

Please find below the profiles of a group of farmers and an animal health specialist from the [REDACTED] area. In an effort to provide useful feedback, we collaborated on this submission.

Emily Stretch:

I'm the fourth generation of farmers to work my family farm here in [REDACTED]. There are three generations still living on the land that we are all so deeply connected to. We all volunteer our time in different areas of the [REDACTED] community. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED], and so many more groups.

Every one of us believes in the importance of community, and the cornerstone of every community is the people. Banning Live Export by sea (LE) harms every member of my family, my neighbours, my community and all the neighbouring communities. It harms every individual in the agricultural sector that relies on a small town with stockmen and women at their hearts. I believe that the LE industry has improved its animal welfare to a standard that I am happy to champion and consign my animals into. I do not believe government has the right to ban an entire industry. Craft regulations and make sure there are checks and balances, yes. Ban an entirely legal and thriving trade, no. I implore you as a young female on the land who cares for her animals through drought, flood, fire, thunderstorms, hypothermia events, and the sunny beautiful days, to please reverse this policy. It does not improve animal welfare or any Australian's standard of living.

To show my respect for your government, I have answered the questions below with the help of a group of people intrinsically involved in the livestock industry. Please do not mistake my answers for support of your policy. I do not support a ban on LE in any way.

Alex Coole:

I'm a third-generation farmer [REDACTED] farming 50,000 sheep at peak with my family who have used the live export trade for over 30 years. My passion is sheep and wool production, animal welfare, genetics and sustainability. I've been farming for 16 years and as many would confirm, I love farming. More importantly I love farming animals; it's what I find most rewarding in life. There are always years where poor seasons or low commodity prices are a huge challenge, but they are challenges I thrive on rising to.

In the past, there have been issues within the live export by sea trade. Industry has responded and made improvements and now this Australian trade is one of the highest regarded for animal welfare in the world. To ban live export won't improve animal welfare globally, nationally the economy will lose 100 million dollars annually as well as the ban affecting 6000 West Australian's jobs. The trade supports many other industries as well as farmers, like livestock transport companies, feed suppliers, veterinarians and stock agents. These will all be affected by the banning of the live export by sea trade.

Please, I ask you to reconsider the policy to ban the trade. Please look at the improvements industry has made, and how hard we work as farmers to supply suitable sheep for this specific trade. You must consider the huge implications the ban will have on the whole agricultural industry.

Emma Haynes:

Members of my family have been in the [REDACTED] farming district since it was settled. Today our broadacre enterprise consists of, at peak, over 20,000 Merino sheep and an approximate 1600ha cropping program.

Turning off our sheep into the live export industry has been a key element to our livelihood since the 1980's. My brother, sister & I have held alternative careers in unrelated areas prior to returning to the family farm. We also travelled extensively, as have our parents. My brother served in Afghanistan as a Captain in the Australian Army and worked in remote Indigenous communities and in QLD during his time in service. My sister worked in television at the ABC in the Outside Broadcast section & studied

Agribusiness at Curtin & holds 2 other Diplomas. She works for the farm remotely from the [REDACTED] wine region & returns to the farm with her children to work here on the school holidays with them. Myself, I have had a management career in Medical Administration in both [REDACTED] & studied Animal Husbandry. In short, we bring a great deal of life experience and awareness to the table.

We ask you to consider the value of such a broad ranging and impactful decision to exit this industry. Australia is a global influencer. We have set the highest standard with regard to animal management and welfare and I ask – why don't you want us to be a part of this industry where we have done so much good for so many animals & people over this time?

Walking away at this point is a heavy responsibility. These same nations we export to today will still be obtaining live exported animals – just not from us and not in our careful manner.

Grant Egerton Warburton:

My name is Grant Egerton-Warburton and my family have been sheep farmers in [REDACTED] since 1860. In that time live exporting sheep was and continues to be a very important part of our business model.

I am the 6th generation in our family to take over the family farm and I am hoping to be able to hand it down to my three sons one day. In saying this I am very concerned that the end of live export will have dire consequences for the profitability of our sheep enterprise going forward. I really hope that you consider all these submissions and reconsider the devastating decision to end the live export trade.

The choice to end Live Export shows a complete lack of understanding of the trade, the effect on country people, and exactly how metrocentric the Labor government really is. It is inexcusable that this conclusion was reached when the country depended on sheep during our inception and now Australian farmers have such a good reputation globally. Ending LE will not change anything on a global level, simply have dire consequences in our own country.

To show my respect for your government, I have answered the questions below with the help of a group of people intrinsically involved in the livestock industry. Please do not mistake my answers for support of your policy. I do not support a ban on LE in any way.

Zali Spencer:

Unlike most, I am not a farmer, I'm just a 23-year-old with a serious passion for livestock.

I grew up in the wheatbelt town of [REDACTED] and often found myself nagging my parents to let me skip school so that I could help with anything that involved being around the sheep on my grandparent's farm, I was obsessed to say the least.

This upbringing gave rise to my current career as an animal health and production specialist for [REDACTED] an agricultural supplies store based in [REDACTED] WA.

Within my role, I pride myself on working alongside local producers, helping them to create a viable sheep production enterprise that continues to maintain the highest-level of concern for animal health & welfare. Within my role, I use a number of different tools to aid in the maintenance of sheep health & condition. For instance, worm egg counts help to identify the effectiveness of a drench and plant tissue tests determine the nutritional value of available feed. All these tools are used in combination to help advise on the best way to maintain and improve the health and wellbeing of livestock.

For many producers, live export is one of many tools used to help mitigate disease and improve risk management. What will be the widespread consequences if we remove this tool? Please don't remove one of the few options we have left within our toolbox.

I also ask you to consider not only the impact of this ban on producers, but on those of us within the community who are not directly related to the live exportation of sheep.

Consider the wider detrimental effects on small businesses, most who rely heavily on the sales and support associated with livestock enterprises. Because without these producers within our community, there will be

consequences for the future and development of regional and rural communities, just like [REDACTED]

SUMMARY:

- We ask the government to reverse the policy to ban live export by sea
- Animal welfare will not improve by banning the trade from Australia
- 15 year steps-based approach to phase out if the policy is not reversed
- So many parties affected by the ban; transport, farmers, veterinarians, stock agents, exporters
- Perfect market for wethers
- Risk of oversupply into local markets, prices will decrease dramatically
- Farms aren't suitable for 100% cropping.
- Having wethers in farming systems spreads risk especially in poor seasons, ewes & lambs are far more vulnerable to weather and feed fluctuations.
- Insufficient local market capacity currently in WA to take in wethers
- So much uncertainty going forward is affecting the mental health of farmers immensely, and will continue to
- Sheep numbers in Australia will be hugely affected as some farmers will get out of sheep to avoid being affected by the ban
- Banning the trade will affect thousands of Australian jobs, and potentially the international trade agreements with the middle east
- So many barriers and impacts that we will feel back on farm could have detrimental outcomes
 - Inability to pay staff in commodity prices decrease
 - changing genetics that we've worked on for 50 + years
 - Inability to hit carbon goals, wildlife corridors, conservation and biodiversity
- Opportunities that may arise from the ban will take years of planning, major changes on farm and may deter future generations from entering the sheep and/or ag industry altogether

Mechanism

- 1) How should the government implement the phase out of live sheep exports by sea? Why should the government use this approach?

We ask the government to please reverse their policy to phase out live sheep exports by sea because this ban does not improve animal welfare in Australia or globally. Nor does it improve the quality of life for any Australian.

Timeframe

- 2) What is an appropriate timeframe to phase out live sheep exports by sea? What are your reasons for proposing this timeframe?

There is not an appropriate timeframe to phase out live sheep exports because of the way Live Export by sea (LE) is woven into the fabric of our agricultural industry. Instead, there needs to be a steps-based approach with proven outcomes across a variation of years and weather seasons, so at least 15 years for this process. As farmers caring for animals, we need to have multiple seasons of demonstrated practical outcomes that do not limit animal welfare and human well-being. Without a continued demonstration of successful alternative approaches to LE we cannot remove the trade by sea. There are too many animals, farms, and individuals relying on this trade to blithely state a number of years and hope that we can hit the targets required by then.

We need:

- Alternative markets to be successful for at least ten years without government investment. There is very little point in subsidizing areas of industry only to see them topple when the

support can no longer be provided. Collapsing markets post govt funding or subsidies would be as crippling, if not more, as banning LE now.

- Minimal surplus of animals on farm over a period of 15 years.
- Parity in valuation of different sheep breeds and types in comparison to a 10 year average.
- A good exit strategy for large volumes of animals in drought season/s. Would LE be available for extreme measures to minimise animal welfare issues on farm?
- If we have to hold sheep on farm due to this policy we need to be reimbursed for the costs associated; feed, cropping opportunities, lost profit from market declines.
- When all of these targets have been met then we can consider a slow phase out of LE by reducing boats over at least three year periods.

Impact and adjustment

Emily Stretch

3) Will you or your business be impacted by the phase out of live sheep exports by sea? If so, please provide details of the impact.

Yes, my business will be impacted negatively.

- My flock structure will alter to more intensive stock types that require more feedlotting and chemical treatments.
- I will have to crop more in general, which reduces my ability to use livestock as an alternative to chemicals and soil degrading techniques.
- I will lose my ability to mitigate the risks associated with flood and drought seasons. Shipper wethers (animals that are sought after for LE) are the animals we keep on farm to be sold when the season does not provide optimal pasture growth. Which happens regularly.
- I will lose another tool to mitigate the risks associated with having prices of my products dictated to me. Without the above mentioned wethers in my system I have less product for the wool markets and less access to multiple sheepmeat markets. Once those choices are removed for me the number of budgeting options I have to mitigate high chemical costs or crashes in grain, oil seed, animal feed, and wool markets reduce drastically.
- Land prices will decrease as people seek to remove themselves from the volatility and uncertainty associated with this potential ban. Once that happens we lose another tool to leverage against the increasing costs of living and farm inputs.
- If the critical mass of wool produced in WA reduces we may lose access to the Fremantle wool stores as an auction house. If that occurs then freight to the Eastern States will kill a lot of the profit involved in the wool market, therefore reducing my businesses viability even further.
- My farm is not able to be 100% cropping. There are areas of land that cannot support that kind of farming due to soil type, water logging, land degradation and salinity issues. To remove LE removes my ability to make a profit of these areas. Traditionally I use wethers to strategically graze these areas without causing environmental issues such as erosion, compaction or overgrazing plants like saltbush. This is not something I can do with lambing ewes as there are key periods of the year that I cannot move them or intervene for health treatments. Equally I cannot use young sheep that are still growing and require more careful monitoring for nutritional intake. Wethers are part of how I take care of the environment.

3. Alex Coole

Will you or your business be impacted by the phase out of live sheep exports by sea? If so, please provide details of the impact.

Yes, the ban will hugely affect my business and farming system

Here's how:

- The current trade spreads risk by having the ability to offload wethers in a poor season to concentrate on the welfare of pregnant and lactating ewes and their lambs back on farm

- Also, it spreads the risk of income streams so our eggs aren't all in one basket by running, for example all ewes, all crop
- It allows competition in the market and underpins prices for local markets
- It currently adds value to our wool production
- There are currently insufficient meat processing facilities in WA therefore these sheep will likely enter the cross bred lamb market which will significantly decrease prices and potentially affect and in some cases cease sheep production across Australia
- My farm is about 70% cropping with about 30% permanent grazing areas which allows us to run more dry sheep (wethers) in these areas and leave the more suitable land for lambing ewes who are more vulnerable to bad weather events and drought.

Yes, the ban will affect me and my mental health

- By giving me a lot of uncertainty going forward
 - The future for the sheep we would normally send on live export vessels is worrying. At what stage does this become an animal welfare issue on farm? We cannot allow a repeat of the early 90's where sheep were euthanized because farmers didn't have any other option. Farmers had to put down thousands of sheep when the wool market crashed because there was not enough food on farm for them. There was not enough money in the farm to buy in grain to feed the sheep and not enough killing space in the abattoirs for the excess animals. There was nowhere for the extra animals to go, and so farmers had to make the tough choice to end the lives of those animals rather than letting them suffer.
4. What will the phase out mean to you, your employer or employees, suppliers, customers, friends and family, and/or your community?
- Banning LE will mean every farm carefully considering if they can continue to afford paying their employees.
 - It will mean some people getting out of sheep altogether to avoid the mental and emotional strain of not knowing if there will be an industry standing at the end of this uncertainty. The follow-on effect of less sheep is less people and more people hurting. That means not enough funds for small communities to continue functioning and more people reaching for mental health services. Or, god forbid, people not knowing how to reach out for help and suicide rates climbing. Health services will be strained, schools will struggle to maintain critical numbers of students, sporting clubs will not be able to field enough players. Scariest of all is the number of people who will no longer have the emotional, physical, and mental capacity to volunteer for small towns. Without our ambulance and fire volunteers we lose access to basic safeties that all Australians deserve.
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5. What barriers and/or constraints might there be for exporters, farmers, and other participants across the supply chain to transition away from live sheep exports by sea?
- Inability to clear more land for cropping purposes.
 - Oversupply of sheep and severely depressed sheepmeat prices.
 - Loss of wool as a renewable, biodegradable fibre that captures carbon.
 - Inability to hit the 'one percenters' like carbon goals, wildlife corridors, conservation, biodiversity and much more.
 - Decreased availability of high quality protein sources in the Middle East.
 - Lack of new chemicals being developed in a timeframe that allows us to continue using old chemicals as well in regard to cropping and livestock.
 - Future generations of farmers may choose to find another career rather than be beaten up by the government again and again for sustainably producing food and fibre.

- Transport systems in Australia not being able to handle extra domestic load of livestock and increased grain harvests.
6. How should supply chain participants be supported as they transition away from live sheep exports by sea?
 - All participants in the supply chain should have access to rebated mental health services.
 - Government should be providing funds to advisors and grower groups that have proven outcomes in facilitating workshops for all members of the supply chain. We should not have to reinvent the wheel individually; we should be able to access groups of people changing their business structures in similar ways and learning from each other constructively.
 - Those businesses that are at the forefront of creating positive change in transitioning should be reimbursed for their time in providing mentorship to these groups.
 7. What would you or your business and/or other supply chain participants need to do to transition away from live sheep exports by sea?
 - Alter genetics and flock structure.
 - Alter farming system to more cropping and different meat market goals.
 - Look into other livestock options such as beef, pork, poultry.
 8. How long do you think it will take for you and/or other supply chain participants to transition away from live sheep exports by sea?
As long as it takes industry to meet the steps-based outcomes outlined in the timeline section.
 9. What can be learnt from other countries that have ceased live sheep exports? What lessons can be learned from Australian states or territories that no longer export live sheep by sea?
This is an area that other experts will be better suited to answer. However, I would urge the panel to carefully consider the welfare of animals being exported from other countries in comparison to Australia. We are one country, but we have an opportunity to help the rest of the world improve their animal welfare in line with ours.

Opportunities

10. What opportunities should the government and/or industry pursue in the lead up to and following the transition out of live sheep exports by sea? (e.g., expanding domestic processing and value adding, increasing sheep meat exports, other).
Investment opportunities/market opportunities to investigate.
 - What improvements to LE would it take to allow it to continue? This market already exists and it is important not to ignore that we may be able to make more improvements that satisfy Australians in terms of animal welfare. This should be the FIRST area of opportunity explored.
 - Abattoir labour in WA. We need more incentives in this space for domestic and international workers.
 - More players in the abattoir space in WA – are there established players in the abattoir market space that are looking to gain a foothold in WA?
 - There may be an opportunity to get WA animals into Eastern States abattoirs. TO achieve this, we need to improve facilities for unloading and loading livestock trucks across the Nullarbor. Live air freight to the East should also be investigated as a potential transport avenue. Anything we do domestically needs to improve animal welfare on farm and throughout the supply chain. This will need careful modelling to ensure we do not negatively impact Eastern States producers as well.

- There needs to be continuing research into expanding Australian access to any and all current markets including chilled meat markets and US markets.
- Modelling on domestic meat market oversupply and price drops – will this in turn make more than just WA farms non-viable. Careful consideration of the whole picture. We have an opportunity to mitigate disasters before they occur.
- Sexed semen. If we have access to sexed semen, we can reduce the number of animals born that are not breeding stock, or maximise the number of male stock born that will be genetically geared to hit particular markets.
 - o Limits: cost effectiveness for commercial enterprises. Accuracy of semen testing.
- We need to continue building our relationship with countries we export to in order to explore viable alternatives and maintain the relationships that provide us with their goods.

11. What would industry participants need, or need to do, to take advantage of opportunities?

This is something those industry participants need to answer for you. I encourage you to reach out to all areas of the supply chain, and the end consumers for answers.

12. What are the barriers and/or constraints to pursuing opportunities?

The largest barrier to all of these opportunities are time, money, human welfare and animal welfare. We cannot allow animals or people to suffer in the name of finding an alternative to a trade that is not inhumane to begin with. Animals and people MUST be at the forefront of all decisions made in regard to any opportunities. Does it improve animal welfare? Does it improve quality of life?

To sum up, the ramifications of banning LE are deep, wide, and treacherous. Please do not ban Live Export by sea. Please stand up for farmers and agriculture instead.

Emily Stretch, Alex Coole, Grant Egerton Warburton, Emma Haynes and Zali Spencer

