

For the attention of the Phase Out of Live Sheep Exports by Sea Panel

I am a born and bred, tax-paying South Australian determined to see an end to the horrific live export trade of sheep and cattle, and wholeheartedly support the government's decision to phase out the shipping of sheep overseas.

I have been a teacher in adult education for over 30 years and have been working in the tertiary sector for nearly twelve. I have a PhD in Medicine (Psychiatry) from the University of Adelaide and support the activities of non-government organisations and volunteer community groups in raising public awareness of social justice issues. Indeed, as a higher degree researcher in the field of mental illness, I see our treatment of animals as the frontline of our behaviour towards any disadvantaged and vulnerable group. For nearly 20 years, I have taken part in protests on the steps of Parliament, met with state and federal ministers and senators, and written numerous letters to previous Prime Ministers and Department of Agriculture Ministers calling for a ban on this shameful and pernicious trade that reeks of misery and death.

I attended the recent online webinar with the Panel and take issue with the Panel's statement that the Albanese Labor government does not intend to implement the phase-out during the current term. It is imperative that this government commits to commencing and overseeing the cessation of live sheep export while still in office and that the phase-out be short in duration. A clear end-date must be fixed to take effect within the Albanese government's present term. A delayed and protracted process only runs the risk of being subject to industry interference and dilution in scope. I do not wish to watch yet another graphic exposé of the appalling conditions animals such as sheep are forced to endure on ship, and neither do I wish to view footage of the abhorrent torture they suffer on arrival because of the government dragging its feet.

I was also dismayed in answer to my question to the Panel regarding the role of ethics, and not only economic considerations in regard to the phase-out, that the speaker only referred to environmental matters, namely being seen to be 'green', and appeared to refuse to acknowledge the overwhelming community objection to live animal export – surely, the very motive for the government's action – being the patent and horrific cruelty that is inherent to this trade which has outraged Australians around the country.

This objectionable business should have been shut down years ago, indeed decades ago. The live animal export industry has shown time after time that it has been an abject failure in ensuring animal welfare standards and practices are followed from one end of the supply chain to the other. The supposed regulatory mechanisms this craven industry continues to invoke are a contemptible travesty, and its duplicitous reassurances with the complicity of the Department of Agriculture only further undermine any confidence the Australian public can have in government while this trade continues.

I personally look forward to the day when the entire live animal export industry is consigned to the junkyard history reserves for the most egregious purveyors of squalor and lies, and see the imminent cessation of the live export of sheep as the start to the inevitable demise of this sordid trade.

In closing, I appreciate the opportunity to contribute a submission to the Panel and trust it will put the wellbeing of animals ahead of political prevarication.

Dr Keith Smith

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