, we can ensure a just and inclusive process.

- **Broad-based support from stakeholders:** the Australian Government's decision to phase out live export by sea has generated widespread support and mobilised various stakeholders who share a common commitment to animal welfare. This broad-based support encompasses animal welfare organisations, veterinarians, and the general public. This broad-based support from various stakeholders underscores the significance of the government's decision to phase out live export by sea. It highlights a shared vision that upholds the highest standards of animal welfare, ethical considerations, and sustainable practices. By embracing this support and working collaboratively, Australia can lead the way in setting a new standard for responsible and compassionate agricultural practices, inspiring other nations to follow suit.
- **Protecting Australia's international reputation:** the continuation of the live export trade puts Australia's international reputation at risk and undermines the country's credibility. Australia ranks poorly when compared to other countries' animal welfare performance. By implementing this policy, Australia affirms its commitment to ethical practices, reinforcing its positive image and maintaining trust in its agricultural sector. New Zealand's total ban on live export as of 30th April 2023. Apart from the animal suffering and welfare issues involved, **the New Zealand government was also concerned about the damage to the country's reputation from its ongoing participation in the live export trade.** Germany recently announced that it was ending live exports to countries outside the EU, with further restrictions expected.

It's time for the Albanese government to follow suit and end the live sheep export trade from Australia, and move to develop more humane, ethical alternatives.

Profits should never trump animal suffering. I welcome the federal government's 2022 election commitment to end the live sheep trade but urge it to announce and legislate an end date to be delivered in the current Federal Government term.

Sincerely, [REDACTED]

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29<sup>th</sup> May 2023.