

31 May 2023

To the Review Panel

### **Submission to the Live Export of Sheep by Sea**

I am pleased that the Albanese government has decided to ban the live export of sheep by sea. This obscene trade has been going on for far too long. It deserved to be banned in 1985 when the Senate Inquiry into Live Exports found that the trade should end on animal welfare grounds alone. After decades of reviews, regulations and minor improvements, sheep continue to suffer horrendous conditions while at sea and worse even in the overseas slaughterhouses where they are killed in ways that would be illegal in Australia. Some animals manage to leak out of the ESCAS system and their suffering is poorly documented, but there is enough footage of them being shoved in car booths and roughly killed in streets and backyards to know that these are not an isolated events. In addition, we must not forget that there is always a risk of a maritime tragedy, or a shipment being refused authorisation to unload - both events could lead to thousands of deaths or prolonged suffering. There have been many such examples in the past, involving Australian animals as well as animals from other countries, to warn us that tragedies happen and that they are not kind to animals.

If we are to avoid more animal suffering and death, I believe therefore that the phase out period for the trade must be as speedy as possible. The government promised that the trade would end but announced that this would not occur during this term of government. I feel that this was unwise as this promise is now entirely dependent on the Labor government being re-elected. To ensure that the promise can be delivered, legislation must be introduced and passed urgently with an end date immediately after the next federal election. This will reduce the risk of a new government repealing the law.

In relation to transition, I believe that smart farmers have seen the writing on the wall for a while and have already transitioned out of breeding sheep for live exports. As a person living in a rural area, I know that good farming practices are all about being agile and responsive to climatic and economic conditions. I believe that those sheep farmers who are still involved in the trade have taken a risk, knowing full well that the trade would end. Minimum support should be provided given their risky choice.

If the Review Panel decides that support is needed nevertheless, it must be for transition towards activities that do not negatively impact animals' welfare and which do not aggravate the twin impending climate and biodiversity emergencies. Support must not be provided to breed more sheep or other herbivores, given the deleterious impact these animals have had on Australia's fragile soils, biodiversity and greenhouse gas emissions.

I understand that the Panel is seeking to understand how the phase out will impact exporters, farmers and other businesses across the supply chain. This term of reference is much too narrow and the Review must consider how the phase out will impact the overwhelming majority of Australians who oppose the trade. These people will be relieved, ecstatic and will wonder why the government has taken so long to ban the trade. The happiness and satisfaction of the majority must be noted and taken into account.

I found panel discussions about the need for emotional support for farmers quite bewildering. Breeding sheep for export is a commercial decision which farmers make of their own volition. The emotional toll on the thousands of Australians who oppose the trade on cruelty grounds is never mentioned. Yet this toll is severe and the people who have fought against live export for decades must be acknowledged by the Review Panel.

Finally, it is important to stress that, regardless of the species, all animals who are transported on ships and slaughtered overseas suffer from stress, fear, pain and cruel deaths. The end of the live sheep export trade must be seen not as an end point but at the beginning of the dismantlement of the live export of other species for slaughter and breeding, including cattle, buffaloes, and goats.

Yours faithfully

Dominique Thiriet