

To the Live Sheep Export Panel

I am pleased to have an opportunity to have my say on the issue of the phase out of the live sheep export trade.

It is my opinion that the entire industry is barbaric and unethical and should be banned for ALL animals. Because of the unavoidable cruelty involved, it is imperative that the trade be phased out as quickly as possible. I understand the panel is looking into how and when to shut down the trade rather than its merits, but the unjustified nature of the practice should determine the time frame.

Exporters and farmers must have realised they were participating in an industry that was doomed as it is unacceptable by moral standards. They must have known this was coming and could have begun to prepare. They are willing participants in an ethically questionable enterprise and are therefore unworthy of unwarranted consideration in this phase out, albeit that a just transition is fair, but not a long transition. The plight of the animals outweighs the profits made from their misery.

I commend Labor's commitment but I am disappointed that Labor has weakened, and possibly endangered fulfilment of, its just promise to phase out the hideous live export trade by delaying setting an end date till its second term. I feel this is a betrayal of the expectations of many whose vote in the last election was determined by this promise. The Albanese Government needs to legislate an end date as soon as practicable within the current term of government.

Investigations reveal continued suffering of animals in transport and slaughter, unconscionable cruelty and systemic failures of ESCAS. Shipping companies committed repeated critical non-compliances, yet the Australian government continued to entrust them with animals by granting them further export permits.

While a few breaches of Australian regulations are clear, the fully conscious slaughter that causes the most suffering to the animals, is allowed under Australia's live export rules. Terrified sheep struggle against the knife, having their throats hacked, and then are tossed, still conscious, on the bloodied floor with their pen-mates. They lie together in their last long, agonised minutes of life. No sentient creature should suffer this way.

Distressing footage shot during the Eid al-Adha inside an Australian government-approved slaughterhouse is not the only evidence of animal cruelty documented by animal welfare investigators. In 40+ degree heat, frightened Australian sheep were being manhandled and shoved into car boots and being sold for private slaughter — in blatant breach of Australia's live export regulations.

Even were all the regulations complied with, such a long journey through heat and in cramped conditions is an unnatural and inherently cruel affliction for any sensitive animal. Brave whistleblowers and welfare charities are doing a better job of monitoring onboard standards than regulators or the industry itself.

I applaud Labor's courage in promising to phase out live sheep export. It is the ethical position, a position supported by the majority of Australians, who have been horrified by the revelations of the atrocities and barbarities of this trade. But it must happen soon.

Our fellow beings deserve respect and welfare standards acceptable to the Australian community. It is impossible to conduct this trade humanely and it must end.

The Albanese Government should stand up for the principles of a compassionate community, not cave in to the craven greed of vested interests. It must act humanely to bring this inhumane trade to a swift conclusion by legislating an end date during its current term.

Yours faithfully,  
Annie Mason

