

Leanne Mundy  
A/g Assistant Secretary  
Animal Welfare and Regulatory Stewardship Branch  
Canberra ACT 2601



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## **Re: Draft Livestock & Production Animals Chapter AAWS**

The Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the draft Livestock & Production Animals chapter of the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS).

As the peak industry body representing Australia's post-farmgate meat sector, AMIC's membership includes processors, smallgoods manufacturers, boning rooms, cold stores, wholesalers, distributors, exporters and independent retail butchers. AMIC is committed to a science-based regulatory framework that supports responsible livestock production, strong animal welfare outcomes, biosecurity, food safety, market access and long-term trade sustainability.

AMIC acknowledges that the draft chapter provides a constructive and balanced representation of Australia's livestock and production sector. It appropriately recognises the central role of science, industry leadership, quality assurance systems, research and development, and continuous improvement in delivering strong animal welfare outcomes. The chapter also presents an important opportunity to clearly showcase the strength and maturity of Australia's animal welfare system to domestic and international audiences.

In this context, AMIC provides the following comments and suggestions.

### **1. Strength and governance of Australia's animal welfare framework**

Australia already operates within one of the most well-established and comprehensive animal welfare frameworks globally. This framework integrates legislation, nationally agreed Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines, export regulatory systems, industry quality assurance programs, and a strong scientific research base.

While the draft reflects these elements in substance, the chapter would benefit from making this starting position more explicit, to clearly communicate the maturity, depth and credibility of Australia's arrangements and reinforce Australia's reputation as a trusted producer and trading partner.

The chapter would also benefit from more clearly articulating that strong, science-based government leadership, underpinned by sustained and adequate resourcing, is essential to maintaining and safeguarding the integrity, effectiveness and international

standing of this mature and established system. Nationally agreed standards should be clearly positioned as the foundation of the framework, with other stakeholders, including industry, non-government organisations and businesses, contributing within this structure. This clarity supports national consistency and reinforces where authority for animal welfare policy and regulation resides.

## **2. Recognition of existing industry systems and transparency**

The chapter recognises the important role of industry bodies, quality assurance programs and certification systems in supporting animal welfare outcomes. Australia already has extensive, well-developed and independently audited assurance systems operating across the supply chain, which form a core part of the national animal welfare framework.

Regulatory frameworks need to continue to evolve to reflect advances in science, technology and innovation. In practice, industry-led systems have often demonstrated a strong capacity to adapt quickly, including through the adoption of technology-enabled assurance approaches such as digital monitoring, video-based verification and emerging artificial intelligence applications. It is important that regulatory approaches recognise and appropriately leverage these systems, so that regulation remains contemporary and effective while avoiding unnecessary duplication, cost and complexity.

The emphasis on transparency and consumer engagement is consistent with these arrangements. Australia's regulatory and quality assurance systems already provide a strong foundation for accountability and confidence across domestic and export markets. It would be useful for the chapter to note that any further transparency or certification initiatives should build on these existing systems, avoid duplication, and support nationally consistent frameworks. This ensures that transparency strengthens confidence in animal welfare outcomes while maintaining consistency and efficiency across the system.

## **3. Role of non-government organisations and retailers**

The chapter appropriately acknowledges the influence of non-government organisations and retailers in shaping community expectations and encouraging continuous improvement in animal welfare.

This section would benefit from clearly reflecting that their standards, initiatives and requirements must operate within, and remain aligned with, nationally agreed animal welfare standards, legislation and regulatory frameworks. This reinforces that advocacy, certification schemes and market-based initiatives complement Australia's formal governance system and support outcomes within a science-based, government-led framework.

The chapter should also clearly articulate that the input of non-government organisations and retailers must be grounded in sound science, evidence and an understanding of operational realities. This is critical to ensure that expectations and standards promoted through non-government or retailer-led channels are technically credible, workable in practice, and do not impose unnecessary cost or complexity or undermine competition within the supply chain.

Such framing preserves the constructive and collaborative role of non-government organisations, including organisations such as the RSPCA, while clearly reflecting that responsibility for setting animal welfare standards and regulatory requirements rests within nationally coordinated, government-led processes.

#### **4. Stocktake and harmonisation**

AMIC supports the proposed stocktake of existing industry activity, including practices, standards, assurance frameworks and extension activities. This presents a valuable opportunity to consolidate and better coordinate the extensive work already being undertaken across industry and government. Framing this clearly as consolidation and coordination would better reflect the maturity and breadth of existing systems and reinforce that Australia already has a well-established and functioning animal welfare framework.

Continued efforts to advance national coordination and harmonisation of animal welfare standards and legislation are also supported. Clarifying that the objective is to improve efficiency, clarity and consistency, while maintaining flexibility across production systems, would help clearly define the intent of this initiative.

#### **5. Case studies**

The inclusion of case studies is supported as an effective way of demonstrating how Australia's animal welfare framework operates in practice across the supply chain.

While the current case studies provide good examples of how industry responds constructively to evolving community and market expectations, it is also important to include examples of well-established, long-standing, structured and continuously improving systems. In this regard, the Australian Livestock Processing Industry Animal Welfare Certification System (AAWCS) is particularly well suited for inclusion.

AAWCS is a nationally adopted, independently audited certification program developed by industry to ensure high standards of animal welfare at processing establishments. It integrates regulatory requirements, international best practice and science-based standards, and is recognised by the Australian Government as an approved animal welfare assurance system for export-registered processors. The program demonstrates how industry-led systems can deliver consistent, measurable and continuously

improving welfare outcomes through structured governance, independent auditing and strong regulatory alignment.

Including AAWCS would present a balanced picture of Australia's animal welfare framework, demonstrating both its capacity to respond to emerging expectations and the strength of its long-standing, structured assurance systems across the full supply chain.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, AMIC considers the draft chapter to be balanced and aligned with Australia's existing animal welfare framework. The refinements outlined above are intended to further highlight the maturity, coherence and credibility of Australia's system, and to ensure the chapter clearly reflects that Australia's animal welfare arrangements are already robust, science-based and internationally respected.

AMIC appreciates the opportunity to contribute to this consultation and looks forward to continued engagement with the Department to ensure that high welfare outcomes are achieved through practical, evidence-based systems that reflect operational realities. Should you wish to discuss the content of this submission further, please contact Sue Viana, Manager – Animal Welfare & Integrity Systems, at [sviana@amic.org.au](mailto:sviana@amic.org.au).

Yours sincerely,

**Tim Ryan**  
CEO  
Australian Meat Industry Council