

## SUBMISSION RE LABOR'S PLAN TO PHASE OUT LIVE EXPORT OF SHEEP

The Australian Government should not close down a viable industry valued at around \$90 million to the country. It is not the role of Government to shut down businesses

The live sheep trade in recent years has accepted and acted on all requests to it to improve its standards, including not exporting sheep in the Northern Hemisphere summer.

More overseas countries are now part of the Australian Export Supply Chain Assurance Scheme. This means better welfare for Australia animals shipped into other countries and also encourages these countries to improve their animal welfare for any animals they may import.

Saudia Arabia are looking to import sheep from Australia again after a long absence from the market. This could see another million sheep exported under ESCAS, meaning another country has taken on our standards of welfare.

Whilst many say we should send our meat boxed or frozen, as suppliers, it is up to us to meet the needs of our client. The preference is for live animals and that is what we should supply them with.

If we are forced out of the Live Export market we risk upsetting our clients who may choose to not only seek the sheep they want from elsewhere in the world but may make it difficult to deal with them in any other area of trade.

The Live Export of sheep is a vital food supply to many countries particularly those in the Middle East. Cutting off their preferred supplier of quality animals will only lead to animals being imported from countries with little to no animal welfare standards at all. Do we only care about Australian animals or all animals?

The Live Export industry is a vital cog in the sheep industry in Australia and, in particular Western Australia. It provides an important alternative to local sales and some competition in the market place. With the uncertainty created by the proposed ban farmers in WA are already seeing a huge drop in prices for their sheep.

The industry is also a vital tool for WA farmers to be able to offload sheep quickly when seasons fail and they don't have the feed to carry the stock through until it rains.

Many farmers in WA would be forced out of the sheep industry altogether if Live Export is no longer available to them. This would also have an impact on the wool market and would impact on the eastern states who use WA to restock after poor seasons.

WA does not have the processing capacity to deal with the extra sheep that would be on the ground if Live Export is not available. Already one farmer has had to wait ten weeks longer than normal to get some sheep into an abattoir. Not only are there not enough abattoirs but there is an ongoing shortage of staff to operate full time.

The Live Export industry does not just impact on the farmers who breed and sell the sheep. There would be a ripple effect on industries such as transport firms, livestock agencies, shearing teams, fodder producers, veterinary services and many more. The ripple then continues to impact businesses in local towns leading to businesses closing, people leaving the towns, schools closing and a community that will battle to survive.

Farming can be very stressful with the impacts of weather, price fluctuations for inputs and outputs, having to be price takers and the difficulty in finding staff. The Covid years with the closure of borders meaning interstate and overseas workers weren't available put even more pressure on farming families. Suicide rates in rural areas, particularly among men, is far higher than in city areas and, for many, I fear this phase out, if it goes ahead, will result in even more deaths by suicide.

Many farmers have incredibly vivid memories and mental scars of 1991 when the wool crash occurred and farmers were forced to shoot their sheep. This is a highly likely scenario in the very near future if this attempt to phase out the industry continues.

The impact is already being felt by all sheep farmers across the country and it will continue to get worse whilst this uncertainty continues around the future of Live Export.

Unless the Government wants blood on their hands they would do well to reconsider this ill-advised position, listen to those who work in the industry, speak to the clients who purchase our sheep and not be influenced heavily by green voters and animal activist organisations.