

31 May 2023

**The Independent Panel for the phase out of live sheep exports by sea
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Australian Government**

Dear Panel,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide input into the government phase out live sheep exports by sea. My submission is made as an interested stakeholder, and I support the government's policy on this matter.

It is my view that this phase out of live export by sea must begin and end as soon as possible, as every delay means more sheep subjected to inexcusable suffering. This includes but is not limited to, the daily stresses of sea transport, to fully conscious slaughter in importing countries. We have seen firsthand the horrific cruelty and brutality of this trade which is why it is imperative that this phase out be achieved as expediently as possible.

As concerned Australian citizen and interested stakeholder in this matter, I believe it is critical that certainty that this trade will end is committed to and provided. This should include the setting of a definitive end date to live sheep export by sea, without the provisions for delay or push back of this date. It must be a firm commitment that is to be achieved. Further, the phase-out needs the backing of meaningful and robust legislation to support the government's policy on this matter. Ideally the phase-out should commence in this term of parliament, however it is acknowledge that this is already stated not to be the case due to the time needed for individuals and businesses to adapt and prepare for the phase-out. To this end, a commitment for the commencement should be made as soon as possible and the commence date should be as early as possible. Undue delay in commencing the phase-out will erode public trust in the Labor government's commitment on this matter and risk further inhumane treatment of the animals subject to this trade.

It is understandable that industry and its participants, such as farmers, are directly affected by this policy. In this regard, it is reasonable that affected stakeholders, in particular those farmers who will see a change in their livelihood practices, are provided government support to help them transition and adapt to these changes. Support should be provided at the "grass roots" level, with the aim of ensuring Australian farmers and producers are able to pivot their operations in response to this policy. Support for large global and multinational corporations, such as the shipping lines, should be limited and not prioritised above local support. These business have the benefit of diversification within their operations and arguably are able to access funds on a more advantageous global scale compared to rural Australian producers.

The government commitment to the phase-out is publicly known, and thus any delay or diminishment to this commitment will have a negative impact on Australia's reputation as a fair and compassionate nation, both nationally and internationally. It is also worth considering the actions of our closest neighbour, New Zealand, and the commitments and actions they have taken towards ending live export. Any further defence of or deference given to, the live export trade by the government will result in a serious undermining of the public trust in the Labor government and in the agricultural sector.

The government policy to phase-out this trade was actively used as part of the political platform during the last election. Voters across Australia put trust in Labor, and thus their vote, that this commitment would be met. It would be a grave breach of public trust should the government not take meaningful, robust and decisive action as soon as possible to begin this phase-out at the earliest possible time.

It is appreciated that this is a complex matter with many stakeholders affected and a range of adjustments, opportunities and support mechanisms to be considered. The work of the Independent Panel is appreciated, and it is sincerely hoped that the recommendations presented to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry for the government's consideration represent the views of all stakeholders and most importantly give due weight to the inherently cruel nature of this trade.

I thank the Panel for taking the time to consider my submission, and ask that the words of Gandhi be remembered at this time, that "the greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated".

Sincerely,

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