

To the Live Sheep Exports Panel

My name is Val Threlfall and I grew up in Regional Victoria and have lived in regional areas around Australia. I have always had a love for animals and an interest in animal welfare. I studied Agriculture Science in the HSC 1970.

I thank you for the opportunity to express my opinion on Live Sheep Exports and address three areas of concern, the Time Frame, Animal Welfare and Australia's Reputation.

The Australian Labor Party came into government with the promise to Ban Live Sheep Exports. I believe the government should legislate now with a date to Ban Live Sheep Exports. It is imperative that Labor fulfils its public promise in its first term of government.

Why? It made a promise to the Australian voters. The longer the time frame the more the suffering of these animals. Professor Clive Phillips research on heat stress on sheep showed alarming findings of suffering. The death of 2,400 Australian sheep on a ship to the Middle East in 2017 shows the impact on these sheep. Heat and humidity place these sheep under unacceptable conditions.

I refer you to 60 Minutes Report, 18th April, 2018, which shows sheep on a ship experiencing shocking conditions that breach our animal and welfare legislation. You see them in pain, in fear and suffering. Horrifying and cruel conditions. Sadly, not much has changed. Please take the time to view this report as it's a factual account on the conditions these sheep are placed in on these ships.

The industry and government have deliberately placed these sheep at risk, harm and finally a terrible death that the industry has no control over in regard to welfare standards. Many of these sheep are slaughtered by overseas people that do not comply even with the OIE animal welfare standards.

The longer the time frame the more the risks and accidents. Exporting sheep in ships on long voyages can be full of risk. The Guardian reported on Monday 13 June, 2022, that 15,000 sheep drowned, 15,000, after a live sheep export ship sunk in Sudan. Those sheep, Australian sheep that perished were all thrown into the ocean. You can see that the Time Frame is very important so as to stop further deaths of sheep, 1,000s of death of sheep, pain, fear and suffering.

The Time Frame is NOW. The government needs to fulfil its promise to Australian people NOW.

I would now like to address Animal Welfare and Australia's Reputation.

As stated above there are lots of factual information, research, videos and photos showing the suffering of sheep involved in live exports. That evidence cannot be denied and sadly that evidence shows breaches in our animal and welfare legislation. The facts are there in black and white.

The RSPCA research poll in 2022 illustrates that live exports is unacceptable from an animal welfare view but also most Australians have opposed it for years and years. 2 in 3 people, no matter where they live, want the practice of live exports ended. Live exports of sheep as Professor Phillips has stated results in heat stress, many deaths in unacceptable numbers, poor handling conditions, stocking densities all of which result in pain and suffering. Sheep are placed in pens where they suffer. Sheep eat, drink, urinate and defecate in these pens as seen on 60 Minutes show, unacceptable conditions. They are subjected to slaughter that does not meet our animal welfare standards, when and if they survive their voyage.

In Australia's society where we are moving towards more ethical treatment of animals, the sheep industry's reputation can only be further damaged if exports of live sheep continue. The industry has experienced this type of damage when they used hormones in meat production.

Live sheep exports is seen as unacceptable by the majority of Australians. The suffering of sheep is obvious, there is no need for it.

Farmers have had plenty of time to adjust to the fact the we as Australians oppose Live Sheep Exports, it would only benefit them by having legislation now so they have a definite date and can plan for their futures. We should support farmers in this transition.

New Zealand has proven it can be done and done successfully. NZ banned live exports on the grounds of animal welfare, the distance involved in transporting animals and to protect their international reputation. Australia needs to do the same.

Australia only got a D in regard to its commitment to protect animal welfare legislation on a scale A to G, A being the highest. The World Animal Protection Index, a D.

As Dr Goodfellow of the RSPCA, 2020 noted, this is a wake up call for Australia to do more to protect Australia's international reputation and better protect our iconic wildlife and farm animals.

Perhaps we can start with the legislation on the ban on Live Sheep Exports.

I thank you for allowing me to express my concerns about the Time Frame for legislation, animal welfare and Australia's International reputation. A delay can only impact on the suffering of sheep, the reputation on the industry and Australia itself.

We need to maintain our Animal welfare standards, plus our reputation at home and internationally.

The Time Frame is now.

Val Threlfall. [REDACTED]