

The woman who revolutionised Australia's animal rights movement.



Christine Townend (top left) is thrown overboard at a 1982 live sheep export protest at Port Adelaide. Picture: News Ltd, (6 July 1982).

By Bryan Seymour

Christine Townend braced for impact as she was heaved from the gangplank onto the dock, landing with a sickening thud. Her protest over the live sheep export trade was over, for now.

After a lifetime of achievement, including her elevation to the Order of Australia, the continuation of this cruel trade remained her one great regret until the moment she passed away peacefully this month.

By the mid 1980's Townend had forced her way into the mainstream advocating for animal welfare in a way few had seen.

Mentored by Milo Dunphy, Christine got together a group of friends in 1976 and proposed the formation of a group to advocate for the welfare of farm animals. Thus, Animal Liberation came into existence, named after Peter Singer's book of the same name. With Singer she then co-founded Animals Australia in 1980.

She set about ridding supermarket shelves of caged eggs, promoting vegetarian eating, the introduction of animal cruelty laws, ending awful animal testing programs and countless other reforms.

"When we started in the seventies we'd go to a restaurant and order a plate of vegetables because there were no vegetarian options," Christine recalled.

“Now we have plant-based ‘meat’ products that are actually more iron and nutrient rich than animal meats,” she said.

Today, it is estimated as many as 12% of Australians, or 2.5 million people, are vegetarian or vegan.¹

She then cast her gaze overseas to eradicating rabies, in dogs and humans, through animal shelters she and her husband Jeremy established in India. These shelters operate today and have transformed the lives of thousands of animals and people.

When Townend began protesting live exports and animal cruelty in the 1970’s she said she was branded one of the most hated women in Australia. Her campaign in 1980 led to a government report revealing, for the first time, the horrific conditions on board these ‘ships of death’.

“You would have had to have been a fool to underestimate this woman,” said Emma Hurst, an Animal Justice Party MP in New South Wales upper house.

“Christine was essentially the founder of the entire animal rights movement in Australia and her work in the animal protection space will continue to help animals for years to come.”

As the wharf side protests gained momentum the Adelaide Advertiser in 1982 ran a front-page photograph of Christine being thrown off the gangplank by one of the men loading the sheep.

“For her to be one of the first people not just in Australia but in the world to bring these issues up for discussion and debate, that takes some real guts to do that,” Hurst said.

Courage was never in short supply as Townend showed when she took on a seemingly insurmountable task in India.

In 1990, Christine attended a conference in France for the protection of animals when she met a woman who convinced her to visit the Help in Suffering animal shelter in Jaipur India. It was a life-changing experience.²

She moved there and became a Managing Trustee of HIS with her husband Jeremy by her side. She remained in that position happily for 17 years.

Walking with Jeremy in Darjeeling in 1993 they came across a dog foaming at the mouth. It had been poisoned with Strychnine which the locals used to try to stop the spread of rabies. The indiscriminate use of this poison condemned tens of thousands of dogs and other animals to an agonising death while failing to halt infections of Rabies.

Nearly 30 years later, Rabies has been effectively eradicated in Darjeeling and Kalimpong thanks to the Working for Animals charity that Christine and Jeremy set up to build and operate animal shelters in both locations. Continued vigilance is essential in preventing the disease from spreading again.

“A major programme of both shelters is a birth control programme, the aim of which is to create healthy, rabies free and stable street and community dog populations,” Christine said.

¹ <https://www.roymorgan.com/findings/rise-in-vegetarianism-not-halting-the-march-of-obesity>

² <https://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders/biogs/WLE0076b.htm>

“These programmes are really important because rabies is rife in India causing many human deaths each year.”

All the while, Townend continued her advocacy efforts at home.

“My biggest regret is not seeing an end to this cruel trade,” she said of live exports..

The federal government has a transition plan to phase out live sheep exports by sea, which happens only in Western Australia, by May 1, 2028.³

Meat and Livestock Australia estimates the trade contributes \$143million to the national economy every year.⁴ A transition package of \$139million has been slammed as grossly inadequate by industry stakeholders.

Still, the end of the live sheep export trade is on track to end once and for all. Meanwhile, live cattle exports will continue; there were 746,829 cows shipped overseas in 2024.⁵

“There's not many people who can say they've made a real and lasting impact in the world but Christine has,” said Emma Hurst.

“I found this quote buried within a submission she had submitted to my parliamentary inquiry into battery cages in the egg industry, ‘Until and unless we lay down our weapons of war against the animals, we will never have a world at peace’.”

An accomplished artist and author, Christine remained active in her advocacy even as her own health deteriorated. She remained focused on the well-being of those who do not have a voice. Her relentless determination has transformed how Australians perceive themselves and our animal friends in the world.

Earlier this year Christine attended our regular committee meeting for Working for Animals and she spoke passionately about another cause she has long championed; the need for action to free elephants in India trapped in a life of hopeless deprivation and pain to service the tourist industry.

The reaction in India to Christine’s passing has been extraordinary. She is revered by the people there as a beacon of compassion and hope.

The Darjeeling Goodwill Animal Shelter staff posted on social media: *The shelters are more than buildings. With lush green pastures, clean and hygienic wards, and nourishing meals, they reflect her belief that all animals deserve respect, love, and dignity. Every corner carries Christine’s values, and the animals she loved have felt her presence in countless ways.*

As one of her close friends and fellow activists put it, “In the animal kingdom over which we rule, Christine Townend is a lion, leading us towards true equality for all living things”.

Rest in well-deserved peace, Christine.

Christine Townend OAM (1944 – 2025).

³ <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/export/controlled-goods/live-animals/livestock/live-sheep-exports-phase-out>

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https://www.mla.com.au/contentassets/a6c1d44861de497db53b9575b9425fce/value_of_the_live_sheep_export_trade_final_report.pdf

⁵ <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/export/controlled-goods/live-animals/live-animal-export-statistics/livestock-exports-by-market>

Christine passed away peacefully and is survived by her husband Jeremy and her two sons.

The family respectfully ask that anyone wishing to pay tribute to Christine's life send a donation to Working for Animals:

<https://www.workingforanimals.org.au/>

‘A life for Animals’ by Christine Townend

<https://www.amazon.com.au/Life-Animals-Christine-Townend/dp/1743325339>

‘Christine’s Ark’ by Christine Townend & John Little

<https://www.amazon.com.au/Christines-Ark-Christine-Townend-ebook/dp/B008V4IBA8>

Classified adyts. 51 0261.



From GRANT NIHILL.

[illegible]

A late-night rendezvous between a televi- By a

Arturo Taverna
PH. 352-8999 ALL SALONS

- 20-32 CURRIE ST., CITY
- 63 RUNDLE MALL, CITY
- MARSHALL SQUARE CENTRE
- 7 CHAPEL ST., GLENELG
- T.T. PLAZA, MOBBURY

Protesters were sprayed with food pellets

CANBERRA — Australia's

Tonkin

The Premier, Mr. Tonkin, has asked the Federal Government to contribute to the cost of the sheep.

Last week, the Australian Bankers' Association warned that banks might not be able to make additional funds available for home loans because of weak growth in bank deposits.

When the Federal Government granted a 1 p.c. home interest-rate cut in March, to 13.5 p.c., it was expected that the major banks to provide an extra \$400m. for housing during the following 12 months.

The banks have suggested that they will not be able to meet the

He was backed by the Treasurer Mr. Howard, who said he was proud at the suggestion that banks would be able to meet it. He agreed \$400m. increase.

The Bankers' Association, say more pressure would be placed on banks to reach the target interest rates as a result of the Government's decision to lift the Australian Savings Bonds rate by 1.5 p.c.

PAGE 5 — Athlone cartoon.

PAGE 8 — Average house value.

calls for changes in income tax

Mr. Tonkin said yesterday he had written to the Prime Minister to say that if the plan in Qld.

George" did all the bargaining. It persuaded them to give themselves up and go to the nearest police station where he was at the time.

The armed men arranged for the major crime to be there so the radio and the two-way radio, and the officer arranged it.

Forman said he followed the man to the Gilead police station but did not interview with them before they left.

Forman said he had to ask why George had been arrested.

[illegible]

TEL AVIV, Tuesday —

EUROPE MOTORCITY. The safe place to buy new and used cars, comm. ve- hicles Main St. Rd. (Advt.)	BLAIR ATHOL AUTO. PARTS New & used spare parts 367 Churchill Rd. Kil- burn Ph 262 4613. (Advt.)	HOUSE OF models, spares and 51 223 3632
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It said President Reagan's position was "a dramatic revolution in US policy, and that Mr. Reagan was taking 'a great risk upon himself personally' by committing US troops to the unstable Lebanese arena.

HONDA Cars, power products, service 123 Pine St. (Advt.)	SHEEPSKIN CAR SEAT covers under tailored, fully or part covered Family Gear, 47 7131 (Advt.)	SIGMA SALES CENTRE Yukon Motors, exs Armas and Pulitney Sts., city Phone 222-4900 (Advt.)
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COLORADO

I think now when I listen to the ABC
in the evenings I shall not dream

Well, all I can say is that I wish they'd told us earlier. The seat of my ancient dinner suit has

Now, through some curious perversity, we tend to use our portable telly rather like a transistor radio. We sometimes turn it on and it babbles away while we go about our business without giving it a glance from one hour to the next. Though not, of course, when *Brideshead* or *Couindown* are on.

But it's nice, and it's reassuring, to have Aunty still about after all these years. She was

It is a telling sign of the respect she

commands, and of her importance, and it points to a continuing life of robust independence.

Dammit, old girl, I think I will dress, just once more, to celebrate

— Des Colquhoun

It's still Tight

after work"

As the days grow longer, we can all look forward to enjoying plenty of Light

Coopers Light gives you great beer flavour without getting into a lather about the little random things that can

occur these days.
This winter, turn on
the Light.
Coopers Light.

COOPERS LIGHT
We haven't forgotten how
a good beer should taste.

a good beer should taste.

5



Animals suffering from extreme heat stress literally cook from the inside out. Pic: Animals Australia



Jeremy and Christine Townend. Pic: Bryan Seymour



Christine Townend and 'Ned'. Pic: Bryan Seymour



Emma Hurst. Pic: Emma Hurst



A rescued kitten hanging out at the Darjeeling Goodwill Animal Shelter founded by Christine Townend. Picture: Working for Animals



Rescued dogs at the Darjeeling Animal Shelter. Pic: Working for Animals



Rescued puppies at the Kalimpong Animal Shelter. Pic: Working for Animals.



Christine Townend in India with a Camel Ambulance. Pic: Jeannette Lloyd-Jones



Veterinary surgery at the Darjeeling Goodwill Animal Shelter. Pic: Working for Animals.