



11 June 2024

## To the Standing Committee on Agriculture

### **RSPCA Western Australia submission to Inquiry into the Export Control Amendment (Ending Live Sheep Exports by Sea) Bill 2024**

Dear Committee members,

RSPCA WA unequivocally supports the Export Control Amendment (Ending Live Sheep Exports by Sea) Bill 2024 (the Bill) and that an end date of 1 May 2028 is legislated during this parliamentary term. While we would prefer an earlier end date given the extreme suffering that sheep experience in the live export trade, we believe the date will allow a successful transition, enabling Western Australia's sheep industry to adapt to market alternatives.

We also support the Bill's provision of legislative authority to enable the Commonwealth to administer \$107m in federal funding to incentivise the transition and ensure the measures are in place to make the transition successful.

RSPCA WA recognises that many progressive West Australian farmers have already moved away from live sheep export and believes that legislating an end date will now provide the necessary certainty to those producers who remain in the trade.

**RSPCA WA concurs with and supports the RSPCA Australia submission (provided to the Committee directly) in its entirety, including the recommendations that:**

1. The Committee should support the Export Control Amendment (Ending Live Sheep Exports by Sea) Bill 2024 as it is.
2. The Committee should recommend improved regulatory controls via the Export Control (Animals) Rules and the ASEL to mitigate the risks to sheep welfare issues that will continue until the end date, such as:
  - a. implementation of additional technology onboard all live sheep exports to the Middle East to enable real-time, automated, and detailed data capture (e.g. CCTV) and reporting (e.g. WBT, DBT, ammonia levels etc.);
  - b. mandatory IO presence onboard all live sheep voyages to the Middle East until the end date; and
  - c. expediting the full update of the ASEL from 2026 to 2024-25.

RSPCA WA echoes the concerns raised in the RSPCA Australia submission in relation to:

- Starvation and shy feeding remaining a major issue on board recent live export voyages.
- Heat stress remaining a major issue on board recent live export voyages.
- Fatigue from the cumulative stress of transport increases the risk of sheep in the trade becoming immunocompromised.

The Royal Society  
for the Prevention of  
Cruelty to Animals,  
Western Australia

ABN 48 626 609 587

108 Malaga Drive  
(Cnr Reid Highway)  
Malaga WA 6090

P (08) 9209 9300

E [rspca@rspcawa.org.au](mailto:rspca@rspcawa.org.au)  
W [rspcawa.org.au](http://rspcawa.org.au)

PO Box 3147  
Malaga WA 6944





- Conditions on board are likely to contribute to infection and disease, and that it is imperative for adequate numbers of Australian Accredited Veterinarians (AAV) to be onboard all voyages to the Middle East during the phase out period and up until 1 May 2028.
- High stocking densities associated with live export ships are likely to impact on the welfare of the sheep.
- Mortality rates are not a measure of animal welfare and just because the sheep do not die, does not mean they have not suffered extensively. Illness, injury, infection, disease and pain all lead to poor animal welfare outcomes for sheep.
- Fully conscious slaughter, which is prevalent in the Middle East, conflicts with Australian laws, standards and community expectations.

RSPCA WA also highlights that despite current fearmongering, Live Export numbers have declined dramatically over the last decade and now represent little more than 10% of animals turned off from the West Australian flock. In 2012/2013 the Western Australian Government's Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development's (DPIRD) analysis<sup>1</sup> shows that 33% of sheep turned off entered the Live Export trade, and that by 2022/2023 that number had declined to just 12%. During that period the DPIRD analysis shows the number of lambs slaughtered locally increased 46%, sheep slaughtered locally increased 16%, animals transported interstate increased 231%, while Live Export declined 61% from 1.71 million animals to 664 thousand animals.

RSPCA WA supports the WA farming industry and advocates that Federal Government funding support should be of a sufficient level to ensure that local processing capacity and competition is developed, during the transition period, to allow the 10-12% of animals currently turned off via Live Export to be slaughtered domestically.

RSPCA WA **supports the Export Control Amendment (Ending Live Sheep Exports by Sea) Bill 2024 (the Bill)** and believes that a four-year transition period, linked with the \$107m federal funding package, will allow for a well-managed and successful transition away from the export of live sheep by sea.

Yours faithfully

Lynne Bradshaw

Chair, RSPCA WA

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<sup>1</sup> [The Western Australian sheep and wool industries | Agriculture and Food](#)