



c/- Lady Barron Post Office
Flinders Island
TAS 7255
Email: info@vale.org.au

5th April 2018

Re: Response to the Minister of Agriculture's Media Statements 5.4.18

1. With respect to the *Awassi Express* high mortality voyage, even if there had been only 1 sheep on the whole ship it would have had a significant chance of dying from heat stress. Our published scientific review of heat stress in live export¹ showed that temperatures above 26°C wet bulb temperature (WBT) were dangerous for sheep. Our review also noted that panting at more than 200 breaths per minute (as evident in the footage) indicates severe heat stress in sheep. No amount of extra space can save these sheep. In these conditions (31-37°C WBT), sheep will die regardless of space.
2. The minister has called on whistleblowers to speak out. Since its inception, VALE has maintained that every live export ship should have an independent veterinarian. One does not need whistleblowers, one needs independent vets.
3. The Department and Ministers have a history of defaming and ignoring veterinary whistleblowers going back nearly 30 years (Dr Roger Meischke, Dr Tony Hill, Dr Peter Kerkenezov, Dr Lloyd Reeve-Johnson, Dr Lynn Simpson). Even a full federal court case could not persuade the Department to take a veterinary whistleblower (Dr Lloyd Reeve-Johnson) seriously.
4. The onboard veterinarian on the *Awassi Express*, no doubt struggling with his loyalty to his employer, the exporter, did not conclude in his report to the Department that shipment of sheep to the Middle East (ME) in the height of summer should not happen. A truly independent vet might have made that conclusion.
5. The conclusion from VALE's published scientific paper, shipboard performance reports and high investigation mortality voyage reports is that sheep cannot be transported safely to the ME in a northern summer.
7. VALE has always maintained that a major failing of the law relating to live export (unlike Australia's domestic law) is that it takes no account of the suffering of the animals involved. **It only counts dead bodies.** It is clear from the Minister's reaction that these independently recorded images document the suffering of the animals concerned.

Conclusion

It is evident that the response to this requires at least two actions from the Federal government:

1. there must be at least 1 independent veterinarian on every voyage
2. voyages to the ME summer must be stopped

Dr Sue Foster, VALE Spokesperson, 0423 783 689

¹ Caulfield MP, Cambridge H, Foster SF et al. Heat stress: A major contributor to poor animal welfare associated with long haul live export voyages. *The Veterinary Journal* 2014;199:223-228