

Submission to Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Phase out of live sheep exports by sea by the Albanese Labor Government

We find it very disturbing that an Australian government chooses to shut down a high performing, valuable industry purely for political gain. It's downright despicable and quite frankly sickening and frightening! Clamoring to a minority in such a dramatic way is not wise and an absolute slap in the face to the many, many businesses and people involved in the agricultural industry.

Reasons why the live sheep export trade should stay and grow!

Australia has some of the highest animal welfare standards in the world. We have invested significantly in animal welfare all throughout the supply chain. We're not just exporting livestock overseas; we're sharing knowledge and years of research to improve global practices. Australia is the only country exporting live animals that regulates standards of animal welfare in other countries and invests in training and auditing to ensure those standards are met. If we lose market access, we can no longer have a positive global influence on animal welfare.

Australian livestock supports communities overseas by providing job opportunities and food security. The demand for live animals is a complex international issue based on socio economics, religion, food security, sovereignty and more. When we send sheep to countries in the Middle East, we help ensure families can have safe, quality sources of meat in the preferred way.

The live sheep export industry is an important contributor to Australian agriculture and regional economies, generating export income, underpinning prices and delivering solid returns for producers. Removing livestock export from the market options creates uncertainty for sheep farmers and their families.

Independent research on community sentiment by Voconiq does NOT show that most people want to ban the trade. It does show there are areas the industry should continue to address and provide information. Animal extremist groups would have you believe that the industry is not supported - this is incorrect. We have not lost our social licence!

A strong sheep industry contributes to a sustainable environment. The live sheep trade is essential for meeting carbon targets and managing land. Australia has a variable climate and in dry years the live export market provides an important option for sheep, improving animal welfare and looking after our environment.

The argument of replacement with more processing in Australia is flawed for many reasons particularly when we can't currently source labour required for existing processing facilities, and let's be honest it's mostly immigrant labour underpinning the majority of processing plant labour. Australia having both a strong boxed meat and live animal export industry is synergistic for many reasons including market access and the flock size.

Likely ramifications if the live sheep export trade is banned.

In Australia, reduced sheep prices will reduce investment into livestock enterprises, including infrastructure, management and husbandry. Overseas countries no longer have to meet Australia's strict regulations, potentially reducing animal welfare outcomes in-market. Australia is world-leading in live animal export welfare standards. If Australians are banned from live exporting sheep, we can no longer influence global standards.

Australian farmers produce food and fibre efficiently. Their businesses are set up to suit their climate and markets. Diversity in farming systems has build resilience and sustainability from both an economic and environmental perspective. If live export is banned, farmers increased their exposure to markets and poor seasonal conditions. This compromised their risk management, environmental impact and economic viability.

As farmers are likely to move away from sheep due to this external interference, regional communities in Australia will suffer:

- Loss of key businesses and services
- Reduced employment opportunities
- Poorer roads
- Smaller population for schools and sporting teams
- Increased uncertainty and angst, leading to deteriorating mental health.

Sheep are often grazed on parts of farms that aren't preferred for crop. This means that the land either won't be used or it will be used for cropping thus reducing diversity on-farm. This reduces environmental sustainability. Less sheep means poorer outcomes for Australia's overall carbon footprint. Poorer soil structure and carbon, increased use of chemicals and synthetic fertilizers.

In the short term, all processing facilities in WA are over supplied and they will look to increase their processing. Before long, this will turn into a lack of supply as farmers will likely move away from sheep altogether. Removing live export takes away critical mass to the whole industry so there is less sheep and competition. In a few years processors potentially won't have enough sheep supply.

Wool is a natural, renewable and biodegradable fibre. WA contributes approximately 20% of the national wool production and this will be significantly reduced as farmers in WA will likely run less sheep, particularly merinos which produce the wool fibre that is made into clothing. The wool industry contributes significantly to the economy, with the WA wool industry worth approximately \$800m alone. Without live export, the could dramatically reduce.

The live sheep export industry has done everything that has been asked of it and more. The entire supply chain has exceeded standards, benchmarks and regulations. If a legitimate industry can be shut down without any evidence to support the decision, what could be next? And what risk does this pose to food security for the Australian population?

Live export needs to stay and grow!

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the independent panel.

Greg & Jo Hayes

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