

As a long-standing merino-producing enterprise, we are totally opposed to the banning of the live export industry, as it underpins the economics of our enterprise. There can be no justification for banning this legal trade as it is continued to adapt and adopt better management of the industry as all plausible industries do as better technology and information becomes available to them.

It is totally concerning that in the light of the industry complying with SCAS and the moratorium as well as considerable investment in processing facilities in our key markets, that we chose to dictate, purely as a political maneuver, to turn our back on our long-term customers. These customers will simply not then choose to buy our product, in the way that we dictate to them that they should receive it. They will simply replace and are replacing our live sheep by procuring them from other countries.

It is very difficult, if not impossible, for the circumstances that the farmers find themselves in in Western Australia, to take those live markets away without causing irreparable damage to the sheep industry of Western Australia.

As a farming enterprise, we are very conscientious to adopt the best standards possible when it comes to animal welfare. We recently did a major renovation on our shearing shed, built a new set of state of the art sheep yards, have an ongoing tree planting program to create improved shelter for livestock, as well as a more eco-friendly farming environment. The commerce required to undertake these capital expenses is underpinned by the commerce provided to us by viable live sheep trade. If the ban is to be followed through on, this will mean a drastic reduction in sheep prices, to the point of not being viable. It will also create enormous stress and duress in times of poor seasons, which are unable to be predicted, and require the flexibility to sell off livestock quickly at a viable price. In previous seasons when we have experienced those circumstances, live export provided a lifeline to our business and meant our sheep left in good condition. Furthermore, our farm did not suffer excessive erosion from being unable to offload stock accordingly to the climatic conditions and feed on offer.

The hidden cost of a declining sheep flock is far-reaching. It will inevitably mean less investment for the livestock that remain, less investment in pastures that provide a healthy landscape and a more natural fertilizing of soils when a crop is grown. Legume clovers provide organic nitrogen and reduce the need to use excessive amounts of synthetic fertilizer to achieve a viable yield when paddocks are in crop. The livestock industry also provides a market for legume crops such as lupins which also naturally fix nitrogen to the soil. It will also mean a heavier reliance on a successful cropping season and markets. If that were to falter, it would lead to increased financial stress of many farming enterprises as well as an oversupply of markets which will adversely affect farmers who have already exited the sheep industry and rely entirely on cropping for their income.

It may also be worth noting, the major impact of a live export ban would be felt by the merino producer who are producing a renewable, ecofriendly, biodegradable fibre. It is beggars belief that anyone in this day and age cannot fully appreciate what merino wool has to offer. Compared to synthetic fibres, it is a far more environmentally friendly option.

A live export ban will inevitably lead to fewer people in our communities, which affects all facets of rural life. The practicalities of the industry mean businesses such as shearers need

as much work year-round as possible. Without live export, the shearing industry will become more seasonal and make life more difficult for career shearers. Without the market competition of live export competing and complimenting the local processing industry, it will make livestock production in this state very difficult to continue on a viable basis.