

20 May 2023

Dear Panel Chair and Panel members,

I welcome the opportunity afforded to the Australian community to provide feedback on the issue of live sheep export. I strongly commend the Government for committing to phasing out the live export of sheep, which I dearly hope will be the precursor to cessation of all live animal exports. The Labor Party's stance on live export and climate action were the two key reasons I voted for (and celebrated) the success of The Labor Party.

Like vast numbers of Australians of conscience, I have been utterly appalled by the atrocious suffering of sheep exported live by sea, which has consistently and inexcusably shown an absence of compassion and abysmal standards of animal welfare. It is shameful in the 21st century in a nation which sees itself as a progressive, advanced society to still turn a blind eye to this abhorrent treatment of animals. The standards we set and accept for animal welfare reflects the moral standing of us as Australians and it is unconscionable that these standards are still being cast aside with brutal indifference as an 'acceptable sacrifice' for commercial ends.

We have an unavoidable moral obligation to uphold standards in our society, which includes animal welfare. In the 21st century, our community's expectations have evolved, something which I and vast number of Australians have repeated to our elected representatives on this issue. I am of the steadfast view (along with the surging and ever-growing number of Australians) that these same representatives are in a privileged position to demonstrate leadership, to respect community expectations, to support moral advancement and uphold the very laws and regulations enacted by you. Our nation and our legacy must surely be framed and enriched not by commercial self-interest for the few, but by foresight, ethics, courage and our resolute commitment to higher and more compassionate standards of animal welfare.

Internationally, a growing number of countries have taken the bold and compassionate step to commit to banning live export. New Zealand and Brazil have recently declared the end of live export. England and Wales have foreshadowed a similar intent. These modern and evolved societies have recognised and taken action to end this most vile and repugnant 'business'. Australia's deliberate procrastination in following suit (and the missed opportunity to take the lead) has damaged our international reputation and credibility as being a progressive nation that takes animal welfare seriously. Furthermore, the long history of abysmal cruelty that underpins live export has greatly eroded the wider community's trust in the agricultural sector in our country.

The horrific and indefensible cruelty of live trade MUST end. It defies belief the suffering and terror that innocent and sentient animals are subjected to by callous commercial interest that treat them as money generating 'things'. When a ship catches fire or sinks, the harrowing and cataclysmic fear is something I cannot even begin to contemplate. Sheep are subjected to severe heat stress whilst at sea, which is categorically unacceptable. For those that manage to survive the journey, the barbaric fate that awaits them i.e. being subjected to incredible pain and stress by virtue of un-stunned slaughter practices that absolutely fail any and every modern standard of animal welfare.

After countless years of campaigning to see this inhumane trade end, the Australian community wants and deserves certainty of this phase out, backed by legislation, and implemented in this current term of Government. It is vital that the Government supports the farming community in this

transition, bringing them on board the journey to a more compassionate Australia whilst safeguarding their economic wellbeing.

It is therefore my sincerest appeal to the Panel to play a key role in helping to end this abhorrent and unjustifiable cruelty during the current Government's tenure. The overwhelming number of Australians are appalled by this cruelty and are ashamed that this has been allowed to continue right up to this point in our history.

Thank you.

Regards,

Leonard Fitzpatrick