



Your strong and independent voice for livestock producers

## **Livestock SA Position Paper for 2018 State Election.**

South Australia's agri-food sector is the number one contributor to the State's economy, injecting \$20 billion into the State, representing 50% of our exports and employing 1 in 5 South Australians.

Of this immense economic impact, South Australia's sheep and beef industries contribute \$3 billion through agricultural product at the farm gate with even larger flow on effects through the domestic and export product supply chains. The sheep and beef sectors support more than 30,000 of the State's jobs, more than the car industry ever provided for South Australia.

South Australia's livestock producers continue to innovate and progress in their production of premium quality red meat and wool, with little to no government funding.

Sheep and beef sectors are now in a growth phase. With the sectors being invaluable to the State's economy and vital to regional communities, it is more important than ever to support the livestock industry to continue their mission in producing premium, clean and green food destined for global markets, helping to put South Australia on the world trade map.

To show your support for South Australia's livestock sector, Livestock SA wish to move the following forward in 2018:

1. Commit to continuing the 90-Day Transport Project.
2. Improve the NRM framework.
3. Establish and implement a water security and accessibility program for livestock producers.
4. Improve engagement and reduce the impact of the State's mining and gas exploration and extraction sector.
5. Energise the implementation of One Biosecurity and commit to continued support. Recognise the benefit of the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) to the broader community and commit to funding in partnership with industry.
6. Commit to investing in current and future research, development and adoption projects which underpin the South Australian livestock sector.

The above-mentioned movements are essential to continue the progression of the State's Livestock industry and your support and commitment to fund these actions is required to ensure the continued success of one of the State's biggest economic contributors and employers.

In addition to the above areas for improvement and support, the costs associated with doing business in South Australia are of critical concern for nearly all livestock producers. The industry needs assistance to manage the costs and to ensure the sector is not hit with additional costs in the future.



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## Background

South Australia is a state with a strong and resilient livestock sector.

The sheep industry has always been important to the South Australian economy. The present sheep industry revenue is close to \$1.90 billion, representing 8% of South Australia's gross agricultural product. Approximately 15,000 people are employed in South Australia's sheep value chain. Compared to other states, there are proportionally more sheep in South Australia than at any other time, with more than one in seven of the national flock from South Australia. More than one third of farms derive income from sheep production, with production occurring in all regions of the state. Our sheep industry is growing.

The South Australian beef industry is vibrant and continues to achieve outstanding annual growth in revenue. The industry is an important contributor to the agricultural output of the state and the economy at large. Farm gate revenue exceeded \$600M/year in 2016/17 and while total gross state revenue generated by the beef industry was in excess of \$1.3B/year. The beef industry has much potential for further growth, through both sustainable gains in on-farm productivity and adding value across the supply chain.

The development of a South Australian Sheep Industry Blueprint and a corresponding Beef Industry Blueprint has highlighted the significant opportunities open to both the industry and the State in the coming years. We look forward to partnering with the incoming government to realise these opportunities.

Any future Government needs to ensure they help, rather than hinder the development of the livestock sector in SA. The costs associated with doing business are a critical concern for nearly all livestock producers. We need help to manage the costs and ensure we are not hit with extra costs.

## Transport and Infrastructure

Livestock SA calls upon all candidates and parties to commit to the continuing the 90-Day Transport Project. The "Improving Road Transport for the Agriculture Industry Project" identifies the issues impacting on agriculture industry productivity across the state and affecting all sectors. Commitment to the continuation of this work will ensure the united approach needed to plan and implement a road transport system that meets the existing and future needs of agriculture.

The incoming Government should also work to ensure the implementation of the Heavy vehicle inspection scheme is realistic, cost effective and not bogged down with red tape.

## NRM

Livestock SA accepts that there must be management and governance of natural resource assets and risks as well as investment in NRM. It must be a system which engages, empowers and is accountable to local communities and regions is preferable to a system based on centralised decision-making in Adelaide. The NRM system needs to return to its original intent to allow regional and subregional engagement and decision-making.

NRM Boards should be nimble organisations with a small core staff, contracting additional work to the most appropriate organisations and people – including resourcing industry/producer groups for engagement, communications and project delivery.

The current Natural Resource Management (NRM) framework has been operational in South Australia for a number of years. Generally, Livestock SA believes that NRM has fallen well short of expectations. Livestock SA believes NRM could meet the expectations of the primary sector but to do so would mean root and branch reform of the existing system.

Less time should be spent on glossy documents and PR and more on practical actions and outcomes.

Current issues impacting the NRM are primarily:

- A top down approach
- A loss of confidence in the NRM by farmers, and
- Too many poor results.

Consequently, Livestock SA expects all parties and candidates to support a reform of the NRM which will result in an organisational structure that will enable the existence of empowered local boards with financial independence and authority over staff.

These simple changes will make the NRM relevant to the local producer and will enable a ‘results focussed’ approach to local projects with meaningful outcomes.

### **Water Security**

The cost of water for many livestock producers needs redress. The increasing cost of water has become an effective restraint on investment in livestock production systems in key areas of South Australia.

In recognition of the significant benefits to be delivered by livestock industries to regional economies and the state overall, Livestock SA calls on parties to commit to assisting that state’s farmers to manage water costs through improved efficiency and new technology.

The establishment of a program should deliver:

- Water efficiency and leak detection assessments on farm,
- Grants and interest free loans to support farm investment in water efficiency as well as desalination and storage technology,
- Demonstration and case studies of water efficiency as well as desalination and storage measures on farm,
- Develop links between farmers and relevant business information, and
- Provide commercial opportunities for on farm research, development and implementation in South Australia.

The South Australian livestock industry has already taken steps in these areas, but such a program will advance the needs of SA farmers to help this state grow.

### **Planning, Mining and Gas**

Livestock SA has expressed their frustration at a number of shortcomings within this key area. These issues include a failure by government to adhere to existing policies, alienation of primary sector land, an absence of proper consultation, product and industry devaluation, an abandonment of inclusiveness and an absence of seeking permission from the sector with the development of projects and policies.

The approach of the current state government leaves primary producers with a clear impression that policies and projects that are important to the state government are progressed without reference to the people and industries who are impacted by the government's decisions.

This isn't good enough.

Livestock SA members remain concerned that the current processes around planning, mining and the gas industries are exclusive. We accept that mining and gas development are necessary realities in the State. Nevertheless, the approach thus far has failed to reassure the farmers of SA that the government isn't prepared to trade off the long-term security of reputation as one of the cleanest and greenest jurisdictions in the world for an immediate return. The absence of consultation reinforces the concern of our members.

The primary sector is here today and will be here tomorrow and for as long as people eat and drink. Livestock SA's message is clear - do not trade off the future for an outcome today.

In a world that is increasingly populated, consumers around the globe will be looking for the security of a clean and green environment to serve their food needs and experience has already proved that consumers are prepared to pay for it. SA presents as pristine and has earned its reputation through diligence and care.

Livestock SA calls upon all parties and candidates to commit to a meaningful, consultative and inclusive approach when dealing with planning, mining and gas development proposals. That commitment must include a clear engagement process that is more than a mere act of going through the motions.

### **Biosecurity**

Livestock SA recognises the importance of biosecurity in managing the risks to South Australia posed by animal and plant pests and diseases. As an industry, we are committed to partnering with the government to maintain and enhance our State's biosecurity status for the betterment of industry, the environment and the broader community.

The National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) reflects Australia's commitment to biosecurity and food safety. NLIS is Australia's system for the identification and traceability of cattle, sheep and goats. It was introduced in 1999 to enhance Australia's ability to trace cattle during disease and food incidents and was expanded to also include sheep and goats in 2009. and provides a competitive advantage in a global market.

Livestock SA calls on each party to recognise the broad community benefit delivered to South Australia by the NLIS and to commit funding to support the operations of the system in partnership with industry.

The incursion of large vertebrate pests into new areas in South Australia is concerning to many livestock producers, not only because of the damage done to livestock systems but importantly because of the threat these pests pose for the environment, both on and off the farm. Livestock SA will look to the incoming government for a commitment to work to limit and repel these incursions.

The development of the One Biosecurity program has been welcomed by Livestock SA. This is an important initiative which has fallen significantly behind its original timelines. We call on all parties to commit to the timely deployment and ongoing support of the development and maintenance of One Biosecurity.

## **Research and Development**

South Australia has a proud history of scientific and academic excellence in the development of the primary sector. In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century successive government had demonstrated an ongoing commitment to scientific and research excellence in the primary sectors. Sadly, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century the SA Government has dropped the ball with an ongoing erosion of the support frameworks around the Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA) and the South Australian Research Development Institute (SARDI).

SA exists in an increasingly competitive world. South Australia ranks with the finest and cleanest places in the world and global recognition but in recent times the shield that has been that high standard of support has been reduced in substance and responsiveness.

Globally there has been continued increasing demand for premium high-value red meat, especially for animals raised on pasture. Consistent year-round supply of preferred specification product is critical to being able to expand and develop these high value markets. Mediterranean pasture based production systems such as those primarily found in SA are characterised by large fluctuations in feed quality and availability throughout the year. These fluctuations constrain graziers ability to consistently supply prime stock and in turn constrains the ability for the industry to expand and develop further high-value markets. Developing feedbase solutions and grazing systems that are capable of providing year-round supply of preferred specification product is of critical importance to increase red meat industry gross revenue.

In addition to resourcing the development and extension of research undertaken across Australia in genetics and breeding and in nutrition, Livestock SA is calling on the parties to commit to investing in the implementation of a state wide feedbase and grazing system plan will aid the whole SA livestock value chain in significantly expanding gross state revenue.

Areas of focus should include:

- Enhancing the feedbase so that it is productive for longer each year
- Grazing and enterprises management practices to allow for greater 'out-of-season' supply to the benefit of suppliers and value chain
- Unlocking the potential of underutilised irrigation in the Limestone Coast for intensive livestock production systems
- Exploration of pasture based finishing systems for warmer regions of SA during winter

Such a program will not only enhance the productivity of the South Australian industry but will also capture many of the gains and learnings generated in other States and through national research funding.

Livestock SA calls upon all parties and candidates to make the following commitments. Firstly, that PIRSA remain its own department without being collapsed under the umbrella of a mega department even more distant from its overseeing minister and secondly, that a commitment to SARDI and PIRSA be expressed in dollar terms well before polling day.