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South Australian State Election 2026

ABOUT US

Livestock SA is the peak industry organisation representing South Australia's red meat and wool producers – over 5,200 sheep producers, 2,700 beef cattle producers and several hundred goat producers. We work to secure a strong, sustainable and competitive livestock industry that drives regional employment, strengthens sovereign food security, and underpins South Australia's wider manufacturing and export economy.

OUR INDUSTRY

South Australia's red meat and wool sectors contribute \$4.49 billion annually to the state economy and support over 21,000 jobs – around 28% of all agricultural employment. The industry produces 82,000 tonnes of beef, 87,000 tonnes of sheepmeat and 57 million kilograms of wool each year¹. Livestock production occurs on 84% of the state's agricultural land, covering more than half of South Australia's landmass.

According to the *More than an Industry Report (2025) – MITR*², food and beverage manufacturing is South Australia's largest manufacturing sector, accounting for 35% of total manufacturing output. Livestock production and processing form a major share of this manufacturing base.

Strong export demand for rising global protein and fibre consumption³ highlight significant growth opportunities. Our industry's roadmap – the *SA Red Meat and Wool Blueprint 2030 (Blueprint)*⁴ – ensures that future government investment delivers measurable returns for South Australia's economy, communities and environment.

THE INVESTMENT IMPERATIVE

South Australia's livestock industry is facing compounding pressures: climate volatility, rising costs, skill shortages, regulatory complexity and critical under-investment in regional infrastructure. These constraints are slowing productivity, limiting processor throughput and reducing competitiveness. A strong partnership between industry and government is essential to maintain productivity, protect biosecurity, and drive sustainable growth.

The MITR confirms agriculture is a foundational economic system, supporting 76,000 jobs and generating one of the state's strongest economic multipliers – every \$1 of agricultural output generates an additional

¹ https://pir.sa.gov.au/primary_industry/industry_support/industry_scorecards

² https://pir.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/478616/more-than-an-industry-report-2025.pdf

³ https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-fao-agricultural-outlook_19991142.html

⁴ <https://livestocksa.com.au/industry-funds/industry-blueprint>

\$0.86 across the SA economy. Strategic co-investment will safeguard sovereign food security, strengthen regional communities and unlock higher-value exports.

To remain competitive, producers need a modern regulatory environment, resilient infrastructure, and targeted support to adopt new technologies. These investments are not subsidies. They are structural enablers of long-term economic performance. Each investment proposed below is backed by a clear return: boosting exports, securing regional jobs, improving resilience and advancing the state's environment, climate and food security goals.

2026 ELECTION PRIORITIES

1. Our Environment

Blueprint Goal: To enhance the natural environment and biodiversity of the land we farm, and to maximise our sector's contribution to climate change mitigation and resilience via a science-based, collaborative, whole value-chain approach.

Climate and Carbon

Livestock producers manage half of the state's landmass and are central to SA's emissions-reduction pathway⁵. Achieving net zero by 2050 requires enabling producers to baseline and manage their carbon footprint. Investment will leverage our industry's ongoing investment in sustainability projects, which since 2017 have been over \$100 million in livestock producer levies⁶.

The MTIR identifies climate-smart agriculture and natural-capital markets as major opportunities for SA. Strengthening environmental data and market access will protect our premium brand and open new revenue streams for producers.

Independent analysis, including ABARES studies on agricultural research and development, indicates that every dollar invested in targeted productivity and sustainability initiatives can return between \$5 and \$10 in long-term farm-gate and ecosystem value.

Ask: \$3 million to enable Livestock SA to support 6,000 livestock producers to undertake carbon baselining and participate in carbon and natural capital programs.

Aboriginal Heritage

While the Aboriginal Heritage (Miscellaneous) Amendment Act 2024 was relatively minor in policy changes and focussed on strengthened protection, it has led to inconsistent interpretation, delays and unregulated fees that are creating considerable delays to biodiversity and drought projects.

The MTIR reinforces the need for environmental and cultural-heritage regulation to be risk-based, predictable and efficient, noting that regulatory uncertainty is a major impediment to productivity, investment and innovation. A modernised Aboriginal Heritage framework that is co-designed with industry will give producers clarity while ensuring cultural protections are upheld.

⁵ <https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/climate-change/greenhouse-gas-emissions>

⁶ <https://www.mla.com.au/news-and-events/industry-news/meat--livestock-australia-delivers-five-year-strategic-plan-to-drive-productivity-profitability-and-sustainability>

Ask: \$1 million to deliver a more workable and effective Aboriginal Heritage framework within 12 months through:

- Risk-based regulation proportional to activity scale.
- Transparent service fees and deliverables.
- Clear guidance and checklists for land managers.
- Funded heritage assessment capacity to reduce delays.

2. Our Market Access

Blueprint Goal: To grow our sector's access to the most profitable markets, by being recognised as a supplier of high-quality and sustainable red meat and wool, supported by demonstrable production practices and credentials trusted and valued by our consumers.

South Australia's regional and outback road network is essential to livestock transport, processing and export access. More than three-quarters of the state's freight task moves by road, with regional corridors carrying the bulk of agricultural and manufacturing throughput.

Yet chronic under-investment has left a \$2.1 billion maintenance backlog⁷, reducing access, increasing safety risks, and constraining processor capacity and export competitiveness. The MITR highlights that food and beverage manufacturing (35% of SA's total manufacturing output) relies heavily on reliable livestock freight routes, making this an economy-wide issue rather than a sectoral one.

Infrastructure SA analysis shows a 4:1 benefit-cost ratio for targeted upgrades through lower transport costs, improved reliability and enhanced safety. MTIR findings further reinforce freight reliability and cold-chain efficiency as critical to sustaining SA's premium brand and supporting higher-value exports.

Ask: \$40 million over four years to upgrade priority livestock freight corridors. Focus corridors would include outback roads, Eyre Peninsula, and Upper South East routes.

3. Our Industry

Blueprint Goal: To nurture the continued development of a connected industry, where stakeholders are united by a shared vision for our sector. Each has agreed roles and responsibilities. Robust governance, evidence-based policy frameworks and authentic collaboration guide our decision-making.

South Australia lacks a modern, fit-for-purpose rural finance mechanism comparable to the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA). As the MTIR makes clear, agriculture is a foundational economic system that drives \$7.9 billion in GVA and supports 76,000 jobs. When producers are hit by drought, floods or market shocks, the impacts cascade across processing, manufacturing, freight, services and regional communities. The absence of a coordinated finance and recovery vehicle leaves the state exposed and slows economic rebound.

A South Australian Rural Finance and Resilience Agency would consolidate concessional loans, drought support and co-investment programs, delivering faster and more predictable decisions. National experience

⁷ <https://daily.raa.com.au/media-resources/road-to-ruin-sas-2-1-billion-record-road-maintenance-backlog-revealed/>

shows these agencies return 5–7:1 through preserved production, avoided business failures and accelerated recovery; critical value given the livestock industry’s role in underpinning 35% of SA’s manufacturing base.

QRIDA demonstrates the model’s effectiveness: over 30 years it has administered more than \$6 billion in financial assistance and significantly strengthened sovereign capability, regional resilience and long-term risk management.

Ask: \$20 million to establish a SA Rural Finance and Resilience Agency. Benefits include:

- **Faster disaster and drought loan delivery, including a no- to low-interest loan product offering.**
- **Improved co-funding from Commonwealth programs.**
- **Whole-farm business continuity and resilience planning.**
- **Consistent, equitable treatment across regions.**

4. Our People

Blueprint Goal: To establish a thriving, trusted livestock sector, that attracts a diverse and competent workforce, capable of fostering a culture of collaboration, optimism, continuous learning and innovation.

State-Based Drought Agreement

South Australia lacks a consistent drought management framework. Without more predictable, multi-year settings, producers are forced into reactive decision-making, which undermines business resilience and regional economic stability. Greater certainty in our state’s framework is needed.

The MTIR highlights the growing skill demands of climate-smart agriculture and the need for strong resilience systems. Aligning a state-based drought agreement with the National Drought Agreement (NDA) would institutionalise cost-sharing, reduce the reliance on ad hoc short-term measures, and provide the confidence needed for long-term workforce retention and investment.

Ask: Establish a South Australian Drought Agreement under the NDA to institutionalise Commonwealth–State cost-sharing for drought resilience.

Regulatory Reform

Livestock producers face overlapping regulatory obligations across environment, planning, vegetation, water and animal welfare laws. The Productivity Commission and ABARES findings show these requirements can absorb 5–10% of farm operating costs, diverting time and capability away from innovation and growth.

The MTIR reinforces that regulatory certainty and streamlined approvals are essential to maintaining competitiveness, attracting skilled workers and enabling the uptake of new technologies. Reducing duplication will strengthen business viability and improve sector productivity.

Ask: Commit to cut agricultural red tape by 25% by 2030 through:

- **A ‘One-Window’ rural approvals pathway.**
- **Harmonised national standards for low-impact grazing and infrastructure.**
- **Independent cost–benefit reviews of all new agricultural regulation.**
- **Removal of stamp duty on livestock insurance to encourage risk management adoption.**

Workforce Priorities and Challenges in the Red Meat & Wool Supply Chain

South Australia's red meat and wool supply chain supports about 28% of the state's agricultural employment. However, the industry is facing critical workforce pressures at every stage – from on-farm labour and shearing to transport and processing – with skill shortages already slowing productivity and reducing competitiveness. In short, the workforce challenge is cross-cutting and structural. It requires targeted, state-led solutions to attract new entrants, upgrade skills, and support the next generation of industry leaders.

The Blueprint recognises these challenges, setting targets to *increase labour availability at all levels along the value chain* and align education outcomes with industry needs. Our industry is already investing in various initiatives including the 'Lead Ag Teacher for SA', 'Empowering SA Sheep Industry Women', 'WoolTag', 'SA Sheep Expo', 'LambEx 2026', and 'SA Junior Heifer Expo' to build capability in our sector.

However, to secure a diverse and competent workforce for a thriving, resilient livestock industry, concerted government action is needed. The MTIR highlights that addressing these shortages will require, amongst other things, investment in skills development, talent attraction, workforce retention strategies and appropriate regional infrastructure.

Ask: Help to build a diverse, skilled and future-ready workforce across the entire livestock supply chain – from paddock, to transport, to processor:

- Launch a dedicated Livestock Workforce Attraction Initiative to draw new entrants into on-farm, transport and processing roles.
- Invest in a Livestock Skills & Training Partnership (with TAFE and industry) to deliver targeted upskilling across the supply chain.
- Establish a Next Generation Livestock Program focused on succession planning assistance and retention incentives to secure the industry's human capital.

5. Our Livestock

Blueprint Goal: To enable our animals to reach their full potential and thrive throughout their lifetime.

South Australia's biosecurity system underpins market access, animal welfare and the credibility of our premium red meat and wool brand. The MTIR highlights biosecurity as a 'vital safeguard' and identifies infrastructure, monitoring and preparedness gaps that weaken resilience across the supply chain.

South Australia's truck-wash and effluent-management network is ageing, inconsistently distributed and unable to meet major exotic threats such as foot-and-mouth disease⁸ and lumpy skin disease⁹. Independent reviews¹⁰ and industry audits consistently identify coverage gaps across key pastoral, Eyre Peninsula and Upper South East freight corridors – areas with high livestock movement and elevated disease-risk exposure.

⁸ A large multi-state FMD outbreak has an estimated direct economic impact over 10 years of around \$80 billion, making preventative measures a critical investment for the state's economy and its regional and remote communities.

⁹ A LSD incursion would have far-reaching impacts, including major economic losses and disruption restrictions to domestic and international markets. It is estimated an incursion would cost at least \$8 billion in lost revenue during the first year alone.

¹⁰ <https://livestocksa.com.au/enhancing-biosecurity-proposed-truck-wash-facilities-for-south-australias-livestock-industry>

With extensive intra- and interstate livestock movements, upgrading truck-wash capacity is essential to reducing contamination risk, improving compliance and protecting access to domestic and export markets. Co-location with fuel, rest and livestock-spelling yards would also improve safety, efficiency and driver welfare.

The MTIR reinforces that investment in prevention delivers significantly higher returns than reactive response, protecting production, processing throughput and supply-chain continuity. Modernising the biosecurity truck wash network is a low-cost, high-impact measure.

Ask: \$3.6 million to upgrade the biosecurity truck wash network through:

- **Co-financing one new facility in a high-risk corridor.**
- **Modernising existing regional facilities to meet FMD/LSD readiness standards.**

PARTNERSHIP CALL TO ACTION

South Australia's livestock sector is central to the state's economy, regional employment, manufacturing strength, and food security. The MTIR makes clear that strengthening livestock production strengthens South Australia's entire economy – its regions, workforce, manufacturing base and sovereign food security – and generating one of the state's highest economic multipliers.

The priorities outlined in this document are not subsidies. They are structural co-investments that will protect market access, enable climate and biosecurity resilience, accelerate regional economic activity, and build a future-ready workforce.

Livestock SA is calling on all parties and candidates contesting the 2026 State Election to commit to these strategic investment priorities. These commitments will secure the competitiveness, resilience and sustainability of a sector that underpins South Australia's rural communities and export reputation.

TOTAL INVESTMENT SUMMARY

PRIORITY	INVESTMENT	KEY OUTCOME	ESTIMATED ROI
Our Environment	\$4M	Climate readiness, cultural-heritage certainty, and natural-capital participation	5:1 ¹¹
Our Market Access	\$40M	Freight productivity, reduced transport costs, safer livestock movements	4:1 ¹²
Our Industry	\$20M	Modern rural finance and resilience agency enabling faster recovery and stronger sovereign capability	6:1 ¹³
Our People	Policy reforms	Predictable drought settings, reduced regulatory burden and building a workforce for the future	N/A ¹⁴
Our Livestock	\$3.6M	Biosecurity preparedness and avoided losses from major disease incursions	30:1 ¹⁵
TOTAL	\$67.6M	Sustainable growth, regional jobs, manufacturing strength and resilience	>5:1

¹¹ Independent analysis of agricultural sustainability, R&D and natural-capital programs consistently shows returns of \$5–\$10 per \$1 invested, driven by productivity uplift, improved land condition and reduced costs.

¹² National freight studies demonstrate benefit–cost ratios of 3:1 to 6:1 for regional road upgrades, reflecting lower transport costs, reduced downtime and improved supply-chain reliability.

¹³ Comparable state rural-finance agencies (e.g. QRIDA) deliver returns of 5:1 to 7:1 through avoided business failures, faster recovery and preserved regional economic output.

¹⁴ Regulatory simplification can reduce structural operating costs by up to 10%, improving farm profitability and freeing workforce capacity for higher-value activity. Practical, state-focused policy proposals that leverage enablers like education, vocational training, regional development support, and state tax policy strengthen the livestock industry’s human capital.

¹⁵ ABARES and DAFF biosecurity modelling indicates that every \$1 invested in livestock biosecurity can avert \$20–\$35 in losses, particularly in preventing FMD/LSD-scale shocks that would otherwise devastate production, processing and exports.