

SUBMISSION

2 March 2023

Carol Sheridan

Assistant Secretary, Animal Welfare Branch

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Via email: <https://haveyoursay.agriculture.gov.au/inspector-general-animal-welfare>

Dear Carol

Re: Submission to Inspector-General of Animal Welfare Consultation Paper

Livestock SA is the peak industry organisation for South Australia's red meat and wool industries. There are over 5,200 sheep producers and more than 2,700 beef cattle producers in the state. With a membership of over 3,500 sheep, beef cattle and goat production businesses, we work to secure a strong and sustainable livestock sector in South Australia.

The red meat and wool industries are the backbone of South Australia's livestock and meat processing sectors, which contribute \$5.4 billion annually to the state.

Livestock SA is a member of Primary Producers SA (PPSA) and is the South Australian representative member of four national peak industry councils: Sheep Producers Australia, Wool Producers Australia, Cattle Australia and Goat Industry Council of Australia. Through PPSA and the Peak Councils, Livestock SA is also a member of the National Farmers' Federation.

Livestock SA welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the consultation on the proposed role of Inspector-General of Animal Welfare. We understand the Australian Government is honouring a commitment to establish an Inspector-General of Animal Welfare, and this will be done by expanding the current office of the Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports (IGLAE) to include animal welfare related objectives and expertise, forming an Inspector General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports (IGAWLAE).

Background

Livestock SA supports live animal export and urge the Australian Government to seek every opportunity to work collaboratively with industry to implement the safeguards required to ensure Australia can consistently demonstrate excellence in live export animal welfare standards and in so doing, secure government and community support for the continuation of this important trade.

In 2021-22, total South Australian livestock sector exports increased by 18 per cent to reach \$979 million¹. Livestock production systems in South Australia mean that only about 10 per cent of live exports are sourced from our state. However, live export markets remain an important component of our industry's ongoing management strategy. Market diversity underpins higher livestock prices and South Australian producers rely on the ability to utilise live export to quickly destock in a sustainable way during periods of drought.

The South Australian livestock sector has developed a strategic 2030 Blueprint for both beef and sheep production², with buy-in from along the whole value chain. The blueprints articulate our belief that demonstrable excellence in animal health and welfare underpins our sector's production capacity, profitability, continued market access and social licence to farm. Our sector continues to financially support and drive the scientific research into how any pain and suffering experienced by our livestock animals can be objectively measured and effectively managed and prevented.

Targets for the Sheep Industry Blueprint include ensuring product integrity to meet market requirements with increased transparency and improving animal health and wellbeing. The Beef Industry Blueprint includes similar targets to maintain the integrity of South Australian beef through continuous improvements in animal welfare.

The global demand for meat also continues to increase, with an estimated growth in global red meat consumption of 15 per cent by 2031³. The export of Australian livestock and meat products will be integral to meet this increasing demand, and Livestock SA supports the continuation of live export with welfare standards underpinned by science to meet this need.

Livestock SA understands that the role of the IGAWLAE will be limited to live exports and that all other aspects of livestock animal welfare along the value chain within Australia will continue to be regulated at a state and territory level with national standards and guidelines in place. Livestock SA supports this approach, and firmly believes that any further expansion of the Inspector-General's role into broader livestock production would add an unnecessary layer of complexity.

Considerations for establishment of the IGAWLAE

Livestock SA understands that for the IGAWLAE to strengthen animal welfare assurance in the export of livestock, it will require additional animal welfare related objectives, and that these objectives will aim to strengthen animal welfare assurance and increase accountability and transparency for animal welfare in livestock exports.

Livestock SA notes it is anticipated that an IGAWLAE will consult and engage those that are involved or interested in livestock exports, similar to how the IGLAE seeks public submissions when conducting reviews. We support broad, transparent and unbiased consultation and consider it is essential that an IGAWLAE avoids generating any perception that it is being disproportionately influenced by radical animal activists or ideology.

Scope of the IGAWLAE

¹ South Australian Government (2023), *Primary Industries Scorecard 2021-22*. Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

² <https://livestocksa.org.au/industry-development/industry-blueprints>

³ OECD/FAO (2022), *OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2022-2031*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/f1b0b29c-en>.

Livestock SA notes that it is proposed that an IGAWLAE will strengthen animal welfare standards. We note that the specific functions of an IGAWLAE are yet to be finalised and will be informed by this 'have your say' process. We also note that the Australian Government has committed to renew the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS) separately to the establishment of the IGAWLAE.

The Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines (S&Gs) were developed under the previous AAWS to harmonise and streamline livestock welfare legislation in Australia, ensuring that it results in improved welfare outcomes and is practical for industry. National and state frameworks of welfare are informed by the S&Gs. These underpin access to domestic and overseas markets and reinforce Australia's commitment to advancing meaningful and effective animal welfare outcomes.

For the industries Livestock SA represents, the S&Gs for cattle and sheep were agreed by state and territory governments in 2016 and came into operation through South Australian legislation on 15 April 2017. The S&Gs for goats were developed by Animal Health Australia and the Goat Industry Council of Australia in 2015 and undergo a review by GICA and AHA annually.

The S&Gs are the result of considerable collaboration, compromise and commitment to improved animal welfare outcomes by all jurisdictions and industry. We are unclear what the commitment to renew the AAWS will mean for industry, but we note S&Gs have proven to be a successful platform and process for realising national consistency of animal welfare regulations across jurisdictions.

We also note the meat and livestock industry has invested considerable resources to develop a suite of best practice programs and guidelines that ensure good animal welfare including:

- Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) program
- National Feedlot Accreditation Scheme
- Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Land Transport
- Australian Livestock Processing Industry Animal Welfare Certification
- Fit to Load Guidelines ('Is the animal fit to load (2019)').

Livestock SA absolutely expects and is committed to robust oversight, accountability and transparency of animal welfare. At this stage, we are unclear how the various new animal welfare commitments from the Australian Government including the establishment of an IGAWLAE will align with, augment and avoid duplication of the comprehensive codes of practice/standards/guidelines that already exist for the livestock sector.

Please contact the Livestock SA office [REDACTED] if you would like to discuss this submission further.

Yours sincerely

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