

Draft report by the Independent Heat Stress Risk Assessment Technical Reference Panel

Submission

Dear Technical Reference Panel members:

Thank you for the opportunity of making a submission.

I oppose the live export of farm animals. There is no humane way to do so. I come from a farming background. I deeply regret that some of our dairy heifers were exported live many years ago. Before the brave disclosures of whistleblowers, my family was unaware of the egregious animal suffering that routinely occurs in the live export industry to this day. Never will livestock of ours be exported live again.

As a member of the community, I welcome the focus of the draft report on animal welfare (morbidity) rather than mortalities alone.

I am also pleased to note in the report that sheep welfare protection will be extended beyond the voyage to the destination as part of the risk assessment process. This is LONG overdue.

Detailed monitoring will be required, and it is vital for animal welfare that Co2 and ammonia levels are monitored as well.

I fully support the responses the panel will have received from the AVA, RSPCA, VALE and other experts and animal welfare organisations, to whom I am grateful.

For the sake of brevity, I have used links to websites to illustrate my points.

Minister's promise to Australia after 60 Minutes footage

Despite Minister Littleproud's announcement in 2018 that all the McCarthy recommendations had been accepted, in fact his Recommendation 4 on **heat stress issues** (which is this panel's task) was not accepted back then. If that recommendation had been accepted it would have effectively banned the summer live

trade from 1 July 2018 and avoided yet more animal suffering during the northern summer sailings to the Middle East. See link:

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/revealed-live-exports-review-recommended-an-immediate-ban-20180529-p4zi34.html>

Moss report – heat stress has been ignored for decades

Animals Australia has been a much-needed watchdog on the live trade for some 20 years. This charity uses the donations of concerned Australians to police the trade that DAWR - as regulator - has failed to police. This was made plain by the scathing findings of the Moss review. I resent my taxes being used to promote and support live export and a failed regulator.

It is a disgrace that senior officers of DAWR were able to edit and remove damning comments from the draft Moss report prior to its publication. See Senator Faruqi's speech and another link below:

<https://mehreen-faruqi.greensmps.org.au/articles/speech-department-agriculture-failed-regulator-live-exports>

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/independent-review-into-live-exports-was-softened-after-department-criticised-draft-findings-20190205-p50vob.html>

Independent Observer (IO) reports and heat stress

- **IOs on DAWR website**

Minister Littleproud's press release on the release of the first independent observer (IO) report (5 months after the event) boasted it had 'full transparency'. Firstly if the observers are departmental vets, how can they be considered independent - especially in light of Moss report referred to above?

The first IO report (No. 10) raised many questions for me. If this was live exporters on their best behaviour, it proves to me that heat stress cannot be overcome on these voyages. My questions/comments are:

The voyage was small - 9227 sheep and 3695 cattle. The stocking density provided 17.5% more space than the ASEL requirement.

There were only 6 photographs to show for 22 days at sea. Stock were crowded together. On day 19 cattle are covered in faeces. No mention of cause of deaths. Were the sheep effectively checked as being fit for export, an ASEL requirement?

The report stated: 'The IO noted that a degree of **heat stress** occurred on part of the journey, and was ***unavoidable*** in the conditions.' Two per cent of sheep (180 sheep) breached the ASEL wool limit. There was a lack of vet supplies and they were not stored according to specifications at all times. Re temperature recordings - 'The IO felt that given an average was being reported that this did not reflect the daily maximum temperature and humidity levels.'

Subsequent IO reports on the DAWR website refer also to heat stress having occurred, as well as lambs being born on voyages, and myriad ASEL breaches.

- **Full IO reports**

Now I know why the IO reports on the website are so scanty on detail. Thanks to the RSPCA, more detailed reports are now available to the public. Following a 6-month freedom of information battle (where is the transparency?) the **heavily redacted reports had photos of heat stressed sheep that mirrored exactly conditions shown in the 60 Minutes footage**. See link:

<https://www.news.com.au/finance/business/other-industries/rspca-obtains-gruesome-pictures-following-freedom-of-information-fight/news-story/cf9f99b8118f8e25f0218a1746834ce5>

In the link below from *Maritime-Executive*, the IO photographs are once again compared to the *60 Minutes* footage – they look exactly the same.

<https://maritime-executive.com/article/live-export-what-the-observers-saw-on-board>

In the link below the *Maritime-Executive* refers to DAWR editing of the Moss report - as well as IO reports showing issues with AMSA approvals.

<https://maritime-executive.com/article/live-export-another-cover-up>

However, DAWR still refuses to release to the RSPCA the video accompanying those more detailed reports.

<https://theconversation.com/agriculture-department-refuses-release-of-live-sheep-video-as-foi-shows-heat-stress-suffering-110775>

Where is the transparency promised by Minister Littleproud? It is no excuse to hide behind the furphy of commercial-in-confidence.

DAWR's own IO reports from journeys undertaken since June 2018 confirm that **heat stress** during the Middle Eastern summer between May and October is '**unavoidable**'.

The footage of sheep suffering and dying shown by *60 Minutes* in April is consistent with what the government and industry's own reports have indicated and consistent with the RSPCA's knowledge and experience of live sheep exports, over decades of repeated disasters ... DAWR's own report of one voyage corroborates the footage, stating that around 2400 sheep died from **heat stress** over the course of the 2-3 week journey.

The *60 Minutes* scenes that Mr Ullah captured on film have been confirmed as being accurate portrayals by other live export veterinarians, the most famous being Lynn Simpson, a veteran of 57 long-haul voyages. In 2016, having sought her technical expertise on setting new live export standards, the Department of Agriculture sacked her after her report and graphic photographs, showing similar gruesome scenes to those on TV, were inadvertently uploaded on the department's website. I saw the photos on the DAWR website, and they can be googled easily for the world to see how Australia treats its livestock.

I agree with the RSPCA (Bidda Jones letter of 19/10/18 to panel) that the purpose of the heat stress model should fundamentally change from one of adjusting on-board conditions to determining whether or not a voyage should be permitted to occur. I also agree that the ownership of the model should be transferred from the MLA to the regulator and made publicly transparent.

Whistle-blowers and heat stress

Because the government and industry fail the transparency test, the role of whistle-blowers is vital to the Australian public. However, former Crime Commissioner Lawler, appointed by Mr Littleproud to investigate allegations levelled against his senior staff arising from the Moss report, was unable to investigate further due to whistle-blower protection laws.

Following *60 Minutes*, Minister Littleproud established a 'whistle-blower hotline' to make it easier for other whistle-blowers to report improper conduct in the LE trade, and in DAWR itself. How will Mr Littleproud's much-vaunted 'Whistle-blower Hotline' work if even a former crime commissioner cannot pursue his investigations? It is a pointless gesture on the part of Minister Littleproud if the information bravely brought forward in good faith by whistle-blowers similarly runs into dead ends. See links:

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/nov/06/live-exports-investigation-into-allegations-welfare-concerns-were-suppressed>

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/beyond-belief-live-export-corruption-inquiry-ends-in-dead-end-20190219-p50yx4.html?fbclid=IwAR17tMncZIU8p5XYLVF-nmDHGAx-2PHgnU69IbtJFXhrGQzRS8E-my6nQsw>

Future of live sheep exports

<https://www.theage.com.au/politics/federal/sheep-trade-is-finished-under-new-heat-stress-test-20181213-p50m60.html>

Live exporters and their proponents, to this day, deny/ignore the documented **unavoidable heat stress** during voyages. They argue that improvements can be achieved – when the science and peak veterinary organisations says they can't - and they attack and seek to denigrate Animals Australia and the RSPCA, whose sole motivation is welfare. It is regrettable that in seeking to vilify welfare groups, some supporters of live export have failed to differentiate between occasional tragic instances of cattle neglect on outback stations versus 30-plus years of sheep suffering heat stress and death on live export ships. This is the depths they are prepared to go to 'to shoot the messenger', deny the suffering and pursue their profits.

Graziers and businesses associated with live export - like any business facing readjustment - must face reality and make arrangements to transition to alternative means of income.

Over the years my family had to adjust to the huge changes that occurred during the dairy industry restructure; the same restructure was necessary for the fruit industry in the Goulburn Valley when Britain joined the EU; similarly, the clothing, textiles and footwear industry, the car industry and numerous other industries, large and small have had to adapt to change.

Farmers must face up to reality. Live sheep export has lost its social licence – if it ever had one. It has no place in modern Australia in the 21st century. Public confidence can never be restored.

Emanuel Exports' recent launch of 'The Sheep Collective' is a desperate PR stunt. For example, letting a few MPs or TV cameras view conditions on a docked live export ship while loading sheep in Fremantle (as was the case recently) is very different from conditions sheep experience when crossing the equator with searing temperatures and humidity and rough seas. As even the 'sanitised' precis of DAWR's IO reports reveal, **heat stress** is still occurring and sheep are suffering terribly on these ships.

The implementation of the recommendations in the draft report is crucial. Animals exported live must be treated in accordance with

scientific and evidence-based animal welfare standards to protect them from harm and distress.

The current HSRA model, which is based on mortality rates rather than animal welfare indicators, has over decades effectively excluded/ignored the severe suffering of many millions of animals that have experienced moderate to extreme heat stress but have not actually died during the voyages.

The industry's own research reports have acknowledged this reality for many years - yet it has failed to act. Instead exporters have continued sending millions of Australian sheep into climatic conditions where they know the animals will suffer. This is neither acceptable to me, nor is it consistent with Australian animal welfare values.

These recommendations must be implemented immediately by Minister Littleproud and the Australian government; they should not be watered down or interfered with. And if the new heat stress requirements are not met, the penalty should be immediate licence cancellation

I do not believe Simon Crean when he says 'animal welfare is the highest priority area for ALEC'. History has shown otherwise; and this defence of the indefensible continues. The industry is still resisting change.

I therefore strongly SUPPORT all EIGHT recommendations made by the Panel in the review of the Heat Stress Risk Assessment model for live sheep export.

In particular, I express my strong support for:

- moving the HSRA framework from one that is focused on mortality to one that is focused on animal welfare;
- acknowledging the Heat Stress Threshold for the standard export sheep and setting a Wet Bulb Temperature (WBT) limit of 28°C;
- setting the risk limit for voyages at less than 2% probability of exceeding 28°C WBT;

- incorporating the environmental conditions at the destination in the risk assessment; and
- recording other factors such as CO₂ and ammonia and factoring these measures into the risk assessment.

Jan Kendall
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