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## Minister on the lamb

By David Bell

John Castrilli has palmed responsibility for animal welfare onto the very industry profiting from alleged abuses.

The local government minister says it's unreasonable to have state animal welfare officers at every loading and unloading.

Following complaints his department launched an investigation into allegations of animal mistreatment during a loading at Freo last week.

Complainants told of overpacked pens and limbs and heads sticking through bars over three days. Tens of thousands of sheep were loaded and no animal welfare inspector turned up to check it out.

"Inspectors cannot physically be present at every instance of live sheep exporting" Mr Castrilli said. "First and foremost it is the responsibility of the individuals and companies associated with the live export industry to act responsibly and in accordance with the Act and their licence conditions."

His Labour shadow Paul Papalia describes that as a "cop out". "There is (still) always going to be a need for government to provide oversight," he said.

"There's a great deal of concern within the local community...I don't think a response of 'it's not our job' is particularly sensitive."

South Metro Greens MLC Lynn MacLaren said the export industry had proven time and again that it was incapable of policing itself.

"The industry does claim that it can self-monitor but we've seen that it's not protecting the animals.

"The trade itself does keeps demonstrating that it is inadequately monitored and that the animals are suffering as a result of these practices."

WA Livestock Transporters and Country Bulk Carriers Association president Grant Robbins says he's satisfied.

"There are always AQIS (Australian Quarantine Inspection Service) inspectors there as part of the loading."

Former Melville councillor Trish Phelan was at the loading last week and she said AQIS inspectors only showed up for an hour on the third day. It was their job to look for disease and blindness, not report on animal cruelty.

Freo's council chief ranger Cameron Bartkowski said livestock was "not within our

jurisdiction'. Even if abuses were sighted on trucks heading through Fremantle, it would be an RSPCA matter".

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