

Phase out of live sheep exports by sea

Submission to Australian government inquiry

30 May 2023

To whom it may concern:

As an Australian citizen with a strong interest and background in animal welfare, I welcome the Australian Government's commitment to phase out live sheep exports by sea. Such a phase out is long overdue.

In fact, I understand the Select Committee on Animal Welfare, following extensive inquiries into the live export trade and the impact on animal welfare, recommended a ban on the export of live sheep for slaughter back in 1985. So for around 38 years the Australian government has allowed this trade to continue, knowing full well the unacceptable risks and animal welfare implications.

Notably, in 2003 Animals Australia released footage depicting incredibly cruel treatment of Australian sheep being dragged, beaten and handled incredibly cruelly during slaughter. Since then we have seen countless investigations and exposés - mostly led by independent charities such as Animals Australia showing ongoing unspeakable cruelty. We have also seen countless government responses and inquiries.

Without a doubt, the live export trade can never be made humane. Live export of sheep should have been phased out decades ago, and I am grateful that we finally have a government prepared to act on this. For the reasons above, in the interests of animal welfare, I urge the government to phase out the live export of sheep as rapidly as possible.

Sheep farming is a very high emitter of greenhouse gases including methane. A rapid decline in sheep population will reduce methane and assist in meeting Australia's climate change goals and obligations. It also uses a huge amount of land and has a negative impact on that land and waterways.

With the phase out comes an opportunity to transition away from reliance on sheep (or other animal agriculture) and instead into more humane and sustainable farming practices. I urge the government to provide support to help transition sheep farmers to appropriate non-animal based agriculture.

I urge the government to legislate the ban on live sheep exports within 12 months - and certainly within this term of parliament - and start the phase out as quickly as possible, with a complete ban in place within a few years. Anything short of this risks deliberately and knowingly subjecting many thousands of individuals to cruel sea journeys and horrific treatment at the destination.

Thank you for considering these views. I wish the government the best in implementing a swift phase-out of live sheep exports.

Yours faithfully,

Chay Neal