

Should Australia continue live animal exports?

What they said

'They're not going to be happy until they've closed down the live sheep trade, the live cattle trade, the live goat trade, until people out west are poor again and then they'll go back to their inner suburban hives and say they've done a good job'

Former leader of the National Party, Barnaby Joyce

'It doesn't matter really whether the ships are destocked, whether they're better ventilated. It's like putting a dog in a car on a hot summer's day – that will lead inevitably to death'

Liberal MP and farmer Sussan Ley who has moved a private members bill to ban live sheep exports

The issue at a glance

On April 8, 2018, Channel Nine's 60 Minutes aired a program based on footage supplied by the activist group Animals Australia. The footage showed sheep in various stages of distress on a livestock carrier bound for the Middle East in August 2017.

The footage was accompanied by an Agriculture Department report on the ship's journey showing that 2,400 sheep out of a total load of 64,000 had died of heat stress, doubling the Government 'approved' death rate of two per cent, or 1,280 in a shipment of 64,000 animals.

Prior to the 60 Minutes telecast, the footage was presented by Animals Australia to the Federal Agriculture Minister, David Littleproud, who expressed his shock at the images of dead and dying animals. 'This cannot go on,' the Minister told an ABC reporter.

Mr Littleproud declared that he was not aware of the situation until the footage was given to him, despite the fact that the Agriculture Department report had been available a week earlier.

Both the live cattle and live sheep export industries have been mired in allegations of unavoidable cruelty for decades, with attempted reforms deemed inadequate by animal conservation groups and others.

In May, 2018, so-called 'rebel' Liberal backbenchers Sussan Ley, Sarah Henderson and Jason Wood moved to have live sheep exports banned in response to a further government attempt to reform the industry. <https://www.afr.com/news/sussan-ley-builds-support-to-ban-terminal-live-sheep-trade-20180521-h10bl3>

The Labor Opposition has pledged to phase out live sheep exports if elected to government. <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/may/03/labor-promises-to-ban-live-sheep-exports-and-have-meat-processed-in-australia>

Background

The background paper reproduced below was written for the information of members of the Australian Parliament by Moira Coombs, Law and Bills Digest and Hannah Gobbett, Economics. It was last modified on January 10, 2014.

Please note, the Parliamentary paper has been abbreviated before being reproduced on this site. The full text can be accessed at

https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/BriefingBook44p/AnimalExports

Australian live animal exports

Live animal exports have been, and remain, a contentious issue. Many petitions have been made to Parliament to end the live export trade.

In 1985, the Senate Select Committee on Animal Welfare in its report *The Export of Live Sheep from Australia* concluded that if a decision on the future of the trade were made on animal welfare grounds alone, there was enough evidence to stop the trade. Taking into account economic and other considerations, the Committee recognised that the trade would continue, and therefore called for animal welfare improvements. The Committee also recommended that the Government encourage the expansion of the refrigerated trade, with the aim of eventually replacing the live trade. However, the UN Comtrade database indicates Australia remains the world's largest exporter of live sheep and fourth largest for live cattle, with the industry employing an estimated 10,000 in regional Australia alone.

Animal welfare organisations, including the RSPCA and the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), advocate that live exports be replaced with meat trade only. Both organisations have commissioned several investigations by consulting firm ACIL Tasman into the live export trade, which indicate that moving away from live exports would offer opportunities for Australian livestock producers. Further, the WSPA report on live cattle export found that domestic processing contributes more to regional economic activity and employment than live exports.

However, there are currently no export abattoirs in the Northern Territory or the northern region of Western Australia, where the majority of live export producers are concentrated. This is largely due to a lack of skilled and semi-skilled labour and low estimated returns. Prohibitively high transport costs (per head of livestock) restrict many north Australian producers from transporting livestock to eastern states' export abattoirs.

Structure of the industry

There is high international demand for Australian livestock, as Australia is one of the few producers of high quality foot-and-mouth disease free animals. A strong preference for live sheep exists in the Middle East due to high fodder, water and meat subsidies provided by a number of Middle Eastern governments, the live sale practices in local souks and the demand for the animals to be slaughtered according to Halal practices.

There is also strong demand for live cattle in South East Asian nations, owing to government support for domestic feedlot industries in Indonesia as well as a lack of cold storage throughout the supply chain. However, a peak Islamic body has commented that Australian halal meat could be exported to Indonesia.

The live export trade is dominated by exports of cattle (which comprise 90% of total live exports) and account for 2.7% of Australian agricultural exports from 2006–2009. In this period the total value of live exports was \$5,886.6 million for cattle and \$311.9 million for sheep (in current prices).

Approximately 75% of exported sheep come from Western Australia, 14% from Victoria and 10% from South Australia. Australia's largest market for live sheep is the Middle East, for which farmers are increasingly breeding fat-tailed breeds favoured by Middle Eastern consumers.

In terms of cattle, 40% of total live exports were sourced from the Northern Territory, 39% from Western Australia and 13% from Queensland in 2006–2009. Indonesia remains the largest market for live cattle; however, Israel, Malaysia, Japan and China are developing markets.

Scandal and response

The Keniry Review was commissioned after the Cormo Express disaster in August 2003 when a shipload of 57,937 sheep bound for Saudi Arabia was rejected because importing authorities claimed that 6% were infected with ‘scabby mouth’. By the time the ship was finally unloaded in Eritrea, 5,691 sheep had died. The Australian Government suspended live exports to Saudi Arabia but resumed them in 2005. The Keniry Review recommended a greater role for the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service in setting standards and quality assurance and proposed a compulsory research and development levy on the industry.

An ABC Four Corners program on 30 May 2011 exposed horrific scenes of cruelty to Australian cattle while being slaughtered in Indonesian abattoirs, resulting in a vociferous response from the public. The then Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator Joe Ludwig, suspended the trade and later announced an independent review of Australia’s live export trade conducted by Bill Farmer AO. The Farmer Review recommended a comprehensive review of the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock and the extension of supply chain reforms, then in place for Indonesia, to all countries.

Regulatory regime

The regulatory scheme governing animal exports is the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS). The Australian Meat and Live-stock Industry Act 1997 and the Export Control (Animals) Order 2004 set out the export licensing and permit system generally. The ESCAS framework is incorporated into this pre-existing system which means that the framework is mandatory.

The licensed exporter must submit their proposed ESCAS arrangements for assessment together with a notice of intention to export and a consignment risk management plan. The ESCAS must contain evidence of compliance with international animal welfare standards, demonstrate control and traceability through the supply chain, meet reporting and accountability standards, and include independent auditing, before assessment and approval by the Department of Agriculture.

Recent developments

The Indonesian government has signalled that it may seek to buy land in Australia to raise beef. While this may raise concerns about foreign investment, any cattle exported from such enterprises would be subject to the same rules, regardless of ownership.

In September 2013 Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, Mr Warren Truss, stated that strengthening all of Australia’s livestock exports to all trading partners would be a priority for the newly elected government.

<https://www.couriermail.com.au/news/opinion/editorialkneejerk-response-no-solution-to-live-exports/news-story/1061d2a17953abf4ae0c1cf95e931442>

Internet information

On July 20, 2018, SBS News carried a report titled 'Joyce says live export opponents "zealots"' which detailed the allegations of the former leader of the National Party that those opposed to live exports were extremists.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/joyce-says-live-export-opponents-zealots>

On July 5, 2018, Farm Weekly published a comment and analysis titled, ' Live export ban will have ramifications' written by the WA Farmers president Tony York. York argues for the vital importance of the live sheep export trade for Western Australian farmers.

The full text can be accessed at

<http://www.farmweekly.com.au/news/agriculture/general/opinion/live-export-ban-will-have-ramifications/2757471.aspx>

On June 9, 2018, The Guardian published a report titled 'Live export opponents should check their moral compass, minister says' which detailed the comments made by the Minister for Agriculture, David Littleproud, in defence of Australian farmers' attempts to ensure the humane treatment of livestock.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jun/09/live-export-opponents-should-check-their-moral-compass-minister-says>

On May 23, 2018, columnist for The West Australian, Paul Murray authored an opinion piece entitled "The end is near for WA live sheep exports". In it he looks at the trade as in terminal decline, saying that "a tidal wave of public opposition" indicates that the continuation of "live sheep exports is doomed." Murray notes that calls to stop the trade have been building for thirty-three years and that the "time has come for the farm lobbies to focus on their exit strategy, rather than put all the effort into preserving a trade that is becoming increasingly uneconomic ... "

Murray also points out that the involvement of federal lobbyists supporting the mainly WA-based sheep export business indicates that exporters of live cattle to foreign abattoirs are also worried that their own industry will be affected.

The full text can be accessed at <https://thewest.com.au/opinion/paul-murray/the-end-is-near-for-wa-live-sheep-exports-ng-b88843243z>

On May 21, 2018, The Guardian published a report titled 'Coalition MPs introduce bill for ban on live exports, saying industry is not viable'

The report details Liberal MP Sussan Ley's private member's bill to ban live sheep exports.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/may/21/coalition-mps-introduce-bill-for-ban-on-live-exports-saying-industry-is-not-viable>

On May 9, 2018, The Australian published a report titled 'Sheep ban "affronts farmer dignity", says Barnaby Joyce' detailing the objections of the former leader of the National Party to attempts to ban live sheep exports.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/foreign-affairs/sheep-ban-affronts-farmer-dignity-says-barnaby-joyce/news-story/74ded2d5115dd2cef84fac80b9d35c39>

On May 2, 2018, ABC News, published a news item by Brett Worthington, 'Livestock exporter raised concerns with Federal Government before thousands of sheep died at sea'. In this item, a spokesperson for the WA exporter, Wellard, said that the government had previously been warned that livestock deaths would continue unless 'substandard ships' ceased to be used to deliver livestock to foreign buyers. The full text can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-05-02/live-export-industry-concerned-old-ships-deadly-for-sheep/9715172>

On April 29, 2018, The Guardian published a news item, 'Live export boss says sheep 'have generous space allocation'', by Dominique Schwartz. In the item, Emmanuel Exports' managing director Graham Daws blames a 'catastrophic' heat wave for the livestock deaths and added that the latest shipment aboard the Al Messilah would have more space allocated for each animal. The full text can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-05-01/live-export-boss-says-sheep-have-generous-amount-of-space/9710508>

On April 23, 2018, The Australian published a news item, 'Live sheep export ban 'would leave farmers struggling'', by Greg Brown, in which a farmer was interviewed for his opinion of the possible banning of live sheep exports. The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/live-sheep-export-ban-would-leave-farmers-struggling/news-story/0cf950d99dd7a1150efa0a46237e05c4>

On April 21, 2018, The Guardian's rural reporter, Calla Wahlquist, wrote a background article, '33 years on, a long-term solution to live export trade remains elusive' The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/apr/21/33-years-on-a-long-term-solution-to-live-export-trade-remains-elusive>

On April 21, 2018, the Sydney Morning Herald published an opinion article, 'Live sheep exports are not worth the moral cost', by Dr Julie P Smith, an associate professor at the Australian National University School of Global Governance and Regulation. Dr Smith became a vegetarian after seeing a previous set of Animals Australia videos, aired in 2011. The full text can be accessed at <https://www.smh.com.au/national/live-sheep-exports-are-not-worth-the-moral-cost-20180421-p4zawf.html>

On April 12, 2018, The Conversation published an opinion article by political journalist Michelle Grattan. In it, Grattan looked at, among other things, the political fallout from the video footage aired by 60 Minutes. The full text can be accessed at <https://theconversation.com/grattan-on-friday-live-sheep-exports-tarnish-australias-reputation-and-should-be-stopped-94935>

On April 10, 2018, The Guardian published a news report titled 'Live exports: mass animal deaths going unpunished as holes in system revealed'

An analysis by Guardian Australia of 70 mortality investigation reports produced by the department shows a number of cases where conditions contrary to ASEL are noted without penalties being imposed.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/10/live-exports-mass-deaths-going-unpunished-as-holes-in-system-revealed>

On April 9, 2018, The Guardian published a report titled 'Shocking live export conditions not uncommon, animal rights groups say'

The report details allegations from animal welfare groups that the shocking conditions shown in footage of the Australian live export ship Awassi Express in which more than 2,000 sheep died are not uncommon and have been repeatedly reported to the federal regulator.

The full text can be accessed at

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/08/shocking-live-export-conditions-not-uncommon-say-animal-rights-groups>

On April 9, 2018, News.com.au published a news item entitled, 'They've been crushed: 60 Minutes footage shows sheep live export horror' which described the deaths of thousands of sheep on board a ship bound for the Middle East. The item includes comment from Agriculture Minister David Littleproud and footage from the Animals Australia video aired by the current affairs program '60 Minutes'.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.news.com.au/finance/business/other-industries/theyve-been-crushed-60-minutes-footage-shows-sheep-live-export-horror/news-story/7a4706b103c7198b2269b1babeae3fab>

On April 9, ABC News posted a news item by rural reporter Brett Worthington, 'Live export ban sidelined by Government and Opposition despite growing activist pressure', in which Worthington reports on, among other things, the exporter, Emanuel Exports, plans to use the same ship featured in the Animals Australia videos, to send another 65,000 sheep from Fremantle to the Middle East.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2018-04-09/awassi-emanuel-exports-sheep-in-perth-amid-federal-investigation/9632652>

On April 8, 2018, Emmanuel Exports, operators of the ship which was the focus of the Animals Australia / 60 Minutes footage, released a press statement:

Statement from Emanuel Exports' Director Nicholas Daws. In it, Mr Daws apologises for the incident and outlines measures taken by the company to prevent a repetition.

The full text can be accessed at www.auslivestockexport.com/images/about-alec/Statement_from_Emanuel_Exports_08_April_2018.pdf

On February 8, 2018, ABC News posted a comment, 'How animal activists took on the cattle industry and won', by Dr Peter Chen, a senior lecturer in media and politics at the University of Sydney's Department of Government and International Relations. He is the author of Animal Welfare in Australia, Politics and Policy.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-02-07/animal-activists-live-beef-exports-brazil-australia-cattle/9404368>

On February 5, 2018, 'The Land' rural newspaper's Andrew Marshall reported that Brazil had suspended live cattle shipments because of concerns over the welfare of

the animals. A spokesman for Wellard, the company which also handles Australian sheep and cattle shipments, said that the company was monitoring the situation, although it currently has no cattle export contracts with Brazil. The suspension was apparently made after the Brazilian animal rights group, the National Forum for Protection and Animal Defence.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theland.com.au/story/5208227/brazil-halts-live-exports/?cs=4963>

On October 27, 2017, ABC News published a report titled 'Dead sheep numbers unknown aboard live export ship, despite formal investigation'

The report detailed the curiously inconclusive data regarding the number of sheep that had died while being transported from Fremantle to the Middle East in July 2016.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2017-10-26/numbers-of-dead-sheep-aboard-livestock-export-ship-in-dispute/9086112>

On July 18, 2016, the Australian Parliament published a background paper titled 'Live export: a chronology' The paper traces the history of live exports from Australia from the 1830s through to June 2016.

The full text can be accessed at

https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1617/Chronology/LiveExport

In June 2013, Issues Magazine published a comment and analysis titled 'Australia Leads the World in Livestock Export'. The piece is written by Alison Penfold, the chief executive officer of the Australian Livestock Exporters' Association and seeks to establish the importance of the live export industry to Australia.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.issuesmagazine.com.au/article/issue-june-2013/australia-leads-world-livestock-export.html>

The National Farmers Federation has a section of its Internet site given over to derailing the importance of live exports and the steps taken by Australia to conduct the trade humanely.

This information can be accessed at <https://www.nff.org.au/supportliveexports.html>

On its Internet site, the Australian Livestock Exporters Council supplies details of the steps taken by the Australian live export industry to ensure the humane treatment of exported livestock.

This information can be accessed at <https://auslivestockexport.com/good-animal-welfare-is-good-for-business/live-trade-faqs>

The RSPCA's Internet site includes a timeline from 1989 to the present listing tragedies associated with Australia's live animal exports.

This can be accessed at <https://www.rspca.org.au/live-exports-timeline-tragedy>

Arguments in support of banning live animal exports

1. The live transport of animals from Australia is cruel and morally unjustifiable. The cruelty involved in the export of live animals has been repeatedly exposed by a number of animal welfare groups.

The traumatic and unsanitary conditions have been stressed. On live-export ships, particularly during long journeys, animals may be forced to stand for a substantial

period of time in a slurry of water, faeces, and urine up to 45 centimetres deep until they are unloaded. On a number of vessels, faeces can fall from upper levels to the decks below, landing either on the animals or in their feed or water troughs. Cleaning is spasmodic, and thousands of tons of effluent are dumped overboard before arrival at the port. <https://www.peta.org.au/issues/live-export-animal-cruelty/>

Animals Australia has described the consequences of heat and the accumulation of urine and excrement in this manner: 'When temperatures soar — and predictably they do — weeks of untreated waste build-up 'melts' into a thick, deadly soup. Any animal needing to lie down to rest risks being buried in excrement. Corrosive ammonia chokes the air and burns the eyes and throats of those on board. Distressed animals rapidly overheat. Their hearts race as they gasp for oxygen.'

https://secure.animalsaustralia.org/take_action/live-export-shipboard-cruelty/?ua_s=BLE.com

Cramped conditions and inadequate ventilation combined with high temperatures and humidity lead to serious illness. Indeed, heat-stress mortality has been an issue since the beginning of the trade. As recently as 2013, it resulted in the deaths of more than 4,000 sheep on the Bader III – and most of these deaths occurred in a single day.

<https://www.peta.org.au/issues/live-export-animal-cruelty/>

Rough seas are also a significant problem, resulting in suffering as well as mortality. The smaller the vessel, the greater the risk that animals will be injured by its movements in heavy seas. The highest mortality rates for cattle on live-export ships in the last 20 years have been the result of turbulent waters and inclement weather. In some instances, up to 75 per cent of the animals aboard have died.

<https://www.peta.org.au/issues/live-export-animal-cruelty/>

The 60 Minutes report which provoked the current controversy televised footage which showed hundreds of Australian sheep, cramped together and dying aboard squalid live export ships headed from Australia to the Middle East. The video, filmed by a navigation officer on board multiple voyages, showed thousands of animals packed into ship's pens, panting in the extreme heat.

More than 1300 sheep allegedly died in two days during an intense heatwave in the Persian Gulf. <http://www.news.com.au/finance/business/other-industries/theyve-been-crushed-60-minutes-footage-shows-sheep-live-export-horror/news-story/7a4706b103c7198b2269b1babeae3fab>

The RSPCA's Internet site has a timeline of animal cruelty episodes associated with live animal export from Australia. Forty-four episodes involving animal cruelty are listed between February 2014 and March 2018. <https://www.rspca.org.au/live-exports-timeline-tragedy>

Also of concern is the manner in which the animals that survive this transport will be slaughtered on arrival. Despite regulations imposed by Australia that are meant to ensure humane treatment of these animals, there is evidence that these regulations are frequently not followed. http://kb.rspca.org.au/what-happens-to-livestock-that-are-exported-for-slaughter-overseas_516.html

2. Past attempts at reform have not been effective

Critics of the live animal export trade in Australia argue that despite a long-standing history of inquiries followed by attempted reform, animal mistreatment continues to occur.

In 1985, a Senate inquiry into the export of sheep from Australia to the Middle East concluded that 'if a decision were to be made on the future of the trade purely on animal welfare grounds, there is enough evidence to stop the trade. The trade is, in

many respects, inimical to good animal welfare, and it is not in the interests of the animal to be transported to the Middle East for slaughter.'

https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1617/Chronology/LiveExport

The General Conclusions of the report recommended the trade should continue provided that the welfare of the sheep was given the proper high priority it requires.

https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1617/Chronology/LiveExport

Critics of the trade argue that the recommended 'proper high priority' has continued to be denied to the animals being transported.

The 2003 Keniry Review, which drew on the findings and recommendations of a Government-established Independent Reference Group (IRG) in 2000 and 2002, found problems with enforceability under the existing framework and again stressed the need for national, mandatory standards.

https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1617/Chronology/LiveExport

The fundamental recommendation of the Keniry Review - that the Commonwealth government be responsible for the regulation of the industry - was adopted and thus the government is currently in charge of the live export industry. The Explanatory Memorandum of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Legislation Amendment (Export Control) Bill 2004 indicated that the government accepted the recommendation that national standards be developed. Some critics, however, have suggested that this was not actually achieved because there is no requirement that the standards be reviewed by Parliament.

<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/DeakinLRev/2011/21.pdf>

Despite the introduction of the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance Scheme (ESCAS) in 2011, reports of supply chain breaches have continued alongside criticism of the effectiveness of the existing enforcement mechanisms and procedures. The Australian Greens, animal welfare advocates and some exporters have argued that the regulatory scheme remains ineffective in the absence of enforcement action.

https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1617/Chronology/LiveExport

3. Australian regulators have not been sufficiently rigorous

It has been claimed that the number of livestock deaths aboard transport ships has been misstated or underrepresented and that these discrepancies have been ignored by Australian regulators. It has further been claimed that even where it has been openly acknowledged that animal mortality rates have been above accepted levels no adequate action has been taken by Australian regulators.

On October 26, 2017, an ABC News report stated Vets Against Live Exports (VALE) was highly critical of the counting methodology used in a voyage of the sheep livestock carrier Al Messilah, where the Federal Department of Agriculture (FDA) report noted that 1,741 sheep had died. The report, however, conceded that it was impossible to verify the actual number of deaths, as 1,286 animals 'could not be accounted for'. An FDA spokesperson said that this was because of an 'inability to collect or dispose of carcasses' due to decomposition and decay of dead bodies.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2017-10-26/numbers-of-dead-sheep-aboard-livestock-export-ship-in-dispute/9086112>

VALE's Dr Sue Foster commented that the final death figure could and should have been reached by simple arithmetic. 'Normally the mortalities are counted as the

number loaded minus the numbers unloaded because the only reason for sheep not being there is they died,' Dr Foster said. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2017-10-26/numbers-of-dead-sheep-aboard-livestock-export-ship-in-dispute/9086112> These figures are significant as an investigation is supposed to be conducted by the FDA after long-haul voyages when mortality rates of 2% for sheep and 1% of cattle are reached. http://kb.rspca.org.au/what-are-the-standards-of-animal-welfare-onboard-live-export-ships_572.html A misstatement of mortality figures enables transport companies to sidestep an investigation.

A report published in The Guardian on April 10, 2018, claims that even when mortality rates have been acknowledged to exceed the levels at which an investigation is meant to take place this either does not occur or negligible penalties are imposed. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/10/live-exports-mass-deaths-going-unpunished-as-holes-in-system-revealed>

Animal welfare groups claim that shocking conditions such as those recently shown on 60 Minutes in footage of the Australian live export ship Awassi Express on which more than 2,000 sheep died are not uncommon. It is claimed such conditions have been repeatedly reported to the federal regulator. The concern is that insufficient action has been taken and that monitoring should not have to depend on the actions of whistleblowers. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/08/shocking-live-export-conditions-not-uncommon-say-animal-rights-groups>

The federal agriculture minister, David Littleproud, has announced a review into the 'culture' of the federal Department of Agriculture after it failed to uncover the recently publicised animal welfare violations exposed by a whistleblower. <https://www.sheepcentral.com/australias-independent-live-sheep-regulator-to-be-reviewed-littleproud/>

An analysis by Guardian Australia of 70 mortality investigation reports produced by the FDA shows a number of cases where conditions contrary to Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL) are noted in the report. Despite this, Guardian Australia found no instances of punitive measures such as fines or loss of export licence being imposed. The department was asked to provide details of any companies that had been punished for breaches of the standards, but it did not respond. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/10/live-exports-mass-deaths-going-unpunished-as-holes-in-system-revealed>

4. Humane transport conditions for live export animals are not economically viable
Opponents of the live export of Australian livestock argue that the expense required to transport the animals in ways that would not inflict unacceptable levels of suffering is too great to sustain. The costs involved would have to be borne by either exporter or importer and they would be too great for either party to consider.

Liberal Party MP Sussan Ley has refused to support the Federal Government's proposal to further reform the export trade and has brought her own private member's Bill to phase out the live sheep export trade altogether.

A sheep farmer for 17 years and representing a regional New South Wales seat, Ms Ley argues that the expense associated with humane transport is too great to be economically sustainable. Introducing her Private Member's Bill, Ms Ley told Parliament that the trade 'can only survive profitably on the business model of animal cruelty. More humane conditions would render it unviable.' <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/may/21/coalition-mps-introduce-bill-for-ban-on-live-exports-saying-industry-is-not-viable>

The Turnbull Government has announced a series of reforms to the \$250 million live export industry including more room for sheep on ships and reducing the number of animals aboard. These stricter rules are intended to make sure sheep have access to places to rest, access to adequate food and water and can be in a position where they will not be exposed to heat stress.

Ms Ley has responded to the government's proposal by claiming, 'It's impossible to transport animals humanely over long distances...it wouldn't be commercial. I watched the [live export] industry for years and...have reluctantly concluded that the industry has no foundation either economically or from an animal welfare point of view.' <https://www.byronnews.com.au/news/does-australia-really-need-the-live-export-industr/3423848/>

Ley has elaborated, 'If the rules were actually enforced – access to feed, water and rest, avoiding high heat stress, no commercial operator would undertake the trade. Exporters have explained to me that it would not be viable. Unfortunately this is an industry with an operating model built on the suffering of animals.'

<https://www.maritime-executive.com/editorials/ley-argues-her-live-sheep-long-haul-export-prohibition-bill#gs.ag8GzH8>

Ms Ley told Parliament the trade only exists because it is subsidised by Qatar and Kuwait. Ley stated, 'The live sheep trade is in terminal decline, dropping by two thirds in the last five years. It is based on just two customers in two countries, Kuwait and Qatar who account for 70 percent of exported sheep. The demand for live sheep comes from its cheap retail price due to government subsidies, not cultural or refrigeration reasons. 99 percent of consumers in the Gulf have refrigeration. Every Middle Eastern country accepts Australian Halal slaughter.

However, the subsidies are being phased out. Bahrain ended theirs in 2015 and went from 325 000 live sheep from Australia to zero. ' <https://www.maritime-executive.com/editorials/ley-argues-her-live-sheep-long-haul-export-prohibition-bill#gs.ag8GzH8> The withdrawal of subsidies is likely to accelerate if further regulation to promote animal welfare increases costs. Ley argues that Australia needs to transition to a boxed and chilled meat model that is both humane and economically sustainable.

5. Ending live sheep and cattle exports will not damage Australian farmers

Opponents of live animal export argue that it is not necessary for the economic wellbeing of Australian farmers. They claim that the animal export trade is already in substantial decline and that farmers have diversified what they grow and produce and how they export their meat products so that they are no longer reliant on exporting live animals.

Writing in *The West Australian*, on May 23, 2018, columnist Paul Murray contended that: 'The numbers don't lie. This is an export trade in terminal decline and the natural reduction over 15 years poses real questions about the arguments that some farmers will go to the wall if it ends.'

<https://thewest.com.au/opinion/paul-murray/the-end-is-near-for-wa-live-sheep-exports-ng-b88843243z>

Murray clearly argues that if farmers have survived the current decline in the live export trade, they will be able to survive its termination.

On June 7, 2018, Tony Zappia made the same point in an article published in *The Advertiser*. Zappia wrote: 'The industry is already in decline with live sheep export numbers falling from seven million in 1988 to 1.7 million in 2016-17, whilst exports

of chilled and boxed meat to the Middle East increased tenfold between 2006 and 2016.

According to Meat and Livestock Australia the sheep meat industry was worth \$5.2 billion in 2016-17. Live sheep exports accounted for less than \$250 million – or five per cent - of the industry's value.'

<https://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/opinion/tony-zappia-industry-is-already-in-decline-with-live-sheep-export-numbers-falling/news-story/521890d22d02f55fef673e1df1477882>

A week and a half later, on June 18, 2018, The Sydney Morning Herald published a comment by Susan Ley, federal member for the rural seat of Farrer. Ley states: 'The live sheep export trade is already in decline. Between 2010-11 and 2016-17 the value of Australian lamb exports to the Middle East increased by more than 100 per cent and our mutton exports by 25 per cent. In comparison, during the same period our live sheep export trade to the Middle East decreased in value by 27 per cent and the number of live sheep being exported more than halved.'

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/the-case-against-long-haul-live-sheep-exports-from-a-liberal-mp-20180618-p4zm5o.html>

It has been judged that Australian sheep farmers would be able to transition from a business model that completely or largely excluded the sale of live sheep. In an article published in The West Australian on April 15, 2018, Paul Murray notes that a recent report had found 'the overall economic effect on WA of ending the trade would be marginally positive because of the effect on the abattoir industry which had sufficient spare capacity to absorb all the live sheep exported annually from WA.'

<https://thewest.com.au/opinion/paul-murray/live-export-is-a-cruel-trade-that-never-changes-ng-b88805756z>

Though not as dramatic, similar trends are apparent in live cattle exports, indicating a gradual fall in the market which will ultimately require the local industry to adjust. In an article published in The Herald and Weekly Times it is noted: 'Australia's largest cattle live export market, Indonesia, took 146,803 cattle for the four month period, 8 per cent fewer than the same time last year, while for the 12 months to April Indonesia took 499,740, down 14 per cent.'

<https://www.weeklytimesnow.com.au/agribusiness/cattle/live-exports-surge-but-longer-term-its-a-slow-decline/news-story/156ddf20dbd054b7ae126ddf5bf4b06b>

For both Australia's cattle and sheep exporters, boxed and chilled meat makes up by far the largest percentage of the market. The live-animal trade is minuscule compared to the boxed and chilled export component. In 2012-13 only 6 per cent of cattle and 7 per cent of sheep raised for meat were exported live.

<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/rendezview/this-nation-no-longer-has-the-stomach-for-liveanimal-export/news-story/0ccad1da2590d622876ea8f0dfe29301>

Arguments against banning live sheep exports

1. Live exports are an important source of income to Australian farmers

Australian farmers, especially in western and northern Australia, have argued that the live animal export trade is vital for their continued economic survival.

In June, 2013, Alison Penfold, the chief executive officer of the Australian Livestock Exporters' Association was published commenting on the importance of the live export industry to Australia. Penfold stated, 'Australia has exported livestock to overseas markets for more than 50 years. The livestock export industry is an important component of the Australian agricultural sector, contributing an average of \$1 billion in export earnings annually to the national economy.'

The industry employs approximately 13,000 people, mainly in regional and rural Australia, and provides significant employment opportunities to indigenous people across northern Australia.' <http://www.issuesmagazine.com.au/article/issue-june-2013/australia-leads-world-livestock-export.html>

Penfold went on to explain the particular significance of the live export trade to western and northern Australia. She stated, 'The importance of the livestock export industry to regional communities is amplified in northern and western Australia, where livestock production has been transformed to meet the requirements of South-East Asian and Middle Eastern markets.

For many cattle producers in these areas the industry is the only source of income, and they supply the majority of live animals for export – approximately 75% of sheep from Western Australia and 80% of cattle from Northern Australia.'

<http://www.issuesmagazine.com.au/article/issue-june-2013/australia-leads-world-livestock-export.html>

In an opinion piece published on July 5, 2018, in Farmers Weekly, Tony York, the West Australian Farmers president stated, 'Western Australia is unique – 85 per cent of Australian sheep that are live exported are from WA. We dominate the trade nationally.

A ban on the trade will be detrimental to our growers at farm level and will have a knock-on effect to other industries that support the trade. Shearers, feedlots, backgrounding facilities and transport and haulage companies – many of which are family owned and operated – will feel the pinch as much as any farmer.'

<http://www.farmweekly.com.au/news/agriculture/general/opinion/live-export-ban-will-have-ramifications/2757471.aspx>

York concluded, 'All of these service providers and many other businesses that make up the communities will be left to deal with economic damage done to those who rely on income from sheep producers and the wider farming community.'

<http://www.farmweekly.com.au/news/agriculture/general/opinion/live-export-ban-will-have-ramifications/2757471.aspx>

Former National Party leader and Deputy Prime Minister, Barnaby Joyce, has also defended the claims of farmers dependent on live exports. Joyce stated, 'We have to be very aware that those who are dealing with live sheep are generally dealing on the lesser country that can't take cattle, and we are going to -affect their livelihoods, their income streams — not only theirs but the towns they surround.

It is about keeping dignity in these people's lives and giving them the capacity...to be able to afford the renovations, to be able to afford the new car, to get a better return back through the farm gate...We have an obligation in this nation to protect the dignity and the rights of those people in the sheep industry.'

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/foreign-affairs/sheep-ban-affronts-farmer-dignity-says-barnaby-joyce/news-story/74ded2d5115dd2cef84fac80b9d35c39>

2. Many of Australia's live export markets will not accept meat exports

Supporters of the live export trade argue that it cannot simply be replaced by chilled meat exports.

A National Farmers Federation fact sheet states 'The supply of livestock and chilled or frozen meat often caters to distinct markets that are not interchangeable. Australian livestock is in demand due to logistical difficulties in delivering and storing meat, cultural/religious preferences and its price. In 2007 Australia could not meet the Middle East demand for live animals. The gap was not filled by Australian boxed meat but by live animals from Sudan, Somalia and Iran, countries that do not share

Australia's commitment to animal welfare.'

<https://www.nff.org.au/supportliveexports.html>

Chilled meat can only replace live exports where importing countries do not have prohibitions against foreign slaughtering practices. There are also export markets that are unable to receive chilled meat exports because they do not have the reliable refrigeration needed to keep processed meat fresh. <https://theconversation.com/can-meat-exports-be-made-humane-here-are-three-key-strategies-96213>

The Australian Department of Agriculture and Water Resources has stated, 'Suggestions that the live trade could be completely replaced by chilled and frozen meat fails to take into account the requirements of the market. While Australia has developed a significant trade in meat products, the lack of refrigeration and cold chain facilities [in importing countries], as well as strong cultural preferences for freshly slaughtered meat precludes Australia from servicing all of its export markets with processed meat products. <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/animal/welfare/export-trade> Similarly, the Australian Institute of International Affairs has noted, 'Cultural practices in many Muslim countries and festivals like Eid al-Adha demand that animals be slaughtered close to consumption.'

The Australian Institute of International Affairs has also observed, 'Those who argue that live export should be abandoned in favour of frozen meat products ignore why demand exists for Australian livestock. Refrigeration remains inaccessible for poor and remote communities in Indonesia and other South-East Asian destinations.'

<https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/news-item/a-rethink-on-australias-live-export-trade/>

In an article published in Queensland Country Life on June 9, 2016, Simon Crean, Australian Livestock Exporters' Council Chairperson, explained some of the factors that limited the development of chilled meat exports to some of Australia's major trading partners. Mr Crean stated, 'The demand for beef and beef products [in Indonesia] is huge, but they also have fundamental infrastructure and cultural issues. They're a Muslim country and have the wet markets because they don't have the capacity for refrigeration throughout the country. Their culture and tradition is to eat the hot meat and their basis for distribution is to kill at night and sell first thing in the morning.' <https://www.queenslandcountrylife.com.au/story/3957916/banning-live-exports-a-perverse-argument/>

3. Significant improvements have already been made to treatment conditions for animals exported live

Defenders of Australia's live export trade argue that the industry has consistently improved the treatment conditions to which exported animals are subjected.

Regarding slaughtering practices, in 2011, Australia introduced the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) intended to improve stock handling from their point of discharge from the transport vessels on arrival in their country of destination, through to the manner in which animals are slaughtered in the importing country. The aim is to assist in the adoption of humane slaughter practices, including pre-death stunning of animals and an end to tendon slashing, eye gouging and other cruelties. There are now almost 600 approved abattoirs in importing countries to slaughter Australian livestock under the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) standards. Australian livestock must only be slaughtered in these approved facilities. Slaughter in facilities that are not approved is a breach of ESCAS and can result in additional conditions or restrictions being placed on Australian exporters.

<https://auslivestockexport.com/good-animal-welfare-is-good-for-business/live-trade-faqs>

Abattoirs range from large, modern and newly constructed facilities that process large numbers of livestock to small, family-run operations that process only a couple of head per night to service local communities. Some facilities have multiple slaughter lines with several butcher teams working at the same time. Others are more simple facilities that only have one slaughter line. <https://auslivestockexport.com/good-animal-welfare-is-good-for-business/live-trade-faqs>

Increasing numbers of exported livestock are stunned prior to slaughter. Stunning, when performed correctly, involves rendering an animal unconscious using special equipment so the animal cannot feel pain. In the case of Indonesia, Australia's most important market, pre-slaughter stunning of cattle has grown enormously, from under 10 per cent five years ago, to around 95pc today. (August, 2018)

<https://auslivestockexport.com/good-animal-welfare-is-good-for-business/live-trade-faqs>

Regarding the conditions under which animals are transported, a fact sheet supplied by the National Farmers Federation has noted that in 2011, 99.26% of sheep and 99.85% of cattle exported by sea arrived at their destination fit and healthy.

Accredited stockmen and women care for Australian sheep and cattle during their journey overseas and Australian Government accredited veterinarians provide an extra level of care on vessels travelling on long-haul voyages. On board, all animals have room to move around and lie down, ready access to food and water and are placed in hospital pens if they need extra care. Exporters must implement and comply with the detailed requirements of the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL) which cover all aspects of preparation of livestock for the voyage – from farm through to on-vessel management.

<https://www.nff.org.au/supportliveexports.html>

Supporters of the live export trade note, Australia is the only country in the world that actively works in overseas markets to improve animal welfare conditions. Australia is also the only country in the world that attempts to regulate livestock exports, all the way from Australian farms to feedlots and abattoirs overseas. The Australian producer levy funds millions of dollars worth of training, education, research and development to improve animal welfare conditions during voyages and in overseas markets. If Australia were to stop exporting livestock, animal welfare conditions overseas would decline. <https://www.nff.org.au/supportliveexports.html>

4. Conditions on board ships can be further improved by imposing more regulation

Supporters of live exports maintain that there are further reforms that can be made to improve the welfare of animals being transported overseas.

In April, 2018, livestock vet Dr Michael McCarthy was tasked with reviewing the risk of heat stress to the \$250m live sheep trade, after the agriculture minister and Nationals MP David Littleproud was shown whistleblower footage from a now notorious voyage of the live export ship Awassi Express on which 2,400 sheep died. On May 17, 2018, the results were released of the government review charged with improving conditions for sheep transported to the Middle East during the Northern Hemisphere Summer.

The recommendations included:

That the industry moves away from using mortality as a measure to a focus on measures that reflect the welfare of the animal. Within the risk assessment model this replaces the mortality limit with a heat tolerance level.

That the risk settings on the Heat Stress Risk Assessment (HSRA) are to be adjusted to better reflect community expectations.

That the space allocation allowed sheep be increased by up to 39% .

That a vessels pen air turnover (a measure of effective ventilation) be independently verified.

That the reportable level of fatalities for sheep travelling from Australia to the Middle East be reduced from 2% to 1% effective immediately.

<http://www.agriculture.gov.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/biosecurity/export/live-animals/mccarthy-report.pdf>

It was further decided that there be stricter provisions put in place to ensure that transporters abide by the new regulations. Directors of live export companies who do not adhere to the new rules will face up to 10 years in prison. In addition, independent observers will be placed aboard vessels to ensure the standards are adhered to.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/may/17/live-export-company-directors-to-face-up-to-10-years-in-jail-under-coalitions-changes>

The Agricultural Minister has endorsed the recommendations of the McCarthy review. Mr Littleproud has stated, 'If I have penalties and get the industry themselves to come on this journey, I will eradicate that, but what I'm doing is getting ahead of the curve. By putting independent observers on all boats, it will eradicate this type of behaviour going forward.' <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/may/17/live-export-company-directors-to-face-up-to-10-years-in-jail-under-coalitions-changes>

5. Many opponents of the live export industry are extremists without sympathy for rural communities

Defenders of Australia's live export industry argue that many of its opponents are motivated by an extreme opposition to the trade. They further argue that these opponents have no sympathy for the position of the farmers who produce the stock and are unable to recognise the benefits of Australia's involvement.

The industry's supporters claim that having Australia remain in live exports is a better guarantee of animal welfare than having it withdraw.

The Agricultural Minister, David Littleproud, has stated that opponents of the industry need to reflect on their 'moral compass' because if the Australian trade is ultimately banned, animals from other countries with fewer safeguards will be exported to the Middle East.

Littleproud has argued, 'If it's not our sheep and our cattle going to the Middle East, it will be another nation's sheep and cattle, that doesn't have the standards we do, and you know what, if we think we can bury our head in the pillow and close our eyes and think it's all over – well I ask about the moral compass of those people because there will be animals that suffer.' <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jun/09/live-export-opponents-should-check-their-moral-compass-minister-says>

Littleproud has suggested that metropolitan Australians have lost their understanding of and sympathy for Australian rural communities and do not appreciate the difficulties Australian farmers face nor the lengths they go to to manage their stock humanely.

Littleproud has stated that city dwellers 'don't understand the production systems and the practicalities of how farming takes place and the ethical behaviour that our farmers undertake to produce the best food and fibre in the world. It's their pride and

joy.' <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jun/09/live-export-opponents-should-check-their-moral-compass-minister-says>

Former National Party leader and Deputy Prime Minister, Barnaby Joyce, has stated that those opposing live export are extremists who are campaigning for its total abolition, irrespective of the benefits it offers.

Joyce stated, 'I think that what we have to do quite clearly is make sure that we send a clear message that we are not going to be put to the saw by zealots. We are over, in this nation, being put to the saw by zealots.'

Whether it's the sheep industry, the fish industry, or the cattle industry, we are over zealots who want to put us out of business.'

<https://www.farmonline.com.au/story/5542194/barnaby-calls-out-live-export-zealots/>

Joyce continued, 'What we're up against is like a religion, it's zealotry and they're not going to stop at just the closure of the live sheep industry.'

These people haven't got a partial religion - they've got an absolute religion. They want to close the live sheep game and where will they go next?

Live cattle. And then it's going to be the live transport industry.'

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/joyce-says-live-export-opponents-zealots>

Joyce concluded, 'They're not going to be happy until they've closed down the live sheep trade, the live cattle trade, the live goat trade, until people out west are poor again and then they'll go back to their inner suburban hives and say they've done a good job.' <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/live-sheep-trade-fails-on-economics-and-welfare-liberal-mp-sussan-ley-20180521-p4zgmc.html>

Further implications

The Labor Opposition has promised that it would phase out live exports if it wins the next federal election.

Opposition agriculture spokesman Joel Fitzgibbon has claimed that once in government his party would phase out the live sheep trade by implementing a strategic industry plan which would create more meat processing jobs in Australia.

Mr Fitzgibbon has stated, 'I don't believe the live export of sheep has a future in Australia. 'By the industry's own admission..., mortality rates can't be

controlled.' <http://www.dscribe.net.au/2018/05/04/the-future-of-live-export/>

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has rejected the Labor policy as economically irresponsible. Mr Turnbull stated, 'We are not going to be making emotional and reckless decisions that will put Australian farmers at risk. We should make decisions about our export industries with the benefit of science and

information.' <http://www.dscribe.net.au/2018/05/04/the-future-of-live-export/>

The leader of the National Party, Michael McCormack, has warned that animals would be worse off if Australia were to ban live exports. He predicts that the market would become filled with nations that do not adhere to animal welfare practices.

McCormack has stated, 'Only Australia has an export supply chain assurance system so that animal welfare from paddock to plate is looked at, is observed, is monitored.'

The Greens have also announced a five-point plan which aims to end cruelty and expand jobs. Their plan has the support of the Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union (AMIEU). <http://www.dscribe.net.au/2018/05/04/the-future-of-live-export/>

The five points include the Government working with industry, farmers and meat works union which would ensure a smooth and successful transition away from exports to local processing and then trading boxed, chill meat.

The plan aims to boost skills and educate workers including Indigenous and other local meat processing workers to service a new and improved sheep meat processing industry in Western Australia's rural and regional areas.

Animal welfare organisations RSPCA and Animals Australia have both pledged to give the export industry \$500,000 each, if they were to ban the exports, with the money being used to support farmers. It's believed that shutting down the practice would cost the Western Australian industry up to \$150 million.

<http://www.dscribe.net.au/2018/05/04/the-future-of-live-export/>

The live export trade has inflicted damage to Australia's reputation internationally.

3000 people rallied in Tel Aviv recently to call for a ban on animal exports from Australia to Israel. <http://www.dscribe.net.au/2018/05/04/the-future-of-live-export/>

It has been suggested that Australia's live animal export industry is likely to live or die in the arena of public opinion. Droughts in New South Wales and Queensland have increased Australia-wide support for stricken farmers; however, the animal welfare issue appears to be viewed separately.

An independent poll recently commissioned by the RSPCA found that some three in four Australians want to end live export, and more than nine in ten want to see long-haul live export standards improved so all animals can lie down and access food and water easily. <https://www.rspca.org.au/media-centre/news/2018/new-poll-finds-3-4-australians-want-live-export-end-greatest-concern-over>

Interestingly, the poll also found almost seven out of every ten Australians in rural/country areas and towns also want to end live exports, and more people in rural and country towns than anywhere else (just under 95%) are concerned over the inadequacy of current standards. <https://www.rspca.org.au/media-centre/news/2018/new-poll-finds-3-4-australians-want-live-export-end-greatest-concern-over>

These figures suggest that concern over live export is not, as Barnaby Joyce has suggested, an issue which divides rural and country Australia. Concern over the welfare of exported animals appears to extend across the country.

Further disasters of the type recently reported may erode support for the trade sufficiently that no major party will any longer support it.