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SUBMISSION

29 October 2026

Mr Adrian Tembel
Chairman and Presiding Commissioner
South Australian Productivity Commission
GPO Box 2343
ADELAIDE SA 5001

Via email: sapc@sa.gov.au

Dear Commissioner

Re: Submission to the Review of Red Tape

Livestock SA is the peak industry organisation for South Australia's red meat and wool producers. Representing over 5,200 sheep producers, 2,700 beef cattle producers and several hundred goat producers across the state, we work to secure a strong and sustainable livestock industry. South Australia's $4.3 billion livestock industry is a key economic contributor to the state and supports 21,000 South Australian jobs across the red meat and wool industries.

Livestock SA welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Review of Red Tape, which is important to our members and industries.

Livestock SA proposes that South Australian agricultural production should be selected as a priority industry for detailed regulatory reform analysis because producers operate under multiple, overlapping state and local regulatory systems; most businesses are small or medium family enterprises with limited capacity to absorb fixed compliance costs; and regulatory delay and uncertainty directly constrain investment in infrastructure, technology and productivity.

Livestock SA recommends prioritising the following reforms:

1. streamline native vegetation and biodiversity approvals for routine low-risk agricultural activities
2. improve implementation of Aboriginal heritage regulation for routine agricultural activities
3. reform agricultural planning approvals and strengthen protection of productive agricultural land
4. standardise and streamline Landscape South Australia requirements
5. modernise pastoral lease regulation to support investment and appropriate diversification.

These reforms address recurring approval delays, duplicated reporting, inconsistent administration and investment uncertainty. Each can be implemented through identifiable state, local or intergovernmental mechanisms while retaining appropriate environmental, heritage and land management safeguards. Rationale to support this proposal is at Attachment A.

Please contact the Livestock SA office on (08) 8297 2299 or via email at admin@livestocksa.com.au if you would like to discuss this submission further.

Yours sincerely

Travis Tobin
Chief Executive Officer

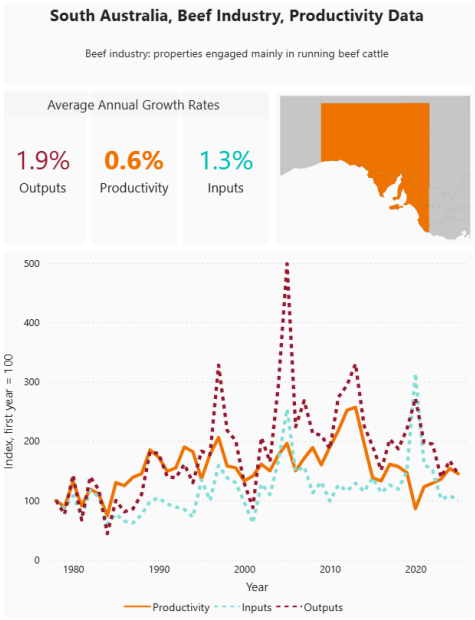
Attachment A

Productivity in the South Australian Livestock Industry

Productivity growth is the primary driver of long-term agricultural competitiveness. While Australian agriculture has historically delivered strong productivity gains, growth has slowed in recent decades. Productivity is a key economic measure of how Australian farms perform. It compares the outputs produced—such as red meat and wool—with the labour, land, capital, materials and services used in production over time. Productivity therefore rises or falls as the volume of output or the inputs required to produce it change.

Productivity growth can be driven by several factors. In agriculture, major gains have come from adopting new technologies, mechanising production and increasing the amount of capital available per worker. Farm productivity is also shaped by decisions about inputs, enterprise scale, the combination of farming activities and the production systems used[1].

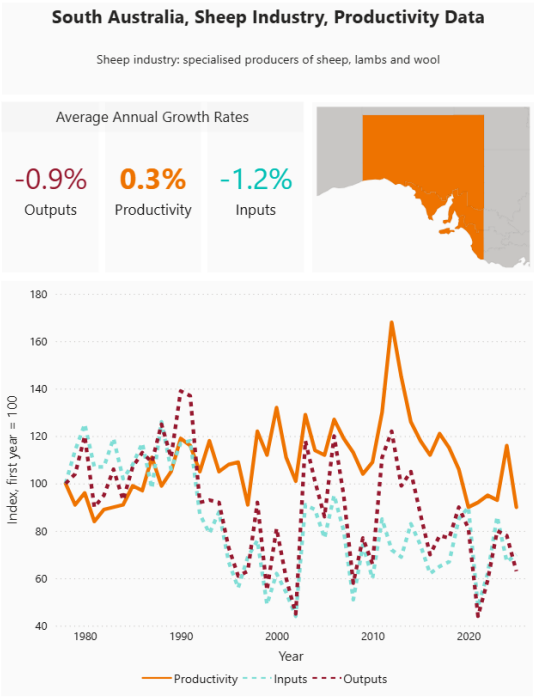
ABARES latest analysis describes productivity trends in South Australia's livestock industries[2]. South Australia's beef industry recorded average productivity growth of 0.6% a year from 1978, while output grew by 1.9% and input use by 1.3% a year. This indicates that much of the increase in production came from additional inputs rather than productivity improvement.



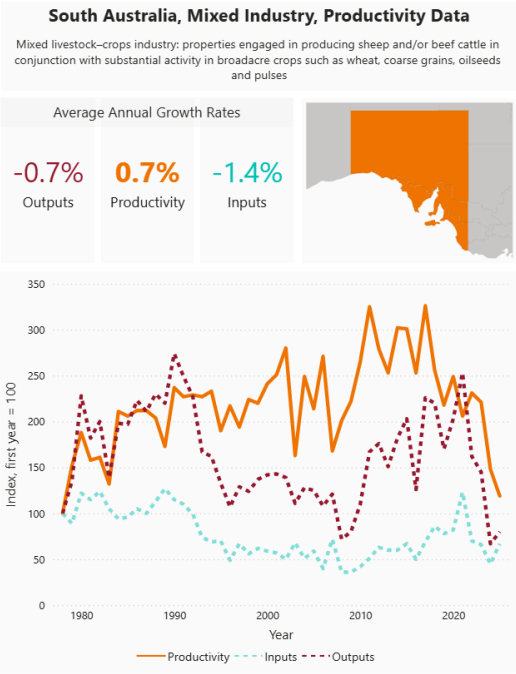
South Australia's sheep industry recorded average productivity growth of 0.3% a year from 1978. Over the same period, output declined by 0.9% and input use by 1.2% a year, indicating that modest productivity gains were achieved principally through adaptation and more efficient use of resources.

[1] Located at: Australian Farm Productivity - Broadacre and Dairy Estimates - DAFF

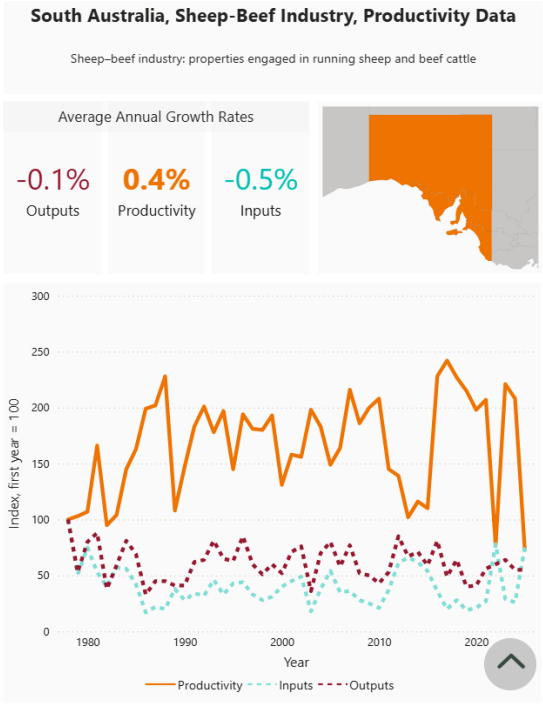
[2] Located at: Australian Farm Productivity - Broadacre and Dairy Estimates - DAFF



South Australia's mixed farming sector recorded average productivity growth of 0.7% a year from 1978, despite output declining by 0.7% and input use by 1.4% a year. The result demonstrates substantial adaptation and efficiency gains, with producers generating more output from fewer resources.



South Australia's sheep–beef industry recorded average productivity growth of 0.4% a year from 1978. Output declined by 0.1% and input use by 0.5% a year, showing that productivity gains were driven largely by efficiency and more effective use of resources.



Red Tape is impacting Livestock productivity

The Productivity Commission's 2016 inquiry into regulation of Australian agriculture[3] remains an important national benchmark on the cumulative burden of regulation on farm businesses. Since then, South Australia has introduced or amended several regulatory frameworks affecting livestock businesses, reinforcing the need for current state specific analysis of cumulative costs, delays and interactions between regulators.

The 2016 Inquiry identified why reducing red tape in agriculture is important as outlined below:

> Regulatory burden matters because it can weigh heavily on farm businesses and undermine the agricultural sector's productivity and competitiveness. As the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences said: Although some regulations benefit farmers, other regulations, which are unnecessarily burdensome, complex or redundant, can constrain productivity growth and impose heavy costs on farm businesses.
>
> For the community, less regulatory burden on businesses can mean lower prices (because farmers face lower costs), fewer taxpayer dollars spent on regulation, and improved living standards. For governments, lower regulatory burden means that more resources can be devoted to higher priority areas.
>
> Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the regulatory environment is important for all sectors of the Australian economy, but particularly for the agricultural sector given that Australian farmers export a significant proportion of their production — about two-thirds of Australia's agricultural production is exported (although this varies by commodity).

[3] Located at: Inquiry report - Regulation of Agriculture | Productivity Commission

Exporters of many agricultural products (such as beef and wool) are price takers in global markets. This reduces their capacity to absorb or pass on costs to consumers, which means that regulatory burdens can weigh heavily on their competitiveness.

Also, most Australian farms are small businesses, and regulatory burdens can have a significant and disproportionate impact on small businesses. There are two main reasons for this:

- where there are fixed compliance costs (such as learning about the regulations and establishing systems to comply with regulations) small businesses typically have a narrower revenue base over which to spread these fixed costs.
- small businesses often do not have specialised staff to handle regulatory matters and complying with regulations means managers are diverted from other farm business activities[4].

Livestock SA's Annual Producer Priorities Survey, conducted in September 2026, identified regulation and red tape as a concern for producers. Some of the comments include:

- "Protecting our industry from being made unsustainable by onerous government regulations".
- "Helping to cut the red tape and improve industry productivity."
- "Whole of government review to reduce all regulatory burden, or at least the cost of these burdens. Streamlining or removal of regulations that prevent or add cost to new infrastructure, especially for water points and fences".
- "Firstly, there is too much red tape and industry fees…."
- "Think hard about the overbearing bureaucracy now facing the small holder – it is WAY out of proportion and undoubtedly be ignored!"
- "Minimising red tape."
- "Less red tape and slow planning decisions."
- "Red tape/regulations are getting harder to keep up with…."
- "All state and federal govt reforms and the red tape fiasco that goes along with these reforms, have a high negative impact on the agriculture industry financially."
- "Lowering compliance administration."
- "Too much paperwork and reducing margins for all the work that is required."
- "Cutting red tape. Reduce compliance."
- "Government red tape involved in being able to develop country".

There are several mechanisms through which regulatory burden affects livestock productivity:

- Compliance costs and reporting requirements.
- Project delays and approvals.
- Administrative burden on farm businesses.
- Investment uncertainty.
- Opportunity costs from delayed adoption of technology.
- Escalating compliance costs associated with expanded regulatory frameworks.

The impact on productivity arises less from any single regulation than from the cumulative effect of multiple compliance, reporting, assurance and approval systems operating simultaneously. Regulatory complexity is accumulating faster than producers can absorb, resulting in increased costs, project delays, investment uncertainty and reduced competitiveness.

[4] Located at: Inquiry report - Regulation of Agriculture | Productivity Commission

A 2014 National Farmers' Federation study estimated that farmers spent more than 20 working days a year on regulatory compliance. For the average farm in its sample, red tape equated to around 14% of net farm profit, with annual costs ranging from approximately $24,000 to $43,000 depending on enterprise mix[5]. The study historical estimates should be treated as indicative rather than as current costs. In real terms, the red tape cost burden identified in this study amounts to approximately $33,000 to $59,000[6].

Agricultural legislation

Agriculture can be affected by dozens of state Acts across areas such as:

- Primary production and biosecurity
- Animal health and welfare
- Natural resources and water
- Native vegetation
- Planning and development
- Environment protection
- Heritage and Aboriginal heritage
- Crown and pastoral lands
- Transport and heavy vehicle regulation
- Workplace health and safety.

Regulatory Impact Statements

Regulatory Impact Statements (RISs) are essential to good regulatory design. South Australia's *Better Regulation Handbook*[7] requires agencies to assess costs and benefits, consider less burdensome alternatives, and identify opportunities to reduce or streamline regulation without compromising community safety or wellbeing. For livestock regulation, this assessment should include cumulative compliance costs, regional impacts, effects on investment and innovation, and the disproportionate burden on small and medium family businesses.

Livestock SA could not locate a publicly available RIS or other analysis quantifying the impact of the recent South Australian legislative reforms identified in this submission. While assessments or exemptions may have occurred through Cabinet processes, the absence of a comprehensive public register prevents stakeholders from determining which proposals were assessed, the costs identified or the basis for any exemption. This evidence gap limits being able to understand the expected net costs and benefits of the proposed reforms that were considered. This then also impacts the ability to put forward quantitative data for this submission.

Regulatory Priorities for Livestock SA

1. Native vegetation and biodiversity conservation

Livestock SA supports protecting native vegetation and biodiversity through regulation that is risk-based, proportionate and attentive to impacts on producers and regional communities.

This should apply to state laws and the Commonwealth bilateral agreement being developed with the South Australian Government, due by mid-2027, under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

[5] Located at: Snapshot of red tape costs on farm in Australia 2014 - National Farmers' Federation

[6] Accounting for inflation: https://www.rba.gov.au/calculator/annualDecimal.html

[7] Located at: Resources and publications | Department of the Premier and Cabinet

Native vegetation requirements can affect fences, yards, tracks, waterpoints, dams, firebreaks, regrowth management and other ordinary routine activities and improvements. The burden can include uncertainty about whether approval is required, a technical assessment, offsets, approval conditions and delays.

Suggested reform

Review the native vegetation and biodiversity regulatory framework—including legislation, regulations, policies, fees, approval processes and agency practices—to ensure it is outcomes-focused, risk-based and proportionate. The review should quantify the existing burden, remove duplication, establish streamlined pathways for low-risk activities and retain appropriate safeguards for activities presenting material environmental risk.

Decisions should balance environmental, economic and social impacts and consider lower-cost options that deliver equivalent environmental outcomes.

The review should examine whether:

- costs are proportionate to environmental benefits
- low-risk activities can use simpler, outcome-based approvals
- duplication between agencies can be removed
- cumulative impacts on productivity, investment and regional communities are considered.

Expected impact of the reform

The reform would reduce compliance costs, approval delays and management time, particularly for small and medium family businesses. Contractors, advisers and government agencies would also benefit from clearer processes.

The available national evidence indicates that agricultural compliance costs can be material, particularly for small businesses. However, it does not quantify the cost of South Australia's native vegetation and biodiversity framework. Reform specific estimates should therefore be treated as an evidence gap rather than inferred from broader historical studies.

Current costs may include fees, consultants, offsets, approval delays and foregone investment. Affected parties include livestock and mixed farms, pastoral leaseholders and other land managers undertaking regulated activities.

Short-term gains would come from lower transaction costs and faster routine works. Longer-term gains would include stronger investment, technology adoption, efficiency and competitiveness. The qualitative case is strong, supported by Productivity Commission findings (2016), better regulation principles and producer feedback. Quantitative evidence specific to this reform is limited. A baseline study should measure application volumes, processing times, compliance costs, delayed investment and environmental outcomes.

Feasibilty of implementing the reform

The South Australian Government could implement the reform largely within existing responsibilities, with limited interagency coordination and no substantial reliance on other jurisdictions.

Risk-based regulation is established in South Australia, including under the *Environment Protection Act 1993*, where regulatory responses reflect environmental risk.

Implementation is moderately complex, requiring targeted amendments, guidance and systems changes rather than a new regulatory system. Upfront costs should be manageable and may be offset by faster decisions and lower compliance costs. Transitional uncertainty, inconsistent interpretation and environmental risks can be managed through clear criteria and monitoring.

Producer and regional business support is likely if costs and delays fall. Broader political support will depend on transparent consultation and measurable environmental, economic and social outcomes.

2. Aboriginal Heritage Act

Recent amendments to the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1998* increased penalties tenfold and strengthened reporting and compliance obligations. Livestock SA is concerned that implementation has created unclear processes and approval delays for landholders.

Impact on livestock producers

The changes have increased costs and uncertainty and delayed approvals for routine activities. This reduces productivity by diverting management time, increasing operating costs and deferring investment.

Reform sought

Livestock SA is seeking practical implementation reform. Our proposed reforms are:

- risk-based and proportionate assessment, with streamlined pathways for routine, low-risk agricultural activities
- clear and practical guidance on landholder obligations, approval triggers and reporting requirements
- faster and more predictable assessments, particularly for routine farm infrastructure and land management works
- greater consistency, predictability and transparency in heritage assessment processes, including published information about applicable charges, service standards and decision timeframes
- stronger engagement pathways between landholders, Traditional Owners and government agencies
- better coordination with planning, native vegetation and other approval systems
- clearer decision timeframes and review processes.

Expected impact of reform

The reform would reduce approval delays, professional fees, compliance costs and uncertainty for livestock producers undertaking routine infrastructure, drought preparedness, environmental and biodiversity projects, and land management works. Clearer processes would also improve outcomes for producers, Traditional Owners and allow government resources to focus on activities presenting genuine heritage risk.

Short-term benefits would include faster decisions and lower transaction costs. Longer-term benefits would include greater investment certainty, more timely farm improvements and stronger relationships between landholders, Traditional Owners and government. Government would face moderate one-off costs to develop guidance, service standards and coordinated assessment processes.

The reform could affect livestock and mixed farms, pastoral leaseholders, Traditional Owners, heritage advisers and relevant agencies. The qualitative case is moderate to strong, but the current

net cost and number of affected businesses are not quantified. Baseline data should therefore be collected on applications, fees, processing times, delays and disputed decisions.

Feasibilty of implementing the reform

The reform is achievable within existing institutional arrangements. Most changes could be implemented through practical guidance, published service standards, transparent information about applicable charges and coordinated assessment processes, with legislative amendment required only where statutory powers or obligations need to change. Implementation would require consultation with Traditional Owners, heritage bodies, landholders and relevant agencies.

Key risks include inconsistent assessment, transitional uncertainty and any unintended weakening of heritage protection; these should be managed through co-design, clear low-risk criteria, staff training and monitoring of heritage and regulatory outcomes.

3. Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act, associated regulations and planning code

Planning rules impose costs, inconsistent interpretation and investment delays. The State Government is reviewing urban–rural interface policies, with completion expected by March 2030.

The State Planning Commission is required to undertake its next statutory review of the Environment and Food Production Areas in 2027. These areas protect food producing and rural land around Greater Adelaide from urban encroachment.

Livestock developments can require council approval and multiple state referrals. The Australian Government Productivity Commission's 2016 inquiry[8] identified development approvals, coordination between regulators and decision-making timeframes as areas for reform.

Suggested reforms

Review the Act, regulations and Planning and Design Code to make agricultural development faster, more consistent and less costly.

Key reforms are to:

- Streamline low-risk agricultural infrastructure approvals.
- Apply consistent rules, definitions and decision timeframes across councils and agencies.
- Use risk-based, proportionate assessment and remove duplicated referrals.
- Protect productive agricultural land from urban encroachment and incompatible development.
- Enable investment in modern livestock production, processing and regional infrastructure.

Expected impact of reform

The reform should reduce application, consultant, referral and delay costs and improve investment certainty. Government would face moderate one-off costs to update the Code, systems and guidance. Existing red-tape costs are unquantified and should be measured.

Potential beneficiaries include about 5,200 sheep producers and 2,700 beef producers[9], other livestock enterprises, processors, advisers, councils and referral agencies. Direct beneficiaries would be businesses lodging development applications.

[8] Located at: Inquiry report - Regulation of Agriculture | Productivity Commission

[9] Located at: Livestock-SA-Annual-Report-2025_FA_online-FINAL.pdf

Short-term gains would come from lower costs and faster approvals. Longer-term gains would include stronger investment, technology adoption, processing capacity and protection of productive land in a livestock industry generating about $4.3 billion annually[10].

The qualitative case is moderate to strong, but reform-specific cost data are limited. PlanSA data and industry case studies should quantify costs, delays, affected businesses and foregone investment.

Feasibilty of implementing the reform

The State Government can lead Code, regulatory and referral reforms, in coordination with councils, PlanSA, the State Planning Commission and relevant referral agencies.

Complexity is expected to be moderate. Most changes could use Code amendments, regulations and practice directions; statutory timeframes or agency powers may require legislation.

South Australia's statewide Planning and Design Code and online system provide an established platform for reform. Targeted pathways in NSW and Victoria also demonstrate that specified low-risk development can be assessed through streamlined processes where standards are clearly defined.

One-off implementation costs should be moderate. Risks—including inconsistent interpretation, cost shifting, weaker safeguards and transition issues—can be managed through standard criteria and performance review.

Producers and regional businesses are likely to support faster approvals and stronger land protection. Broader support will depend on adequate council resourcing, credible safeguards and transparent consultation.

4. Landscape South Australia Act 2019

The *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* regulates land, water, pest plants and animals, and biodiversity. For livestock producers, regionally variable requirements, overlapping approvals and complex water and pest management obligations can create unnecessary cost, delay and uncertainty.

Livestock SA supports the Act's environmental objectives but seeks a more consistent, risk-based and proportionate framework.

Suggested reforms

Livestock SA recommends a targeted review of the Act, regulations, regional plans and administrative practices to:

- standardise rules and guidance while retaining justified regional flexibility
- streamline approvals for routine low-risk water and land-management works
- remove duplication with planning, native vegetation and pastoral land processes
- clarify obligations, approval triggers, timeframes and review rights
- strengthen accountability for cross-boundary pest control on public and private land
- improve producer input and transparency in regional priorities, levies and expenditure.

Expected impact of reform

The reform would reduce permit, advisory and delay costs, improve consistency and allow agencies

[10] Located at: Livestock-SA-Annual-Report-2025_FA_online-FINAL.pdf

to focus on higher-risk activities. Short-term gains would include faster routine works and less duplication; longer-term gains would include stronger investment in water security, drought resilience, pest control and productive land management. Implementation costs should be moderate, but baseline data are needed to quantify current costs and measure outcomes.

Viability of the reform

The reform is achievable through existing state and regional institutions, with moderate coordination and implementation costs. Most changes could be delivered through regulations, regional plans, permit policies and guidance, although some statutory amendments may be required. Key risks—reduced regional flexibility, inconsistent implementation and weaker safeguards—can be managed through clear statewide standards, justified regional variation, and performance review. Producer support is likely; broader support will depend on consultation and maintaining environmental outcomes.

5. Pastoral leases

Livestock SA supports the sustainable management and conservation objectives of the *Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act 1989*, but considers that the framework should better support investment, innovation and diversification on pastoral land.

Reform sought

The Act, regulations, lease conditions and administrative practices should be reviewed to establish clear, coordinated and risk-based approval pathways; recognise modern livestock and land management systems; enable appropriate supplementary land uses; and remove duplication with other regulatory regimes. Reform should retain land condition safeguards while reducing delay, uncertainty and unnecessary compliance costs for pastoral businesses.

Expected impact of the reform

The reform would reduce approval delays, advisory costs and uncertainty for pastoral businesses seeking to improve infrastructure, adopt modern land management practices or pursue appropriate supplementary land uses. Clearer, coordinated and risk-based pathways would also reduce duplication across pastoral, planning, native vegetation, landscape and heritage processes. While the reform would directly affect a smaller number of businesses than statewide agricultural regulation, the benefits could be substantial for affected leaseholders because pastoral enterprises operate over large areas and make long-term investment decisions under variable seasonal conditions.

In the short term, the reform should lower transaction costs and improve the timeliness and predictability of approvals. Over the longer term, it would support investment, diversification, succession planning and more resilient use of pastoral land, while retaining land condition safeguards. Government would incur moderate one-off costs to review legislation, lease conditions, guidance and related approval processes.

The qualitative case is moderate to strong, but the current net cost of pastoral lease regulation is not quantified. Baseline data should therefore be collected on approval volumes, processing times, compliance costs, delayed investment and land condition outcomes.

Feasibility of the reform

The reform is feasible and could be led by the South Australian Government through a targeted review of the Act, regulations, lease conditions and administrative practices. Most changes could be implemented through clearer approval pathways, updated guidance and better coordination

between the Pastoral Board and agencies responsible for planning, native vegetation, landscape management, Aboriginal heritage and related approvals.

Legislative complexity is moderate, with statutory amendment required where permitted land uses, tenure settings or decision-making powers change. One-off consultation, policy and system costs should be manageable. Key risks include weaker land condition safeguards, inconsistent decisions, unresolved native title or heritage obligations and cost shifting to leaseholders. These risks can be managed through co-design with pastoralists and relevant rights holders, clear eligibility criteria, staged implementation, transparent timeframes and fees, and monitoring of land condition and investment outcomes. Pastoral industry support is likely where reform improves certainty and diversification opportunities without weakening environmental and cultural heritage protections.

Other South Australian legislation relevant to livestock production

South Australian livestock businesses operate under an extensive and overlapping regulatory framework. The following legislation (not exhaustive) is provided as context for the cumulative burden described in this submission.

- **Biosecurity and livestock traceability:** the *Biosecurity Act 2025*, together with the *Livestock Act 1997*, *Plant Health Act 2009*, *Dog Fence Act 1946* and *Impounding Act 1920* during transition to the new framework. Relevant instruments include the *Livestock Regulations 2013* and electronic identification requirements for sheep and goats.
- **Animal welfare and veterinary services:** the *Animal Welfare Act 2025*, transitional animal welfare legislation and regulations, and the *Veterinary Services Act 2023*.
- **Agricultural and veterinary chemicals:** the *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (South Australia) Act 1994* and *Agricultural and Veterinary Products (Control of Use) Act 2002*, which regulate registration, supply and use of agricultural and veterinary chemical products.
- **Food safety and primary production:** the *Food Act 2001* and *Primary Produce (Food Safety Schemes) Act 2004*, together with applicable food safety schemes, standards and processing requirements.
- **Industry funding and adjustment:** the *Primary Industry Funding Schemes Act 1998* and *Rural Industry Adjustment and Development Act 1985*, which support industry funds, assistance and adjustment measures.
- **Land, water and environmental management:** the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019*, *Environment Protection Act 1993*, *Native Vegetation Act 1991*, *Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act 1989*, *Crown Land Management Act 2009* and the pending *Biodiversity Act 2025*, together with regional plans, water allocation plans, permits, licences and statutory policies.
- **Planning, local government and heritage:** the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016*, *Local Government Act 1999* and *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988*, together with the Planning and Design Code, council by-laws and associated approval requirements.
- **Climate, energy and emerging markets:** the *Climate Change and Greenhouse Emissions Reduction Act 2007*, *Hydrogen and Renewable Energy Act 2023*, *Gene Technology Act 2001* and *Biological Control Act 1986.*
- **Transport, workplace safety and emergencies:** the *Heavy Vehicle National Law (South Australia) Act 2013*, *Work Health and Safety Act 2012* and *Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005*, together with fatigue, mass, dimension, load-restraint, emergency-management and fire-prevention requirements affecting livestock businesses and transporters.