

Submission – Have you Say Phase out of live sheep exports by sea.

I was raised on a wheat and sheep farm based in the [REDACTED] of Western Australia. My family have been farming in the area for the past 100 years. They heavily rely on the live sheep industry for the ongoing sustainability of their business but also their livelihood. Banning or choosing to phase out the live sheep export industry will have a significant negative impact on my family but also on the community they support. Outlined below are four of the many reasons why I am not supportive of the ban or phase out of the live export trade.

1. Animal Welfare.

Australia has some of the highest animal welfare standards in the world and regulates the standards of animal welfare in other countries including animal welfare education. Loss of market access results in loss of positive global influence. International markets will seek (and already have commenced) to export sheep from other countries that do not enforce the same standard or influence across the sector. Why can Australia not continue the live sheep export trade and introduce additional penalties to ensure those in the industry are held accountable.

2. Cannot be replaced with domestic processing.

In Australia we are already unable to source local labour required for pre-existing processing facilities. No funding or incentive to support infrastructure required for operations to expand at the scale required to replace the live sheep trade. Not to mention that this market is already over saturated and the demand does not exist. It would further create pressure on finding a skilled labour market to fill the jobs required to run such processing facilities.

3. Detrimental impacts on regional communities.

Banning the live sheep trade will have a negative impact on a large number of rural and regional communities including:

- Loss of key business and services within the agriculture industry but this will also extend to other industries including education and health.
- Reduced employment opportunities directly in the live sheep trade but this will extend to farmers being able to offer local job opportunities within the community.
- Poorer roads.
- Smaller populations in regional communities with reduction in employment causing small school populations, sporting groups etc.
- Increased uncertainty and angst for those who rely on the industry to generate an income to support their business and family. Those living and working in rural areas already face a range of stressors that are unique to living outside of major cities. Banning live sheep export will lead to further stressors that impacts a significant portion of a rural community further impacting mental health issues.

4. Affect upon other agricultural industries (e.g. wool industry, grain industry).

Banning live sheep export will force many farmers to move away from sheep which will negatively impact the wool industry with a reduction in wool production. The cost benefit of sheep will be lost to farmers.

This will also lead to an increased overload in supply chain in the cropping and grains industry and will cost farmers billions of dollars in the short term with discounted grains but also in the long term in the poorer soil structure and carbon, increasing use of chemical and synthetic fertilisers which can be harmful to the way farmers manage their environment and land.

I urge our leaders to act and rethink their option to ban / phase out live sheep export. No suitable plan has been developed for how the agriculture industry will be affected by such significant changes nor has enough consideration been taken into the negative impact this change will have to an already disadvantaged community (rural and regional), specifically those who work directly in the industry. This issue will cause a domino effect and have a greater impact on other industries in the long term, specifically the health industry.