

Tuesday, May 30, 2023

Independent panel

Phase out of live sheep exports by sea

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Federal Government of Australia

Lodged on line

Thank you for the opportunity to lodge my submission to the  
'Phase out of live sheep exports by sea' panel.

In 1984, the 'Senate Select Committee of Inquiry into Animal Welfare in Australia' stated that live export should be banned on animal cruelty grounds alone.

Since 2018, it has been Labor party policy to end live sheep export, if elected, and Australians were relieved and thrilled. In the lead-up to the 2022 Federal election, Labor re-committed to their policy. Nearly 40 years on since the SSCI, and countless heartbreaking investigations, reports of breaches, and sickening exposés (all thanks only to animal charities and whistle-blowers), once elected, the Labor Government betrayed the trust of voters by refusing to even begin the phase until 2025 - their next term. Two more years.

One of the worst and largest animal cruelty issues on the planet, and Labor is banking on winning the next election, and gambling with the lives of thousands of sheep until the next election, and risking the lives of millions of sheep if they lose. Further, the industry is seeing this, and now using it, as an opportunity to pressure the government to reverse the decision entirely.

### **Animal Welfare and Ethical Concerns –**

In the context of the urgency for a legislated phase out

Last month, a Brazil court banned live cattle exports over animal welfare concerns:

"Animals are not things. They are sentient living beings, that is, individuals who feel hunger, thirst, pain, cold, anguish, fear," Federal Judge Djalma Gomes wrote in the ruling:

<https://www.reuters.com/business/sustainable-business/brazil-court-bans-live-cattle-exports-over-animal-welfare-concerns-2023-04-27/>

This is equally applicable to sheep:

An important new essay reviews sheep cognition, emotions, and personalities:

"Our paper is meant to separate fact from fiction and to understand who sheep are—not what we want them to be. In the process we found out that our characterisations of them as dull-minded and lacking uniqueness and independence in their *personality* and desires is completely wrong. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth." ([Lori Marino and Debra Merskin](#))

"Sheep do care about their own lives and how they are treated and respond to similar situations in similar ways to humans. Nothing we've learned about sheep gives us a free pass to mistreat them based on myths about their "mindlessness." They are intelligent, complex, and feeling individuals."

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/animal-emotions/201905/why-sheep-matter-theyre-intelligent-emotional-and-unique?eml>



"Sheep have unique personalities and can recognise at least 50 individuals' faces - and remember them for years.

They can also tell if other sheep (and humans) are happy, or sad, stressed or calm by reading facial expressions!

Sheep form special friendships with other individuals, and may even spend time thinking about their friends when they're not around, "... and feel desolate when those close to them die or are sent to slaughter." - Jonathan Leake, Science Editor. e.g. Author, [Jeffrey Masson](#), recounts the story of Rammo — a young ram he met in Missouri, who became the guardian for a blind calf named Whisper. He would graze next to his friend and guide her around. When Whisper died, Rammo stood by her body, calling and calling."

And this is how the animal agriculture industry treats these sentient individuals:

## **Ships**

By way of a reminder, I strongly urge you to view the '60 Minutes' 'Cormo Express' exposé. Just one of many:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1V96Y533Ds> Part 1

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRogWe\\_f9U4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRogWe_f9U4) Part 2

Struggling to stand in rough seas, caked in faeces - many becoming buried in it as they are no longer able to stand - sheep are in various stages of a terrifying, slow and excruciatingly cruel death from temperatures soaring to 40°C plus. They actually cook from the inside out.

He can't breathe:



- A lamb lies in the bog, a mass of faecal matter and urine, that has built up in the pens of the live export ship Awassi Express on a voyage from Fremantle to the Middle East in August 2017.  
Photograph: Supplied by 60 Minutes/Channel Nine.

What really happens on live export ships:



- She is still alive in this photo

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6RKarFD8sY&embeds\\_referring\\_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fanimalsaustralia.org%2F&feature=emb\\_imp\\_woyt](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6RKarFD8sY&embeds_referring_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fanimalsaustralia.org%2F&feature=emb_imp_woyt)

Even worse for the many who are also pregnant and giving birth. Another, ongoing, breach of regulations – Pregnant ewes are not allowed to be loaded onto live export ships, and yet:



He never made it off the ship. The littlest victims of live export aren't loaded onto ships – **They're born on board** Credit/Source: Animals Australia



**" 'Boiled alive'**

"The footage shows sheep carcasses disintegrating in the hands of crew. The men are filmed wearing gumboots but no protective gear, standing in a bog of sheep faeces and urine that is inches high and known in the industry as the "faecal pad".



As the men try to move the bodies of the sheep onto plastic so they can be transported to the side of the ship and tipped overboard into the sea, the bodies of the sheep spill apart, their limbs "popping off" at first touch.”:



- <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/boiled-alive-new-footage-shows-full-scale-of-live-exports-horror-20180503-p4zd9q.html>

## Destinations



It is common practice in destination countries for animals to be incompetently and violently slaughtered by unqualified and inexperienced workers. Trembling and terrified, animals are fully-conscious and butchered in the line of sight of other animals. There are virtually no laws protecting animals in the countries they're sold to. They are routinely subjected to abuse and terrifying, agonising methods of slaughter that are illegal in Australia.

- **WARNING - DISTRESSING CONTENT:** Disturbing footage allegedly showing Australian livestock being brutally mistreated in the Middle East has led to calls for an urgent intervention. PLEASE VIEW: [https://au.news.yahoo.com/disturbing-video-of-australian-sheep-slaughtered-in-the-street-sparks-investigation-033921987.html?soc\\_src=social-sh&soc\\_trk=ma](https://au.news.yahoo.com/disturbing-video-of-australian-sheep-slaughtered-in-the-street-sparks-investigation-033921987.html?soc_src=social-sh&soc_trk=ma) (08.08.20)



The Age, 2018

- “Footage taken by local investigators for Animals Australia as well as market sellers at 10 sites across Jordan shows sheep with Australian national livestock identification ear tags being forced to jump off the backs of trucks, dragged by one leg and bundled into cars for home slaughter, which is banned under animal welfare rules.”

[https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/treatment-of-australian-sheep-in-jordan-under-investigation-20200812-p55ksr.html?fbclid=IwAR2cTCfbTRBn-\\_7RwkY9gnuFdyeZqcwXHH6g9cf5tZ\\_iDvzm4qlKIU7LRY](https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/treatment-of-australian-sheep-in-jordan-under-investigation-20200812-p55ksr.html?fbclid=IwAR2cTCfbTRBn-_7RwkY9gnuFdyeZqcwXHH6g9cf5tZ_iDvzm4qlKIU7LRY)



- After a tip-off from an Egyptian vet, Animals Australia sparked a government investigation into what an industry leader described as “horrific” slaughtering practices in Egypt.

### **Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS)**

Of course, sheep are not the only victims of this cruel trade. All are the responsibility of ESCAS who “requires exporters to have arrangements in place for the humane handling and slaughter of livestock in the importing country.”

It is our duty to never forget ‘A Bloody Business’ – 4 Corners exposé of our live cattle export trade in Indonesia – 12 years ago today:

- <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-08-08/a-bloody-business---2011/2841918>

- <https://www.smh.com.au/national/slaughter-suspended-over-indonesian-cattle-cruelty-20110527-1f8ci.html>

Following this, the government responded by implementing the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS).

But further exposés ensued:

- This is what Saudi slaughterhouses look like:

<https://www.facebook.com/AnimalsAustralia/videos/10153133655060299/> (2015)

- Australian cattle sledgehammered to death in Vietnam (Animals Australia, 2016)



[https://cdn.animalsaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/23224725/sledgehammering-Vietnam-2016-900x450.jpg?theia\\_smart\\_thumbnails\\_file\\_version=2](https://cdn.animalsaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/23224725/sledgehammering-Vietnam-2016-900x450.jpg?theia_smart_thumbnails_file_version=2)

- <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/barbaric-footage-shows-australian-cattle-slaughtered-illegally-in-indonesia-20200818-p55mnt.html> (2020)

- PETA Asia investigated the treatment of Australian cattle exported to Indonesia and found that animals were frequently improperly stunned and killed in painful, abhorrent ways. (2021)

- Throats cut and thrown like rubbish: Disturbing new footage from a slaughterhouse approved by the Australian Government's live export scheme...

A lone sheep is shoved up a ramp, into a slaughterhouse. He stops, eyes frozen on the scene in front of him. Another sheep — one of his pen mates — is struggling against a blade as his throat is cut. Still fully aware, he's thrown headfirst onto the blood-soaked floor, where other sheep lay, slowly losing consciousness.

Witnessing this, the frightened sheep turns to leave. He doesn't want to be here. And in this most vulnerable moment of his grueling live export journey, he is failed one final time by the industry — he's dragged back inside to meet the same fate as those who went before him.

The distressing footage from inside this Australian government approved slaughterhouse wasn't the only evidence of animal cruelty documented by our 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.

- Animals Australia, 30.07.21



- <https://animalsaustralia.org/our-work/live-export/end-live-export/>

- <https://vimeo.com/386842085>

ESCAS has been an utter failure. The cruelty continues unabated.

### **Environmental impact**

Effluent was pumped out of the ship, and the bodies of the sheep, dead and dying, thrown overboard, ocean pollution is massive. – Cormo Express exposé, 60 Minutes, 08.04.18:



Further, the long-distance transportation of sheep by sea consumes substantial amounts of fossil fuels, contributing to greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation.

## **Dying industry**

From Germany to Namibia, many countries have banned live export. Others have started phasing it out, and halting individual shipments – All on animal cruelty grounds.

New Zealand banned all live export for meat in 2007 - with no negative financial consequences. In April, 2023, they ended all live export by sea – All on animal cruelty grounds.

As stated in my opening, in April this year, a Brazil court banned live cattle exports over animal welfare concerns.

In Australia, live sheep exports fell from over 7 million sheep in the late 1980's, to just over 1 million in 2018. Between 2016 and 2020, that figure decreased even further by more than 50%.

“A former livestock carrier and Riverina Local Land Services board member says all live exports of stock should be banned to end the misery for animals”

<http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/5332824/carrier-calls-for-an-end-to-all-live-exports/?cs=148>

Australian governments have had decades and ample opportunity to crack down on this irredeemable industry, but they continue to lag behind. They have spent decades – and millions of taxpayer dollars – trying to review and reprimand an industry where animal abuse is systemic, because the entire business model is built on animal cruelty – otherwise, it would not be financially viable to the players.



## **Ensure a just transition**

I support farmers being provided with transitional support away from live export to sustainable animal agriculture practices, contributing towards meeting the globally-growing demand for ethically sourced products, thereby also creating more and new jobs – Better for people, animals, and the planet.

## **Economic opportunities**

- Other countries, not least New Zealand, have replaced live export with no financially negative impacts.

- “Shutting down sheep trade would have little economic impact on (Australian) farmers” – Financial Review:

<http://www.afr.com/news/shutting-down-sheep-trade-would-have-little-economic-impact-on-farmers-report-finds-20180409-hoyi7c>

- According to Pegasus Economics Report, commissioned by Animals Australia to examine the economic impact of the phasing out of the live sheep export trade. February 2020:

a “The live sheep export industry has been living on borrowed time in terms of its capacity to maintain its social licence to operate.”

b The cessation of the live sheep export represents a loss of around 0.5 per cent of total cash receipts for specialist sheep farms and 0.17 per cent of total cash receipts for mixed enterprise sheep farms. This translates into a loss of just under \$2,000 per sheep farmer.

c “The trend increase in consumption of processed sheep meat products in the Middle East suggests further export opportunities exist for processed sheep meat exports for sheep redirected away from the live sheep export trade.” And:

*“Refrigerator ownership in consumer households across the GCC is 99%; in the UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar it is near universal at 99.5%.*

*Freezers also have a high penetration (73%) among consumer households in these countries.”*

d “There is evidence of chronic ongoing underutilisation of sheep meat processing capacity in Western Australia.”

e “Total employment in Western Australia is likely to increase if sheep destined for live export are processed in Australia.”

f Ending live exports could increase employment across the meat processing sector.

Transitioning away from live export opens up opportunities for the development of many alternative industries and export markets for Australia.

We can enhance economic resilience, create jobs, and meet the growing global demand for ethically sourced products. By prioritising animal welfare and sustainability, we can build on Australian businesses already embracing alternative industries, including plant-based production, and further foster innovation, create new jobs, and stimulate economic growth.”

In closing:

I welcome the well-overdue news of concrete next steps towards a phase out of all live sheep exports from Australia. Establishing an independent panel to determine how and when to phase out the trade is appropriate, bringing Australia a step closer to ending a trade which has deep, inherent and unfixable animal welfare issues. It's a business model based on animal cruelty.



- No animal should die like this, or this -



The entire industry has continued to be a disgraceful abomination from the start – all those decades ago. Not one more animal should ever have to endure such savage and barbaric cruelty.

In the name of everything that's decent and moral, at the very least, the Albanese Government should be honouring its commitment to begin the live sheep export phase out now. I strongly urge you, please, to take a moment to open the links in my submission to see why this is such an urgent matter.

With the panel's report due in September, this will allow ample time for the Government to consider the panel's findings, and critical that they introduce legislation during this, their first term of government, i.e. Before the next election, 2025.

This is a call to mercy.

Yours faithfully, Cheryl Forrest-Smith

[Redacted signature block]

Photos: Animals Australia

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