

Opening statement: Australian Livestock Export Corporation (LiveCorp)

Thank you Chair, for allowing me to make a short opening statement.

My name is Troy Setter. I'm the Chair of LiveCorp. I am joined by Wayne Collier LiveCorp's CEO.

The objects for which LiveCorp is established are:

(i) to promote:

(A) the humane handling and management of livestock throughout the export supply chain

(B) the export of Australian Livestock to overseas countries

(C) trade access in the interest of Licensed livestock exporters

(v) to promote, protect and further the interests of the Australian livestock export industry in any lawful manner.

LiveCorp does not engage in agri political activity or lobbying. We complete factual R&D and marketing and share the results of this work with stakeholders. LiveCorp is committed to providing transparent factual information.

The important role of livestock exports in providing markets for Australian producers, jobs for Australian workers and crucial food and fibre for our customers has been highlighted since we were here last.

The recent disruption of trade to Indonesia and Malaysia, for instance, created a singular focus from the department and industry, working together to minimise the impact on the northern cattle trade.

LiveCorp's connections with industry here and in Indonesia allowed us to play a significant role throughout the event – coordinating the industry's response, alongside ALEC and MLA, and providing technical advice and other information to the department, exporters, importers and producers.

Since the lifting of the suspension of several export facilities, we've been developing guidance on the assessment of skin blemishes, and assisting with planning for Indonesian delegations (including one which finished up in recent days).

Over the past year, we've been supporting Indonesia's efforts to manage foot and mouth disease (FMD) and lumpy skin disease (LSD) through an Australian Government grant. This has been very well received and reinforces the strong relationship between the two industries.

To date, we've approved 245,000 LSD vaccines for both Australian-bred and locally bred cattle.

Through the grant, we're also funding a project being run by the Indonesian cattle industry to provide information on LSD to smallholders and run vaccination training and events.

Back in Australia, El Nino has been declared and we're already seeing drier conditions. This is when live export comes into its own – allowing producers to de-stock to protect their land and the environment, and supporting competition in the marketplace.

Modelling in our recent economic analysis on live sheep exports estimated that closing the trade would see prices for Merino wethers drop around \$22 per head in normal times... but around \$37 per head in a period of high turn off, such as drought. We have recently seen WA producers getting offered as low as \$1 per head for sheep and reports of some Eastern Australian producers having no other option than shooting sheep.

With this dramatic fall in sheep prices compared to this time last year, we have seen Australian sheep are far more competitive in the international market.

Live sheep exports were 41% higher in 2022-23, compared to the previous year. This included Qatar getting back into the market, and Israel taking four times as many sheep as the previous year. There is good enquiry from other markets.

Over the same period, dairy cattle exports were up 11% and goat exports were up 237%. Beef cattle exports declined 8% due to Indonesian and Vietnamese market challenges that are now starting to recover, and the recent falls in the Australian cattle price is creating opportunities in these and new markets.

Part of LiveCorp's charter is to promote the export of livestock overseas, and we've helped to open two small air-export sheep markets this year – Papua New Guinea and Argentina.

Our other responsibilities include providing training in areas such as animal welfare and biosecurity. One example In Indonesia is the Livestock Export Program, which put more than 2,000 people through workshops and webinars in 2022-23.

Last time we appeared at Estimates, we were about to launch the latest report from our community sentiment project, from the third in a series of surveys of more than 4,000 Australians each time.

The report shows growing confidence in the industry across the surveys, including its animal welfare performance. For instance, around three-quarters of respondents believe the benefits of live export outweigh, or are equal to, the costs of the industry.

Thank you Chair – we are happy to take questions.