



# MEDIA RELEASE

## Time for McGowan to Stand Up for Live Exports

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The decision of the independent regulator, Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) to deny an exemption under the Northern Summer Order to load 56,000 sheep for export post June 1 has highlighted the indifference of WA Premier Mark Gowan towards the WA livestock industry, the Pastoralists and Graziers Association (PGA) said today.

WA livestock exporter RETWA was refused an exemption to load an alternative vessel before the 15th June, after the Al Kuwait vessel, which had been due to transport the sheep after docking in Fremantle on 22 May was quarantined after crew members tested positive to COVID-19.

“What should have been a simple solution to resolve an extraordinary situation has not only highlighted the shortcomings of our current and seemingly inflexible live export regulations, but has also shown the failure of WA Premier Mark McGowan to stand up for the interests of the 5,250 sheep producers in this State who rely on or are directly affected by the live export trade,” PGA President Tony Seabrook said today.

“Since announcing over a week ago that the Al Kuwait was being quarantined following crew members testing positive for COVID-19, the Premier has refused to offer any leadership or solutions over the last 8 days to ensure the export of the 56,000 sheep, who are now stranded in a Baldvis feedlot, placing the WA sheep industry in a dire position.

“These sheep, which were sourced from over 300 WA farms will now slowly enter the domestic market over time at a significant cost to the exporter, and with a strong likelihood of pushing down farm gate prices.

“Further, our long term trading partners have already indicated that as a result of this refusal by the Federal Government to grant the exemption, that they will begin to source sheep from alternative markets, rather than from Western Australia.

“As part of the National Cabinet, which has met twice in the past week, it is evident that the Premier at no time prosecuted the importance of any of these issues to his Federal counterparts to allow for the granting an extraordinary exemption due to the pandemic, to ensure these sheep could be loaded onto an alternative ship.

“This raises serious questions over the Premier’s continual reluctance to engage with, or support the sheep farmers of WA.

“The live export industry is a one hundred per cent legal and viable industry which underpins the livelihoods of thousands of WA farming families and is often the major economic driver for many regional communities throughout the State.

“In this time of crisis government needs to show not only leadership, but support for all Western Australian industries. The continual indifference of the Premier, and the WA Labor Government towards this vital industry needs to stop.

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Issued by PGA of WA

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