

Dear Panel

Consistently since the first investigations into Australia's live-export industry, Australians and people worldwide have borne witness to the suffering and deaths of sheep aboard ships. Our country should have no part in continuing this trade. Ending the live export of sheep is long overdue. Tens of thousands of sheep have already died aboard ships, and many more will be subjected to suffering, abuse, pain, and potentially horrendous deaths the longer this trade is permitted to continue. The Labor government made a commitment, supported by the majority of Australians, to end the live export of sheep – which it must now fulfil and has promised that it will do.

New Zealand's landmark ban proves that ending this trade without delay is possible, and past investigations and reviews indicate that a **swift shutdown is necessary to prevent the prolonged suffering of animals**. I strongly urge Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and the Labor government to set Australia down a kinder path by ending the live export of sheep during this elected term and working towards a future without any live-animal export including cattle which should also be included in its future plans.

Cruelty is found in every corner of the live-export industry, and although the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System was put in place more than a decade ago, exporters and abattoirs still either don't understand the regulations or don't care about following them because there are no meaningful consequences for non-compliance.

I wholeheartedly support the Albanese government's commitment to ending the trade. They are even allocating over \$5 million in the budget to enact the phase-out. I want live sheep exports to end. After numerous incidents, tragedies at sea involving animals on live export ships, and subsequent inquiries into and reviews of the trade including the 2003 Keniry Review, 2011 Farmer Review, and 2018 McCarthy and Moss reviews, ending this trade is well overdue. The government has recognised the phase out will impact individuals, businesses and communities that rely on the trade. Government consideration of how and when to give effect to the phase out will be undertaken during this term of the Australian Parliament, with a view to informing an implementation plan, but we must also have a beginning of the phase out.

I strongly urge the government that as this vile trade has operated in secret for decades with unbelievable abuse of gentle sheep **this phase out MUST begin in this term of government**, probably being completed early in the following term of government. To protect sheep and ensure that this trade actually ends, a **legislated end date MUST also be determined in Parliament in this term of government**. This will ensure that regardless of which political party is in government that this trade is legislated to end.

The Australian community expects the phase-out of live sheep exports to begin as soon as possible. The government intends to implement the phase out of live sheep exports by sea in such a way as to provide certainty to industry, minimise disruption and maximise opportunities.

Richard Mussell the CEO RSPCA Australia says it is 'crucial' that legislation to shut down the industry be passed in this term of parliament to-

1. ensure it happens
2. give farmers certainty to transition to alternative markets
3. protect our international reputation- recent past exposes on the cruelty of live exports from Australia has tainted our image
4. reflect community concerns- in a recent poll 2 out of 3 Australians want an end to live export
5. the trade is unfixable due to inherent cruelty and an industry that cannot be regulated properly.

### General Comments

Legislation with a timeframe plan and BEGINNING the transition phase must be in this term of government. The first term of government must be the consultation, planning, legislation phase to end the industry and **a start of the phase out transition period in this term of government**. Because of the underlying ongoing inherent cruelty in this trade the phase out period must not be drawn out. The phase out to end the export of live sheep for slaughter

should take no more than a 2–3-year transition period. The reason being is that during this transition period gentle sheep will **still suffer** on these ships and in these imported countries. Disease and suffering of sheep due to heat stress and the poor conditions on board these ships will continue. The suffering doesn't end for those who survive the journey. Because there are virtually no laws protecting animals in the countries they're sold to, they're often subjected to abuse and methods of slaughter that are illegal in Australia.

A transition period of 2-3 years should be enough time to support farmers, establish alternative markets, many of these already exist, and finally end the live sheep export trade by sea. Strong global prices has led to a record increase in recent years. The long-term global outlook for chilled sheep meat is strong, supported by **growing** global demand. The value of Australian sheep production for the frozen meat trade increased from \$3.4 billion in 2010–11 to \$4.5 billion in 2021–22.

Minister Watt says there are significant opportunities for WA sheep producers outside of live sheep export. The government has already been working hard to open up new markets for boxed sheep meat, including in the United Kingdom, India and potentially the European Union. The government is already supporting sheep farmers to transition to chilled meat markets. Processing facilities should also be planned for to accommodate an increased frozen meat market. Years ago every town had an abattoir but due to the live sheep export trade operating over the years many abattoirs closed down. The government is aware that financial investment to build more regional abattoirs in WA and reopen the closed abattoirs will provide more jobs in regional Australia. Local meat processing facilities for boxing the meat with the workers to match will also need to be established as part of the preparation plan to end the live sheep export trade.

Decades of abuse and failings to afford animals in the live export trade the most basic protections has been a taint on the image of Australia on the international stage. For such a developed country we have allowed monetary gain to be prioritised over the suffering of innocent animals. Our past governments, regulators, exporters, farmers and the industry as a whole have turned a blind eye to this suffering. The public were completely unaware of this condoned cruelty. I thank those who had the courage to film this suffering, to uncover the filth of this industry and expose the failings to regulate the industry. The abuse and cruelty of gentle sheep in the live export trade must end as soon as possible and must not be dragged out. All our animals should be killed in Australia under Australian laws, so the live sheep export trade must end.

I wholeheartedly support farmers in receiving any government support to help them during this transition phase. This may be establishing new markets through contacts and could mean financial support. Most Australians understand that this is difficult for farmers and financial support will be needed. Australians are also aware the millions and millions of taxpayer money that has already been wasted on review after review with recommendations that were never adopted in full like restricted ban periods and trying to fix an unfixable industry because supply chains had failed to enforce proper animal welfare standards. Overseas slaughter of our Australian exported animals cannot be regulated properly to ensure our standards of humane slaughter – that is the stunning of animals so that they are not conscious. Australian animals in exported countries are treated brutally at point of slaughter. The sheep trade is inherently cruel as sheep still suffer heat stress at sea and painful un-stunned slaughter overseas.

When this trade ends this will positively impact Australia's international reputation as a fair and compassionate nation just like New Zealand's, who has ended all live animal export including all animals exported for slaughter and breeding. Defending the continuance of this trade undermines the public trust in Australia's agricultural sector.

### **How the government should phase out live sheep exports by sea**

The unavoidable reality of all live export and especially our sheep as they head to the Middle East is weeks of stressful unfamiliar surroundings including repeated handling by unfamiliar people, standing in their own faeces and urine, unfamiliar environments with loud noises, varied ventilation, high humidity, mistreatment and inhumane slaughter practices once they disembark at their destination.

As sheep suffer throughout the live export journey, which can take months (if animals are refused entry into ports due to disease), and welfare issues are cumulative and inherent across the whole supply chain, whilst the phase out continues the ban period must be **fully enforced** as recommended by McCarthy to spare gentle sheep suffering unavoidable heat stress- which is an added problem as sheep cannot regulate their body temperatures properly. The legacy left by the outgoing Morrison government was a blatant refusal to accept a **ban period covering May to October** which represents the entire Middle Eastern summer period indicated by McCarthy. Images of sheep

suffering unbelievable heat stress on these ships and in these countries- Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Red Sea is proof enough that the live sheep export trade is cruel. **Whilst the trade is phased out there must be a ban period in place from May to October every year to spare sheep suffering heat stress, so no live sheep export ships operate in that period to the Middle East.**

During the phase out period I recommend that reduced stocking densities on ships must be maintained as well as mandatory Independent Observers (IO) and Vets on every ship voyage. Sheep must have satisfactory access to water and feed and adequate ventilation is to be provided on these ships due to extreme heat. A properly stringently regulated supply chain authority must be based in these overseas imported countries to ensure that Australian sheep are not tied on roof racks or put into car boots, or sold on social media, or slaughtered with no stunning in the streets but slaughtered **only** in approved slaughterhouses where stunning procedures are in place. These slaughterhouses must be the only legal premises where our animals should and must be killed.

The phase out will impact exporters, farmers and other businesses across the supply chain and financial support and adjustment options for those impacted by the phase out must be provided which Australians will support.

#### **The timeframe to implement the phase- out**

***We must legislate the end date as soon as possible in this term of government. Not only do we risk the end of the trade being indefinitely delayed and leaving thousands more sheep to suffer unnecessarily, but Australian farmers will miss out on the certainty they need to make the change and seize market opportunities that are available now. Legislation in Parliament with a definitive end date ensures that it will happen, regardless even if a Liberal/National government follows. Otherwise without the legislated date ending this trade all the good work by a Labor government could be overturned by a less compassionate government.***

The Government has already made it clear that they are committed and the phase out will go ahead, which I thoroughly support and commend the Labor government for this positive action to finally end this cruelty.

**Legislate an end date in this term of Parliament to provide certainty for farmers and the public. We cannot further damage our international reputation and subject countless more sheep to this unacceptable risk. The phase out must begin and end as soon as possible. New Zealand is a model for ending the live animal export trade in its entirety. A 2–3-year transition phase out period should be adequate when the government is already starting to build alternative markets in the frozen sheep meat trade.**

Your sincerely

Katie Wynter