



Animal Welfare
League Qld
Est. 1959

31 May 2023

ANIMAL WELFARE LEAGUE QUEENSLAND

Submission in Support of the Phase-Out of Live Sheep Export by Sea

I am writing on behalf of the Animal Welfare League Queensland to express our strong support for the Australian Government's commitment to phase out the live export of sheep by sea.

As an organisation committed to animal well-being and humane treatment, we commend the government's recognition of the inherent cruelty associated with this trade and its willingness to prioritise the welfare of animals.

In this submission, we express our support for the swift and legislated cessation of live sheep exports while highlighting the need for comprehensive support and assistance for farmers during the transition.

1. Animal welfare concerns

Despite regulatory measures, transporting live sheep by sea for slaughter is inherently cruel, resulting in severe suffering.

a) Stress

The crowded and confined spaces, combined with extreme temperatures, pose significant risks to the welfare and survival of sheep. It is inhumane to subject these animals to such conditions.

Sheep are highly susceptible to heat stress, particularly during long journeys by sea. Therefore, even when regulations are followed, the conditions on board ships can lead to high mortality rates due to heat stress.

b) Un-stunned slaughter

Another grave concern is the practice of un-stunned slaughter that occurs in some destination countries, despite efforts to improve facilities and conditions. For example, Australian sheep exported for slaughter often endure painful and inhumane slaughter methods, including throat cutting without prior stunning.

This practice is cruel and contradicts Australia's animal welfare standards, which require stunning before slaughter to minimise pain and distress.

2. Public demand for certainty and legislative phase-out



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The Australian public strongly desires confidence and urgency in ending the live sheep export trade, which has been the subject of public concern and scrutiny for many years due to the inherent suffering endured by animals in this industry.

AWLQ fully support the public sentiment calling for the phase-out to be legislated and implemented within the current term of parliament. This will demonstrate the government's commitment to animal welfare and restore public trust in the agricultural sector.

We commend the government for recognising the need to address this issue promptly.

3. Time sensitivity and swift implementation

AWLQ recognises the urgency of addressing the inherent cruelties suffered by sheep during long-distance sea transport. Scientific evidence indicates sheep are prone to heat stress and suffer significantly during these voyages, even when all regulations are followed. This ongoing suffering directly contradicts our moral obligation to protect animals from harm and highlights the ethical imperative for prompt action.

Considering the gravity of the situation and the unnecessary harm inflicted on thousands of sheep each day, the government must take immediate action. Therefore, AWLQ strongly urges the government to initiate and complete the phase-out of long-distance sea transport for sheep as soon as possible.

4. Impact on Australia's international reputation

The continuation of the live sheep export trade significantly impacts Australia's international reputation. The trade has raised concerns and criticism from various quarters, both domestically and internationally, regarding the treatment of animals and the overall welfare standards upheld by the Australian agricultural industry.

The ongoing export of live sheep tarnishes Australia's image as a fair and compassionate nation. It undermines the perception that Australia upholds high animal welfare standards and prioritises humane animal treatment. In addition, the conditions endured by sheep during long-distance journeys, often fraught with overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, and extreme weather, have sparked outrage and raised questions about the ethicality of the trade.

Many countries, advocacy organisations, and individuals worldwide have disapproved of the live sheep export trade, leading to negative publicity for Australia. This negative attention impacts Australia's international standing, as it is seen as out of step with evolving global attitudes toward animal welfare.

By phasing out live sheep exports, Australia has the opportunity to restore and enhance its international reputation. Countries like New Zealand, which have taken a progressive stance by ending the live sheep export trade, serve as examples of ethical farming practices and have garnered international praise for their commitment to animal welfare.



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Aligning with such nations will allow Australia to position itself as a global leader in ethical farming practices. In addition, by embracing alternative trade methods, such as chilled and frozen meat exports, Australia can demonstrate its dedication to improving animal welfare standards and adapting to changing consumer preferences worldwide.

Enhancing Australia's reputation as an ethical agricultural producer brings numerous benefits. For example, it strengthens relationships with countries prioritising animal welfare, expanding trade opportunities and facilitating partnerships based on shared values. In addition, industries such as meat processing and value-added agricultural products can thrive by capitalising on Australia's positive reputation and market demand for ethically sourced products.

5. Support for farmers and transition assistance

We acknowledge that the cessation of live sheep exports will impact farmers and businesses involved in the supply chain and the importance of supporting these farmers during this period of change.

We strongly advocate for allocating government resources to assist farmers in diversifying their operations and developing alternative markets.

Facilitating investment in domestic processing facilities as close as possible to where animals are produced, and sheep meat transport and export instead of live animals can create new opportunities within the agricultural sector and mitigate the economic impact on affected parties. In addition, providing training programs, and other resources, will assist farmers to adapt to new opportunities and safeguard their livelihoods.

6. Strengthening trust in the agricultural sector

Ending live sheep exports by sea will help foster public confidence in the Australian agriculture sector. It will show that the industry is willing to evolve and adapt to meet higher ethical standards. Such a move will align with the growing global demand for responsible and sustainable food production, improving Australia's reputation as a provider of high-quality agricultural products.

Building public trust in the agricultural sector goes beyond addressing animal welfare concerns. It also involves transparent communication, engaging with the public, and ensuring that farming practices align with environmental sustainability and food safety standards. By demonstrating a commitment to these broader principles, the government and the industry can establish a stronger bond of trust with the public.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, Animal Welfare League Queensland strongly supports the Labor Party's stance on ending the live sheep export trade, and we believe that this policy reflects the values and concerns of many Australians. The commitment to phase out this trade demonstrates a genuine



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commitment to animal welfare and acknowledges the growing sentiment within our society that the mistreatment of animals is unacceptable.

By committing to end this trade, the Labor Party is responding to the concerns of countless Australians who believe it is morally wrong to subject animals to such conditions. This policy acknowledges that animals should be treated with respect and dignity and that their welfare should not be compromised for economic gain.

Taking a bipartisan approach to achieve this objective is important because it ensures that the issue is not limited to one political party or ideology. It shows that the welfare of animals transcends political boundaries and that protecting animals from cruelty is a shared responsibility. By encouraging collaboration across party lines, the Labor Party's commitment to ending the live sheep export trade can gain broader support and increase the likelihood of success.

We urge the Expert Panel to consider the views expressed in this submission, prioritise the swift and legislated cessation of this inherently cruel trade, and provide comprehensive support to farmers and other affected stakeholders to ensure a just transition.

We commend the government for taking a proactive stance on this issue. We look forward to witnessing this decision's positive impact on animal welfare, Australia's international reputation, and public trust in our agricultural sector.

Thank you for considering our submission. We remain available for any further discussions or clarifications regarding our views.

Sincerely,

Craig Montgomery
Communications & PR Manager
Animal Welfare League Queensland

