

1 March 2023

Senator the Hon Murray Watt
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
PO Box 6100
Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

via email: minister.watt@agriculture.gov.au

cc: The Hon Anthony Albanese MP, Prime Minister of Australia
Senator the Hon Penny Wong, Minister for Foreign Affairs
Senator the Hon Don Farrell, Minister for Trade and Tourism

Dear Minister

Re Live Sheep Phase Out Policy

We write to advise that we oppose the Australian Government's policy to phase out live sheep exports.

Signatories to this letter are the Chairs and Presidents of peak livestock bodies, national farming organisations and state farming organisations. We have signed this letter as the policy is a whole of sector issue, not just a livestock exports issue. The policy represents a red line that cannot be crossed. We will never support legitimate agricultural industries being closed for political reasons, or to suit activist agendas.

We recognise that the live sheep industry has not been without its past challenges, but also acknowledge and commend the industry for its reform, which has been substantiated by evidence and enhanced Australia's trading reputation internationally.

This reform has been recognised by the Western Australian Premier and his Agriculture Minister. We note that you have also acknowledged the improvements the industry has made.

If the live sheep industry is phased out in spite of its reform and positive animal welfare outcomes, which can all be evidenced, then an appalling precedent will be set, one which alarms all of us.

All of our industries have, at some point, become the target of activist agendas that do not portray our industries truthfully.

It would set a dangerous and concerning precedent for the government to prioritise activist agendas over recognising the overwhelming evidence of reform and improvement. Activists will not stop at just the live sheep industry. Any accession to their agenda undermines all of our industries and the work and investment we have collectively made to Australia being a world leader in animal welfare.

The live sheep industry, like all our industries, exist to support Australia's food production and provides for the food security and market preferences of our international trading partners. We do not believe it can be 'transitioned out of' in a way that benefits producers. It would be detrimental to rural communities and international markets. All the evidence is farmers who remain in sheep will suffer a financial cost if the trade ends as it is the only mechanism that provides additional competitive tension in the market. The industry's removal would penalise farming families and our international friends, to our country's detriment and at the cost of approximate 3000 jobs in Western Australia.

We acknowledge that you have sought to engage meaningfully with us on this matter and we appreciate the manner in which you have done so. We note that shortly you will be announcing a consultation process about how the policy will be implemented.

However, we advise that in making our contributions to this process we will continue to oppose the Australian Government policy to phase out live sheep exports and continue to advocate for a change in this policy based on evidence and contemporary experience. As far as we are concerned, the industry must be viewed on its current standing and improvements as it remains a vital part of the Australian agricultural sector.

Yours sincerely



David Galvin
Chair
Australian Livestock Exporters' Council



Andrew Spencer
Chair
Sheep Producers Australia



Fiona Simson
President
National Farmers' Federation



David Foote
Chairman
Cattle Australia



Steve Harrison
Independent Chair
Wool Producers Australia



John Falkenhagen
President
Goat Industry Council of Australia



Barb Madden

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President
Australian Lot Feeders' Association



Rick Gladigau

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Peter Baldwin

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Vice President
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Emma Germano

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Victorian Farmers Federation



Joe Keynes
President
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Ian Sauer
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Tasmanian Farmers & Graziers Association



Georgie Somerset
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David Connelly
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David Warriner
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Greg Pankhurst
President, Queensland Livestock Exporters
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Darren Spencer
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