

Phase out of live sheep exports by sea

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Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute my thoughts and feedback on the federal government's planned phase-out of live sheep exports by sea. I have tried to keep it as brief as possible, acknowledging that submissions from organisations such as **Animals Australia, Australian Alliance for Animals, RSPCA, and Vets Against Live Export** will supply the economic data, community opinion poll figures, and much more in-depth transition plans than I could.

I have been involved with the Fremantle-based, grassroots organisation, **Stop Live Exports** (People Against Cruelty in Animal Transport), formed in the mid 1990s to lobby against live animal exports, since 2003. In the last ten years (up to 17 May 2023), I have been employed by that organisation as the paid Campaign Manager. In that period, I have read virtually every bit of information – every industry report, every government report and review, every independently commissioned review/assessment, every media article, every interview, every investigation and exposé, and most social media posts of both industry and its supporters, and those of the reputable organisations that have condemned the trade. I have written dozens of blogs, opinion pieces and media commentary and been interviewed about the trade for print, radio and television media dozens of times. I have many hundreds of gigabytes of statistics, photos and videos, have monitored in real time and remotely, the ships loading in Fremantle, tracked them to and from their destinations, and liaised with those in the industry, those who used to be in the industry, senior investigative journalists, and other advocates and organisations both here and around the world, for all of that decade.

I recognise that the “if” and “why” is already decided, and the panel is seeking feedback on the “how” and “when” and any insight into impacts the timeframe and process may have, but it must be said that although those involved in and supporting the trade keep accusing this government of ignoring the science and industry’s “welfare improvements” to date (lower mortality rate), and of caving in to a minority inner city opinion, the government is, in fact, ending this trade based on science, statistics, historical evidence that it cannot be done humanely, and the opinion of not only a majority of Australians including those in Western Australia and rural areas, but also every single animal protection organisation on the planet *and* the historically conservative Australian Veterinary Association.

Safeguards

The phase-out period, regardless of length, should include the following safeguards:

- Extend the northern summer moratorium to cover **1 May to 31 October inclusive**.
- Allow **only a reduction** in the number of sheep exported each interim year – no increase.
- **Mandate Independent Observers** on all shipments of sheep to or through the Middle East.
- **Make the Independent Observers' full reports available** to the public on the website, as the 2018-2020 reports were, or at least available on request.
- **Penalise ASEL breaches**. Of the 41 voyages with sheep and Independent Observers aboard between April 2018 and June 2020, 75% had ASEL breaches – **see figure 1** – including, but not limited to:
 - ewes lambing on at least 10 voyages (shouldn't have been loaded)
 - sheep euthanised for dog bite wounds and shearing cuts (shouldn't have been loaded)
 - sheep loaded with poor body condition (shouldn't have been loaded)
 - insufficient space on at least five voyages
 - mouldy feed
 - dirty water
 - feed and water withheld on at least seven voyages.

And this was **while Independent Observers were watching**; one shudders to think what was happening from 2020 to 2022 when there were no IOs on board, or right now when very few are travelling with shipments.

Timeline: why the rush?

- The phase-out period should not extend beyond **31 December 2025**. **Legislation** must be introduced **this term** and an end date set **this term, with no sheep departing by sea from 1 January 2026**.
- **New Zealand** phased out a live animal trade by sea worth **five times** what the live sheep export trade from Australia is worth, in **two years**.
- **Global warming** is going to see **heat events** which have previously caused the deaths of thousands of sheep to perish and suffer on live export vessels become more frequent, and **weather become more unpredictable and harder to forecast**.
- The number of sheep exported from Australia has decreased from **6.25 million in 2001** to **427,591** (by sea) **in 2022** (and a similar amount this year) – **see figure 2** – without the sheep industry collapsing. That averages out to a decrease of around 277,000 sheep each year. It's difficult to justify why ending the export of those last <500,000 sheep should take any longer than two to two and a half years, maximum.
- We currently have live export available to sheep producers in Western Australia and yet they are complaining that they are stuck with (reports vary

- from) 800 thousand to 1.8 million sheep excess to requirements. It seems that live export is not the golden bullet they would have us believe. If they can't offload the excess sheep *with* live export, then a swift transition to life without it should not be too painful, or at least, no more painful than the current situation. ***We are talking about less than 500 thousand sheep in a state with a flock of 12-14 million.***
- As the trade winds up, those employed within it will be seeking employment elsewhere. Good operators will get snapped up and the "less good" will be left to work in the diminishing live export industry – on-board stockpersons and vets, feedlot operators, transporters, loaders. ***It is in the best interests of those last sheep who leave Australia alive, to wind it up as quickly as possible.***
- A swift transition provides ***certainty*** for producers, for exporters, for importers, for transport operators, for feed growers/manufacturers, for feedlot operators, for shearers, for domestic processors who need to plan for the extra lambs/sheep for slaughter, and for the public, the majority of who support an end to the cruelty. Dragging it out is not beneficial to anyone, including the sheep.
- Industry asserts that 3,000 jobs will be lost as a result of ending the export of 500 thousand sheep. It's a ridiculous suggestion that 3,000 jobs are reliant on 500 thousand sheep and the people with those jobs would not be able to be gainfully employed producing, tending to, feeding, transporting, and shearing the other 12-14 million sheep in the state, not to mention the jobs in the slaughter industry that will no longer be exported with the sheep.
- **This article** (Al Arabiya 9 May 2023 'GCC gears up as Australia, New Zealand sheep export bans shake regional food security' reports on endeavours already happening in the Middle East (including Saudi Arabia which is currently seeking to recommence imports of live sheep from Australia) to achieve self-sufficiency in sheep production and release themselves from reliance on Australia and New Zealand

REPORT #	DEPART DATE	DURATION DAYS	VET	HEAT STRESS	ASEL COMPLIANT	ESCAPES COMPLIANT	LAMBING/ CALVING	SUFFICIENT SPACE	WOOL LENGTH COMPLIANT?	POOR FEED	POOR WATER	FEED DEPRIVATION	WATER DEPRIVATION
01	Apr 2018	29	YES	MILD-SEVERE	NO		LAMBING			YES			
02	May 2018	19	YES	YES	NO		PREG EWES						
03	May 2018	30	YES	SEVERE	NO		LAMBING			INSUFFICIENT			
04	May 2018	18	YES	YES	NO		LAMBING						
07	May 2018	30	YES	YES	NO								
08	May 2018	21	YES	YES	NO		LAMBING						
09	Jun 2018	21	YES	YES	UNSURE								
10	Jun 2018	22	YES	YES	UNSURE								YES
21	Sept 2018	24	YES	YES	NO		LAMBING			YES			
31	Nov 2018	16	YES	NO INFORMATION	NO						YES	YES	YES
32	Nov 2018	26	YES	YES	NO		LAMBING					YES	YES
36	Nov 2018	25	YES			NO							
47	Dec 2018	22	YES	YES	NO								
50	Dec 2018	21	YES	MILD	NO			NO					
57	Dec 2018	23	YES	YES	NO		LAMBING						
67	Jan 2019	18	YES	YES	NO								
70	Jan 2019	21	YES		NO					Fines, unpalatable		YES	
71	Jan 2019	24	YES		NO						Access blocked		
74	Feb 2019	16	YES	YES	NO		LAMBING						
76	Feb 2019	21	YES	YES - 21 DAYS	NO					INSUFFICIENT			
86	Feb 2019	21	YES	YES									
98	Mar 2019	20	YES	YES	NO	NO						YES	YES
99	Mar 2019	17	YES	YES	NO					YES			
105	Apr 2019	21	YES	YES	NO		LAMBING						
113	Apr 2019	21	NO		NO			NO					
117	Apr 2019	18	YES	MILD									
123	May 2019	21	YES	SEVERE									
127	May 2019	29	YES	YES									
133	May 2019	18	YES	SEVERE	NO								
189	Sept 2019	21	YES	YES	NO			NO					
193	Oct 2019	26	YES	YES	MAJOR							YES	YES
199	Oct 2019	23	YES	YES	NO					FINES			
200	Nov 2019	25	YES	YES	MAJOR					INACCESSIBLE			
206	Dec 2019	23	YES	YES	NO								YES
207	Dec 2019	26	YES	YES		NO							
211	Dec 2019	24	YES	YES	NO			NO		FINES		YES	
212	Jan 2020	23	YES	YES	NO			NO	NO				
213	Jan 2020	26	YES	YES	PROBABLY NOT								
216	Feb 2020	24	YES	YES	NO		LAMBING			FINES			
218	Mar 2020	20	YES	YES	NO					FINES			
219	Jun 2020	17	YES	YES	NO								
SHEEP ONLY													
SHEEP AND CATTLE													

Figure 1: All sheep voyages May 2018 to June 2020. Figures from Independent Observer Reports, DAFF website.

SHEEP BY SEA

2014: 1,189,892
2015: 2,014,516
2016: 1,775,321
2017: 1,845,272
2018: 1,143,508
2019: 1,076,994
2020: 777,798
2021: 552,957
2022: 427,591
2023: 279,864 (as of April 2023)

SHEEP BY AIR & SEA COMBINED

2000: 4,553,189
2001: 6,257,120
2002: 6,069,702
2003: 4,379,920
2004: 3,638,413
2005: 3,651,584
2006: 4,158,671
2007: 3,768,953
2008: 4,584,756
2009: 3,578,182
2010: 3,001,976
2011: 2,592,028
2012: 2,199,999
2013: 1,897,270
2014: 2,249,643
2015: 2,071,205
2016: 1,759,276
2017: 1,887,416
2018: 1,176,051
2019: 1,118,499
2020: 811,481
2021: 575,529
2022: 502,758
2023: 284,975 (as of 31 April 2023)

Figures: DAFF Reports to Parliament and All
Livestock Exports spreadsheets.

Figure 2 (not possible to acquire 'by sea' only figure prior to 2014)

END