

Bryony Sumner

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Att: The panel for the phase out of live sheep export by sea.

My name is Bryony and I am concerned member of the public who would like to make a submission for the panel's consideration in this issue. I am deeply concerned about the animal welfare of Australian sheep and would like to discuss this in relation to live export.

The predominant term of reference that I would like to address is the timeframe to implement the phase out. Timeframe is crucial and must be decided and legislated in this term of Government. There is no guarantee of a second term and delaying the decision would ignore the election promise made by the Albanese Government. A further delay would also subject millions more animals to the gruelling and cruel journey across the sea. Government needs to expedite the phase out, commit to an end date and legislate in this term as a show of good faith.

During their election campaign, Labor recognised that the Australian public wanted an end to live export and used this to gain votes and popularity. In 2020, the RSPCA released results of an Australia-wide study that revealed 67% of Australians wanted an end to live export. Two thirds of these votes were from rural and regional areas and there was a 70% support to end live export in WA where most of the live export industry is based. The Labor party capitalised on this knowledge and used the promise of ending live export as a main goal once elected.

The reason that many Australians want an end to live export is that it is now widely known how much animals suffer on the long voyage overseas to slaughter. Sheep are especially vulnerable. A 2020 study by Australian Professor Clive Phillips highlighted how susceptible Australian sheep are to heat stroke and reported high rates of mortality during transport. Animal welfare is the most compelling argument we have against live export and although it is not on the terms of reference for the panel it is a fundamental issue. We need to remember always that sheep are not cargo but sentient beings and outcomes for them and unacceptable and unfixable. Ships leave Australia with no independent observer on board and OIE animal welfare standards (which are the bare minimum) and not complied with.

New Zealand have recently successfully implemented a ban on live export. Key factors in their government's decision were animal welfare, the length of the voyage and their national brand and reputation. Australia shamefully scores only a D rating on the international animal welfare scale – partly due to live export and an unwillingness to reform. Statistics have shown that the live export industry has been in decline for the past 20 years. The 'Bloody Business' expose in 2011 turned public opinion against the trade and there has already been ample time to find alternatives and opportunities since then. In 2021, an economic analysis conducted by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences concluded that abolishing live export would only initially generate a noticeable economic impact, followed by a smooth and relatively low-cost transition to alternative markets.

This panel and commission provides an excellent opportunity to stop supporting and subsidising an industry already in decline which perpetuates animal cruelty. Representing less than \$100 million a

year of the GDP, live export's economic contribution is negligible. With the growth of plant-based proteins and the recognised benefits of plant alternatives for our health and the environment, this is a great time to be offering farmers more lucrative and ethical alternatives which benefit our health, environment and Australia's international brand and reputation.

Many thanks for the opportunity to submit my opinion to the panel,

All the best

Bryony Sumner

References:

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