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Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

11 June 2024

Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry on The Export Control Amendment (Ending Live Sheep Exports by Sea) Bill 2024

FOUR PAWS is the global animal welfare organisation for animals under direct human influence, which for the last 35 years has revealed suffering, rescued animals in need and protected them. Since our establishment in Australia in 2015, we have actively campaigned against live animal transport and export.

FOUR PAWS submit this statement in strong support of the bill to end live sheep exports and commend the government for introducing this crucial and long overdue legislation. This bill marks a critical step forward for animal welfare, sparing millions of sheep from suffering on ships and at their destination, and will improve Australia's reputation for animal welfare worldwide.

This legislation has the support of not only the animal welfare community, but the broader Australian population that supports a transition to a kinder, fairer, and more profitable agricultural system.

Live export remains a major animal welfare concern for Australians, with close to 44,000 citizens signing a petition to support the introduction of legislation to end this brutal trade. One of the largest petitions to be tabled in Australia's 47th Parliament.

Additionally, independent polling commissioned by the RSPCA shows over 78% of Australians support an end to the export of live sheep to the Middle East. The movement to end live export reflects the values of the broader Australian community, a community which rejects the inherent brutality and cruelty of this unnecessary trade.



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Parliament must acknowledge this overwhelming public sentiment and support the passage of this legislation to ensure the bill to ban live sheep exports is enshrined in law. This legislation guarantees a more humane and sustainable future, that both considers animal welfare and protects Australia's international reputation.

The live sheep export industry has been under scrutiny for years, and its economic value has been in steady decline. Despite this, and despite a generous \$107 million transition package and a four-year phase-out period, the industry still claims shock and surprise, arguing that this change will devastate Western Australian regional communities.

This narrative contradicts the facts presented by the Independent Panel, which clearly indicated that the phase-out is entirely feasible with manageable adjustments to flock composition. The Panel noted that "the WA sheep industry can be profitable and sustainable during the transition period and beyond the end of live sheep exports by sea."

Repeated exposés have shown that the industry is incapable of reform. Contrary to industry claims, the trade has not been "fixed." Analysis from Independent Observer reports on voyages to the Middle East between 2018 and 2023 reveals that sheep suffered from lameness, injury, shy feeding and gastrointestinal disease, scabby mouth and pink eye. A staggering 6,551 sheep deaths were reported, and over 80% of Independent Observer reports state that sheep were starving on board. Upon arrival in the Middle East, these animals face slaughter without stunning, a practice banned in Australia.

The live sheep export industry lost its social license decades ago, it is cruel and outdated. We implore Parliament to see this Bill through its final stages and continue to stand with the majority of Australians, including 71% of Western Australians who polling has shown overwhelmingly support the Federal Government's policy to phase out live sheep export by sea.

This legislation will finally place Australian animal welfare on the right side of history.

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Founded in 1988 in Vienna by Heli Dugler and friends, the organisation advocates for a world where humans treat animals with respect, empathy and understanding. The sustainable campaigns and projects of FOUR PAWS focus on companion animals including stray dogs and cats, animals in fashion, farmed animals, and wild animals – such as bears, big cats, and orangutans – kept in inappropriate conditions as well as in disaster and conflict zones.