

To Minister Watts,

I am a 60-year-old, fifth generation farmer, producing 6000 to 7000 lambs per year. I have lived just [REDACTED] all my life. I also sit on the [REDACTED]
I am writing asking the Minister to reconsider the government's decision relating to the stopping of the live sheep trade. I am asking that true leadership is shown and not just political leadership for the two are distinctly different.

To appreciate a full understanding of the live sheep trade we need to a brief history of why the industry started.

The most significant drought in my lifetime was in 1982 when almost all of eastern Australia and large parts of south-eastern Australia was affected. The farmland in our area was mostly sheep with a small amount of cropping. After an opening rain on Anzac Day, as a result, farmers got there hopes up. But as it basically didn't rain for the rest of the year, as late winter, then spring arrived there was no feed for the sheep and most farmers were in trouble, i.e., they were way overstocked.

As a result, sheep began to flood the market, so much so that by September of that year, sheep were being sent to market and producers were getting bills as the price received for the sale of the sheep, did not cover yard fees and levies. At this point the government stepped in and guaranteed farmers 50 cents per head, so they could be shot and dumped in a hole in the ground.

It was around this time in East Africa a famine was developing which ultimately led [REDACTED] to create LiveAid. This situation caused two major mind shifts.

The overstocking from the animals caused untold damage to the topsoil resulting in the dust storm that hit Melbourne February 27, 1983. From this politically opposed people, Labor Premier, [REDACTED] and country vice-president of the Liberal Party, and president of the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] got together and created Landcare. This is an organisation designed to improve the environment and has now spread worldwide. Because of this the world has become a better place.

Secondly it is morally stupid for one country to be dumping perfectly sound sheep while another is pleading for humanitarian aid to stay alive. I remember thinking that as I delivered our sheep to the [REDACTED] gravel pit in [REDACTED], to see them counted and shot, this was one of the saddest days of my life.

Someone else saw this as an opportunity and started shipping those sheep from Australia which were to be dumped to where they were needed. The obvious choice was the Middle East as they had significant port infrastructure to handle livestock ships. Many other advantages occurred in this area. Sheep had a long history as being part of their diet. Live sheep are often part of their religious and cultural history. Many areas do not have refrigeration, live killing is essential plus they get to utilize the whole animal. Finally, the people of the Middle East have a long history of developing trade deals and once established, honouring them. So basically, it's obvious to take a commodity that no one wanted and take that commodity to a place where everyone needed it. So began the live sheep trade.

Over the next 40 years the industry continued to improve. The quality of the animals travelling, the ships they travel on, the facilities they travel to and how they were processed. There has been an ongoing aim to improve the situation for all involved.

This leads us to the present situation. The people of the Middle East will still eat sheep, if Australia does not supply sheep, they will source their animals from somewhere else, most likely East Africa, Eastern Europe or Eastern Asia. If Australia stops supplying sheep will the people from the areas where the sheep will be sourced from suffer due to the raised price and demand of these animals? Also, will

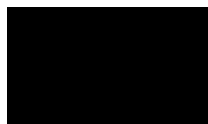
the animals receive better welfare outcomes if Australia leaves the market? I am sure the answer is no and no.

Political leadership comes to us in the form of the likes of Donald Trump, who will do anything to remain in power. Our politicians are developing policies to appease the East Coast Greens and Vegans to receive their votes, no matter the consequences for the people and animals of East Africa, Eastern Europe, and East Asia.

True leadership comes to us in the form of Nelson Mandela, one man who integrated a country and set an example for the rest of the world to follow.

Minister Watts you now have an opportunity to be Nelson Mandela and not Donald Trump. The live sheep trade will continue in the future whether or not Australia is included. Animal activists need to consider the animals of the world, not just Australia. As we have some of the best animal welfare standards in the world by remaining in the market, we become the benchmark of the live export trade. Our removal from the market will result in declining standards in the export industry.

Yours sincerely,



Graeme Maher

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