

## SUBMISSION ON THE PHASING OUT OF LIVE SHEEP EXPORTS BY SEA

1. Following the public screening several years ago of whistle-blower footage revealing the sickening conditions sheep are subjected to on their long voyage to slaughter in the Middle East, there can be no question that the government has made the right decision in bringing this trade in abject cruelty and misery to an end.

### Potential mechanisms for phasing out the live sheep exports

2. In broad terms, the mechanism ought to, in order:
  - a. At the commencement of the process, **establish a body comprised of veterinarians, independent of the trade, and representatives from animal welfare organisations**, such as those from within Animals Australia (being the organisation which revealed the atrocities to the public) for the purpose of setting, and ensuring adherence to, the highest standards of animal welfare for the voyages that will take place over the phase-out period; and for such adherence to be overseen by this body.
  - b. **Establish a forum comprising the Panel, relevant stakeholders from the live export trade and the body referred to in 2.a. above**, at which the economic impact on the industry stakeholders may be ascertained and discussion and decision-making take place on the timeline and ways in which such impact can be minimised, including through government subsidies during and following the phase-out period, while ensuring compliance with the animal welfare standards as set by the body referred to.
  - c. **Establish a further body, charged with the task of overseeing the support of primary producers currently directly involved in the trade**, during the phase-out period and beyond, through government support, in the form of grants and favourable loans, possibly involving the establishment of facilities for valued-added meat products for export, and in liaising with the education sector, to make provision for free and subsidised education for those wishing to transition into other forms of employment.
  - d. Following these processes and being ever mindful of the very reason for the phasing out of the trade, have the Panel provide the Minister with its preferred options and associated costings, *emphasising* the importance of giving effect to the government's commitment to bring the trade to an end *as soon as possible* consistent with the government's further commitment to not end the trade during this current term.

### A suggested timeframe for the phasing-out

3. The NZ government has lead the way on bringing an end to live exports and, following a **two year transition period**, in 2008 banned the live export of *all* livestock for slaughter. Very recently, the NZ government extended the ban to cover all livestock regardless of the purpose of the export; again, following a two year period in which to phase out the trade. And so, it would undoubtably be worthwhile for the Panel to liaise with and receive advice from the NZ government on both the mechanism and timeline in phasing the trade out here in Australia.

4. While the Australian government has committed to the phase-out not taking place during this term of government, the process should start at the earliest opportunity, so that if the NZ example of two years' transition period is adopted, the phase-out period could come to its completion during the early part of the next government's term.
5. As already stated above, given the very purpose of the phasing-out of the trade - to bring an end to the extreme suffering experienced by countless many sheep - there is surely an obligation on all those responsible for giving effect to the government's decision, *to bring the trade to an end as soon as possible*, while complying with the time constraint set by the government.
6. For the industry to anticipate and adapt to a new order, the frequency of live export voyages must naturally taper off, either in a linear or exponential fashion. The forum referred to at 2.b. above would best provide for an informed discussion on just what this rate of decrease ought to be.

#### Potential ways to support the transition.

7. As proposed at paragraph 2. c. above, the impact of the transition can be ameliorated by providing government assistance in enabling the creation of processing facilities for the production of valued-added products and in the retraining of those whose livelihoods have depended on the live exports and who wish to move away from meat production altogether.
8. The answers to be provided to the open-ended 'consultation question' number 8, which probably ought to have been included under the Timeframe heading, will very likely paint a picture of great hardship, with respondents insisting that the transition will take 'a very long time', almost certainly longer than the 2-year period referred to above. Because of the central importance of animal welfare in this whole matter, any delay beyond that committed to by the government surely cannot be accommodated. NZ has already shown that a two-year transition period is very achievable.

#### Other matters

9. The Australian public was shocked, outraged and sickened when those images of gross cruelty inflicted upon those helpless sheep on board a floating hell were shown on television. And to think that this cruelty took place under the watch of a government committed to the live export trade and which insisted that all the necessary regulations were in place and being adhered to. Industry self-regulation never works. It is now time to commence the process of bringing this era of gross animal cruelty to an end.

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