

Tuesday, 30th May 2023

Submission to Western Australian Live Sheep Export Panel

CC: Federal Agriculture Minister, Murray Watt;
Minister for Agriculture of Western Australia, Jackie Jarvis.

We are a family farm on the [REDACTED] We farm with two sons and their families.

Our farming practices over the past 40 years have been as regenerative as they possibly can be within a commercial farming system.

We say regenerative because the live stock portion of our business in rotation with cash crops provides organic nitrogen in the sheep phase of the operation via legume pastures. This was a sustainable system developed by the Western Australian Department of Agriculture through the 1970's.

On our farms we run approximately 40,000 sheep on an annual basis in conjunction with 9000 hectares of mixed cropping. Directly, we employ 16 people and indirectly probably in the vicinity of 100 people.

As a farming business we were victims of Joe Ludwig shutting down the cattle trade in the north of Australia. At that time this farm had 2000 lambs ready to go to market. Those lambs within a fortnight of Ludwig shutting down the trade lost \$40 per head due to market forces. That was a hit of \$80,000 to this business (refer to an article done in the West Australian Newspaper at that time).

Since Senator Watt has announced the phasing out of the live export trade, the price of live stock has already plummeted. This is due to a number of factors. The State Labor Government has done its best to regulate this trade out of existence in spite of the science.

Last year this farm was forced to carry an extra 5000 lambs through the winter months because there was no marketing option for them. That is no live export trade through our winter months and no capacity to slaughter sheep at WA abattoirs.

We were one of many farms.

We carried those 5000 sheep through but were very lucky as it was a kind season. I, like many other growers fear for this season. If it stays dry it will be a disaster for farmers and their live stock. This farm is still carrying some of those stock and struggling for slaughter options.

This industry is one of the few Australian industries that has stood on its own feet without Government support for the last 30 years.

When you look at Australia's debt you would think Government would be encouraging and growing this industry. \$90 million of export income is not insignificant when you look at Australia's balance sheet.

All of this is in the light that Australia has the best animal welfare standards in the world.

We fear for the future of the sheep industry.

Our farm consultant has modelled a 25% reduction to our gross margins for the sheep portion of our business. What other employee of Australia would be happy to take a 25% reduction of income at the whim of a misguided Government?

It is our belief that Australia does not have the capacity or will to expand abattoirs especially in light of the dire labour crisis that confronts all industries.

In addition to this there is no competition in the abattoir space.

It is my sincere hope that the expert panel has learned and seen enough about our industry and the affects that it is going to have on Western Australia to advise the Minister that what he is doing is a major tragedy for Western Australian farming, and that he should reevaluate his position on the industry.

