



# STUART GRIMLEY MP

Member for Western Victoria  
State Leader of Derryn Hinch's Justice Party

## MEDIA RELEASE



### More Sheep Shearers Needed for Western Victoria

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Member for Western Victoria, Stuart Grimley MP is lobbying the State Government to do more to fix the short-term sheep shearer shortage in regional Victoria. The recent announcement of nine people completing a training and assessing course to teach new sheep shearers is a great long-term solution, but won't solve the crisis that is happening now.

The opening and shutting of borders has had a large impact on the number of travelling shearers that would normally fill the void of this shortage. The vast majority of these shearers travel from New Zealand. As Victoria has not been accepting overseas travellers or participating in the travel bubble with New Zealand, farmers don't have enough staff to shear their sheep.

Due to the lack of shearers, farmers have had to cut wool at much longer lengths which achieves a low-value market price; this results in financial loss for the farmer.

Another concern is the animal welfare aspect. Sheep must be shorn in accordance with the new POCTA Regulations (2019) that stipulate "sheep must be shorn before the fleece is longer than twice the average annual growth for the breed or more than 250mm (whichever is shorter)". If sheep cannot be shorn when required serious welfare problems can arise, such as flystrike injuries/deaths, due to long wool, and if shorn too late into the winter, death from the cold weather.

There is an issue with attracting workers to shearing, much like fruit picking. People who are on welfare don't want to do this work and are not being incentivised to take up the work. This needs to be addressed by both State and Federal Governments.

#### Quotes attributable to Stuart Grimley MP:

"I understand that COVID-19 has presented a myriad of challenges to every government and the private sector. But it seems the Victorian Government hasn't addressed the need to support our struggling farmers with overseas workers or through incentivising those on welfare to take up this work.

Many of our agricultural businesses rely on overseas skilled and unskilled labour. Our shearing industry is no different. I have been contacted by Western Victorian farmers who are screaming out for help to shear their sheep.

It is positive that the government has invested in more trainer and assessors to help shore up the future of the local industry. However it's not going to get sheep shorn in the short-term.

I'm calling on the government to provide short-term assistance to these farmers and to have contingency plans for the future, if COVID-19 continues to wreak havoc on travel. This could mean creating an incentive for people who are currently on welfare, to take up a position in shearing or other agricultural work.

**Office of Stuart Grimley Media Contact:** Callum Whitehead / 0437 096 982 / [callum.whitehead@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:callum.whitehead@parliament.vic.gov.au)