

## LIVE EXPORT

*Statement by Minister for Agriculture and Food*

**HON JACKIE JARVIS (South West — Minister for Agriculture and Food)** [2.16 pm]: I rise to make a statement on the Western Australian government's submission to the independent panel consulting on the phase-out of live sheep exports by sea.

In Australia, the commonwealth government, through the Export Control Act 2020, regulates animal welfare in livestock exports and sets the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock and Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System.

New regulatory settings were introduced in 2020, including an absolute prohibition period during the hottest, most humid part of the Northern Hemisphere summer, with an aim to improve animal welfare outcomes and minimise the risk of heat stress and heat stress mortalities for sheep exported to the Middle East. The WA government believes that the new animal welfare measures now in place, including the northern summer live export ban, are working and are appropriate. However, as we know, the commonwealth government has committed to phasing out live sheep exports from Australia by sea, but has stated that the phase-out will not take place during this current term of the Australian Parliament to provide time for individuals and businesses to prepare for a transition away from live sheep exports. The WA government submission to the independent panel consulting on the phase-out of live sheep exports makes it clear that any phase-out plans by the commonwealth government must include significant support for our farming communities and a reasonable time frame.

There is a significant risk to Western Australia's farming systems from the transition out of the live export of sheep, particularly if the transition does not allow sufficient time or resources. In the absence of increased support to the processing capacity and development of export markets for meat and wool, the size of the WA sheep flock may drastically reduce as farmers switch from mixed enterprise systems to solely broadacre cropping. This will have a devastating impact on the broader WA merino wool industry.

Economic modelling undertaken by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development on a projected 15 per cent reduction in the size of the WA sheep flock because of the closing of live sheep export markets could cost the agricultural industry and broader WA economy up to \$123 million annually. Although transitioning land use from running sheep to growing cereal crops will reduce the economic impact, it is still estimated that the cost to the WA economy will be around \$22 million annually. A 15 per cent decline in the state sheep flock could also lead to a loss of more than 380 jobs along the livestock supply chain, which will have a negative flow-on impact across WA regional communities.

President, livestock plays an important role in sustainability within WA broadacre farming systems. Rotational grazing systems and permanent pastures improve soil health and fertility by increasing soil microbial density, nutrient availability and organic matter due to the addition of manure and grazing animal movement. In turn, this increases carbon sequestration and reduces the need for fertiliser inputs. Taking livestock out of the farming system entirely will result in risks to farming businesses, the environment, rural community structures, and regional and state economies. Our submission makes it clear that any phase-out of live export will need to be managed well, with resources provided to support the processing sector, market development and the ability for the WA sheep industry to diversify its farming operations.

I now table the Western Australian government submission, *Live sheep export phase-out*, together with supporting documents: Meat and Livestock Australia and Australian Wool Innovation Limited's *Sheep producers intentions survey* of May 2023; the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development's *Sheep notes*, issue 9 of June 2023; Meat and Livestock Australia's *Fast facts — Australia's sheepmeat industry* of May 2023; the 2023 update of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development's *Implications of management decisions on the WA sheep flock in response to changing markets*; and the addendum to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development's flock scenario modelling update.

[See paper [2406](#).]