

**INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE PHASE-OUT OF
AUSTRALIAN LIVE SHEEP EXPORTS BY SEA ON NEW
SOUTH WALES**

Organisation: Australia Against Live Export (AALÉ)
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AUSTRALIA AGAINST LIVE EXPORTS

Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry on the Live Export Ban



To : Dear Committee Members,

20 August, 2024

Portfolio Committee No. 4 - Regional NSW
Legislative Council
Parliament of New South Wales
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Australia Against Live Exports (AALE) and our extensive network of supporters submit this document in response to the parliamentary inquiry into the impact of phasing out Australian live sheep exports by sea on New South Wales.

While we acknowledge the importance of considering the economic and social impacts on regional communities, we emphasise that the primary rationale for supporting the ban is the imperative to improve animal welfare standards.

We maintain that this ethical imperative outweighs economic concerns and that resources would be better allocated to supporting the transition rather than prolonging the debate.

The Necessity of the Live Export Ban: Prioritising Animal Welfare

The ethical case for banning live exports remains undeniable and must be the core focus of this discussion. Documented evidence shows that animals on live export vessels endure extreme conditions, including overcrowding, heat stress, and inadequate veterinary care. These conditions result in immense suffering and mortality.

As Tania Lawrence emphasised in a recent parliamentary hearing, "Australians expect and deserve a government that prioritises the humane treatment of animals." This sentiment is shared by a majority of the Australian public, including many in New South Wales.

The phase-out represents a significant positive step toward more humane treatment of livestock. While economic impacts are important considerations, they must be viewed as secondary to the ethical imperative of ending this cruel practice.

Economic Considerations for New South Wales

While we understand the committee's mandate to investigate the economic impact on NSW, we urge consideration of the following points:

- **Declining Industry:** As Tony Brightling noted in his article "Live Sheep Ban Through a Different Lens," the live sheep export trade to the Middle East is in terminal decline due to shifting market dynamics. Affluent Arabian Gulf States are moving towards Western-style food supply chains, reducing demand for traditional fresh meat markets.
- **Competitive Disadvantages:** Australia faces significant disadvantages compared to competitors like Sudan, Somalia, and Romania in supplying live sheep, including higher transport costs and stricter regulatory constraints.
- **Opportunity for Transition:** Rather than prolonging a declining industry, we advocate for redirecting resources towards facilitating a transition that provides robust support to farmers and industries in NSW to adapt to more sustainable and economically viable practices.

Successful Transitions: Case Studies

Several regions and countries have successfully transitioned away from live exports, demonstrating that such a shift can be beneficial both economically and in terms of animal welfare:

- **New Zealand:** After banning live exports for slaughter in 2003, New Zealand's meat export industry has thrived. The country has seen growth in its processed meat exports and has developed a reputation for high-quality, ethically produced meat products.
- **United Kingdom:** The UK's restrictions on live exports have led to increased investment in local abattoirs and meat processing facilities, creating jobs and adding value to the local economy while improving animal welfare standards.
- **Denmark:** The Danish pork industry successfully transitioned from live pig exports to processed meat exports, increasing the value of their products and improving their global reputation for animal welfare.

These examples illustrate that a transition away from live exports can lead to more sustainable and profitable agricultural practices while prioritising animal welfare.

Impact on Regional Communities and Potential Solutions

We acknowledge the inquiry's focus on the impact on regional NSW communities, including transport operators, fodder and grain producers, and local meat processors. We propose the following solutions:

- **Investment in Local Processing:** Redirect resources to develop and expand local meat processing facilities in NSW, creating jobs and retaining value within the state.
- **Alternative Markets:** Support NSW sheep producers in identifying and accessing alternative markets for their products, both domestically and internationally.

- **Diversification Support:** Provide assistance to farmers in diversifying their operations, potentially into areas such as wool production, cropping, or agritourism.
- **Skills Training:** Implement programs to retrain workers in affected industries for roles in expanding sectors of the agricultural economy.

Government Support and Compensation

We strongly advocate for the NSW Government to work with the Australian Government to provide compensation and support for affected farmers and businesses. This is crucial to ensure that the transition to alternative markets does not result in undue hardship. We recommend:

- Developing a comprehensive support package for affected farmers and businesses in NSW.
- Providing targeted financial assistance for transitioning to alternative business models.
- Investing in infrastructure and technology to support the growth of local processing and value-adding industries.
- Establishing a transition fund to compensate farmers for potential short-term losses as they adapt to new markets and practices.

Broader Benefits of the Phase-Out

We stress that the phase-out of live exports can lead to the development of more sustainable and ethical farming practices, which will ultimately benefit both the economy and society as a whole in the long term:

- **Enhanced Reputation:** Transitioning away from live exports will bolster Australia's reputation as a leader in ethical and sustainable agriculture, potentially opening up new premium markets.
- **Increased Value-Adding:** By processing animals domestically, NSW can capture more of the value chain, leading to increased economic activity and job creation in regional areas.
- **Innovation Stimulus:** The need to adapt to new markets can drive innovation in farming practices, processing technologies, and product development, positioning NSW's agricultural sector for future growth.
- **Alignment with Consumer Trends:** As consumers increasingly demand ethically produced products, this transition aligns NSW's agricultural sector with evolving market preferences.
- **Environmental Benefits:** Reducing long-distance animal transport can contribute to lowering the carbon footprint of the livestock industry, aligning with broader sustainability goals.

Australia Against Live Exports and our supporters urge the committee to consider the broader context of the live export ban, with animal welfare as the primary focus. While short-term economic challenges exist, the phase-out presents an opportunity for NSW to lead in developing a more ethical, sustainable, and ultimately more profitable agricultural sector.

We recommend that instead of questioning the necessity of the ban, the inquiry focus on how best to support those impacted by the transition. By reallocating resources from the live export trade to direct support measures and compensation, both the NSW and Australian governments can ensure a smoother transition and demonstrate their commitment to ethical governance, animal welfare, and the long-term prosperity of regional communities.

The time for debate is over. The focus now must be on implementing the ban effectively, supporting NSW's agricultural sector through this necessary transition, and positioning the state as a global leader in ethical and sustainable livestock practices.

References:

- Parliamentary Inquiry into the Impact of the Phase-out of Australian Live Sheep Exports by Sea on NSW, 2024(Media release - inquiry...).
- Tony Brightling, "Live Sheep Ban Through a Different Lens," Beef Central, 2024.
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Sincerely,

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Founder

Australia Against Live Exports

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