

LIVE EXPORT — ANIMALS AUSTRALIA REPORT

**236. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:**

I refer to the minister's proposal yesterday to ban live exports from Western Australia for three months of the year.

- (1) Does the minister agree with the Animals Australia commissioned report that banning live exports for three months would cost on average \$2 000 per farmer?
- (2) Does the minister concede that the Animals Australia report is flawed, given its view that the state's live sheep export volume is less than half of that outlined in the department's "2017 Western Australia's Agrifood/Fibre/Fisheries/Forestry Industries" document?
- (3) What protections has the minister considered putting in place for sheep farmers should she push ahead with pursuing a ban of live export from Western Australia?
- (4) Is the minister willing to invest state funds in providing more abattoir facilities to increase domestic sheep processing capacity?
- (5) If yes to (4), what is the anticipated contribution of the state government to facilitate a growth in processing?

**Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:**

- (1)–(5) I am not familiar with the Animals Australia-commissioned report, so I am not going to pass judgement or give my view on whether it is right or wrong. But what I do know is that the member's colleague in the federal Parliament, the federal Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, is actually accepting that what is going on at the moment is totally unacceptable. He said, "I've seen that footage and I was absolutely shocked and gutted", as were farmers across the state. He said that it cannot go on.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I want to hear the minister respond.

**Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN:** Our point is that vessel after vessel has taken sheep from southern ports in Australia in the winter and gone into the Gulf in high summer. There has been such a clear spike in the rate of death and mortality on those vessels that we believe something has to be done. It happened in 2016 and the federal department said, "Just take a few sheep off." Then it happened again in 2017 and the department said again, "Just take a few sheep off." Now that the federal minister has been forced to confront the reality, he is saying that that is absolute rubbish and that it is not acceptable and something different has to happen. The federal minister has said—we are happy with him taking that approach—that there is going to be a short, sharp review of what can be done to handle this issue of mortality in the months of July and August in particular, and he is talking about air conditioning, maybe. We are open to considering air conditioning, but I suggest that people actually go and see some of the vessels being used in this trade and question whether this will be feasible at all. Of course, it would have to be refrigerated air conditioning, because a big part of the problem is that the ships are repeatedly going into areas of very high humidity—94 per cent humidity. If we are going to deal with this problem by way of air conditioning, we will need to be talking about refrigerated air conditioning. I would have thought that the cost of doing that would be absolutely prohibitive. Reducing stocking densities by 40 per cent might be part of the solution.

*Point of Order*

**Hon COLIN HOLT:** I am wondering about the conciseness of the answer.

**The PRESIDENT:** There is no point of order. The difficulty here is that people ask multi-part questions. The minister is providing a response. Yes, it would be very much appreciated for the minister to stick to the point and provide an appropriate, timely response. I am sure that that is what she is going to do.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

**Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN:** I see at every point that members do not want to actually confront the issues at play here, whether it is a ministerial statement or whatever.

We will be prepared if they come up with a way of air conditioning these vessels, but we are not confident that is possible. We will hold off judgement until we see what comes out of the federal government's report.

In terms of abattoirs and the capacity to deal with any pause in live exports, we have been talking to WAMMCO, which can operate two shifts. It is operating only one, but it would prefer to be operating two shifts. But even on a single shift, its quiet months are May to September, so it absolutely would have the capacity to do that. When we look across the board at Fletchers, WAMMCO and V&V Walsh, we see that our processors are only running at about 60 per cent capacity. It is clear that we have the capacity in the abattoirs, if it was necessary to do this, if it turns out not to be financially viable to air condition the vessels that will be going to the Gulf in summer.

