

EMANUEL EXPORTS — LEGAL ACTION

Statement

HON DR BRAD PETTITT (South Metropolitan) [5.51 pm]: I rise to give a member's statement on live sheep exports because on Monday this week we heard, when the story broke in Nine newspapers, that the WA government intended to drop its long-running prosecution of live sheep exporter Emanuel Exports for the death of 2 400 sheep—an extraordinary number—on the *Awassi Express* in 2017. This was the day before the trial was due to commence. Then the very next day in court it was confirmed by prosecutors for the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development that they would drop the case, citing the complexity of the case and the public costs and the administrative sanctions already incurred by the company. I, and I think many others who have been watching this closely, were extremely disappointed by this outcome. When more than 2 000 sheep die of heat stress—often, frankly, drowning in their own waste—in conditions that were appalling, I, like many others in the community, expected that the WA government would hold Emanuel Exports to account. If anyone has seen the videos that were captured by the whistleblowers, they were really difficult to watch.

I am not the only one. The federal Labor member for Fremantle, Josh Wilson, who I know very well, put out a media release. I want to quote what he had to say on this issue because we both agree on it. He said —

“This is a disappointing outcome. The community will be bewildered that no specific consequences follow the appalling failure of the *Awassi Express* fiasco.

He is right, because when these kinds of things happen, we need to make sure that there are consequences. It is a really important role for the WA government to do and, frankly, it failed. These were very serious criminal charges regarding a matter of great public interest. Where I live in Fremantle, the port is a regular reminder, frankly, of the cruelty of the live export trade.

We have already seen over the last decade, a massive decline in live sheep exports from Fremantle port, down almost 90 per cent from where it was at its peak. Frankly, this is all the more reason to get on and end the trade with a sensible managed transition out of live exports from WA.

The decision to drop the charges came just weeks, interestingly enough, before Emanuel Exports was granted regulatory approval to reopen the live sheep export trade with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. To see those charges dropped at that point, on the basis of the interests of taxpayers, raises more questions than it does answers. The question that comes to mind for me is: is it too expensive to uphold the law for animal cruelty? I certainly hope not because I think this sends a very poor message to the WA community. It sets a precedent that, ultimately, the live export trade, which is cruel by nature, can get away with this, and that leads me to one conclusion. If that is going to happen, the best thing is for the trade to be shut down. If the government cannot prosecute it, cannot manage it and cannot make sure that it can be held to account for what happens out on the high seas, there is only one way forward, and that is for this industry to be shut down as quickly as possible.

I am standing today to appeal to the WA government to listen to its federal counterparts, the Greens and the public, and commit to ending the cruel live export trade from WA, once and for all.