

**LIVE EXPORT — FEDERAL LABOR POLICY**

*Motion*

**MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Nationals WA)** [4.01 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns Bill Shorten and the federal Labor Party for its destructive plan to shut down Western Australia's live sheep export industry and calls on the McGowan government to stand up and fight to save an industry that generates hundreds of jobs in Western Australia.

On the eve of a federal election, this is a very timely debate to have in this place, because there is a very clear difference between the views of the federal Labor Party and that of the federal coalition. I think it is incumbent on this place to note that a significant industry in Western Australia is likely to end should there be a Shorten Labor government on Saturday. This Parliament should send a very strong message to say that it expects more, because this is a Western Australian sector that is under direct attack from the Shorten Labor Party. I would like to know what those opposite have done to make sure that Bill Shorten and his shadow cabinet have made a decision based on fact rather than chasing the inner-city votes of the Greens in the Melbournes and the Sydneys of the east coast.

On 30 April 2019, the federal Labor Party launched a six-point plan covering animal welfare issues. It reaffirmed a pledge it made public sometime before that it would immediately ban the northern summer live sheep trade, and it proposed a plan that would phase out the live sheep trade within five years. It struck to the very core of many in my constituency, many in the member for Roe's constituency and many in the member for Moore's constituency. It is not just the farmers that we are talking about; this is a sector that has a significant supply chain and it will have a significant impact on many Western Australian jobs. This is a state government that professes to be supportive of creating jobs. This sector already employs a significant number of Western Australians. Due to a policy change and the uncertainty that has been created because of this national debate, this sector is under incredible stress and pressure. I will come to that because there are people involved in this who have made their views public over the course of the last few weeks as we approach Saturday's federal election. Should this be enacted—should a future government decide that the live export sector for sheep be shut down—it would decimate the Western Australian sheep sector. It is a policy that attacks our Western Australian farmers, our Western Australian feedlotters, our transporters, our sharers, those who produce food and pellets for the animals in the supply chain and many others who are indirectly involved in this trade.

As I said, it is an almost uniquely Western Australian trade. That is why it is an attack on Western Australia by Bill Shorten's Labor Party. That is the choice that we have on Saturday. It is a policy borne of the eastern states, the inner suburbs of Melbourne and Sydney, where people see the Labor Party chasing the Green vote. That is the competition. The Labor Party is seeking to make sure that it is balancing what it would like its policies to be with winning as many seats as it can—those seats in which we see very high distrust and great uncertainty about the sector. I will talk a little bit about why that exists. We are not denialists in the Nationals WA; we understand that not everybody understands or approves of live exports. We are certainly not oblivious to that and neither is the sector. I would argue that in the last six to 12 months, the sector has tried to pull itself up and has made some significant changes to regain the trust of communities right across Australia.

I want to put on record that Mr Shorten is no friend of WA and no friend of the agricultural sector. A party's policy that is central to an agricultural policy that will kill jobs in Western Australia cannot be a friend of Western Australia. It will phase out live sheep exports over five years, which will be devastating for those businesses involved and also the communities they operate in. These are the communities that I represent and are represented by many of our regional members, not just those in the agricultural sector, but those in the major regional centres, right the way through to our ports and all the people who work in that supply chain as well. I would like to know whether Bill Shorten, the Premier or others have actually taken the time to sit down and meet those people in the supply chain of this very important sector. Have either of them stopped to talk to a shearing contractor or a hay contractor? What about the people employed at the pellet mills, like some of the constituents in the member for Roe's electorate? What about the truckie who takes enormous pride in putting food on the table and looking after his family? He has a job. These are family businesses that have been handed down from generation to generation with these trucking businesses that are involved in transporting live animals. Have they sat down and talked to those people?

I hazard a guess that neither the Premier nor Bill Shorten has done that. I know that Bill Shorten has not because he has not been to regional WA. He has been here a fair bit during the campaign. WA is certainly in the mix, but he has not made it over the Darling scarp as far as I can remember. He certainly has not explained to the entire sector why he wants to wipe out its livelihood. He has not stopped to think that there is an alternative plan that has been worked on and pursued in conjunction with the current Liberal–National coalition government in the sector here in Western Australia. I would hazard a guess that he has not done any of that because he simply does not care, and that is because he knows that his votes are in the cities of Sydney and Melbourne.

I fear for WA under a Shorten government and my constituents across regional WA fear for their futures. Before I go any further, I would like to provide some context for members about this very important sector in WA. We produce some of the best lamb, mutton and wool in the nation and in the world. We export it to over 100 countries. We have trade relationships that have gone back many, many years, and that trade has built up over time. The department of agriculture and food, or the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, as it is now known, estimated that in 2015—I have some more recent figures further on—WA’s sheep flock was about 14 million. We have struggled in Western Australia. The sheep flock has diminished quite significantly over time for a number of reasons, but there is renewed support for this.

Many people in the sector see a mixed enterprise as a very important buffer in being able to manage some of the seasonal and climactic changes that we are dealing with in the agricultural sector. We have seen some very good wool and meat prices, and the live export sector is a very important part of that mix. That is very important for everybody to understand. We cannot simply pull a section of that sector out and expect it to continue unaffected. It cannot continue to operate. They are integrated farming operations and in some cases they have been built up with infrastructure and significant investment over a long time, yet we have a future federal government talking about potentially shutting down or phasing out the industry over five years. It will take far longer. I suspect once it is confronted with the reality—if, heaven forbid, we are faced with a Shorten government post-Saturday—it will find that it is far more difficult than what it is suggesting. I know that members of the federal opposition are saying it because they need to win votes in Sydney and Melbourne.

About 5 250 businesses involve sheep. On average, they have probably got about 2 700 sheep. That is a big call. It depends on where we are in the state as to how many sheep they have in their flock. It has changed in recent times, but most of the sheep that we grow in Western Australia are merino—I think about 87 per cent. In 2015–16, the total meat sheep and live export was around 5.56 million. The breakdown of processing versus live exports are around 3.8 million into the domestic processing market, 1.67 million are exported live and about 84 000 go over the border into the interstate domestic market. The industry contributes around \$200 million a year to our state’s economy, which is not insignificant. In Western Australia, that live export accounts for 86 per cent of national live sheep exports in total. It is a predominantly Western Australian sector. That is why I say that the federal Labor Party’s policy is an attack on Western Australia. They are remote from the decision-makers and they are easy to dismiss because we are so far away from where they are trying to win their votes. I do not think for one moment that Mr Shorten has considered any of this. I do not think he has considered the collateral damage for our broader agricultural sector. He has not sat down with farmers to listen to their concerns, and that is certainly something that we have done. We have done it with our federal colleagues as well. I have to say that the federal Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, David Littleproud, has taken some criticism on this issue. But it is a difficult time. He has not, however, shied away from the fact that he needed to have face-to-face conversations with those on whom it is was impacting. We accompanied him to the property of a Brookton farmer who brought together a number of farmers at the end of last year. Murray Hall hosted him for a roundtable session to express some of the industry’s concerns and to talk about some of the potential solutions. Murray’s comments were reported in the 13 December 2018 *Countryman* after the visit. He is a very succinct man. He said —

“What I really fear is ill-informed Eastern States crossbenchers and politicians from both sides making decisions when they haven’t investigated the downstream consequences, including environmental impacts and pressure on the flock in a de-stocked situation, and what it means for WA.”

That was immediately after the meeting that was held with me , a number of my Nationals WA colleagues and the federal Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources. Neither Bill Shorten nor any of his cabinet have spoken to anyone like another one of my constituents, Corrigin hay contractor Cory Weguelin, before they launched their six-point plan and pledged to phase-out live export. Bill Shorten has not done that, because if he had spoken to Corey and read what he contributed in another article to the *Countryman*, just this month on 9 May, perhaps the decision would be slightly different. I will read to members what Cory has said, because this is a really significant concern for him in advance of his decision to vote on Saturday. The article states —

“It’s hard not to get upset when your whole life is on the line.”

That is the harrowing state-of-mind that Corrigin hay contractor Cory Weguelin is struggling to deal with, while sweating on the outcome of the May 18 Federal election.

The survival of Mr Weguelin’s business, Millden Hay, is dependent on WA’s live export industry, with most of its income coming from baling straw to be processed into pellets for sheep feed aboard livestock carriers.

With Federal Labor standing firm on its pledge to phase-out the trade within five years, if elected, the self-confessed work addict is fearing the death of his business.

“If Labor do that, it is the end of our business ... it will not be viable for our business to continue,” ...

Ms Mia Davies; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Shane Love; Mr David Templeman

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“With where we are at now, we will lose everything. I am not talking tractors and machinery, I’m talking house, the whole nine yards, it will send us broke, basically.

“It is pretty hard to deal with, really.” Mr Weguelin operates the family-owned Millden Hay alongside wife Katherine, with the help of one casual employee, to support their four children aged 10, 4, 2 and six months.

The 30-year-old former boilermaker admits he is no stranger to toiling long hours to cut hay and also bale straw for Williams-based feedstock supplier Macco Feeds Australia’s stock pellet production.

Mr Weguelin said Labor’s live export policy was too city-focused and failed to consider potential ramifications for rural Australia.

We understand very clearly what that policy means for our constituency and for a sector that is very important for Western Australia’s economy.

We are often asked why we export live sheep. We are told that there are alternative options and that we should be promoting the increase of domestic processing and jobs here onshore. Members would absolutely not find any objection from the Western Australian National Party about increasing the opportunities for domestic processes for increasing jobs here—but it is not at the cost of one for another. They both work in this sector together in Western Australia. I encourage members to, if they have not done so already, visit a website for the newly formed the Sheep Collective. This is a collective that has brought together the transporters, contractors, farmers and exporters. They understand that they have to operate now as a whole —

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** What is their website?

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** It is The Sheep Collective. This is Bindi Murray and Dr Holly Ludeman; there is a whole raft of them. It is made up of representatives from all along the supply chain. They have recognised that we need to do better as a sector at explaining what we do and why it is important. We understand that we need to be more transparent in the way that we discuss what happens and that perhaps that has not always been the case in the past. They all have a responsibility along the supply chain to make sure that the public understands why this sector is important, and why we take a scientific and animal welfare-based approach to managing the entire supply chain. If members took the time to sit down and talk to each of those individuals along the process, they would understand that that is exactly what has been happening for many years. We will never ever defend situations such as the *Awassi Express*. It should never have happened, and nobody would say that that was an acceptable outcome for animal welfare. I would like to say that since that was brought to light, the industry as a whole has made significant inroads in trying to make sure that they are shifting the way that they do business. They are becoming more transparent and the government at the same time is also working to do that, under the guidance of federal Minister Littleproud. The sector would be the first to say that it needs to continuously improve. Continuous improvement in all elements of any business is a necessity. I think members would find that we have done that over many years. We certainly do not treat animals the way that we did even 30, 40 or 50 years ago when we were loading them onto ships. The way that we manage and raise animals, the way that they are put on trucks, all those things, continuously improve on a scientific basis because there is no benefit to us in having a poor animal welfare outcome in the long run. That is not what people get involved in the industry for.

Bill Shorten’s plan is to throw away an entire sector, one that is peculiarly focused on WA. Our plan, federally and at a state level—trying to push this government as well—has been to try to work with the industry to address the issues that the community and we think are unacceptable by improving transparency, lifting the bar for exporters and placing animal welfare and science at the centre of every decision. That comes with some pain and it is certainly causing some pain in the sector as we speak. It includes things such as discussions around the summer ban, which was, by the way, initially imposed by the industry itself. Then there was an order made by the federal Department of Agriculture and Water Resources that the industry would continue that this year.

But it was initially imposed by the industry, in recognition that it needed to prove to the public that it took seriously the issues that were being raised. This—along with new stocking densities, independent auditing of the pen air turnover, the watering arrangements and a reduction in the notifiable mortality rate—is part of the sector’s response to a number of reports that have been created by the department and by experts and tested by industry. The industry does not agree with some things and thinks they will make it very difficult to continue, but it is continuing to work constructively with the government to make sure we get an outcome for this very important sector. We are not prepared to walk away from a Western Australian sector that is so important to so many.

All the things I have just mentioned are outlined in responses to reports that have been created by the government about how and when it is going to implement its policies and what measures it is taking to address some of the concerns that have been raised as a result of these independent reports. This is in addition to the appointment of an external and independent inspector general of live animal exports, appointed by the federal Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, David Littleproud, to oversee the department’s regulation of live exports and also to report to the public and the minister. There is a new level of transparency in this sector. That has been

recognised as something that we need to do. I say “we” because this is part of a regional community—my community. As a sector, we need to do better at explaining and bringing people along to understand what we do. We cannot expect people to value something that they do not understand. Whether it is live export or any number of other things we see in the agricultural sector, we all acknowledge that we need to do better at that, but we also need the community to understand that we have and always will put animal welfare at the centre of those decisions. We need to make sure that we continue to build that trust across the community.

What is the state government doing? That is the question we have as part of this debate today. If the government agrees that this sector is important, from a Western Australian point of view—we have heard the Premier and the Minister for Agriculture and Food say on a number of occasions that they support our sheep sector and the live export industry in Western Australia—I would like to know whether it has actually done some modelling to demonstrate to its federal counterparts exactly what the impact of that policy is likely to be. Has it tried to explain to its federal counterparts in Canberra that this is something that is likely to be very harmful here in Western Australia? What is it doing to stand up for our Western Australian farmers, beyond responding to the questions that we have asked in this place and the debates that we have had in this place and in the Legislative Council? Remember, 1.7 million sheep were exported from WA in 2017, which is 86 per cent of all national live sheep exports, and was directly worth \$210 million in 2017 alone. There is a raft of evidence from Meat and Livestock Australia and others involved in the supply chain on the flow-on impacts of that \$210 million through the rest of the community.

Has the state government done any modelling on what will happen if this policy is successfully introduced? Has it done any modelling to share with its federal colleagues to explain to them the impact of this policy? If it has not, why not? If the government is going to say that it supports the sector, it should back that up with actions that give the sector cause to say, “Hang on; we know the Western Australian government is on our side. It’s in there, arguing with its federal counterparts, saying, ‘We need to rethink this policy.’”

Even if the federal Labor Party does not get in, we need to see that policy wiped from the books, because it will not stop there. It will be the sheep industry one day, and I can promise members that the beef industry will be next. Call me cynical, but the only reason the beef industry is not on the table in this election is because of the impact it would have on the seats that the Labor Party needs to win in Queensland. Politics is protecting the beef sector, but that sector is very nervous.

The truth is that we know that the words of the Premier and the Minister for Agriculture and Food are a very thin veneer, because we have seen their actions. We have previously seen the Minister for Agriculture and Food standing on the bridge with anti-live export activists, professing her support for an end to that industry. That is why people are cynical about this, and that is why they expect this government to do more than just say, “We support you.” They want to see action and they want the state government to loudly tell Bill Shorten that it does not support that policy and that it will not support that policy should, heaven forbid, we have a Labor government post Saturday.

This Parliament must condemn Bill Shorten’s policy because it is anti-WA, anti-farming, anti-small business and anti-jobs. It is the antithesis of everything that this government has said it supports. How could it possibly vote against a motion that says we need to support jobs, we need to support an important sector, and we need to support our farmers? It is a very, very important sector, and many people are very nervous. If this Western Australian Parliament were to make a strong statement today, it would go a long way towards giving them confidence that the government will be in there if, heaven forbid, we have a Bill Shorten government post Saturday. Regardless, I would like to hear the government put its position on the record, because we have had this debate and I have not seen any action on the matters that we have raised today.

The sector is hurting, and the uncertainty of this national debate on the Western Australian economy and the people who are reliant on it is very, very disappointing. These are good people who have worked hard and who deserve our government’s support. They are certainly doing their bit. If members go to the Sheep Collective’s website, they will see the work that has been done by the Western Australian Farmers Federation, the Pastoralists and Graziers Association and the Livestock Transporters Association to work hand-in-hand with the government to make sure it can address the issues that have been raised in the independent reports about past challenges to this industry. We need to make sure that we work with them and not simply end a sector that so many are reliant on.

**MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe)** [4.26 pm]: I rise to support the Leader of the Nationals WA and the motion —

That this house condemns Bill Shorten and the federal Labor Party for its destructive plan to shut down WA’s live sheep export industry and calls on the McGowan government to stand up and fight to save an industry which generates hundreds of jobs in Western Australia.

I emphasise the “jobs” part of it, because that is the mantra of this government—jobs, jobs, jobs. If this export industry goes down, it will probably mean that 3 500 jobs will be lost. I call on the McGowan government to stand up and fight to save that industry.

**Mr D.T. Redman** interjected.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** That is right; not a problem.

I certainly do not want federal Labor to do deals in inner-Melbourne seats, trying to dictate what happens in the WA sheep industry. That is really what happens. We see these preference deals being done; federal Labor has to protect its inner-Melbourne seats to look after the Green element in inner Melbourne and inner Sydney. I can confirm for the Leader of the Nationals that Bill Shorten has not consulted and has not been over the Darling scarp in the last couple of years. He went to Kalgoorlie for three hours the year before last, so that is the extent of his consultation in the regions of Western Australia. If the fate of the WA live sheep export industry is to be in the hands of Bill Shorten, Joel Fitzgibbon and Hon Alannah MacTiernan, heaven forbid that the federal opposition is elected on Saturday; that is all I can say.

I am a farmer and have a farm between Katanning and Kojonup. That farm has always been predominantly sheep, so I have a very strong understanding of how the live sheep export industry works. Over the last 35 to 40 years we have sold sheep through the live export trade and I understand how important the industry is. It is really important because, as the numbers indicate, 1.7 million sheep are sold into the live export industry and 3.8 million sheep are put through our processing industry.

That is about one-third of the sheep in Western Australia. That is a really important part of the price mechanism as well within our WA livestock industry. My community of Katanning is probably more involved in the sheep and live sheep industry than any other town in Australia. The Katanning saleyards recently built the largest undercover saleyards in the southern hemisphere where around 25 000 sheep can be put under cover and up to 30 000 at times if necessary. That has been a fantastic asset to the community of Katanning and the whole great southern to be honest. It was good to see the member for Armadale venture into the Katanning saleyards the year before last just to improve his knowledge about the sheep industry.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** They were great hosts.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I know that the people of Katanning and surrounds were very appreciative of the member's visit.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** They were very friendly.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Very good; I thank the member for Armadale.

The Western Australian Meat Marketing Co-operative Limited, the state's largest sheep processor, with around 350 employees, is also an integral part of the sheep industry. In Katanning we have both the saleyards for buyers for the live export industry and WAMMCO that exports to the United States, Europe and so forth. We have every angle covered. WAMMCO has struggled for many years to get the labour required for its processing industry. Members opposite make sweeping statements that it is not a problem to process everything in Western Australia; however, those 1.7 million extra sheep cannot be processed in Western Australia, firstly, because they are not always suitable for processing, and, secondly, we cannot physically get the labour. That is part of why our multicultural community in Katanning exists, as a lot of our labour comes from the Burmese, Chinese and Afghan communities. As the Minister for Heritage knows, the Christmas Island and Cocos Island population that came in 1975 was a large part of the stability of the workforce at WAMMCO. I want to point that out because it is very important that there is an understanding of this matter.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** They love you out there—I must say that.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I know; I thank the member for Armadale.

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** There was one old lady I was talking to who didn't like you. I won't tell you her name because you might hunt her down. She may have been a tourist.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Hopefully I get on well with the large majority of my electorate, thanks, minister!

I regularly communicate with Col McRury, managing director of WAMMCO, Tony Bessell, manager of the Katanning works, and Nigel Aitkin, who goes out every morning in the minibus to pick up workers because that is how hard it is to get a full roster of workers at the Katanning plant.

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** I do remember it now. It was a lady in the street. She said, "You're not a politician are you, because I hate politicians. I said, "Yes, I am. I am Peter Rundle." That's how it came about!

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I knew there was a reason the minister strayed into the electorate of Roe recently!

WAMMCO does a fantastic job. We are proud of the way it works. It is a great asset for the great southern community. Live export is an integral part of sheep farming from Esperance through to Geraldton, and it covers many pastoral areas as well. It is a \$200 million industry. As the Leader of the Nationals pointed out, 86 per cent of the national market for live sheep export is sourced in Western Australia. We cannot just flick the switch and say that we will process everything in Western Australia; it does not work like that. As I said, many sheep are not necessarily

suitable to process. They might be 33 or 34 kilogram live weight wether lambs that are only score 1 and are not suitable to process. They do not fit into a market. There is a distinct lack of understanding from many within the Labor Party—perhaps not the state Labor Party, but certainly federally. Bill Shorten has absolutely no understanding; Joel Fitzgibbon has slightly more, but not much. Apart from those sheep not being suited to processing, there is not necessarily the market for that type of product. I become concerned when Hon Alannah MacTiernan, our ag minister, talks to our Middle East markets about how we can change from exporting live sheep to chilled product. It demonstrates her lack of understanding. An article in *The West Australian* on 22 May 2018 states —

Australia's biggest live sheep customer has confirmed it has started looking elsewhere for supply, amid suggestions Australia could stop the trade.

Al Mawashi, a Kuwait-based livestock trading company, was concerned because for the past 40 years it has been buying up to two-thirds of the 1.8 million head of sheep exported out of Western Australia. Our state agriculture minister has suggested to them and to the Qatar government that the trade is going to end and that they had better start looking for sheep elsewhere because there is a good possibility that we will end our live export industry. It was concerning to me when I heard about that last year. The minister fails to understand that although we all agree that chilled product is good, there is limited refrigeration in some of those countries. The live export product will be replaced by sheep from Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia and many other countries. This is what I worry about—people have not thought at the next level: I can assure members that the animal welfare standards in those countries are nowhere near the levels in Australia. I want to bring that to people's attention because it has not been talked about enough.

I will go through a timeline of the activities of our party last year. The Leader of the Nationals WA talked about some of those. We all saw the vision, which no-one found acceptable, and which, I might add, is under police investigation. Its authenticity is something to keep in mind. As I said when I spoke last year about animal welfare, it was like a military operation. That vision was held back for six months by those putting out that footage. If they were really interested in animal welfare, they would not have held it back for six months. On the Monday morning we all arrived at our parliamentary offices to find the book on live export and animal welfare issues. I questioned that last year. I did get some grief from the likes of the member for Maylands, the member for Balcatta and the member for Thornlie. I tried to explain to the member for Belmont as well that we care for our animals on the farm. We do not want to see anything happen to them. It is in our interest to produce a good quality animal. The better the quality of animal, the better the return. To the credit of the member for Belmont, she spoke to me afterwards about that. It is an important issue to understand that as farmers, we are very interested in the welfare of our animals.

Moving on, the Nationals WA went to the first meeting at Darkan, which was put together by the Compass Agricultural Alliance. That was straight after the immediate reaction to the group. The Leader of the Nationals WA, Hon Colin de Grussa and I turned up—as did 150 sheep farmers. They were a positive group. They suggested improvements that could be made. Unfortunately, no-one from the state Labor Party turned up—the party that says that it is the party for regional Western Australia. When there was a major issue in the sheep industry, no-one turned up. It was disappointing to say the least. Then we had the Katanning meeting with over 1 000 people. The master of ceremonies was Owen Grieve. John Hassell, the candidate for O'Connor, also chaired part of the meeting. Members of the Western Australian Farmers Federation were there, as were several other colourful characters.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** How was the minister treated?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** It was a passionate meeting. I give credit to Hon Alannah MacTiernan. She did turn up. She defended her position. That was not a bad effort, considering there were 1 000-odd farmers and people from the industry there. We listened to stories about how important this industry is to the people of regional WA. Chloe McDougall, a farmer from Dumbleyung who has two young children, was there. The continuity of this industry is very important to her farming family. Alan McFarland from Katanning Furnishings told us how important it is to the business sector of the great southern. Ben Poett, who has carted my sheep over the years, is a fantastic young guy with a young family.

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Armadale!

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** He has not been able to cart a load of sheep for four months, member for Armadale. Honestly, the continuity of his business was really affected by this cessation, I guess you could call it.

We also have Macco Feeds Australia. Ninety per cent of the business of Macco Feeds is about supplying pellets to the live export industry. There is a lack of understanding of the flow-on effects on the 3 500 people who are affected by this industry. We also have the livestock shipping companies Livestock Shipping Services, Emanuel Exports and Wellard. I might add that Wellard has spent tens of millions of dollars getting its ships up to a high standard.

From there, Hon Colin de Grussa and I went to Canberra, and we asked the federal minister, David Littleproud, whether he could come across to Western Australia. He came across, as the Leader of the Nationals mentioned,

consulted and went out to Beverly and spoke to growers. We had a forum at Parliament House with many of the relevant parties, including transporters, members of the shearing association, members of the feed industry and farmers. He consulted well. Then we took Minister Littleproud to the Katanning saleyards to look at the facility and to talk to growers, agents and buyers of sheep for the industry and the abattoirs. The Nationals have done everything we can to consult, to improve communication and to try to help the industry at a state level.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I would like to congratulate the Sheep Collective and Holly Ludeman, who, as a vet, has a full understanding of the live export industry and the ships. I congratulate them for inviting all members of Parliament and industry groups to look at how the sheep are loaded and how it works. I thank those members from this house and the other house who took up that opportunity to improve their knowledge. It is very important. As we know, the mortality rate is now below 0.4 per cent. That is a lower rate than that for sheep that are left in the paddock on the farm. There is less density in the pens. Obviously, there is the three-month ban that the industry has placed on itself. It is interesting that it has made those changes proactively. I certainly congratulate the industry for taking those strides over the last 18 months and improving welfare outcomes and its social licence. We all acknowledge that that needed to happen.

I will highlight one disappointment for me. The state government has not provided any correspondence to indicate that consultation with the federal opposition has taken place. I am not aware of any consultation. The state government certainly has not provided any modelling to tell us what will happen if and when the federal government cuts this industry off. What will happen to regional employment and our WA regional economy? As I said, 3 500 jobs will be lost in the first year. The government for jobs has not provided us with any modelling. The Minister for Agriculture and Food has stated that her goal is to deliver a proper transition away from live export. We are pretty well aware of that, having seen the footage several years ago of our agriculture minister standing with her friends on Fremantle Traffic Bridge holding placards and looking to ban the live export industry. We have a pretty good understanding of where she stands. I condemn Hon Alannah MacTiernan for what she has not done for the sector—that is the way I would put it. I have looked at some of the quotes in the *Countryman* and *The West Australian*, one of which states —

The State's two biggest farmer groups accused Ms MacTiernan of undermining Emanuel's ability to manage animal welfare on its ships.

That was done when, off her own bat, she raided Emanuel, if you do not mind. Someone from Emanuel said that sheep and cattle were on the ocean and the minister took away the tools that Emanuel needed to maintain control. Another quote states —

WAFarmers livestock president David Slade said that despite the trade coming under Federal jurisdiction, the State Minister appeared determined to disrupt it as much as possible.

“It is clear that the minister ... is doing everything in her power to inflame hostility to the live export industry,” he said.

This demonstrates how there was a lack of trust. We saw the headline “Are ewe kidding?” in *The West Australian*. I think that pretty well described it in a nutshell. We have an ag minister who is supposed to act on behalf of our sheep industry, but all we get is the “anti” argument. As I said, we have the memory of the minister standing on Fremantle bridge.

In summarising, I condemn Joel Fitzgibbon for the way he seems to be interested only in the northern cattle industry. He has said that he will phase-out the live sheep export industry, but there are no problems with the northern cattle industry; it is fine. That is the old eastern states' mantra: there is no problem in the northern cattle industry. He has hung our WA sheep growers out to dry. I strongly condemn Bill Shorten. As I said, he has not been over the Darling scarp for a couple of years, apart from his trip to Kalgoorlie for a couple of hours. I condemn the federal Labor Party's destructive plan to phase-out the live export industry, should it be elected on Saturday. I call on the Premier and his ag minister to stand up and fight to save an industry and to stick to their mantra of saving and creating jobs in WA.

**MR I.C. BLAYNEY (Geraldton)** [4.49 pm]: I will speak briefly on this motion. I am thankful for the opportunity. Of course, live export is almost a niche industry of the sheep industry, but within that industry it is vital; it is valuable. Most years I think that Western Australia exports about 90 per cent of the live sheep exported from Australia. For genuinely focused sheep farmers, it is quite a critical part of their operations. When we look at the value of the industry, \$200 million across the entire Western Australian agricultural sector is not huge, but for focused sheep farmers it is of critical importance. Numbers dropped in 2018 to 1.2 million sheep, worth \$158 million, and that was because of the problems in the industry. As a grower, as a farmer, I exported live sheep that I was farming every year. In some years I think it was the only enterprise on the farm that made any money. Commodities rise and commodities fall, but I usually got good money for sheep that I was live exporting. Farmers produce high-quality carcasses in Western Australia, but merino do not produce a particularly good carcass. The

niche works because the merinos produce the best wool, but they do not produce a good carcass. However, when that sheep is sold, it suits the requirements of the Middle East quite well.

If we follow the industry through the chain, there are jobs all the way through. There are the people who cart the sheep. The industry stopped again earlier this year and last year, and when we talked to specialised sheep carters, they said there were lots of people with trucks sitting around doing absolutely nothing. If something worth as much as a road train is sitting there literally not turning a wheel, there are huge costs that have to be paid weekly just to keep the thing sitting there, and there is no income. Live export is a valuable adjunct to the industry. If the live sheep export section is pulled out of the industry, it will probably reduce the size of the sheep industry overall. That feeds into shearing, transport again and the growing of pastures. In my area sheep industries have dropped quite significantly from the drought years in the early 2000s, and this would be another blow. The valuable thing with having sheep in a farming system is that it means there have to be pastures. With pastures, problems such as herbicide resistance can be addressed and they provide another couple of streams of income. If those are taken away, it makes the operation more vulnerable to serious downturns in grain prices.

The Middle East is well known to have a preference for fresh meat rather than processed meat. I understand that is changing. I understand that there is more refrigeration in the Middle East, but in large parts of the Middle East, fresh meat is very much the preference. I do not have much doubt that were we to shut down our industry, the trade would simply switch to being supplied by other countries, which, as my colleague said, would have far lower animal welfare standards. I can tell members that there will not be people in those ships keeping an eye on the welfare standards of those sheep. Any sheep they lose on those ships just go straight over the side and no-one will know about them. As I said, the fact that we are able to keep this operation going helps the resilience of the farming system. The new standards that the federal government has brought in for ships and their supervision are very hard to meet and they will be very expensive. There is no choice about that. It has been decided that that will be done.

Of course, the other thing that is going to be done is that some of the ships will be grandfathered. They will have to go. They should have gone by now, but they will be gone very shortly. The ships are very important. I think Wellard ships were mentioned. They are much newer and have better ventilation. There are not the same problems on those sorts of ships. There is also electronic surveillance on all the decks at all times and there are independent people on the ships reporting directly back to the federal department. Under those standards, I do not have much doubt that the industry will not have any more disasters such as the one it had most recently.

I get the feeling that a lot of the opponents of this industry do not care and are not interested in regional areas and the people who live in them. It is never easy living an isolated existence. As I said, I have no doubt that most of those people do not know and are not interested. It is part of a wider trend of less acceptance of animal farming. It could be seen that this is the first industry and that a couple of other intensive industries will follow. I do not argue about having higher animal welfare standards, but I think the issues and ideology of the opponents of this industry go further than just having higher animal welfare standards. In some cases, they just want to eliminate the entire industry. I have no doubt that if they succeed in shutting down the live sheep export industry, they will immediately switch their attention to the live cattle export industry, which in many ways is an entirely different industry. We have developed an entire industry in northern Australia that is built around producing the type of cattle required by our near Asian neighbours—cattle that can cope with the heat and humidity and that when slaughtered have very little fat in the meat, which means it does not go off so quickly in conditions of no refrigeration. As we saw when the trade was banned in 2011, those cattle are not suited to being brought south and put to the systems of the European-type cattle living in the southern parts of Australia. That is one of the reasons the industry feels it has to stand and fight this issue: it knows that the live cattle export industry will be next. The end of that industry would not only do some damage to agriculture in northern Australia, it would just about finish it, because it is pretty much entirely dependent on the export of live cattle. Of course, the industry is very concerned about filming and animal welfare agencies paying people to take footage on the ships—paying people significant amounts of money and giving them an incentive to produce quite dramatic footage, which of course they did.

This Parliament really should support this motion. I think it is important to send a message to federal Labor that not everybody is in agreement with the decision, were it to make one, to phase out this industry. This state exports 90 per cent of Australia's live sheep. In some pockets it is one of the pillars of the whole farming system, and if it is removed, the farming sector will be much less resilient than it is now. I support the motion and I think the house should support it as well.

**MR R.S. LOVE (Moore)** [4.58 pm]: I am very pleased to be able to contribute to this excellent motion put forward by the member for Central Wheatbelt that this house condemns Bill Shorten and the federal Labor Party for its destructive plan to shut down Western Australia's live sheep export industry and calls on the McGowan government to stand and fight to save an industry that generates hundreds of jobs in Western Australia.

It might surprise some people in this chamber to know that the live export industry began over 100 years ago. Sheep and cattle have been exported from this country for over a century. Starting, I think, in the 1970s and

developing further in the 1980s, we saw a very large trade with the Middle East. Prior to that time farmers received very, very poor returns on what was known as mutton—the older sheep—that were really the by-product of the wool industry in Australia at that stage. There was a huge increase in the value of sheep for meat in the 1970s, especially wethers. That was initially into countries such as Saudi Arabia, but other smaller countries in the Middle East came into the market.

I can remember as a child hearing stories about people receiving very, very poor returns for their livestock when they sold them, to the point that a few cents a head was what might be expected for a wether. That turned around in the late 1970s, which was around the first time I signed a contract with a live exporter. Sorry, yes, I am involved in the trade; I know that Madam Deputy Speaker has views on animal welfare. It is now over 40 years since I first signed a contract. At that stage, I think the price was something in the vicinity of \$30 on property, which was 800 miles north of Perth. That was big money in the 1970s and a big turnaround from getting nothing. In fact, prior to that, for many stations it might be considered that if they got the transport covered to get the wool sheep down to an abattoir, that was a pretty good job and that was about all they would expect. There were very poor returns from the sale of meat.

Although the sheep market has retracted in recent years, it is still a very important industry in some of our electorates. The member for Roe has a very extensive industry in his electorate. He has spoken about its importance in towns such as Katanning and to the farmers throughout his region. Similarly, the member for Central Wheatbelt and even the member for Warren–Blackwood have quite good lamb production industries in their electorates. In my electorate of Moore, sheep products are a very important part of the farming systems. It is true that in some areas people have gone into more of a total cropping situation as sheep numbers have declined. They have probably declined from 30-odd million sheep to about half that number now. That is not to say that the industry has not stabilised at a very sustainable level. If we see a five-year phase-out of the livestock export industry, as is openly spoken about by the federal Labor Party, I make two points: firstly, I do not believe it will take five years for the industry to end. Once it is signalled that there is no future for live exporters out of Western Australia and no future beyond five years for a supply chain, those countries will very rapidly find other supplies of live sheep. The export of live sheep to those very same countries will not stop. What will change is where those sheep are sourced.

As other members pointed out earlier, Australia is pretty unique in having an ESCA system—an exporter supply chain assurance system. It is a system that actually places responsibility for the welfare of sheep not at the sale at the farm gate and not at the wharf at Fremantle, but at the slaughter of the sheep. That is unique. It will no longer happen, and it will not be happening under any other country. I do not think that any of the other countries that export to these markets have a similar system. What is most likely to happen is that the same numbers of sheep will be sourced from places like Sudan and South Africa, and some European countries, and welfare standards will probably decline for those sheep. They will not receive the treatment that we would expect in a modern industry. Huge investment in infrastructure has resulted in decent abattoirs and state-of-the-art handling facilities in many Middle Eastern areas.

Back in the day when *60 Minutes* or another TV program had pictures of sheep being loaded into the boot of a car from some market and taken into the backyard and slaughtered, that is not the system that exists now. The system that exists now is a closed loop in which the sheep are accounted for all the way through. Yes, we concentrate on the glitches, but we also should look at the successes. The successes are that we have managed to produce an industry that is far and away a more humane supply chain to the Middle East than would be replicated from any other country. As I say, that supply chain will continue into the future but it will not be sourced from Western Australia; it will be sourced from somewhere else.

Western Australian farmers and Western Australian rural people face a very stark choice on Saturday in the federal election. If, heaven forbid, a Shorten Labor government is elected, we will see a major component of the Western Australian agricultural industry close down. I do not believe that it will take five years to close down; I think it will shut down much quicker than that.

That brings me to my second point: What happens to the sheep in Western Australia? What happens to the price of sheep? What happens to the industry? I fear it will go back to what I described prior to the 1970s. As the member for Roe outlined, there are different classes of sheep. Some sheep that are difficult to market will attract virtually no value. They will be what is called NCV—no commercial value. Having lived through the wool collapse of the 1980s and early 1990s, at one stage our family properties were shearing around 28 000 head of sheep. That collapsed to a few thousand very quickly because of the wool crash. I think it was the Australian Wool Innovation at that stage—I forget the group that funded it—that organised the systematic destruction of many sheep. Farmers were paid to shoot their sheep. Having to participate in that rather bizarre and macabre episode, I do not want to see it happen again. I fear that that may happen again in the future if we close down a market without having an alternative.

I have heard the Minister for Agriculture and Food speak at forums about finding new markets and supply chains et cetera. Those sorts of things do not happen overnight. Over a million head of sheep a year will require a home. Where will we process those sheep and what will happen to them? They cannot just stay on the farm. Farms are not

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 15 May 2019]

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Ms Mia Davies; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Shane Love; Mr David Templeman

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geared to run lots of wool sheep—that is not the main game. I do not think that will necessarily take care of the problem; that will only find a place to put sheep for a year or two. Eventually, there will have to be a turn-off of those sheep. Unless there is a viable market and a viable place to put them, farmers could be forced back into that grisly scenario of the 1990s when, in selecting a .22 rifle to have on the farm, they would pick the one with the biggest magazine because that is what is needed to shoot lots and lots of sheep. It is no fun. I do not want to see that happen.

I am very, very concerned about what might happen with this government, which is very, very Canberra-centric. Areas around New South Wales will not be affected by this change; Western Australia will be. The Western Australian sheep market produces over 80 per cent of sheep exports. This is very much a problem for Western Australia. Western Australia does not have the extensive abattoir networks and markets that run right through the eastern states. People from Naracoorte in South Australia travel to New South Wales to buy sheep and take them back to slaughter them. There is much more of a domestic capacity to handle the sheep that they have, and sometimes they buy our sheep and take them across the Nullarbor. I do not know whether that is any less of an animal welfare issue for the sheep than putting them on a boat. Apparently it is not, because the government is not claiming to want to shut down the livestock transport industry, thank goodness. I am not suggesting that it would. Once livestock is handled, there is always a risk that something might go wrong.

We have to remember that we are talking about sheep. Although we might treat them respectfully and not want to inflict any damage on them, we are not talking about people with wool on them; we are talking about sheep. We are talking about making sure that they are handled safely and efficiently, which is something that most farmers want to see and most farmers do on their property. I am sure all farmers do this on their properties, and they would like to see that extended throughout the supply chain. I am not necessarily convinced that sticking all the sheep on a truck and sending them over to Dubbo or somewhere is actually a great idea either. The problem is that we do not have a supply chain or the capacity to handle the sheep that are going to be dumped on the market by the Bill Shorten government, if it gets elected in the future. When the Labor Party talks about adjustments, I do not believe for a moment that it will actually put any meaningful money towards helping out a few farmers in a couple of coalition-held seats in Western Australia. I do not think that it could care less. I think that trying to drag money out of Canberra to assist the farming community with such a change will not happen.

I know that live exports are not the only things in the firing line for this federal Labor Party. It has also vowed to introduce federal laws to override state laws to make it much more difficult for farmers to clear their land. Some of the areas in New South Wales and Queensland have woody weeds and brigalow, which used to be cleaned off to allow grass to grow for stock. This is no different from what the Aboriginal people used to do throughout the centuries with their rotational burning, but, apparently, that is all going to be brought to an end as well. The farming community in Western Australia and other parts of Australia is going to be facing a very serious challenge if a Shorten government is elected on Saturday and actually puts in place the policies it has announced. The policies are frightening to sheep producers, and I am sure they are frightening to a lot of other people such as retirees and others who are facing cuts to their income, but farmers, especially, will be greatly affected by a Shorten government if it were to be elected.

In my own area, the electorate of Moore, I still have my property at Badgingarra. A town like that would be absolutely devastated by the changes that are being considered. A lot of that country is suitable for grazing. It is not actually great cropping country. Sheep are an integral part of the operation and, oftentimes, farmers get a poor finish to the season with pretty short feed. Having farmed that area for a long time, I know it is pretty hard to get sheep in a truly marketable, heavy condition for the current weights that are right for lamb. The export industry has played a very large role in that area in filling a gap, especially when the seasons get a bit tighter. What will happen to the farms and the businesses in towns like Badgingarra, Dandaragan or Eneabba, or one of those smaller communities? Heaven only knows! But I believe that those communities will be absolutely devastated by the changes that are likely to happen.

In the face of all that risk for communities in Western Australia, one has to ask what the Western Australian government has been doing to try to effect some second thinking on the part of the Shorten camp about what it is planning to do, and maybe suggesting to it that this might not be such a good idea. We know the answer is probably nothing. In fact, if we look at what is said publicly, the minister talks only about finding alternatives to the livestock export industry, not actually defending the livestock export industry. As has been pointed out, I have seen pictures of the minister on the Fremantle Traffic Bridge with the people who are vowing to shut down the live export industry. We know that is the mindset that now pervades this government, as well as the federal Labor candidates who are standing for election throughout the country, who hope to form the next federal government.

If this government were dinkum about helping the farmers, it would do some serious research on the issues that I have outlined. Exactly what will be the effect on the Western Australian industry? What will be the effect on communities in regional areas? We have a Minister for Regional Development who happens to also be the Minister for Agriculture and Food and we are told that that is a great thing because if we combine the two, they can work

hand in hand, but I do not hear anything coming from the Minister for Regional Development about what the effect will be on regional development.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** What will the effect be on regional communities if this change comes in? What about the tiny towns that I have just outlined? What about the town of Katanning, as the member for Roe has spoken about? What about all those people who rely on live exports who are not farmers: the truck drivers, the shearers and all of the rest of the community involved in the livestock industry and agriculture generally? If you take out this market—I do not believe, as I say, that it will end in five years—I think it will shut down very, very quickly and \$200 million will be lost. That \$200 million loss will be devastating to towns in my electorate. It will be devastating to towns in the member for Roe's electorate and the member for Central Wheatbelt's electorate, and even to some in the member for Warren–Blackwood's electorate. It probably will not affect people from Joondalup. It probably will not affect people from Armadale. It might affect some people down in Albany and Jerramungup. But the Labor Party obviously does not care, because it does not hold those seats and it does not care what happens to the farmers of Western Australia. It does not care what happens to the workers. What about the real workers who are going to be affected by this? It really does not even care about the people who formed the Labor Party. Was it not a bunch of shearers under a tree somewhere in Barcaldine who actually started your group up, and now you do not care less?

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** Who gutted the agriculture department?

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** You do not care less!

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** Who gutted it? The guy next to you when he was minister.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** You do not care less what happens to those workers and you do not care less what happens to the communities in my electorate.

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** While you were in government, he gutted the agriculture department and we're putting the money back. You are a disgrace.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** You are the disgrace! You and your government are the disgrace, and you should be ashamed of yourselves!

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** You keep saying, "You don't care" all the time. You didn't care about it at all!

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Minister! I think both of you do not need to be screaming like this across the chamber. If you have points to be made, please put them in the correct way.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Thank you, but I thought I had the call.

We know that the Labor Party does not care because this is happening in coalition seats federally. It does not care because this is in Western Australia. It does not care because this is in Katanning, this is somewhere in Moore, this is Merredin or somewhere. It does not care. All it cares about is winning the next election and pandering to the Green votes in the city. That is what it is aiming to do. It is aiming to sell farmers down the drain so that it can get votes in the inner cities of Melbourne and Sydney and the like. It does not care less what happens to people in rural Western Australia. I understand that. It is based in Canberra. That is what you expect. But what are the government members doing? What is the Labor Party in Western Australia doing to stand up for the communities that government members purport to, in some measure, represent?

We have upper house members in the Agricultural Region. There are members of Parliament in the Agricultural Region who run around. When do they stand up and speak about these issues? When do they talk about the concerns of farmers? When did we last hear Hon Darren West stand up and say that the livestock export industry was important? When did we last hear Hon Laurie Graham stand up and say something about these matters? I do not even know the guys in the Mining and Pastoral Region, but I have never heard them talk about it either, and we know that there are still some people in the Mining and Pastoral Region who rely on the sheep industry as well. Although there are members like the member for Bunbury, who I heard saying quite recently that there are more representatives of Labor people in the regions here than in any other party—that is great; but why is there no representation? Why not actually stand up for the regions? What are you people doing? Labor does nothing for the regions. Labor has agriculture region members who have not spoken about this issue anywhere. They have done nothing. They have helped no-one. Now we know that all the government is doing is waiting for Shorten to come in, so that he can shut down this industry that the Labor government considers an embarrassment because it has had to side with a bunch of farmers. It does not want to do it, it is not doing it now, and it has not done it in the past.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** Lazy debate. What a lazy contribution by you!

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Lazy? Ha! The member for Armadale does not accept interjections when he is speaking; I know his form.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** Lazy contribution! We do care about the country.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** The member for Armadale is trying to distract me from my message.

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Ahem!

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I would quite like to hear from the minister in this house who represents the Minister for Agriculture and Food on this matter. I believe that the Leader of the House is that person. I do not think the government has any story to tell. We know that it has done no modelling of what the effect would be on Western Australia. We know the industry has done plenty of modelling. We know that the price of sheep in Western Australia is highly correlated with the price received through the export markets, so if that driver is taken out, on that alone we will see a price collapse. But the government has not looked at what will happen to those one million-plus extra sheep and it has not done any modelling of what will happen to the communities in our electorates, because it does not care.

**MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House)** [5.21 pm]: I am very pleased to make a contribution, representing the Minister for Agriculture and Food in the other place. Member for Moore, I listened to contributions from the Leader of the Nationals WA, the member for Roe and the member for Geraldton, who put forward arguments that of course need to be considered. But you, sir, do your argument no service. When the member for Moore uses terms like, “No-one cares; the other side of the house does not care”, it is just rubbish. He does not do his argument any service, if that is how he wants to get understanding and representation. I am going to give the member for Moore a couple of important pointers, if he is talking about who cares, who did not care and who does not care. We need only look at the term of the previous government. The member for Moore, as a National Party member, was a member of the former government. Senior members of his party in this place, who sit next to him, were responsible for the agriculture portfolio. The member for Moore knows very well, as do most people who looked at the agriculture portfolio during their term of government, that the National Party, which has always argued that it should hold the agriculture portfolio in any coalition government, attacked the very portfolio that it sought to represent. We need only look at the way in which the Department of Agriculture and Food was emasculated by a National Party minister.

**Mr D.T. Redman** interjected.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** It is there in black and white. Last Thursday, a Labor Treasurer stood in this place and delivered a budget that highlighted \$131 million that this government is putting back into agriculture. That money was stripped away by the member’s party in government! So who does not care? Who did not care? It was you, sunshine! The Nationals failed the people in the agricultural regions of Western Australia. Now they come in here and fail to accept and understand what they did to the industry! The member for Moore will never admit it, because that is the sort of person he is.

Other members who spoke in this debate this afternoon put forward good arguments. I want to talk about what they said. But when the member for Moore came in here and said that this side of the house does not care, he was absolutely wrong! That demonstrates his lack of care and lack of standing up for the people in the agricultural industries of Western Australia. He did not say this when the former minister, who sits next to him, was emasculating the Department of Agriculture and Food. Where was he? Where was your voice, sunshine? It was not there, because the Nationals were snuggling up to the Liberal Party in government. He did nothing. This Labor government is returning \$131 million to the agriculture budget, because we recognise that agriculture—food production—is a key industry for Western Australia. We want to enhance it and value-add to it. We will keep doing that, noting the budget that was handed down by the Treasurer last Thursday.

The reason I am angry is that I actually have strong empathy with people who work on the land. I am not just saying that because I was born in Northam. My grandparents were sheep and wheat farmers in Narrogin. It was their livelihood. I watched my grandparents—my grandmother and my grandfather—carve out a living, in good country to be honest, in the Narrogin Valley around Boundain and Yilliminning. As a little boy, I wanted to be a farmer. I grew up watching my grandfather and grandmother, and then their sons, build up a farm, work hard and treat animals respectfully. I saw it as a little kid and as a teenager. I saw that they, like the overwhelming number of farmers in Western Australia, treated their animals respectfully and in a humane way. Do not ever say to me that I do not care, because I have a history! I do not have a great and abiding understanding of the industry, but I grew up with a farming family, so I take offence when the member for Moore starts to say things about people not caring. I am proud of my grandparents and the role they played in agriculture in the Narrogin district. They were great farmers. I watched when sheep crates would come to the race and the sheep would be loaded on to go off to market. Back in those days, there was a big saleyards in Narrogin. I remember the old saleyards in the middle of town. They were huge! I remember standing with my grandfather and watching as his sheep were loaded on at that market. When members start to try to pit city people against country people simply because they think city people do not care, they are so off the mark. It is disingenuous for the member for Moore to continue to do that, because so many people in Western Australia have an affinity with country WA.

I admit that I would love to see more city-based people have a much greater understanding of what happens in rural and regional Western Australia. I would like to see that, but I think there is still a long way to go. When someone is city bound and has been brought up only in the city, then, yes, it does cloud their understanding of what it means to grow or produce something that is then sold to an export or a domestic market. But this is such an important issue. It is so off the mark for the member to belittle people because they might live in the city and to say that they do not understand or do not care. I think that incident—the ship that the National Party highlighted—jolted everyone. It jolted lots of people throughout Australia. Indeed, it jolted the industry. I went to the website of the Sheep Collective, Leader of the Nationals WA. I will read out what they care about. I quote —

The Sheep Collective is a collaboration of exporters, importers, industry bodies and producers. It's about showing the care given to sheep in the live export process.

The Leader of the Nationals WA talked about the production line.

**Ms M.J. Davies:** The supply chain.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The supply chain. I quote again —

There are many reasons why we export our live animals to other countries. The Australian sheep industry has continued to grow since the first animals were exported more than 150 years ago.

Yes, it is an over 100-year industry in Australia. It continues —

Our own population simply is not large enough to sustain the sheep farming industry based solely on the local consumer market.

That is why exports are a critical part of that business. The site goes into some key elements about how it works and refers, obviously, to the farm, feed lots, transport and the export and importing processes. It then refers to animal health and welfare, and I quote—I do not think anyone would be unsupportive of this —

Ensuring the health and welfare of our sheep is at the core of what we do, across the supply chain, every day.

That is their animal health and welfare focus. It continues —

Our husbandry methods are constantly modified with low stress management the prime consideration each time we handle the sheep. Access to quality food and water is provided at all stages as well as treatment for local pests and diseases and quarantine when required.

I commend that industry group. Its members clearly want to make sure they get a message out to the wider community that greater education and understanding is required about that supply chain, but there are issues that impact on the growers and the producers in providing the resource to that supply chain. I think it is great that that group and other growers and other producers heard the message from what we saw on *Four Corners*, which led to the broad exposé, I suppose, of that particular ship at that time. I do not doubt that a number of important measures have been added or improved upon to ensure greater animal welfare. I do not doubt that at all, but a bit of history needs to be highlighted here. The motion before us certainly demonstrates that members opposite expect a Labor victory on Saturday. That is the first point.

**Ms M.J. Davies:** I think I made the point that regardless of the outcome, the policy needs to be struck from the Labor platform.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Let me tell members about the Minister for Agriculture and Food; Regional Development. I have to say that I have never seen such venom from members of Parliament, particularly from the National Party and some Liberals, against our minister. I find her quite remarkable. She is an astounding person. Her work and research ethic is immeasurable because it is so comprehensive. Anyone who has ever been to a meeting with her or seen her in action will know that she analyses, asks questions and probes. She does not take everything on face value. She is a minister who demonstrates more than a broad and deepening understanding. She acknowledges that she is learning as she goes. We all do that, but the venom that comes from some of the mouths of members opposite against her is remarkable. She stoically fronted the Katanning meeting. A number of people who were very supportive of the themes she was highlighting had conversations with her privately during and after that meeting. It is no mean feat for someone to go to a meeting of 1 000 people who are potentially angry and concerned about the future. I get that; I honestly do. Of course they are going to be passionate and concerned about the future of an industry that they know sustains their family and that they want to sustain into the future. I get it.

Please do not assume, as the member for Moore does—I think the member for Roe is a bit more of a reasonable person—that no-one cares, because they do. We want to see our farmers and producers continue to produce high-quality product, be it grain, meat, fruit and vegetables or horticultural products. We want to see that. Can I tell members that the myth that is perpetuated by some in the National Party that we in the Labor Party somehow have no affiliation, empathy or, indeed, strong support for our primary producers is absolutely wrong. It is wrong. Yes, people will get very passionate about the welfare of animals. I accept that too. They will be part of the debate and will put their cases also. Part of being in our democracy is that we listen to the debate, understand what is said

and probe that, but this default position by the member for Moore, which is to say that no-one cares and that we on this side do not care, is utterly wrong, I assure him.

I was in Katanning earlier this year. In the hotel we stayed at, I was grabbed by a gentleman who I think was in transport, from memory. He said, “I know you’re in town; can I talk to you at breakfast time?” I said yes. He highlighted the issues around the live export industry from his perspective. From memory, I think he has a pretty big transport enterprise and has had it for a long time. It was important for me to hear what he had to say.

Ministers of this government travel in the regions, as I do. I was in Bruce Rock last week. What a magnificent town and shire; what a magnificent group of people who are passionate about a future for their town. Why would they not be? They have wonderful attributes and assets that they can grow and promote. They are brilliant. I came away from Bruce Rock really buoyed, as the Minister for Local Government, about one example of a rural local government that understands what its strengths are and builds on them and promotes its place. It wants to share it with everyone. That is the other thing. One of the good things about Western Australians is that they are usually well travelled.

**Mr R.S. Love:** Are you talking about live sheep?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Do not assume that Western Australians are not interested in what is happening in regional Western Australia.

**Mr R.S. Love** interjected.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Let us go through some history, because I am going to take my time.

**Mr R.S. Love** interjected.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I am going to take my time because the member for Moore angered me. I am going to take my time to point out a few things that need to be highlighted.

Members opposite attacked the federal Labor Party. Let us look at what the Liberal–National Party has done or failed to do. In fact, it can be highlighted as what has damaged this industry and created uncertainty. We need only look back at the guy that I do not think you guys like very much, Barnaby Joyce, when he was appointed federal Minister for Agriculture in 2013. What did he do? As the minister, he announced the abolition of the Australian Animal Welfare Advisory Committee—he gutted that. There is a bit of a trend here. That role was to advise the federal minister and the Department of Agriculture on animal welfare matters. He got rid of it.

Philip Moss, who later led a review of live exports, singled out 2013, the year that Tony Abbott was elected as Prime Minister and Barnaby Joyce was named agriculture minister, as the year when things began to go wrong inside the federal Department of Agriculture. Minister Joyce scrapped \$25 million worth of savings in his department, including the work to establish national animal welfare standards; got rid of the committee overseeing them; and abolished the department’s animal welfare branch. In 2015, the federal government changed the livestock export certification process, removing approvals for individual livestock shipments. The systematic erosion of animal welfare oversight and regulation of the live export industry sent a message to the live export industry, because he kept eroding measures that were there to oversee the health and welfare of livestock. Then in 2017, we saw the *Awassi Express* voyage, which I highlighted earlier.

As the member knows and as the Leader of the Nationals WA highlighted, we have seen a dramatic decrease in live export numbers. If my figures are correct—I assume they are—in 2000, 4.22 million sheep were exported live out of Western Australia. If we fast-forward to 2018, the figure is under one million; 986 000 sheep were exported live. The percentage has decreased dramatically from 42 per cent in 2000 to 19 per cent in 2018. However, there has of course been a steady increase in the amount of sheep meat exported since 2000: \$126 million worth of sheep meat was exported in 2000, and it is my understanding that \$478 million worth of sheep meat was exported last year.

The Minister for Agriculture and Food and the government unashamedly support boosting local meat processing to capture more value from livestock. That is no secret; the government is focused on boosting processing in WA. That means there is greater capacity and capability for more meat processing jobs to be created in regional WA. I understand that Western Australian abattoirs are capable of processing more than 4.8 million head of sheep annually, and that many of those processors are currently not processing at their maximum capacity, so there is growth potential. The minister informs me that there is renewed international interest in our meat processors from Malaysia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates. Livestock Shipping Services, which has a live export arm and a meat processing arm, last month expanded its meat processing arm by buying its second abattoir in Western Australia.

I read with interest recent comments from the chairman of the Western Australian Meat Marketing Co-operative Ltd, Mr Craig Heggaton, who said that the processing sector was ready, that the live sheep trade had been in decline for a decade, and that over a period of time the processing works here in Western Australia can gear up and take that extra number of sheep; it is not a huge number. He said that the biggest threat to the industry was not necessarily losing the live sheep export trade, but the lack of sheep numbers in general. Those were comments made by the chair of the WA Meat Marketing Co-operative. He also said —

In my opinion, the demise of the live sheep export industry, provided producers take a pragmatic view of it and consider adjusting their production systems ...

That is the point that he made.

The state government has supported the WA sheep industry throughout this period, and there has effectively been no leadership from the federal Liberal government. The state government has been getting on with supporting resilience in our local sheep industry. Over the last 18 months, we have provided \$5 million in loans to the Western Australian Meat Marketing Co-operative to upgrade its Katanning processing plant—that is \$5 million, member for Roe. It is a very important investment. I was in Katanning recently and saw the —

**Mr D.T. Redman** interjected.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I have not finished.

I saw the importance of the abattoir that the member mentioned, which operates just on the edges of the town of Katanning. There has been more than \$900 000 provided to boost research capabilities in Katanning. The live export reference group has been formed to provide advice to the Department of Regional Development on strategies for improving the resilience of the WA sheep industry. Of course, the state Minister for Agriculture and Food, Hon Alannah MacTiernan—in whom I have the greatest faith—will work with whoever is elected on Saturday to support and provide positive options for sheep growers to continue to produce quality product for the export market going into the future. She will work with anybody; she will work with whoever is the federal agriculture minister post the election on 18 May.

I understand that the federal Labor Party's priority is to ensure that the sheep industry can continue to thrive, whatever happens at a federal level. The state Minister for Agriculture and Food, Hon Alannah MacTiernan, is in regular contact with the federal shadow agriculture minister and she is constantly putting the interests and aspirations of our farming sector and communities to the federal Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources. I think there is a clear understanding that there are some special elements to what happens in Western Australia in the production of live animals for processing. Western Australia is a very important, emerging and growing market. There is, of course, a focus on support to allow a long and proper transition that will enable WA farmers to manage change and to take up increased opportunities.

I turn now to what Tony Seabrook, president of the Western Australian Pastoralists and Graziers Association, had to say about Mr Fitzgibbon on *Country Hour* earlier this year. I think it once again puts paid to the comment the member for Moore made about the capabilities of the federal Labor spokesperson for agriculture, whom I hope will be the federal agriculture minister post 18 May. Mr Tony Seabrook, president of the Pastoralists and Graziers Association, had this to say about Mr Fitzgibbon on *Country Hour*. I listen to *Country Hour* quite a lot; I do. The interviews it has with various people in the sector are actually very, very good and interesting.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** *Lateline* is a great program!

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** He is not on anymore, but I listened to Tony Delroy.

Several members interjected.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Anyway, can I just highlight to the house the comments of Tony Seabrook, president of the Pastoralists and Graziers Association. This is what he had to say about Mr Fitzgibbon on *Country Hour* earlier this year —

*Joel has been around a long time, he is a very sensible man, I get on very well with him, if we do have a change of government —*

This is Tony Seabrook, president of the Pastoralists and Graziers Association —

*and he does end up being the Minister for Agriculture, I very much look forward to working with him, he is a very steady operator, I don't believe we would be having the wild swings that we are in policy that we are having right now.*

That is very interesting. It is a very different assessment from the member for Moore's assessment earlier. It comes back to the member for Moore's constantly negative approach. He is clouded by the philosophical view that nobody in the Labor Party or who lives in the city can have any empathy or affiliation with the aspirations and the importance of regional Western Australia. This is why he does his side of politics such a disservice. There are members around him to whom people will listen when they speak, because they reflect an understanding that there is widespread empathy and support for, and understanding of, our farmers. When drought ravages parts of our country, we quite often see in social media people who reside in the city —

**Mr R.S. Love** interjected.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** No, I am going to put the member to bed about his negative attitude towards people he says do not care, because he is wrong. He is absolutely wrong and he talks rubbish when he does that; he does himself and his party a disservice. People like Mr Tony Seabrook are quite prepared to work with a federal Labor government and a federal Labor minister for agriculture. The member for Moore made comments about Joel Fitzgibbon, who might be the federal agriculture minister if the federal Labor Party is successful at the election. He is a sensible man and I get on well with him. I very much look forward to working with him. He is a steady operator. This is the key point: I do not believe that we will have the wild swings in policy that we are having now. I do not know Tony Seabrook well, but I know of him. I would not doubt his word in his assessment of who could be the future agriculture minister in federal Parliament.

We have to keep listening and engaging and having conversations. The member for Moore has claimed that none of that has happened. If we look at past budgets of the Nationals WA while in government, we can demonstrate that, if there were conversations, they were not working. Investment in the agriculture industry and in the then Department of Agriculture and Food in particular was gutted under their stewardship of the portfolio—and this was while there were five members of the party in this place and two, maybe three, members in cabinet. When the member comes in here and says that the Labor Party does not care and does not respond, he is talking with a forked tongue, because in the budget handed down last Thursday, \$131 million has been committed to the agriculture industry. As the member knows, we are already marketing our products to national and international markets, because we understand that a very high quality product is produced in Western Australia, including the grains that are exported to the world, particularly to Asia. There is a special grain that is part of the noodle market—I learnt that the other day when I was in Asia.

**Mr R.S. Love** interjected.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** There has been an increase in the chilled meat market.

**Mr R.S. Love** interjected.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** You have had your go, mate! You had your go when you were in government! You did not stand up for the agricultural region then. You did not defend the agricultural region or the department when the fellow next to you was gutting the budget. I did not hear any speeches from you about the budget in which you said, “I am disappointed that the member for Warren–Blackwood, as the minister, has gutted the agriculture budget.” I did not hear that at all. Now you come in here and say that we do not care. History shows —

**Mr R.S. Love** interjected.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** We have heard from you! You failed the people down there and in the agricultural regions of Western Australia.

I will always listen to other members of the Nationals. I have a lot of respect for the leader, the member for Roe and others. I have a bit of respect for the member for Warren–Blackwood, even though I have had a go at him tonight. But the member for Moore does absolutely nothing for the argument. Rather than abusing the Minister for Agriculture and Food and blaming everybody else, he should look in the mirror and realise the catastrophe that he oversaw as a member of the National Party during the eight and a half years of the Barnett Liberal–National government. If he wants to keep being blinded by that, he does not do himself a good service and he certainly does not do the constituents he should be representing or the sector he is representing a good service. All they are hearing from him is negativity, simple abuse and all those sorts of aspects, not a willingness to work with the minister and the department. We are putting more money—\$131 million—into the agriculture sector, unlike the member who oversaw it when it was gutted.

Several members interjected.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** That is fine. We will accept the failures of the Nationals. We are going to get on with working with the industry and with whomever is elected come Saturday, 18 May. I have every faith in our agriculture minister. She makes sure that she is out and about in the pastoral and agricultural areas. She makes sure that she talks to the producers. She makes sure that she works with those who value add to the products that are sent to the world. She looks at how we brand our state’s produce. She looks at making sure that we are telling the story that our products in regional WA are well produced and effective.

Several members interjected.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The rabble over there are upset now. I was not going to take it. I was not going to stand here and take their rubbish, particularly from the member for Moore.

**Mr R.S. Love** interjected.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** You will blow a gasket shortly, son. I can see it happening. Settle down, son. You failed totally!

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 15 May 2019]

p3401a-3417a

Ms Mia Davies; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Shane Love; Mr David Templeman

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**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Minister! I need everyone to stop shouting. Hansard cannot possibly get a recording of everybody screaming at each other.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I will not take any more interjections.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** No; I figured that.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I think that would help the situation. I want to put on record —

**Mr D.T. Redman** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Enough, member for Warren–Blackwood! I call you for the first time.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Of course the Labor Party strongly supports our farmers and producers in the agricultural regions of Western Australia and our pastoralists who use the land. Our Minister for Regional Development; Agriculture and Food has demonstrated her commitment, because another \$131 million from this budget will go back into the agricultural area, even though members opposite gutted it. They do not like this. They hate this. While in government, the National Party, which members opposite have always promoted as the party of rural and regional Western Australia, gutted the very department that it has sought to represent over many years. They hate this. We saw their faces when the budget was delivered last Thursday and they heard the comment that \$131 million would be added to the agriculture budget. They hated it. The blood drained from their faces, particularly from the member for Moore's.

**Mr R.S. Love** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Moore, I call you for the first time.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** They hate it. Let me assure members, as we round down to six o'clock, that we will continue to support our farmers.

*Point of Order*

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** I am finding it really difficult to hear.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I quite agree. I once again call all the front bench of the National Party. I have said a number of times that you are not to keep yelling. That is enough.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** We will work with whomever is elected on Saturday, 18 May. The minister is continuing to work with a range of key stakeholders to make sure that we understand that we need a robust industry in regional Western Australia. I have highlighted in my response the gains being made in the chilled meat industry as one example, but there is a raft of others. We will keep working with and talking to farmers and we will support the work and efforts of groups like the Sheep Collective. I commend them. It is tremendous work. Part of that work is about educating the broader community about supply chains and exactly what the industry does on farmland and at production places. It is positive and an important part of the Western Australian economy and the Western Australian community psyche. Members should never deny that there is strong empathy from all sides of politics in Parliament for the important people who live in rural and regional Western Australia. I care. We care. The member for Moore does not seem to understand that. He might want to have a bit of a think about what he says and how he approaches some of these motions, because it is not the same message that is being given by his leader, the member for Roe or the member for Geraldton.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

*Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm*