

Five simultaneous rallies as live sheep shipped during Middle East's summer

Out of sight but not out of mind - political pressure mounting ahead of Federal Government vote on bills to end inhumane trade

Hundreds of South Australians will rally on the steps of Parliament House tomorrow to turn up the heat on politicians who still support inhumane long-haul sheep shipments to the Middle East.

Tomorrow's rally, starting at 10.30am, is one of five being held simultaneously around the country, with similar rallies being staged in Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra and Brisbane.

RSPCA South Australia's Animal Welfare Advocate, Dr Rebekah Eyers, will be among the speakers at the Adelaide rally. She said it was vital to keep telling politicians the issue is not going away.

"We have two bills set to go before Federal Parliament when members return from the winter break in mid-August, and both bills call for these cruel sheep exports to be phased out," Dr Eyers said.

"Politicians will have the choice to either contribute to the end of what is one of the most shameful chapters in our nation's history – or be remembered for allowing it to continue on their watch."

The last ship to leave Port Adelaide loaded with South Australian sheep and cattle, the *Al Shuwaikh*, is now in the Middle East where temperatures hover between 35C to 45C.

In its submission to the recent Federal Government review into sheep shipments to the Middle East during the northern hemisphere summer, the Australian Veterinary Association stated that these shipments could not be recommended because of the extreme risk of sheep suffering heat stress, even with reduced stocking densities.

The review's report, handed down last month, recommended changing the way in which the heat stress risk is assessed. However, the Federal Government chose not to adopt this recommendation, as it would have meant current shipments taking place during the Middle East's summer could not continue.

Federal Agriculture Minister David Littleproud has told media that "further testing of the findings relating to heat stress risk assessment" will be undertaken before a decision is made on this particular recommendation.

Dr Eyers said the review's integrity had been compromised by the decision not to adopt this key recommendation.

“In essence, what we’re now doing is treating sheep like guinea pigs just to show yet again that these summer shipments are inherently cruel and unjustifiable,” Dr Evers said.

The McCarthy review was one of two announced by Minister Littleproud in the wake of shocking footage showing Australian sheep suffering and dying onboard five routine sheep shipments last year.

The second review, led by former integrity commissioner Philip Moss, is looking into the capability and culture of the Federal Government regulator of live animal exports. It is due to report on June 29.

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