

## SUBMISSION RE PHASE-OUT OF LIVE SHEEP EXPORT BY SEA

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on this important issue.

I wish to see live sheep export phased out as soon as possible, with an end date legislated within the current term of parliament.

I live on a farm and I have worked with animals for 70 years and I would never subject a sentient creature to a gruelling and unnatural sea voyage under any circumstances. As a member of a farming community, I understand the travails of farming and I comprehend that a phase-out is necessary to allow for adjustments.

But I must say that farmers in this sector have willingly participated in an industry too likely to involve cruelty, that they must have known they have never had a social licence for this trade and that, therefore, it could not last and that they needed to prepare for this phase-out.

The longer it drags on, the more sheep will suffer. I commend the Albanese Government for its commitment to ending the trade. However, many people voted to elect this government because of this promise and expected it to take place during the current term of government. Therefore, it is morally beholden on the Government to fulfil that expectation, especially as the enactment in the next term lacks certainty in case Labor is not re-elected.

No one wishes to see people deprived of their livelihoods. The consultation panel has been assured by the Western Australian meat processing industry that they are confident of a market for the mutton product that is typical of live-export stock. This would facilitate a transition to domestic slaughter to help farmers exit the live export industry.

Domestic processing could provide increased business opportunities in this sector, with a possible demand for new abattoirs. I understand it has been suggested abattoirs could run double shifts to handle backlogs. Also that Government could assist with streamlining the visa system if numbers of Australian process workers are insufficient.

We hear much about protecting the mental health of farmers, but what about the mental health of a greater number of people who are painfully conscious of the unconscionable suffering of the animals and would find it unbearable to endure a long, drawn-out process of phase-out?

There have been too many ESCAS breaches to be able to say the system has been a success. Most improvements in the industry have been prompted by catastrophic welfare disasters, the courage of whistleblowers, agitation from animal welfare groups and public outrage. The industry cannot be held up as a paragon of ethical self-regulation and does not deserve to continue any longer than is absolutely necessary.

No matter how well regulated the system is, the horrors of unstunned slaughter and callous, incompetent handling in destination countries, coupled with the unacceptable conditions of a long sea voyage in the heat, are unavoidable.

Parliament must legislate an end date soon, within this term, as it will give the industry certainty and bring relief to these innocent, gentle creatures and the people who care about them. It will also improve our moral standing on the international stage. There was a time

when our products were held in high regard for their green and ethical credentials. There was a time when I was proud to be Australian because of our progressive principles. No longer. Bringing this traffic to an end in the near future will improve our international standing. We are lagging so far behind nations such as New Zealand and Brazil and it is a matter of shame that we are not banning export of all species.

I am disappointed that the survey questions, the membership of the panel and the tenor of the panel sessions have been all about the suffering of farmers and not about the suffering of helpless animals who have no choice. Clearly, the merits of the trade have a bearing on when the trade ends. It is wrong, has always been wrong and will always be wrong.

Live export is one of the heartless manifestations of extractive capitalism. It is mining life forms, plundering them for profit. It must end during this term of government.

Mary Forbes

