

To:

The Independent Panel
Phase out of live sheep exports by sea
Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute feedback about the Australian Government's plan to phase out live sheep exports by sea. The Government is to be commended for committing to phasing out this practice. However, it needs to be expedited rather than delayed until after the next election.

This submission responds to the following Terms of Reference:

- the timeframe to implement the phase out
- support and adjustment options for those impacted by the phase out
- opportunities – options to expand export of plant-based foods
- other matters as appropriate

The timeframe to implement the phase out.

Please do not delay commencing the phase out of live sheep exports until after the next election. The more delays occur, the longer sheep will continue to suffer. The live export trade is cruel and a phase out should begin without delay. The welfare and rights of animals to be free from cruelty should outweigh concerns about financial sustainability. Even the recently revised Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL) fail to protect animals from cruel treatment during live export. For example, the minimum pen space for export by sea still does not allow a sheep to lie down.¹ Once the animals arrive in another jurisdiction it has been documented that they can be treated even more cruelly in abattoirs that do not even meet Australian standards. The slaughter of animals in the street without prior stunning is also common in some countries. I have personally witnessed the aftermath of a mass slaughter of sheep during a religious festival in a Middle Eastern country. The bodies of slaughtered sheep were strewn over a vacant lot in a city suburb and the gutters were filled with congealed blood. In the same city I witnessed a beautiful, desperately struggling, baby goat slaughtered in a suburban street with a knife and no stunning. These were sights I will never be able to unsee.

Support and adjustment options for those impacted by the phase out – plant-based food production.

Please encourage and support farmers currently raising livestock for live export to change to cruelty-free, plant-based, food production.

Please assist in the creation of new factories that produce plant-based foods that are much healthier than animal meat and more environmentally sustainable resulting in less greenhouse emissions. Help

¹ *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock 3.2*, p82 available at <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/export/controlled-goods/live-animals/livestock/australian-standards-livestock> (accessed 31/5/2023).

create a better, kinder, healthier, more ethical world that does not rely on the slaughter of animals for food.

Opportunities – expand plant-based food exports.

Support opportunities for farmers to export plant-based food and proactively seek out overseas markets that will import Australian plant-based foods. Support the overseas marketing of Australian plant-based foods.

Other matters:

The example of New Zealand.

Please look to the example of New Zealand which, as of 30 April 2023, has now banned live export of livestock (sheep, cattle, deer, and goats) by sea.² The export of live animals for slaughter was already prohibited.³ Further restrictions on export by air have been introduced to protect New Zealand's trade reputation.⁴ Hopefully more restrictions will follow to phase out remaining exemptions.

Australia as an international pariah in the animal welfare stakes.

There is clearly a need in Australia for better national animal welfare regulation. Australia compares poorly overall with all European countries, New Zealand, India, Malaysia, and Mexico on the international Animal Protection Index that assesses animal welfare standards.⁵

It is indeed shameful to see that Australia is the worst animal welfare performer, together with Belarus, on the Voiceless Animal Cruelty Index (VACI).⁶

Live export of all animals is cruel, both on the journey and at the destination. Please expedite the phase out of the live export of sheep by sea from Australia. Please also commit to phasing out the live export of all animals by sea and by air from this country.

Thank you for considering my views.

Mary Ann Gourlay

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31 May 2023

² See <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/export/animals/live-animals-including-livestock/requirement-documents-for-exporting-live-animals/animal-welfare-export-certificates/restrictions-on-exporting-livestock/> (accessed 31/5/2023).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ See <https://api.worldanimalprotection.org/country/australia> (accessed 31/5/2023).

⁶ See <https://tinyurl.com/5c2bzrjz> (accessed 31/5/2023).