



31st May 2023

Mr Phillip Glyde
Chair
Independent Panel

Via E-Mail: livesheep.phaseout@agriculture.gov.au

Phase out of live sheep exports by sea

Dear Mr Glyde

The PGA is a non-profit industry organisation established in 1907, which represents primary producers in both the pastoral and agricultural regions of Western Australia.

As a state farming organization, the PGA supports its membership in the operation of profitable farm businesses.

The PGA has historically supported live sheep export by sea and continues to do so.

The PGA provides this support because:

- Across specialist and mixed farms, livestock sales have been historically more important than wool revenue. Therefore, having access to a number of different markets will give significant value options given the variation in seasonal conditions and markets. Live export provides buying competition in the local marketplace for Western Australian sheep.
- Western Australia's sheep region has a unique climate which features a short and effective green pasture phase during winter followed by a rainless period of 6 to 9 months. Should an adverse season occur, the ability to off load a lot of sheep quickly and profitably via live export leads to excellent welfare outcomes for WA livestock.

Pastoralists & Graziers Association of Western Australia (Inc)



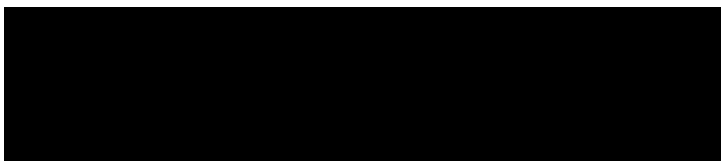
- The ability of Western Australian sheep farmers to turn off sheep to service the Middle East live export market can be essential to good animal welfare, pasture management, and maintaining on-farm profitability.
- The PGA also notes that many live export voyages from Fremantle Port carry mixed consignments of sheep and cattle, especially voyages to Turkey and Israel. Approximately 10% of all Australian live cattle exports depart from Fremantle on such voyages.
- If the live export of sheep by sea is phased out these ships will not carry enough cattle to make the journey profitable. Consequently, exports of live cattle from the southern rangelands will also suffer from a phase out of sheep live export by sea.
- There will be economic implications for Western Australia's regional and rural communities from a phase out of sheep live exports.
- According to Sheep Producers Australia the total Australian livestock export sector employs more than 10,000 people and the total value of the livestock export trade is worth ~\$2 billion.
- Besides Western Australian farms selling their livestock for export, other businesses derive an income from this trade, including on-farm contractors, shearers, road transporters, suppliers of hay/fodder to export yards and live export ships, freight companies, veterinary and feedlot service providers and fuel suppliers.
- It is estimated that over 2000 people are indirectly employed in these supporting businesses.
- Many of these people are employed as farm workers, or truck drivers, or stock hands who may not have the portable qualifications necessary to find alternative employment if the live export of sheep by sea is phased out.
- Western Australian sheep processing capacity is limited by labour availability, a small domestic market and a lack of new export markets for processed sheepmeat. Western Australian processors are already "booked-up" months in advance.
- Markets that take Australian livestock do not want boxed meat or nothing. These markets are already large consumers of Australian chilled and frozen meats. Boxed sheep meats are complementary to live export and not a direct replacement.
- Our trading partners seek live animals for genuine cultural and religious reasons but also for their food security needs.
- Australia improves the animal welfare standards in the countries it sends livestock to. No other country does this.
- If Australia ceases to supply livestock, other countries with lesser standards will supply it, to the detriment of improvement in animal welfare globally.
- Heat stress is no longer an adverse animal welfare issue on live export ships. It has been addressed.

- It seems likely that a phase out of live export of sheep by sea will see a change in the farm enterprise mix in Western Australia. There are a number of different scenarios that farmers could pursue to make up for the loss of sheep live export but each of them seems likely to result in a reduction in the merino sheep flock and its wool clip, almost all of which is exported to overseas buyers.
- If, as the RSPCA and other activist groups suggest, that live export is in terminal decline (based on falling export numbers) then a phase out is not required. The Commonwealth Government can simply wait for market forces to prevail.
- The loss of both sheep live export and a significant reduction in wool exports from Western Australia will result in a decrease in export income for the entire nation.

Further the PGA draws the attention of the Panel to the Voconiq report on Live Exports and The Australian Community 2019-2021 released in March 2022, the Australian Live Sheep Export Trade Analysis by Mecardo in May 2023 and the Factbook of Australian live sheep and sheepmeat exports by MLA in May 2023. These provide factual background and analysis to support the PGA submission.

In conclusion if the Commonwealth Government persists in a phase out of live sheep exports by sea, then it is incumbent on them not to leave any single Western Australian livestock producer worse off because of it.

Yours Faithfully



Mr Tony Seabrook

President

Pastoralists and Graziers Association of WA