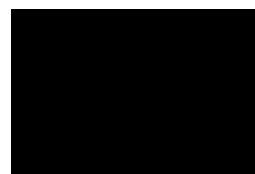




# AMIEU

FEDERAL OFFICE



www.amieu.asn.au

## SUBMISSION TO THE CONSULTATION PANEL

30 MAY 2023

The Australasian Meat Industry Employees' Union ("AMIEU") represents workers in the meat industry from across Australia. We support the banning of the live exporting of sheep both as a domestic economic growth measure and through an animal welfare lens.

### Background

The live exporting of sheep has readily declined over the past 5-15 years due to persistent animal welfare concerns and minimal economic benefit to Australia. Between FY2017–FY2022, close to a 75% drop in sheep exports occurred, which took place organically in the market without government intervention.

Table 1 (FY):<sup>1</sup>

Animal	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022
Sheep	1,934,904	1,009,795	996,69	608,144	478,781
Cattle	958,905	1,242,100	1,290,597	893,148	612,565

Table 2 (CY):<sup>2</sup>



Australia has seen a significant declination to the live exporting of sheep, whereby the percentage of exported sheep now sits at between 5-10% of the 1988 and 2003 figures.

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

<sup>2</sup> Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, [Livestock products, Australia, December 2018](#), cat. no. 7215.0, ABS, Canberra, 2019.

## **Terms of Reference**

### ***Mechanism***

- 1) How should the government implement the phase out of live sheep exports by sea? Why should the government use this approach?

The Government should implement the phasing out of live sheep exports in a staged yet expeditious manner for domestic economic growth and animal welfare reasons. Many meat processors already have the capacity to upscale (and indeed want to upscale), though the small percentage of sheep that are exported overseas can, in the AMIEU's view (and through industry feedback), be easily accommodated into existing facilities.

The March quarter saw 2.4 million sheep slaughtered and 5.7 million lambs slaughtered.<sup>3</sup> On that trend, in 2023 we may see up to 10 million sheep slaughtered. A 5% increase (est. current live export percentage) is unlikely to have any dent in production capacity and will only serve to assist the domestic meat industry.

Additional infrastructure is unlikely to be required, though in the event that it is (or for other contingencies such as rostering changes), then we propose a short notice period of on or around 6 months to allow for a full transition.

### ***Timeframe***

- 2) What is an appropriate timeframe to phase out live sheep exports by sea? What are your reasons for proposing this timeframe?

The Government should phase out live sheep exports by sea in an expeditious though stage wise manner, and with a sense of urgency. This approach should be used due to the minimal (if any) direct economic benefit to Australia through the live exporting of sheep. Hundreds if not thousands of domestic jobs are likely to be created in the Australian meat industry upon ceasing the live export of sheep.

### ***Impact and adjustment***

- 3) Will you or your business be impacted by the phase out of live sheep exports by sea? If so, please provide details of the impact.

NA.

- 4) What will the phase out mean to you, your employer or employees, suppliers, customers, friends and family, and/or your community?

The phase out has large potential to provide economic benefits to the Australian community, particularly in regional Australia, where a bulk of meat processing occurs. Generally, 3000 jobs are created for every 1 million head of cattle that remain in Australia. Applying these figures to sheep, the AMIEU estimates that between 500-1500 jobs could be created if current workers do not take the additional capacity.

- 5) What barriers and/or constraints might there be for exporters, farmers, and other participants across the supply chain to transition away from live sheep exports by sea?

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/industry/agriculture/livestock-products-australia/latest-release>

A barrier to the effective transition away from the live exporting of sheep at this stage remains in the corner of many industry bodies that are refusing to participate in the discussion. Cultural and religious practices may be a perceived constraint (not an actual constraint), though best practice slaughter and preparation ought to be followed above religious and cultural considerations. Australia is well equipped to deal with the demand both from an accreditation and processing point of view.

- 6) How should supply chain participants be supported as they transition away from live sheep exports by sea?

For overseas countries and/or overseas purchasers, the solution could be as simple as purchasing more processed mutton and lamb from Australia. It is likely the costs of the reduction in exports has already been incurred, and therefore the remainder of the process should be focussed on maximising domestic economic growth.<sup>4</sup>

- 7) What would you or your business and/or other supply chain participants need to do to transition away from live sheep exports by sea?

NA.

- 8) How long do you think it will take for you and/or other supply chain participants to transition away from live sheep exports by sea?

This will depend on matters such as the nature and length of the contracts that are currently in place. The AMIEU's view is that the live exporting of sheep should, as far as possible, end in a stage wise, expeditious manner.

- 9) What can be learnt from other countries that have ceased live sheep exports? What lessons can be learned from Australian states or territories that no longer export live sheep by sea?

NA.

### **Opportunities**

- 10) What opportunities should the government and/or industry pursue in the lead up to and following the transition out of live sheep exports by sea? (e.g., expanding domestic processing and value adding, increasing sheep meat exports, other)

The number of sheep exiting by ship can be balanced against expansion of domestic capacity including a probable growth in jobs and domestic economic activity. The Government and/or industry should pursue the expansion of domestic supply chains including production, though also continue to explore international markets who will purchase processed lamb and mutton in line with (if applicable) cultural and religious observances.

- 11) What would industry participants need, or need to do, to take advantage of opportunities?

At this stage it would appear that the domestic industry is well prepared to deal with the cessation of the live exporting of sheep with respect to infrastructure and otherwise. Industry may require support in various ways, though it is unclear to what extent that may be required (e.g. skills shortages, labour, appropriate markets, etc).

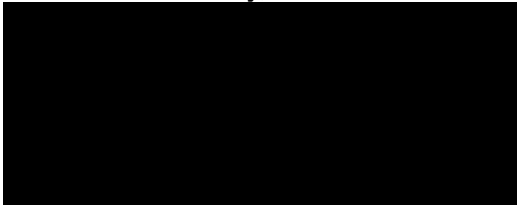
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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/jun/03/anthony-albanese-says-live-sheep-exports-wont-be-phased-out-before-2025>

**12) What are the barriers and/or constraints to pursuing opportunities?**

Barriers to pursuing opportunities could include the cost for meat production facilities (in terms of their expansion capacity), worker shortages (though we note the unemployment rate is estimated to rise and therefore worker capacity and/or availability should increase), and other factors such as trade protection.

Yours sincerely,



**Acting Federal Secretary  
AMIEU**