

Live Sheep Export Phase Out

I commend the Federal Government through the election commitment of the Australian Labour Party to end live sheep exports.

I greatly appreciate the opportunity to make a submission and do so as an individual veterinarian who has worked in the agricultural sector in various roles for over 20 years. I have worked in the animal welfare area for over 25 years and have membership in animal welfare for the Australian and New Zealand College of Veterinary Scientists. I was instrumental in implementing low stress stock handling training for loading animals onto ships at port over 20 years ago.

I fully support the phase out of live sheep exports on welfare grounds. This trade has caused immense suffering to millions of sheep over decades as has been demonstrated by science, media exposes and numerous inquiries. The transportation of sheep by ship over vast distances is inherently cruel and no measures can adequately safeguard the welfare of all sheep.

To ensure certainty and to allow firm plans to be implemented, I urge that a phase out date is set during this term of government. This will also provide an assurance to the Australian community, the vast majority of which support the end of the trade, that the phase out will occur.

Ideally, the shortest possible time from the announcement to the end date should be made to ensure that the phase out process commences as soon as possible. This could be 2-3 years but should not be longer.

With strong leadership, commitment, good planning and appropriate support, the agricultural sector can transition away from live sheep export in a timely and efficient manner. This is likely to require increasing capacity of processing for domestic and international markets. However, it is imperative that sufficient monitoring, especially onboard ships is in place to ensure sheep welfare is a key priority during the transition phase. There is a risk that declining investment in the trade will result in poorer standards of infrastructure, management and care for sheep.

I express my sincere appreciation to the Federal Government for implementing this phase out as it will prevent the suffering of millions of sheep in the future.

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