

**Submission on the Proposed Phase Out of the Live Sheep Export Trade 30/5/2023****Animal Liberation Tasmania**

To whom it may concern,

Animal Liberation Tasmania (ALT) is a grassroots organisation, advocating for the rights of non-human animals since 2016. We have actively engaged with the movement to ban the live exportation of all animals since our inception as an organisation. I personally have been involved in supporting this campaign since 2011, with the exposure to this issue and the images released from the ships and overseas slaughterhouses ultimately driving my decision to choose veganism. Indeed, this is the experience of many of the individuals with whom ALT has worked as an organisation over the past seven years.

ALT generally supports the proposal by the Albanese Labor government to end the live export trade of sheep by ship, and applauds the government for abiding by a key election promise. This trade has long experienced the decline of its social licence and trading opportunities, not just relating to sheep but all animals subjected to the well documented torturous and exploitative transportation methods. According to the Federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry, between 2017 and 2022 the numbers of animals live exported (including cattle, sheep, alpaca, buffalo, and goats) has declined by almost two million animals per annum.<sup>1</sup> ALT hopes that the ending of the live export of sheep will set a precedent moving forwards and that we will sooner rather than later bear witness to the end of the trade in totality.

As regards the timeline proposed by the Albanese Labor government, ALT is less supportive. As a key election promise the process should begin within the current term. Efforts made now run the risk of being for naught should the next election result in an LNP victory.. Furthermore, a delay between now and the next election condemns hundreds of thousands of sheep to being sent across the seas in horrific conditions for at least another two years. An immediate cessation supported by a just transition for producers must be a priority. This includes live export by aircraft, a facet of the trade many people are not aware of and which has not been considered in the current consultation.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/export/controlled-goods/live-animals/live-animal-export-statistics/livestock-exports-by-market>

The mechanisms by which a cessation of the trade might take place would have to include a just transition, supporting producers and their communities out of dependence on live export and towards reskilling, repurposing of land, or relocation if preferred. Regional areas are already struggling, and individuals deserve support away from these industries. A just transition may involve financial and practical assistance in developing plant-based agriculture in appropriate areas, with grants to establish the necessary policies and infrastructure. Reskilling and upskilling with placements at educational facilities fully subsidised by the government would be a necessary component of any transitional process. Land formerly cleared for grazing could be acquired by the government for the purposes of re-vegetation, assisting in the fight against the worsening climate crisis through the creation of carbon sinks, and supporting threatened and endangered species in their community recoveries. As has been shown, land clearing for the grazing of farmed animals is a driving cause of deforestation and species loss; 75% of all forest loss in Eastern Australia is driven by land clearing for pasture.<sup>2</sup> Revegetation and species conservation, with appropriate government assistance, could afford regional areas the opportunity to revitalise through ecotourism and through accommodating people engaged in the scientific studies of these species and their protection.

There are viable options available if policy makers and producers would look beyond the constraints of traditional systems that have been proven unsustainable in the long term, and are deleterious to environmental, human, and non-human animal welfare.

Consideration for returning land previously used for the farming of sheep for the live export trade to Aboriginal custodianship should also be included as a primary issue in the discussion of the transition away from the trade.

Producers should be encouraged and supported away from animal agriculture in its entirety, not encouraged to value add to the equally exploitative domestic industry. As per the IPCC 6th Annual Report (section B6.2.2), a reduction in the production and consumption of animal-based foods, with a shift towards diets that are focused around plant-based foods, provides “[...] *major opportunities for adaptation and mitigation [of the climate crisis] while generating significant co-benefits in human health.*”<sup>3</sup> The farming of ruminants including sheep has been identified as

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<sup>2</sup> [www.wilderness.org.au/ images/resources/The\\_Drivers\\_of\\_Deforestation\\_Land-clearing\\_Qld\\_Report.pdf](http://www.wilderness.org.au/images/resources/The_Drivers_of_Deforestation_Land-clearing_Qld_Report.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/chapter/summary-for-policy-makers/>

a main source of methane gas emissions.<sup>4</sup> <sup>5</sup> Enteric methane from farmed ruminants is responsible for 30% of daily methane emissions.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, freshwater farm dams are a primary producer of greenhouse gasses; eutrophication as a result of manure run-off and fertiliser from livestock is associated with significant increases in the production of methane and CO<sub>2</sub>.<sup>7</sup> An end to the live export of sheep presents an opportunity for the numbers of ruminants farmed for flesh and fibre to be reduced in Australia. This would benefit both human and non-human communities, in terms of environment and health, and assist in meeting emissions targets set down by the government to combat climate change.

A transition to plant-based systems would be facilitated by the government, and through organisations such as Farm Transition Australia, a registered charity established to find pathways for meat and dairy producers away from animal exploitation and towards humane and sustainable plant-based production systems. From their website: *“Many farmers are open to change, either seeking a future-focused business that is financially secure and less stressful or looking to exit the industry with a career change.”*<sup>8</sup> The proposed phase out of the live export of sheep could present such farmers and producers with the opportunities they deserve to diversify and move away from animal agriculture. But these opportunities must be supported through a just transition, as discussed above.

An end to the live export trade of sheep should be implemented swiftly, supported by policies that enable a just transition for farmers away from industries of animal exploitation and towards regenerative and sustainable solutions. This could assist in revitalising struggling regional areas, through diversification of industry, would be of benefit in the fight against climate change, and also be of benefit to human health.

And at the crux of this matter, an end to this trade, including other species of animals live-exported by this country overseas, would prevent millions of individuals from being subjected to horrific conditions and treatment whilst in transit and once in processing facilities in other countries. It is unconscionable to think, with the increased understanding we have of non-human animal sentience and the ever expanding body of evidence from multiple

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<sup>4</sup> MD Najmul Haque, (2018): <https://doi.org/10.1186%2Fs40781-018-0175-7>

<sup>5</sup> Ilma Tapio, et. al., (2017): <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40104-017-0141-0>

<sup>6</sup> John L. Black et. al., (2021): <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani11040951>

<sup>7</sup> Martino E. Malerba, et.al., (2022): <https://doi.org/10.1111/gcb.16237>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.farmtransitionsaustralia.org/>

organisations showing the reality of transport by sea for animals in the live export trade, that the trade could continue for a moment longer. Welfare reforms have repeatedly failed, with just five out of thirty-eight eligible ships transporting between May and September of 2022 sailing with an independent animal welfare observer, and with no independent observer reports being published since prior to June 2020.<sup>9</sup> The failures of the trade to adequately support simple animal welfare measures proves yet again that there is no right way to do the wrong thing.

ALT advocates for the Albanese Labor government to halt the trade immediately. Support should be provided to affected producers until such time as a complete just transition package is rolled out, with a focus on encouraging a move towards plant-based systems.

Regards,  
Kristy Alger  
President  
Animal Liberation Tasmania

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<sup>9</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/dec/15/live-exports-just-five-of-38-eligible-ships-had-australian-animal-welfare-observers>