

Dear Panel

RSPCA Australia has argued a domestic journey was better for an animal than the live export journey. Livestock should be slaughtered as close as possible to the point of production to avoid or minimise the inherent risks associated with their transport. The trade in live sheep from Australia to the Middle East requires transporting thousands of sheep over thousands of kilometres on arduous journeys which can last several weeks, could not be further from this principle.

I thank the Panel for the opportunity to comment on the end of the live sheep export trade.

The Government have already made it clear that they are committed and the phase out will go ahead. I thank them for their commitment and for being a government that finally listened to the people. My submission therefore focuses on how and when I would like to see a phase out.

WHEN is the Phase out

Setting an end date in this term of Parliament is vital to ensuring the phase out occurs, so as to avoid prolonged uncertainty for Australian farmers, and our international reputation sinking even lower because of a continuing live sheep export trade. It would also subject countless more sheep to this unacceptable cruel risk of suffering on these long-exported ship journeys as well as suffering in these imported countries.

If it is not legislated, the end of this trade will not be secured, and if a returning Coalition government occurs, after the next election, they would undo all the good work that the Labor government had initiated. So it is imperative the end of the live sheep trade is legislated in this term of government. The live sheep export trade belongs in the past. There are new emerging markets with a very positive outlook that will yield profits for sheep farmers with a strong future for global sheep meat consumption. These profits would also flow onto the government as well.

New Zealand banned live export of sheep following a 2003 disaster when 5,000 sheep died on a ship bound for Saudi Arabia. It was legislated with a transition period to follow and the export of live animals for slaughter in **2007 ended because of concerns for animal welfare. It took 4 years.**

The Australian electorate are aware of the timeline of tragedy that has continued to exist in the live sheep export trade for decades. In one year alone the proof listed below shows that this industry has condoned the continued suffering of sheep and has refused to change the way it treats and exports sheep. The Liberal/National government at the time refused to bring the industry to account. In one year alone a summary of repeated failures by the government to regulate this industry properly.

8 April 2018 shocking footage of sheep suffering on board a long-haul live export journey aired on *60 Minutes*, after being captured by a brave whistle-blower.

17 April 2018– While the Department of Agriculture failed to respond to the footage of cruelty from on board the Awassi Express, another vessel, the MV Al Messilah arrived in Fremantle to commence its next journey. This is following the MV Maysora setting sail the week prior. At the same time, more horrific footage of animal cruelty is released from an Australian Government approved abattoir in Qatar.

22 April 2018 –Conditions on board the MV Maysora are reported by WA government officials who boarded the ship with a warrant after being refused access by the live export company. They find sheep in overcrowded conditions without clear access to food and water, contaminated water troughs and dead sheep already visible – all prior to the ship actually departing.

3 May 2018 –The Labor Party pledges to end live sheep export if they are to win the 2019 federal election.

7 May 2018 –A scientific review by the Australian Veterinary Association into live sheep exports is released, and concludes that voyages from May to October, during the hottest time of the year in the Middle East, should not continue given the high risk of suffering and death for sheep.

10 May 2018 –Senators Lee Rhiannon and Derryn Hinch jointly introduce a Bill in the Senate to phase out live sheep exports.

14 June 2018 – Animals Australia takes legal action challenging the legality of the Department of Agriculture's decision to continue issuing export permits despite the incontrovertible evidence of animal suffering.

22 June 2018 – Emanuel Exports, the company responsible for the Awassi Express shipment, has its export licence suspended by the Department of Agriculture.

27 June 2018 – **A motion is passed in the Senate** calling for the Government to legislate for an orderly phase-out of the live sheep export trade.

10 July 2018 – EMS Rural Exports, a company closely affiliated with the disgraced Emanuel Exports applies to export 60,000 sheep.

12 July 2018 – EMS Rural Exports has its licence suspended by the Department of Agriculture.

22 August 2018 – Following its suspension, Emanuel Exports has its export license cancelled by the Dept of Agriculture.

18 September 2018 – The MV Maysora is allowed to sail with 30,000 sheep, despite the prior concerns about conditions on the ship, and the continued risk of heat stress in the Middle Eastern summer.

12 October 2018 – The Dept of Agriculture releases a notice to relax stocking density restrictions put in place in July – once again, ignoring the science and capitulating to industry demands.

18 October 2018 – Yet another live export company, closely associated to Emanuel Exports, is granted an export licence despite its parent company's horrific track record on animal welfare.

31 October 2018 – The Government's review into the culture and capability of the Department of Agriculture is released. The Moss Review identifies conflicting responsibilities, systemic neglect of animal welfare, and recommends the establishment of an independent Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports. The Liberal/National government had failed our exported animals and 'turned a blind eye' to their suffering instead supporting the industry to continue.

29 November 2018 – The first Independent Observer (IO) report from on board a live export ship is released and states that heat stress on board was 'unavoidable', despite the ship complying with the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL).

4 December 2018 – The ALEC announce the industry will be self-imposing a moratorium on live sheep exports to the Middle East from June to August 2019, in a desperate attempt to salvage the industry's shattered social license and pre-empt the recommendations of the Government's Heat Stress Risk Assessment Review.

13 December 2018 – The long-awaited draft report from the Heat Stress Risk Assessment Review is released, making preliminary recommendations that will lead to the likely end of the Middle Eastern summer trade. Because this is a snapshot only of one year in the live sheep export trade, there must be no hesitation in legislating an end date in this term of government.

Of note, in May 2018 **Senators Lee Rhiannon and Derryn Hinch jointly introduced a Bill** in the Senate to phase out live sheep exports. That was 5 years ago, and nothing has been done. In Australia the Live Animal Export Prohibition (Ending Cruelty) Bill 2019 has already passed in the Senate. It is time that the live sheep export trade be legislated in Parliament with a clear end date very soon. This is absolutely essential to guarantee it happens with no procrastination.

There is no reason why with a supportive crossbench and many Independent Members of Parliament that this piece of legislation and a **Bill to end live sheep export should and must be passed within the next year**. Of course the consultation and planning phase with support by the government will continue to gradually **transition farmers over to alternative markets occurring over the next few years. The transition process should be completed soon after 2025.**

New Zealand achieved this goal and Australia can also. During the phase out period this will allow enough time to establish appropriate infrastructure to support a chilled meat market- enough abattoirs and staff, transport lines and routes, haulage methods to transport sheep to Australian abattoirs, factories and staff to pack chilled meat products and transport lines of chilled meat to imported countries. **The phase out must begin in this current term of government and be as short as possible. Every day of delay sheep will continue to suffer on lengthy voyages and in these imported countries where they are slaughtered cruelly.**

HOW is the Phase out

There will be more jobs made available in regional WA when the live sheep export trade ends.

1. The Government is encouraged to establish an effective and efficient policy around labour, and more importantly around migrant labour who will be needed to operate the increased set up of the processing facilities. Obtaining sufficient labour to meet the sudden demand of processing more sheep now on shore must be planned in advance. Workers need to be sourced that are reliable and skilled enough to achieve humane slaughter standards for animals. If sufficient Australian workers cannot be found, overseas visa workers may need to be sourced.
2. Ending live sheep exports will mean a transition to frozen meat markets. More regional abattoirs will need to be established especially in Western Australia where the majority of sheep farmers are located. This alone will provide more jobs in the building trade to build new facilities and/or recommission old abattoirs that will need to be renovated to meet the demand.
3. The Government is encouraged to get feedback from all farmers (especially in WA) as to where the best locations should be to service the majority of sheep farmers. This would help to restrict the transport distances and costs for farmers. It would also minimise sheep stress whilst sheep are transported on trucks to regional Australian abattoirs. This adds to improved animal welfare standards.
4. The government needs to consider that more inspectors will need to be employed to ensure that abattoirs meet Australian animal welfare standards of appropriate humane slaughter involving stunning procedures. RSPCA Australia's advice on training and employment of more inspectors could be sourced by the government and utilised whilst working closely with the government officials. RSPCA Australia have long advocated an end to this trade and their support along with other animal welfare entities could be provided.
5. Farmers say that banning live sheep would have both a financial and emotional impact. Currently they have four options — to sell their livestock to other farmers, sell to feedlots, sell to processors, or sell for live export. In Western Australia 30 per cent of sheep sold each year get sent to live export. This loss for farmers will need to be made up with sheep prices suffering some decline. However, the February 2023 statement from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry clearly states that 'the global outlook for sheep meat is positive in both developing and developed countries.' The OECD-FAO expects global sheep meat consumption to increase from 15.9 million tonnes (MT) in 2021 to 18.1 million tonnes in 2031- a 15% increase. By transitioning now to a chilled market, WA farmers will be able to take advantage of these booming markets to make up for any financial losses during the transition. To minimise financial loss even further and encourage a smooth transition the Department of Agriculture could work with farmers on a one-to-one basis to secure overseas frozen markets for their sheep exiting live export thereby supporting farmers on a staggered basis. A transition process of a few years only is recommended to avoid sheep continuing to suffer.

Conclusion

In 2011 I first became aware of the suffering of all animals involved in the live export trade on the 60 Minutes program, and I was horrified. How could our government and this industry permit this suffering? The answer was greed. Since then I have witnessed and campaigned for years to end this horrific trade. The horror all live exported animals endure begins in transport to these exported countries. Their miserable journey will end when they're hacked into pieces – sometimes while still conscious and often in full view of other animals who cry out in terror when they realise, they are next.

I congratulate the government for standing by their election promise. The Federal Government has reaffirmed their commitment to transitioning away from live sheep export to a better future, once and for all. Now, they've appointed an independent panel to consult on – not **if** – but **how** and **when** this transition should take place.

Specifically, the current consultation process will guide the Government's timeline and next steps in transitioning away from live sheep export. Most importantly right now, the Government must **legislate an end date** in this term of Parliament and end this trade for good. Australian farmers will have certainty, so that they can plan and make necessary changes for the future.

The Government has already made it clear that they are committed and the phase out will go ahead. As it does not include live sheep exports by air, I do caution the government that farmers do not take advantage of this loophole, and then all of a sudden, we have an exploding number of sheep being exported live by air to the Middle East

markets. Inhumane slaughter of our exported sheep to these overseas countries will still continue, and this must be avoided. I encourage the government to also wind down air transport of Australian sheep.

Although the phase out of live sheep export by sea is a complex issue that will impact farmers, businesses, our trading partners, and the communities that participate in the trade, we strongly urge the government to continue with what they promised the majority of the electorate who have wanted this for years now. Just because this is an entrenched industry and will have its challenges to overcome to move to a chilled meat market and other alternative markets within Australia itself, does not mean it cannot be done. Ending this trade has been a controversial discussion for years now, so it is time to end this trade once and for all.

The mere fact that this industry cannot be fixed and regulated properly has already cost the taxpayer and the government enormous amounts of money. The end of the live sheep export trade is right both morally, ethically and financially with its declining trade over the years with 2.6 million live sheep exported in 2011-12 to last year's export in 2022 of 502,758 sheep exported by sea and air combined. Animal welfare standards on these 'ships of death' are so poor many sheep die and are shovelled overboard and this is another financial loss to the industry.

It make sense to market sheep in Australia through our supply chains from farmer to truck or train to Australian abattoirs with compliance checks and inspectors in place to ensure animal welfare standards of proper care and slaughter are maintained. Then onto the processing facilities for chilled meat and then to the exported overseas markets.

The time has come to finally end the cruel live sheep export trade forever.

Your sincerely

Marie Humphries