**Broadcast Session 1**

Program overview transcript

(Duration 55 mins 52 secs)

12 May 2023

## Introduction

This is the transcript of a Broadcast, presented by the Independent Panel for the Phase out of live sheep exports by sea. There were 114 participants. The broadcast sessions were intended for large audiences to hear from a panel. Attendees were able to submit questions via the Teams Live moderated Q&A tool, while their microphones and camera were not enabled. At the start of these forums, the panel shared information before providing attendees with the opportunity to ask questions and participate in an online discussion.

## Transcript

[Webinar begins]

**Phil Glyde:** Hello everyone. My name's Phil Glyde. I am the chair of the independent panel appointed by Minister Watt to consult with stakeholders on the How and the when, the government can phase out the live export of sheep by sea.

Before we begin today's session, can I acknowledge that we are meeting on the lands of Australia's traditional owners and pay my respects to their elders, past, present, and emerging. I welcome all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be joining us here today.

Just a reminder that today's Team's live broadcast is being recorded. We are doing a live broadcast today with doing another one on Monday and both of those broadcasts will be available to view on the department's website. I am also pleased to be joined by my fellow panel members and I will ask them to introduce themselves. First of all, Heather…

**Heather Neil:** Hi everyone. I am Heather Neil, up until 2019, I was the CEO of RSPCA Australia, and it was a role that I held for 12 years. I now work in rail safety and the mental health industry.

**Sue Middleton:** Hi everyone. My name is Sue Middleton. I am a farmer from WA. Until recently, we were broad-acre farmers in the Wheatbelt, but we had a piggery and a self-replacing merino ewe enterprise, and we were involved, and did do live export. We developed a horticulture business, Moro citrus, which we are still involved in, I should also tell you, and have been involved in the export for the citrus industry. And I have also had a thirty plus year career in regional and community development.

**Warren Snowden:** Good morning, everyone, and up until the federal election last year, I spent almost 33 years in the federal parliament as member for Lingiari and member of the NT, previously administered over a number of different portfolios in the Rudd Gillard governments and I'm very pleased to be part of this discussion.

**Phil Glyde:** And I was previously the chief executive of the Murray Darling Basin Authority is my most recent job, and I was previously a Deputy Secretary in the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry’s and I have got background in agricultural policy and economics.

So, what have we been asked to do? On the 3rd of March, Minister Watt opened a consultation process to inform how and when the government should implement its policy to phase out live sheep exports by sea. The panel was formed to undertake the important task of engaging with stakeholders right across the complete suite of stakeholders that have an interest in this area. And he's asked us to really to do three things, to advise on the how and the when the phase out should take place, what is needed to help those who will be impacted by the phase out, and how can we help those people adjust and also how can we tap into new opportunities such as expanding domestic processing of meat and evaluating and increasing exports by quality sheep meat to the world.

We are very conscious there are many views held on the trade and that people and businesses stand to be affected by the phase out. We have heard a lot in our face-to-face meetings that were held in WA, that is especially the case, that the impacts will be felt in WA. Because WA accounts for the vast majority of live she exports from Australia at present.

The Prime Minister and Minister Watt have indicated that the phase out will not be implemented during this term of the Australian Parliament, and will be implemented during the next term, and that provides time for impacted parties, the exporters, farmers, supply chain participants and the communities that depend on the live export trade to consider their options and adjust. As I have mentioned, we have already met with a wide range of people and groups across Australia, but particularly in WA, so that we can get all the different perspectives on the trade and what might be needed to help participants to transition to other opportunities. Alongside the feedback that we are getting on forums such as this in terms of online, and the face-to-face meetings, we are also encouraging everyone to put in a written submission. You can do that by visiting the department's website, and you can complete a survey or submit a written submission and welcome those submissions before the 31st of May on the website can also download a copy of the consultation paper.

Following this consultation process in our own investigations we will collate the feedback and develop recommendations for the government to consider. We are obliged to report to Minister Watt, by the 30th of September.

Just a couple of housekeeping things I need to remind people about in terms of this live broadcast. All video and microphone features for the participants are disabled and so to raise a question, please use the text chat tool to type and submit your question. Those questions are going to be moderated, which really means that we are going to try and collate similar questions or identical questions. So, we get to as many different issues and questions as we can in the time available. And so, you might not necessarily see your exact wording translated into a question, but we are hoping that we do that job well and that we can get as many questions answered as possible and would also try to get a full range of different views as well. So, we may only respond to one of your questions rather than if you've got 5 or 10 or 20 that you might want to ask us. But bottom line is, we will aim to answer as many questions as we can in the time available. So, with that in mind, I will ask you to submit questions and we'll go from there…

I think I have caught people a little by surprise. To date, we do not have any questions. I am more than happy to wait for those questions. Do not be shy.

So, the first question we have is, does the panel support the phasing out of live sheep exports by sea? We have had that question posed to us many times, particularly during our regional forums in WA, and it is a pretty simple answer. We have not been asked to provide the views on whether or not we support. We have signed on to this task and the specifics of this task, which is to advise the Minister on how to go about phasing out. What is the best time frame for that? And so, we are specifically not covering that. That being said, we will be going to try and describe the impacts of the phase out, and the reason we do that is that everyone is aware of the consequences of the decision. But more importantly, so that we are aware of what is likely to happen and so that, therefore, we can recommend to the government what actions it might take to try and offset those adverse impacts.

The next question we have is when will the phase out take place? That is a very good question indeed. It is one of the critical questions that we have been posed as a panel and that's really why we're seeking information from everyone. What is the best time for it to take place? We have heard in our consultations today, timeframes anywhere from as soon as possible as possible, the next term of Parliament should government be re-elected, right through to 20 or 25 years? And so we're looking at what the impacts are likely to be, both immediate and over time. What the likely impacts might be of any of the measures that the government might choose to put in place so that we can give an estimate of that, to provide some certainty to, to farmers, but also to provide time for people to adjust.

The next question we have got is why isn't it possible for the phase out to occur prior to the end of this term? And the answer to that is that the Prime Minister and the Minister has made it very clear that they won't do that, and my understanding is that the reason for that is because they do want to have time to adjust. It's long been recognised that stopping something as integral to West Australian agriculture as the live trade, will have an adverse impact and those adverse impacts can be ameliorated or reduced if people are given time to adjust, if alternative markets can be found for the type of meat that might be thrown up to increase domestic processing. If there needs to be changed to farming systems, mixed farming systems, then give time for producers to do that. So, I think it is reasonable – it's a sensible approach – that you can minimise the cost by giving people time to react.

Next question is in relation to a similar experience New Zealand managed to complete phase out of all live exports in two years. Why does the phase out need to be over two terms? That is a good question. We met on Tuesday this week with the New Zealand officials who were responsible for that phase out and it's important to remember that New Zealand has had a much longer time frame for phasing out its live exports. It started the process of phasing out the export of live animals for slaughter many years ago, I think around 2007. And so, the most recent phase out, which was also announced after a period of consultation, was the phasing out of animals that were going overseas for breeding purposes. And so, I think the New Zealand phase out experience is much longer than what we've talked about to date. So, I think that may well be what is behind the government's thinking in relation to the phase out over two terms.

The next question also a good one, which is will legislation or regulation change be required to implement the government's plans? That really is a good question. That really will depend on the way in which the government chooses to go about making the change. We know that some stakeholders are looking for the legislation to be put in place before or during this current term to provide some certainty going forward. But really at the end of the day it comes back to what is the best way to implement that change, and what some of the recommendations might be that we might make to ameliorate the impacts of that change. But that is one of the critical questions that the panel will be considering is how to make sure that the change occurs in a sensible way.

The next question that we have got is the scope of the panel's work limited to sheep, or will other live exports also to considered? The terms of reference for us are clearly the export of live sheep by sea. And so, we are specifically not looking at the cessation of export of other animals, and indeed the export of sheep by air remains out of scope as well. So, we are only looking at the export of live sheep by sea.

We have another question which is, are animal welfare organisations included in the phase out process? I assume what that question means is, are animal welfare organisations being consulted during our work? And I should add also, perhaps, will animal welfare organisations continue to be engaged once the report is being provided to government and as government moves towards the implementation phase? And all I can really do is comment on what we have done. As I mentioned earlier on, we have sought to involve any stakeholder that has any interest whatsoever in this process and we've met with a range of animal welfare organisations, we've still got a few more to cover and we'll continue to do so. And indeed, we note that in the public submission processes today, and in the have your say processes, we've seen a lot of comments come in from animal welfare organisations, so they are definitely included in the consultation process, and indeed we'll be having separate meetings over the course of these virtual meetings. We are doing eight of these virtual meetings over the course of Friday and Monday. And there is two of them that are like this, which are open to all. But there's also specific ones we are doing. We’re doing a couple with farmers, but also doing one specific one for animal welfare groups, which is this afternoon at 12:30 to 1:30 Australian East Coast Time. So yeah, we'll continue to engage with animal welfare organisations and indeed will continue to engage with any organisation that wants to talk to us about this issue.

The next question is will you be recommending financial compensation to all in the supply chain that will be adversely impacted, such as farmers, stock agents, truckers, feed suppliers? And that is an excellent question and one that we have been posed at almost all of the meetings that we've held with the participants in the supply chain. There is a lot of people who are very concerned about what the ongoing impacts might be. Whilst on the face of it, it looks like this question is just about the live export industry and those who participate in exporting sheep. There's actually a lot of people who are involved in that process and one of our tasks is to understand what those linkages are, so that we can get a handle on what sort of impacts might be expected and also what options there are for people to adjust. In some cases we've heard that there are very few options for people to change their activities and move on to something different that isn't to do with live animal export. And so, we will definitely be considering that. In relation to financial compensation, there is a number of different activities that we might recommend right through from financial compensation, right through to assistance for industries, in particular players in those industries to adjust. So, we are definitely considering all things that could be done to ameliorate the impact of the decision.

The next question is are live cattle exports next to be banned? And that is really a question for the government, not for the panel. As I said before, our mandate is to look at the export of live sheep by sea. And my only observation would be that the government, the Minister, and the Prime Minister, has made it very clear that this process, this ban, is only to do with live sheep by sea.

Follow up question is will the panel be recommending funding for new abattoirs and staff to support them in WA? It appears the sourcing of overseas labour will be critical. I think if there's one thing that there seems to be a unanimous view on in terms of talking to everybody right across the stakeholder spectrum, is that if you're going to be removing the export of live sheep by sea, then you need to make sure that those animals that might have gone overseas on a ship actually do get processed in Australia. The more that that can happen, the smaller will be the adverse impact on farmers. We have spoken with almost all of the domestic meat processors and will complete that process when we're back in WA in the second half of June. But what we've heard from all of the stakeholders, particularly the industry stakeholders, is that whilst it might be possible to provide assistance for abattoirs to put on additional capacity, expert chilling rooms or extra equipment etcetera, one of the rate limiting steps at the moment would seem to be sourcing of labour, and much of the labour in the abattoirs in WA comes from overseas and there had been some concerns expressed about the difficulty of obtaining that labour promptly. We have heard a lot about long queues for visa processing and so sourcing of overseas labour will be critical. Accommodation for labour is also critical. We heard a lot about that in visits to WA in the meetings we have had, and indeed, training and skill acquisition is also another factor in making sure that abattoirs will be in a position to perhaps run 2 shifts, 1 and a half shifts, so they can actually deal with processing. Now the element that we've heard a lot about, right at the moment in WA, there's quite a backlog in the abattoirs, it's impossible to get a booking until the end of July, and that's a causing concern given that there are quite a number of sheep on farm at the moment. But the short answer is yes, we will be considering funding for another programme to support new abattoirs, augmenting existing abattoirs and staff etcetera to support them.

So next question is also another good one. Thank you for all these questions. Are the sheep currently being exported live suitable for a boxed meat market from Australia? Excellent question. We have heard a variety of different views on this. When we talk to processors, we hear that in summary that they can sell overseas anything they can kill. When we talk to sheep producers, what we hear is the animals that they are currently getting ready and have been getting ready for many years for live export, are not necessarily suitable and do not necessarily meet the specifications at the abattoirs have, or their processing for prime lamb, in particular. And so, there is a real concern about whether or not the type of breeds that are being used in the live export trade actually are suitable. And that goes to the question of timeframes. Is it possible for farmers to change over time to meet those specifications? Is it possible for abattoirs to process those animals that might not necessarily be suitable for lamb specs, and still have a market overseas that is going to be financially viable, not just for the processors but also for the farmers. And that is one of the questions that we have had posed to us. One of the questions we have, and trying to get to the bottom of, what activities, or actions could be taken by the government to make sure that animals can be processed domestically, can find a market overseas and can continue to produce an income stream for graziers.

And the next question we have is, will this policy damage Australia's trade relations? And that has certainly been a key topic of discussion that has been brought to our attention. Many of the countries that have traditionally taken live sheep, and certainly the countries that currently take live sheep, are concerned about what this means for their supply chains. And there has been a concern expressed that either retaliatory action might take place on other exports that Australia provides to those countries. Or that we might be undermining the food security of those countries by limiting this trade, and so there's a risk for this to happen, and one of the questions we're looking at is what can be done to minimise that risk. We have certainly been asked by the Minister to engage with those overseas markets, companies and countries that currently use the trade and we have done that. We met with one of the companies most recently, last week, we had a video hook up with Kuwait, with a company called KLTT, and we will continue to do that, to hear their concerns and see what can be done to ameliorate those concerns.

The next question we have is, will the government reconsider its decision to phase out live sheep exports by sea? Again, that is out of our wheelhouse. That is not one that we can really answer. That is really a question that you would need to put to the government. And we are aware through our interactions with almost all of the industry associations and representative groups, that their policy is very clear. They do not support the phase out of the trade. That they will not engage with us in the details of the how and the when to phase out the trade, and that they will prosecute the policy objective, which is to cease to stop the policy being implemented through their political and agribusiness representatives.

The next question is, how does the panel expect to be able to measure the financial impacts across multiple industries, and the major impacts the phase out will have on small regional communities. That is an excellent question. And really there is two parts to that. If I could deal with the first one is how do we expect to measure, to be able to measure the financial impacts across multiple industries. So, there is a history. There are some lessons that we can learn from history, there have been a number of studies commissioned over the last three or four years, primarily relating to the financial and agronomic impacts of the moratorium that was introduced around 2018, that saw a reduction in the trade. And so, estimates were made at the time that that moratorium was being considered about what those financial impacts will be. There are economic studies conducted on behalf of the industry, economic impact studies conducted on behalf of the animal welfare organisations, and indeed the Australian Bureau of Agricultural Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) looked at those studies and produce its own estimates of those impacts. So, we have some history to draw on. We've also been made aware through our consultations that the industry groups and the animal welfare groups are refreshing those studies to bring it up to date, but also to deal with the complete cessation of the trade, which was what would occur if the government’s policy is implemented in the next term. And we are also aware that the WA Department of Agriculture DPIRD is also undertaking its studies. We are also in the process of trying to commission our own consultants to sort of look at those questions. And so, we are working hard to do exactly what that does. Try to measure the financial impacts across multiple industries. And it is not just the impact on a live sheep producer or on the live sheep exporters. It is also to look at all of the industries in the supply chain, feedlots, truckers, the impact it might have on the wool industry, the impact it might have on the shearers, the impact it might have on all of those supporting industries. The second element of the question is about the major impacts the phase out will have on small, regional communities and indeed that has also been a concern and a real worry for many of the people we have met with in our regional consultations. That there will be those impacts. And so, we again, will be probably trying to measure those impacts, and they’re notoriously difficult to do, but we think it would be really important if we're going to move to this export ban, then we need to try and understand what impact there might be on regional communities and possibly also recommend actions to offset those impacts. And certainly, the previous experience I've had in this area is that those impacts are real, and the ongoing effects are often not seen and felt until sometime after the original decision is taken. So, we are well aware of that concern and we'll simply be doing our best to estimate those impacts. I might also point out that in our submissions, in our discussions that we have been having to date, we're getting sort of anecdotal information about this, and we're really quite keen to try and bring some of those examples forward, because some of those studies talk about things at quite an aggregate level, at a sort of sector wide level, but a lot of the people we've been engaging with are very concerned about the impact on their individual business and whilst it's impossible to sum up all of those individual impacts, we do know there are quite different farming systems and the impacts will be quite different depending on how live export features in those farming systems. And so, we will be looking at those submissions for those anecdotes, because of the sort of impacts that might occur, and hoping that that those things might, at least be illustrative of the type of impacts that could occur if actions are taken to phase it out.

The next question is in relation to when we will complete our work. We are obliged to report by the 30th of September, and we will be finished by that point. As many people have pointed out to us, it’s quite an ambitious time frame, but it's the one that the government has set us and we understand the reason for that is that if they're going to get ready to implement the phase out in the next term of Parliament, they need that sort of time to acquire funding, should funding be required or funding be recommended by this panel to offset those impacts. And also, legislation might be required. So, for those of you unfamiliar with the Byzantine machinations of how government works, that means that those things have to be considered in the next budget, the most recent one was brought down earlier this week. But in order to get into next year's budget, the department and the Minister need to have this information in front of them by September to have that work done. So, it is a long-winded answer, but we will have our work done by the 30th of September and we are working extremely hard to meet that deadline.

The next question is, will the panel recommend that legislation is in place within this government term? That is one of the questions that we are considering. I cannot give you an answer yes or no on that, but it is one that we are considering, that question of how and when is the best way to implement the government's decision.

And the next question is, have we consulted sheep producers in Eastern Australia re impacts? Yes, we have consulted some of those sheep producers or at least the representative organisations. And we are also aware of the impact that has occurred. We are aware also that there are impacts that are occurring in the market that have nothing much to do with this decision because the decision won't be implemented at least until the next term of government. And so a lot of the price impacts that we're observing, a lot of the supply and demand questions that have occurred over the last little while and indeed the large number of sheep that are currently on foot in WA that haven't found a market as yet, there are issues that have emerged over for variety of reasons over the last couple of years. But however, people are concerned that that sort of impact will be the consequence of the government's decision, having additional market sheep on the market and depressing prices. So we're aware that there are current impacts and we’re aware that the mere announcement of the panel, and the mere announcement of the government's decision, although it's going to occur in a couple of years’ time, we're aware that that very announcement has had an impact on markets, has a big impact on confidence in markets and investment confidence and on indeed, on the decisions that individual producers and members of the supply chain will make over the course of the next few months.

Next question is, is the government trying to source markets for box meat? Again, at another great question, the government and indeed the Meat and Livestock Australia and indeed the individual abattoirs are constantly in the business of trying to find new markets and trying to support existing markets. And one of the solutions that has been put to us is that there might be further work that governments, the MLA, the individual processors can put into broadening out the markets and finding markets for the sort of animals that are currently being produced for the live trade. And so I'm aware that there's a lot of people, we’re aware that there are a lot of players involved in opening up markets, but it seems to be that given that Australia together with New Zealand are one of the two largest exporters of lamb and sheep meat, that we’re already recognised around the world as an efficient producer, and that I think there is the hope, and you got to get to the bottom of this, there is the hope that those markets can be found. So, I think that will be something to be considering in terms of ameliorating action.

Next question is again an excellent one, will it be commercially viable for new processing capacity, or will ongoing subsidisation be necessary? Has the panel considered the scale of investment required to avoid adverse impacts on sheep farmers? So, I can say in relation to the second part of that question, that is definitely yes. One of our key tasks is to advise the government on first of all, what's the size of the impact and indeed what sort of investment might be required, what sort of initiatives might be undertaken by the government to minimise the impact, I think we've recognised it might be hard to completely avoid adverse impacts. The mere changing from one farming system to another has an impact regardless of whether in the long run that might be positive. So, we will be considering that.

The question of commercial viability is really a critical one. One of the things that we are acutely aware of is that it is one thing for the government to come in and provide money to do particular things, perhaps establish more processing capacity and new plants or in existing plans or encourage new domestic players in the market. But we are also aware that at the end of the day, all of these things have to be financially viable, for all of the players in the supply chain and long going subsidies, might not necessarily be the right thing to do. So, one of those questions that we are contemplating, is it actually commercially viable to do this without completely long term, you know, without having permanent subsidies for the processing sector, and that's a distortion of itself in the market. And what I think we have observed also is that Australian farmers are the most economically efficient producers of agricultural product in the world market and one of the reasons for that is that there isn't a lot of subsidies for the agricultural sector as a whole. So that's a really good question and it's definitely one that's been occupying our minds as to how does the government make the interventions in order to try and offset the adverse impacts, but also not leaving a long run inefficiency in the market, not creating white elephants in investment in processing capacity. So that is a complex answer that we are currently contemplating.

The next question is in relation to Australia's reputation in terms of animal welfare. What is going to happen to our reputation? I think it is well known that Australia's regulatory framework and the behaviour of exporters to date is world leading and has been for quite some time. And so, one of the concerns that have been expressed to us in our meetings is that, if Australia withdraws from those markets, what will be the consequence on animal welfare outcomes in those markets? Given that if we have a high welfare standard to export out, what will happen? I think my best estimate, my understanding of the size of Australia's participation in the market right at the moment is that we are responsible for about 6% of the total live sheep trade around the world, and that our presence in that market may or may not be significant. It is one of the questions we try to ascertain to see if there's anything that needs to be done through Australia withdrawing from the trade and what impact that might have. It certainly has been put to us that there are other entities around the world that also have an interest in maintaining and improving animal welfare outcomes and the European Union. Some of these exports do come from the European Union to, particularly the Middle East. And so, they have their own objectives. There are worldwide organisations that looking at animal welfare and so the questions being put to us, if there is an impact on animal welfare going forward internationally, what should the Commonwealth do? What could the Commonwealth do in that space? So, we are aware of that issue, and it is something we're considering what can be done about that.

Next question is in relation to have you met with the WA State government as a key stakeholder in this debate? And the short answer to that is yes, and we will continue to do so. There's been meetings that this panel has had with WA officials, but also the panel met last week with the West Australian Minister to hear her concerns and her views about what needs to be done in relation to the phase out of live sheep by sea. So we'll continue to do that and indeed, we will be relying heavily on the work that the WA Government will be putting in place. We are expecting a very full, weighty, accurate and informed submission from the WA Government and the WA Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

The next question. Does the outcome necessarily need to be that the same number of sheep are processed just locally versus via export, rather than a reduction in overall numbers? i.e., the balance between the current scenario and the known impacts of animal agriculture with respect to climate change. That is again, a good question and has a number of dimensions to it. It really is a good question. We've met with the representatives of sheep producers, wool growers, etcetera, and we've met with individual farmers, of course, during the course of our consultations in Regional WA and we’ll continue to meet with them to hear about this topic. But one of the issues that people put to us is that this decision will reduce the attractiveness of sheep production, and will indeed, not just for meat, but also for wool, and what impact that might have. That it might lead to a significant reduction in the number of sheep in the sheep flock in WA and indeed might flow onto the overall national sheep flock. And so that is a really good question about whether or not we have to maintain or otherwise, the number of sheep. The sheep producing organisations or their representatives I think would be keen to see the sheep flock grow over time, that sheep production would still remain a viable financially successful industry and indeed grow it. And a lot of their plans for the future seem to relate to growing the size of the sheep flock and increasing wool production, increasing boxed meat production. And really it is a question of, if this transition can be well managed, if the investments can be made to enable sheep producers to stay in the game, those that can still see a future, then we certainly think that would be a good outcome if that could be had but whether or not that happens depends a lot on the extent to which sheep producers can stay in the game and I think one of the concerns we have about industry's policy position, which is not to engage with us on the how and the when, they'd rather prosecute their argument at a political level to make sure there's no phase out. We are very keen to find out from all producers and everyone in the supply chain what are some of those things that could enable a more optimistic future for the industry, recognising that the very announcement has put a fair degree of pessimism into the future of the industry.

So the other part of the question is in relation to animal agriculture and what impact it might have on climate change, and several of the meetings we've had in N.W.A have made this linkage between the role that sheep play in reducing the amount of adverse impacts that contribute to an acceleration of climate change and also the impact impacts that would happen if taken out of production systems, which means a greater application of chemical fertilisers and the like. And so, it is certainly an issue that we are trying to understand, trying get a handle on, what sort of impact this might have on the environmental side. What does this mean? There is also going to be lots more crop production as a result of sheep farmers leaving, then trying to make up for that loss of income and putting in more grain production. So, what impact does that subsequently have on climate change, so these are two very contentious issues that we don't have an answer to yet and we're seeking answers to.

Do you believe that the issue of live animal exports has an ethical as well as an economic dimension? We have certainly heard about the ethics and the animal welfare consequences of the decision, and indeed the animal welfare consequences of livestock production. But the economic dimensions also come out in some of our discussions, and again is one of the things we have heard and we are considering. The point that has been made to us is that Australia, generally speaking, has a very good reputation in relation to being a clean, green producer, that whilst we can from time to time, we are a high cost producer of products, people are prepared to pay those high costs because of our ethical, and environmental, and biosecurity standards that we have, which impose significant costs on getting products out of the country. And so it's been put to us that this decision, whilst it might have an adverse economic impact, could have in the longer run have some sort of a positive impact, because this sort of decision enhances that overall reputation of being a clean green ethical producer of agricultural products, and as economies around the world develop more Western standards as they develop, as those countries develop more of a middle class, more of an economy like the first world, these things become very critical sources of competition for us into the future.

How could people participate in the consultation process? Very good question that I think could possibly be a Dorothy Dixer, but certainly participate in these live forums that we've got on over the course of today and Monday, continue to turn up to our in-person meetings, which we’ll be providing the detail of those as we move further north of Perth and out into the Eastern Wheatbelt and down to Bunbury to complete our geographical coverage. Let us know if you want to meet. We are having a lot of discussions with stakeholder groups and individuals and representatives online. Please put in a written submission. Getting things on the public record is really critical and important to us. We can quote from that in our report, and we can learn from what you know. There’s only so many things that four people on a panel, ably assisted by the research that's been done to date and the research we’ll get in, there is only so much we can glean, that we know from our own personal experience. We will have to have high quality submissions if we are to provide a high-quality report. So please do that. If you do not want to provide a submission, then you can still get in and have your view expressed by going on the website and having your say. You can just send us essentially a short e-mail so that we know what your view is. So that is I think, unless someone can advise me, I forgot something there, we're going to be continuing to consult. While the public submission process will complete on the end of May, the 31st of May, we'll continue to engage right up to the point at which we finalise our report, and that's important because what will come from these submissions will be questions, that we will need to follow up with those people that put in public submissions, the people that we've been talking to, to date. At almost every meeting we've had, we've reserved the opportunity to come back to the people we've met with so that we can tease out questions, particularly as we move into the phase of figuring out what's the best thing we can do to offset the impacts of the phase out?

Next question is, will submissions be considered by the panel? If it is stated we don't support the phase out policy, but also highlight the impact it will possibly have on industry? I think a short answer to that is absolutely yes. Just because you oppose the policy, it does not mean you should not put in a submission. It does not mean you should not describe for us the impacts and effects that policy will have on you, your industry, your town, the whole of the country. Please let us know that. If you can, by all means put in what you think would be the best thing that could happen should the policy go ahead. Let us know that too. But just because you are opposed to the policy that is, we will be considering your submission. Just as much as we would consider someone who is or an institution that is absolutely supporting the policy in spades and wants to see implemented as soon as possible.

The next question is how are you balancing polarising views on the phase out? That is an exceptionally good question. Whilst we have all of the views expressed, as you'd expect, they range from get going with the phase out, this is a cruel trade; right through to this is ridiculous, we don't want this policy, we do not want it phased out. Supporting those views will be the submissions and the new work that is being done, not just by us but by the representative organisations that argue the specific aspects of their polar views. That will all come in together, we will be able to get some facts and figures from others in the consultants, etc, that are experienced in these matters. But at the end of the day, there is no mechanism, there is no report, there is no fancy economic or social or otherwise method, for bringing together those views. That's the role that the four of us play in exercising some judgement about how do you go about implementing the policy, and at the end of the day, no matter how good the submissions are, and how good the supporting material is, there will be opposing views, there will be opposing analysis, and our job is to bring that together and come to an agreement about what is the best way. And so, I would not like to think that we are going to be waving a magic wand or using a black box, we will be applying nothing other than judgement to try and come up with a range of ways in which governments can implement the policy.

How many sheep producers are actually relying solely on live export for their income? Again, a very good question, a simple answer to that is I don't know that, but what we have heard talking to farmers is there is a huge range of farming systems in WA, and that whilst there are quite a few farming enterprises that don't export sheep by sea, however, it has been also pointed out to us that the mere existence of that channel, of being able to provide animals to the export trade, is a significant benefit to live sheep producers. Why is that? Two reasons. One is that it provides an alternative to the domestic processing. And so, there is another player, there is another competitor in the market, during time for when the abattoirs might not be as interested in providing a decent price. And so, the mere existence of another player in the marketplace means that there is a benefit to a sheep producer who might not be using live-ex or has chosen not to use live-ex. The other element is as a risk management tool, that the nature of agricultural production in WA, reflecting its climatic circumstances is that from time to time in very bad years, farmers might be caught with an excess of sheep on farm and no ability to feed them because there might be no feed on farm, and that in circumstances, live exports provide an outlet for those farmers not to overgraze or to be able to do something, should they end up in a circumstance where they have too many. And so, I think it is one of those questions. Ok, I think we are getting to time. We have got 5 minutes. Probably got time for one last question...

Someone has asked the question what is the e-mail address for submitting views, if you don't want to make a submission? Please, I think it is a very good question. [livesheep.phaseout@agriculture.gov.au](mailto:livesheep.phaseout@agriculture.gov.au).

Can I thank everybody for their patience, staying on the call and listening to me. I know that gets a bit boring and repetitive, but can I thank all of you who submitted questions, particularly the ones that have been published and apologise to those of you who might not have seen the exact specifics of your question reflected. But we have been able to consider a number of questions. There is another one of these sessions on Monday, but there is also another six sessions where we're with smaller groups with the opportunity to engage more directly through video or voice. Please feel free to engage in those. The other thing I remind people of, particularly WA, there will be further face to face consultations. Please reach out to us if you do want to have a one-on-one discussion with the panel. But look with those closing remarks, can I thank you again for your patience and time and look forward to ongoing engagement with you. Thank you.

[Broadcast ends]

Note: Every effort has been made to transcribe the broadcast accurately, however slight discrepancies may occur between the spoken word and written word.

**Acknowledgement of Country**

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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