

## Submission to the liveexport panel

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**Farmer**



### 1 Mechanisim

The fairest mechanism to phase out the liveexport by sea is to build up the WA sheep industry into a thriving growing export powerhouse. We will know that this has been achieved as WA sheep prices will be able to sustain parity with the east coast. This way the sheep industry can continue to invest in productivity, environmental and animal welfare improvements. The liveexport industry can then be rebranded as an important foreign aid mechanism whereby our leading animal welfare is exported to the world.

### 2 Timeframe

The beauty of this approach is that we don't need to set an end date as the WA sheep industry will be in such great shape that we will be able to support the government's efforts to export animal welfare to the world. Under this timeframe producers and supporting supply chain members will have the confidence to make long-term investments to improve the industry.

### Impact and adjustment

If the government uses an industry supporting mechanism then our sheep business will thrive allowing us to invest in our business, environmental programs and our community. If the government simply seeks to ban a legal world leading trade without building the WA industry into the future, there will be serious negative consequences.

My major concern is our ability to meet our animal welfare quality assurance program requirements. I also have grave concerns for animal welfare and environmental management for the state as a whole if WA loses the ability to destock large numbers of stock in a short period of time when we experience a poor season. Currently the mere announcement of a ban has caused a crisis of confidence among WA producers. This combined with a late break in many sheep growing areas makes it impossible to move store animals anywhere at the moment because no one has the confidence to take them on. The store lambs that I have on the market currently have not attracted any interest, other pregnant ewes that I could have used to destock are priced so low that there is no value gained by such a trade. With limited labor I must maintain these animals until later in the spring where I can attempt to move some of them on. This is a risky proposition given excess feed costs, low livestock prices and the difficulty of getting animals into local processors.

The proposed ban would have devastating consequences for the future state of the WA environment. Climate change, dryland salinity and other forms of land degradation would be adversely impacted without a strong WA sheep industry. Productivity and animal welfare requirements for sheep production make the growing of deep-rooted perennial pastures, shrubs and trees a future requirement. This investment won't happen without a strong sheep industry in WA.

By supporting the WA sheep industry, the government will ensure that employment prospects and diversity remains in our rural communities. Many crop only businesses don't employ that extra labor unit that is required for sheep operations.

As a mixed farmer my concern also extends into the grain growing business. If government intervention adversely impacts sheep prices there will be a further gravitation of mixed farms to cropping. Our CBH storage and handling will come under immense pressure and will not handle the extra tonnages coming from displaced livestock hectares. This will result in the sort of shipping delays that will adversely impact local basis price for grains and the profitability of grain farming systems. Another major problem for grains comes with the impact on sustainable rotations with legume grain crops that have significant markets in local livestock production. Additionally, any off specification cereal grains will have limited value without strong interest from the sheep industry.

We cannot expect markets to just transition to chilled or frozen mutton when their preference is for the secure food option of fresh. These are sensitive markets, and we risk upsetting these important trading partners. Long-term support from the government to develop competition in the marketplace is required. This will take many decades and investment from government in long term improvements.

Covid, labour shortages and government interference have had a major impact on the mental stress endured by farmers. Farmers are more than twice as likely to take their own life than regular Australians. Surely this crisis needs some special consideration before the government commits to damaging policies. It is hard to stay positive and contribute to my industry when we are so brutally attacked by noisy minorities and we feel betrayed when the government sides with them.

### **Opportunities**

The whole economy benefits from a strong sheep industry, from the grass roots community sport to local supporting businesses. Having more people employed in these rural areas in the sheep industry is critical to our national identity. The positive impact from developing into an export powerhouse will flow through to the rest of the nation.

The major impediment to the WA sheep industry becoming a growing export powerhouse is government interference in our markets. Our markets should be protected by a strong supporting relationship with a government that does not fall victim to the influence of a minority of activists. A government that always stands up against this noisy minority will have the backing of the agricultural industry.