

Dear Expert Panel Members

I am writing to you because of the phasing out of live-sheep exports and I understand you are studying the time frame for this to happen.

I supported Labor in the last election because they promised to end live-sheep exports. I welcome this shift in attitude in Australia to reduce the cruelty in our agricultural system. Making money from shipping live animals to a destination where they will be treated very badly is not a way to make a living. Personally, the treatment of animals in our agricultural system meant I became a vegetarian 18 years ago and have been vegan for the last eight.

Not only does this practice of cruelty undermine our trust in farmers and second guess our choices at the supermarket, it gives Australia a poor reputation internationally. It harks back to colonialism and just taking what we want with no respect for our beautiful planet and the intelligent beings and highly evolved plants and ecosystems we are a part of. I believe, sadly, our society often, from ignorance or arrogance or convenience, undervalues and underestimates just how intelligent our fellow creatures are and how they have familial and other types of relationships we fail to recognise. With that perspective, even deny their pain, which can be both mental and physical. If we don't draw a line in the sand and say this is enough, then people around the world might continue to think this behaviour is acceptable. I'm so pleased we have drawn that line and are adult enough and adaptable enough to make this transition, and, in this, we can walk with our heads up with New Zealand.

We all know that many farmers rely on this overseas market for their livelihood and this shift, while only a first step at reducing cruelty in our food chain, is a big change in culture and business model for farmers. I recommend the government help support farmers and their staff transition, in a similar way to the government is helping businesses move to reduce their carbon emissions and transition to solar energy.

Another option for these farmers and staff is to retrain in a different industry. Free or subsidised education for these people to transition is, I think, a good idea. If they have been immersed in this livelihood it might help to them to understand alternative opportunities and options and have a wider view of the world.

While we are going to make this transition to a more respectful world, the time frame is important. Please have this legislation passing and commencing in this term of parliament so that there is certainty for farmers about when they need to act. This certainty will also help consumers with their choices. A few good role models may help others make the change. I also know that the animals on the live-export ships suffer. There is no doubt this practice is cruel even if it is regulated, so the sooner live-sheep export ends, the better.

May you find peace

