

31 May 2023

Via email: Livesheep.phaseout@agriculture.gov.au

Dear panel members,

Re: RSPCA WA submission on the phase-out of live sheep export

I write on behalf of RSPCA WA to contribute to your public consultation on how and when Australia's phase-out of live sheep export should occur. This matter is pertinent to our charity given the majority of Australian sheep exported are from WA. It is also extremely important to our local, state-wide community and supporters.

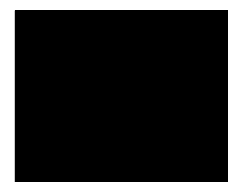
RSPCA WA has advocated for better animal welfare in West Australia (WA), since 1892. We are one of eight autonomous and independent RSPCA Member Societies that comprise the Australian RSPCA federation. RSPCA WA's mission is to prevent animal cruelty and improve the welfare of all animals by providing leadership and quality services to WA in collaboration with our partners and stakeholders. We have long engaged with government, industry, non-government organisations and the community to deliver on our mission. This includes collaborative and mutually respectful engagement with WA sheep producers, other live export supply chain stakeholders, and their respective state-based peak bodies.

RSPCA WA opposes the export of live food animals for immediate slaughter or further fattening because the welfare of animals used for food can be better protected by processing them locally, as close to the farmgate as possible. We support an end to live sheep export because it causes extremely poor welfare outcomes. Sheep welfare issues are inherent to the trade, especially during long voyages to overseas destinations and full conscious slaughter. Improvements in regulation have failed to improve these issues because sheep cannot physiologically tolerate the conditions of live export.

Importantly, we support the end of live sheep exports, not the demise of WA's sheep industry. RSPCA WA continues to work with the local sheep industry to improve animal welfare with increased use of pain relief and improved farm practices. The phase-out of live sheep export will assist this momentum and increase industry sustainability. Certainty on the end date and structural adjustment is urgently needed.

Community support in WA unequivocally favours a phase-out of live sheep export. Independent polling conducted earlier this month by market research company McCrindle, shows that 71% of West Australians support the Federal Government's

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current policy to phase-out live sheep exports from Australia by sea. This includes 72% of people in metropolitan WA and 69% of people in regional WA. The polling, conducted across a representative sample of 800 West Australians during the week of 8 May 2023, also shows that:

- 88% of West Australians think Government should support farmers and others in the supply chain to transition out of live sheep exports (including 89% in metro WA and 87% in regional WA).
- Over 75% of Western Australians think a phase out should occur in four years or less, while just 24% think it should take more than four years.

Therefore, we ask that the Panel please ensure that the welfare of Australian sheep is central to the advice it provides to the Australian Government on how and when the phase-out will occur. We ask that sheep welfare is not subordinated to the human and economic impacts of the phase-out. Accordingly, we endorse the recommendations lodged by the RSPCA Australia and its full submission on the specific mechanisms, timing, impacts and opportunities for the phase-out:

Recommendation 1: The Australian Government must implement the phase-out of live sheep export through legislation to ensure a mandatory mechanism to support the end of the trade.

Recommendation 2: The Australian Government must expand the Northern Summer Prohibition (to 1 May - 31 October inclusive) in the interim until the end date of Australia's live sheep trade.

Recommendation 3: The Australian Government must implement a declining annual cap on the number of sheep allowed to be exported in the interim until the end date.

Recommendation 4: The Australian Government must not permit any expansion or reinvigoration of live sheep market access in the interim until the end date.

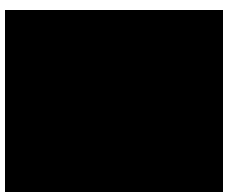
Recommendation 5: The Australian Government must reinforce regulatory compliance and enforcement measures to protect sheep welfare in the interim until the end date.

Recommendation 6: The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry must introduce mandatory independent third-party inspections prior to loading live sheep for export in the interim until the end date.

Recommendation 7: The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry must require that Independent Observers attend all live sheep export journeys from Australia in the interim until the end date.

Recommendation 8: The Australian Government must pass legislation in this Parliamentary term and before the 2025 election, to end Australia's live sheep export trade.

Recommendation 9: The Australian Government must ensure a short-term phase-out period of no longer than three years, from the passing of legislation, to avoid adverse animal welfare outcomes of a long-term phase-out.



Recommendation 10: The Australian Government must ensure that animal welfare remains a priority of Australia's live sheep phase out and is not subordinated to economics.

Recommendation 11: The Australian Government must mitigate any increased risk to sheep welfare in WA by allocating funding for an animal welfare response package to address any adverse sheep welfare impacts that may arise during the phase-out period.

Recommendation 12: The Australian Government must address the current processing limitations in WA as the highest priority to ensure sheep can be processed as close to the farm gate as possible.

Recommendation 13: The Australian Government must invest in road and transport infrastructure for the main arterials from WA to the eastern states to mitigate any animal welfare risks if increased road transport of sheep in Australia is a necessary interim solution.

Recommendation 14: The Australian Government must prioritise the review and update of the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for the Land Transport of Livestock (2012).

Recommendation 15: The Australian Government must encourage greater leadership from Australia's peak primary industry bodies to invest in the design and delivery of initiatives to support the mental health and well-being of Australian primary producers.

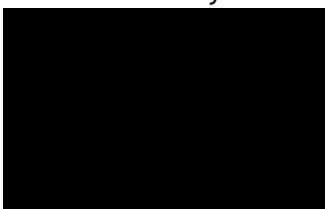
Recommendation 16: The Australian Government must incentivise the transition away from live sheep export to alternative markets as part of any structural adjustment package for primary producers.

Recommendation 17: The Australian Government must support the expansion of Australia's chilled and boxed meat trade as a more humane and sustainable alternative to live export.

Importantly, RSPCA WA believes these recommendations must be implemented in conjunction with one another, to avoid creating any unintended welfare issues within the West Australian sheep industry.

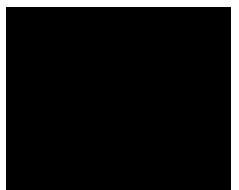
RSPCA WA welcomes the opportunity for further consultation and thanks the panel for your important work to date. We look forward to securing an end to live sheep export.

Yours sincerely



Ben Cave
Chief Executive Officer

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