



Australian Government

Inspector-General of Animal Welfare
and Live Animal Exports

Implementation of Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports recommendations

Review report 2024/02



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The source of data for all figures and tables is the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, unless otherwise noted.

Review team and acknowledgements

Mr Glenn McMellon, Ms Heidi Barbour and Ms Clare Hamilton assisted the inspector-general in this review. The inspector-general would also like to thank the former Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports, Mr Ross Carter, for his insights into the review.

The inspector-general gratefully acknowledges the cooperation and advice of the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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Summary

The purpose of this review was to assess the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's progress in implementing the 41 Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports' recommendations contained in 6 reports published between March 2020 and April 2024. The review paid particular attention to the methods used to ensure review findings and recommendations are being used to improve the department's regulation of Australia's livestock export industry, with particular focus on the health and welfare of livestock.

The inspector-general's primary role is to provide independent oversight of Australia's livestock export regulatory system. To maximise the effectiveness of the inspector-general's role, it is important that the department makes every effort to fully implement all agreed recommendations.

The department has formally closed 13 recommendations and has made some significant improvements in their engagement and communication with stakeholders, regulatory practice, information technology systems, data capture and analytics. However, it is the inspector-general's assessment that not all closed recommendations have been fully implemented, implemented in a timely manner, or achieved the original intent of the recommendations. Only 6 recommendations have been fully implemented. The department's regulatory policies and practice continue to be developed, with 10 recommendations related to regulatory practice still not implemented.

There appears to be a lack of accountability for implementing recommendations within the timeframes initially indicated by the department. The timelines for implementation of recommendations often appear to be extended at a later stage as an administrative convenience, rather than based on a rigorous assessment of the overall system risk of delaying implementation.

The department's processes for managing the implementation of inspector-general recommendations have continued to evolve since the initial establishment of the position, and they have only recently been formalised. For this review, the department had difficulty in providing convincing evidence for the closure of some recommendations, including recommendations implemented as part of other bodies of work and projects. Additionally, the department does not have an evaluation process to determine the effectiveness of recommendations which have been implemented.

This review makes 4 recommendations aimed to support timely implementation of recommendations, increase accountability and transparency, and support future evaluation of the effectiveness of those recommendations that have been implemented.

Review process

Objectives

The review examined the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's implementation of recommendations from the previous Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports' reviews. This review focused on:

- the department's formal response to each recommendation
- subsequent actions regarding each recommendation
- whether closed recommendations have fulfilled the original intent or purpose
- progress and reporting of the implementation of recommendations
- effectiveness and timeliness of ongoing communication with stakeholders
- possible improvements which could be made to future inspector-general recommendations.

Scope

This review examined the department's progress with implementing inspector-general recommendations. The review considered:

- governance arrangements for managing recommendations
- the department's formal response to each recommendation, including who is responsible for implementation of each recommendation
- planning and actions taken for each recommendation
- progress to implement recommendations, including initial timeframes and any extensions
- tracking and reporting of progress of implementation of recommendations
- documentation to support closure of recommendations
- whether implementation of recommendations addressed the original intent or purpose
- evaluation of the practical usefulness of closed recommendations
- records management in relation to the implementation and closure of recommendations
- ongoing communication and reporting to stakeholders about implementation of recommendations
- government policies that may have affected implementation of recommendations
- any improvements that could be made to future inspector-general recommendations.

Out of scope

Nil

Methodology

During this review, the inspector-general:

- conducted an entry meeting with the department's executives that
 - communicated the review's objectives and scope
 - outlined responsibilities
 - identified risks related to the review and any appropriate mitigation strategies
 - provided an opportunity for all parties to discuss the proposed review process
- conducted in-person and online meetings with stakeholders
- met with Mr Ross Carter, former Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports, to discuss the original intent of recommendations
- discussed preliminary information and data requirements with relevant departmental officers and requested required information and data
- conducted a desk-top audit of closed recommendations including relevant department data and documentation (such as instructional material, policies and communications material)
- developed a draft review report with key findings and recommendations
- conducted an exit meeting with the department's executives that
 - provided an overview of initial review findings
 - outlined the process of release of and response to the draft report
- requested a fact check by the department's relevant line areas to correct any factual errors or misinterpretations of evidence, if necessary, and to provide further evidence
- requested that the secretary provide a management response to the draft review recommendations
- provided a final report to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and published it on the [Inspector-General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports website](#).

Recommendations and department responses

The department's response to the review is at [Appendix A](#).

Recommendation 1

The department should reinstate the biannual meetings for the senior executives to review the status of inspector-general recommendations. Updates from these meetings should be provided to the inspector-general.

Department's response:

Agreed in principle

The department agrees it is essential for relevant senior executive staff to be active in the oversight of the implementation of recommendations. Currently, each recommendation is allocated to a Senior Responsible Officer, normally a First Assistant Secretary, who is responsible for the managing the implementation of the recommendation.

The department will commit to increased executive oversight by establishing regular meetings between the Senior Responsible Officer and the business area/s responsible for implementing the recommendation, consistent with the department's existing governance framework.

The department reports on the implementation of IGLAE/IGAWLAE recommendations quarterly to the Audit and Risk Committee through the Internal Audit Program Sub-Committee. This allows the Audit and Risk Committee to form a view on the appropriateness of systems of internal control including the management of recommendations which they communicate to the Accountable Authority.

Recommendation 2

The department should create implementation plans for all open and future inspector-general recommendations. Implementation plans should include an evaluation plan.

Department's response:

Agreed

The department updated the processes for the governance and management of recommendations in February this year.

The processes now include developing implementation plans for each recommendation. Current implementation plans are consistent with implementation plans used by the Internal Audit team for the management of Australian National Audit Office and internal audits.

Implementation plans will be updated to include evaluation plans and will be shared with Internal Audit.

Recommendation 3

The inspector-general recommends that the department commit to a shorter timeframe for implementing all inspector-general recommendations.

Department's response:

Agree in principle

The department is committed to implementing agreed recommendations as soon as practicable. The time taken to implement a recommendation is dependent on several factors including:

- scope of the recommendation
- type of recommendation, and whether it involves legislative frameworks, policy, processes, or information technology
- dependencies
- departmental and government priorities.

Recommendation 4

The department should publicly report on progress in implementing inspector-general recommendations and provide a summary of reasons to support closed recommendations.

Department's response:

Agree

The department agrees transparency regarding the implementation of recommendations is important for stakeholder confidence and has developed, and will publish soon, a webpage on the department's website reporting on the implementation status of recommendations.



Dr Michael Bond

Acting Inspector-General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports

20 August 2024

1 Background

1.1 Legislation

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the department) regulates the export of livestock under the *Export Control Act 2020* and the *Export Control (Animals) Rules 2021*. The Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL) stipulate the minimum animal health and welfare conditions required to export livestock from Australia.

The Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports (IGLAE) position was initially established as part of the Australian Government's response to recommendations of the independent Review of regulatory capability and culture of the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources in the regulation of live animal exports conducted by Mr Philip Moss AM (September 2018). The *Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports Act 2019* received royal assent on 3 October 2019.

The legislation was amended to the *Inspector-General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports Act 2019* and received royal assent on 5 December 2023. The Inspector-General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports (IGAWLAE) provides an additional layer of animal welfare accountability and assurance related to the regulation of livestock exports in Australia. The IGAWLAE reviews the performance of functions and exercise of powers by the department in regulating livestock exports, develops review reports and makes recommendations for overall system improvements.

1.2 IGLAE reviews and recommendations

The IGLAE completed 6 reviews between March 2020 and April 2023 and made 41 recommendations. See [Appendix B](#) for the full list recommendations and the department's implementation status.

Collectively, these reviews covered all the major processes involved in the regulation of livestock exports. They were intended to be considered as a body of work to guide the department to improve their live animal export regulatory practice in accordance with the objectives of the inspector-general position (Ross Carter [Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports] 2023, pers. comm., 5 April). The 6 reviews were:

- *Monitoring and reporting during livestock export voyages*
- *Implementation of Moss Review recommendations*
- *Review of the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System*
- *Livestock export permit systems and processes*
- *Livestock export licences and approved arrangements*
- *Communication and engagement in livestock export regulation.*

There were 13 recommendations closed at the commencement of this review. This review focused on the implementation of closed recommendations and the department's process for managing recommendations.

2 Review of closed recommendations

2.1 Overview

Since March 2020, the department has closed 13 of 41 recommendations. Of the 13 closed recommendations, the department agreed to 9 and agreed in principle to 4 (Table 1).

Table 1 IGLAE recommendations March 2020 to April 2023

Review	Total recs	Agree/ support	Agree/support in principle	Open	Closed
Monitoring and reporting during livestock export voyages	12	6	6	5	7
Implementation of Moss Review recommendations	4	3	1	0	4
Review of the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System	8	4	4	7	1
Livestock export permit systems and processes	7	4*	3	6	1
Livestock export licences and approved arrangements	4	2	2	4	0
Communication and engagement in livestock export regulation.	6	6	0	6	0
Total	41	25	16	28	13

*One recommendation had two parts, the department agreed to the first part, and agreed in principle to the second part. This recommendation is treated as agreed for the purpose of this table.

While it is recognised that the implementation of recommendations often requires adequate funding and resourcing, the department often appears to extend the time to implement and close recommendations. No recommendations were closed during 2022. However, the inspector-general understands that implementation continued, with 5 recommendations closed in the first half of 2023 (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Implementation timeline for closed recommendations

Review	Published	Total recs	2020			2021			2022			2023			2024		
Monitoring and reporting during livestock export voyages	02-Mar-20	12	P			4		1				1	1				
Implementation of Moss review recommendations	15-Dec-20	4			P			1					2		1		
Review of the exporter supply chain assurance system	28-Jun-21	8				P		1									
Livestock export permit systems and processes	19-Nov-21	7						P					1				
Livestock export licences and approved arrangements	06-Oct-22	4								P							
Communication and engagement in livestock export regulation	06-Apr-23	6											P				

P – published

IGLAE recommendations provide an evidence base for the department to understand systemic issues/problems, and work towards continuous improvement. As part of this review, the inspector-general analysed the IGLAE recommendations and grouped them into 5 themes. This provides useful insights into systemic issues in the livestock export system and barriers to implementing some recommendations. Table 2 shows that the department’s regulatory practice frequently is an area in need of improvement, relating to 18 of the 41 recommendations.

The inspector-general understands that limited funding is often a major impediment for the department in improving technology and IT systems; this relates to 8 recommendations. There can also be overlap between themes, where enhanced technology can allow improved regulatory practice or administrative processes.

Table 2 Recommendation themes

Theme	Open recommendations	Closed recommendations	Total number of recommendations
Improved regulatory practice	10	8	18
Communication	6	2	8
Technology	6	2	8
Assurance	4	0	4
Streamlining processes	2	1	3
Total	28	13	41

The review met with the previous inspector-general to discuss the original intent of closed recommendations, and assessed whether implementation of closed recommendations addressed their original intent or purpose.

2.2 Monitoring and reporting during livestock export voyages

2.2.1 Recommendation 3

That the department increase the resourcing and capability of the Technical Analysis Team in both statistical analytical expertise and epidemiological expertise. This analytical capability should include expertise in identifying other areas of risk such as participant behaviour, drivers and asset performance (for example, vessels, decks and pens).

Department’s response: Support in principle

The department recognises the value of the Technical Analysis Team and the need to upskill staff across the Division in digital literacy and invest in epidemiological expertise. The development of these capabilities has been a focus since the Moss Review.

The department agrees with using data to support evidence-based regulatory decisions. Subject to resource constraints, the department will continue to explore how it can invest in its data analysis and epidemiological capabilities.

Department's closure entry

The Animal Welfare Branch recruited an APS6 Veterinary Officer into the Technical Analysis Team to perform technical assessment of industry performance, provide technical animal welfare advice and increase the team's analytical and epidemiological capability.

Review assessment

Implemented in part, ongoing.

The Technical Analysis Team has undergone several changes since the department agreed to this recommendation in principle. The team has used the expertise of an animal scientist with experience in animal research and applied statistics, and other subject matter experts within the department. The team provides ongoing analytical input and data analysis to inform several animal health and welfare-related reviews, processes and policy development, such as the *Heat and cold stress in Bos taurus cattle* and *Northern Hemisphere summer review*. In addition, the team has provided tools to assist departmental officers identify areas of risk and undertake assessments and calculations related to animal welfare. The department continues to recognise the value of the Technical Analysis Team and has invested in specialised IT hardware and training opportunities, with a view to increasing the capacity and capability of the team.

This recommendation endorses the Moss review recommendation, encouraging the department to adopt a forward-looking, constructive culture and policy. The Technical Analysis Team has continued to provide important technical analysis, supporting evidence-based regulatory decisions and continual improvement to animal welfare in the livestock export trade.

Another component of this recommendation was for the Technical Analysis Team to increase analytical capability to support a more advanced risk-based understanding of industry participant behaviours and drivers. The inspector-general encourages the department to continue to aim to understand the underlying significance of the data and have a good understanding of individual exporters, their priorities and behaviours.

The inspector-general understands that budget constraints and the need to respond to some emergency incidents have hindered the capacity and outputs of the team. As a result, the department's definitions and explanation of their data needs has fallen behind the development of the monitoring technology that has the potential to provide much of this information. This was made apparent in the IGAWLAE's review of the *Independent Observer program*.

2.2.2 Recommendation 6

That Independent Observer summary reports be published within a service-level commitment period after the conclusion of a voyage. Any matters under further investigation should be noted. Details of matters under investigation may be excluded, as appropriate, until the department's course of action is determined. Once this is determined, the published report should be updated to explain the issue and the department's response.

Department's response: Support.

The department will review its procedures for processing Independent Observer Reports with a view to establishing a timeframe within which summary reports will be published.

Department's closure entry (summary)

Implemented in part. The department now publishes all Independent Observer (IO) summary reports that are finalised in each quarter. The department was unable to set a service level commitment due to publication processes and the uniqueness of reports. The department identified risks with publishing summary reports, including matters still under investigation, because publication might compromise investigations and/or court proceedings and/or have adverse effects on exporters' businesses.

Review assessment

Implemented in part, ongoing.

The intention of this recommendation was to improve transparency. The department worked towards this objective, and provided an explanation as to why it was not possible to set a service level commitment. It is important for the department to maintain stakeholder confidence in the IO process. For example, if an issue was raised in an IO summary report, the department could provide more detail to give stakeholders more confidence that the department is considering all relevant aspects. In such a progress report, it should not be implied that an exporter has been neglectful or negligent if observer data is being assessed. The department should consider using language in IO reports that provides adequate transparency but is not inappropriately critical of an exporter.

2.2.3 Recommendation 7

That the department consider whether cost recovery of the Independent Observer program should be incorporated into the general cost of regulation.

Department's response: Support

The department will explore cost recovery considerations for the Independent Observer Program in the broader context of current whole of department cost recovery activities.

A proposed approach to cost recovery of the whole program, including a division between levies and direct charging, was initially discussed with industry on 26 February 2020.

Department's closure entry

Cost recovery of the Independent Observer program has been incorporated in the new cost recovery implementation statement framework which was released in early 2021.

Review assessment

Implemented in part.

The department agreed with the recommendation and incorporated the IO program into the cost recovery implementation statement. IOs are listed as an intervention and charged as a fee for service for an individual exporter. This recommendation was made in the broader context of viewing IOs as undertaking specific regulatory monitoring activities aimed at providing regulatory assurance. They are not auditors. The intention of this recommendation was for exporters to share the cost of IOs across industry, as assurance is listed as levy related activities under the department's cost recovery model. There is a strong likelihood that the recommended broader cost recovery model would have significantly reduced the deployment of IOs being a challengeable problem for exporters.

2.2.4 Recommendation 8

That the department work with LiveCorp and industry to update training for stockpersons, particularly in relation to monitoring and reporting. The department should consider the utility of establishing a stockperson network.

Department's response: Support

The department will work with LiveCorp and industry when LiveCorp updates this training.

This will include support to review and update the LiveCorp Shipboard Stockperson Training Course and industry education sessions (in the form of teleconferences, workshops and/or webinars) on the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL) version 3, with a focus on monitoring and reporting requirements.

The department will liaise with industry to investigate establishing a stockperson network.

Department's closure entry

The department continues to support LiveCorp in delivering training as requested. Industry is considering expanding the stockpersons training to allow for different accreditation for example, species. LiveCorp will contact the department for input when required. The department understands industry are considering establishment of/have established a stockperson network.

Review assessment

Implemented, ongoing.

The stockperson training program was updated in 2021 by LiveCorp. The department contributed to the revised educational material and participated in the stockpersons training workshop. The department continues to work with LiveCorp to update the stockperson training material as needed.

Stockpersons are recognised as a vital, important group of personnel in managing animal welfare outcomes on livestock export voyages. The intention of this recommendation was to improve guidance and training for stockpersons, particularly record keeping, monitoring and reporting requirements. The previous inspector-general considered that when there was a change to ASEL, the department would consult directly with stockpersons regarding the practical consequences of the change. The inspector-general understands that the department now consults with stockpersons through the stockperson network organised by LiveCorp.

2.2.5 Recommendation 9

That Australian Government accredited veterinarian training, monitoring and reporting obligations be updated and clarified with improved guidance, support material and advice.

Department's response: Support

In August 2019, the department began implementing debriefs with shipboard AAVs following each voyage.

The department is establishing regular meetings/teleconferences with a highly engaged working group of AAVs.

The department will also hold an AAV workshop in Adelaide in March 2020. The workshop will discuss training, monitoring and reporting obligations.

Department's closure entry (summary)

Implemented.

The department updated the Australian Government accredited veterinarian (AAV) training course in February 2022. Additionally, the department developed/updated guidance, support material and advice on monitoring and reporting obligations. The department: held AAV workshops to discuss training, monitoring and reporting obligations; worked with LiveCorp to develop the LIVEXCollect application to facilitate AAVs and stockpersons to meet their onboard reporting and ASEL obligations; published ASEL guidebooks to promote consistent application of ASEL rejection criteria by AAVs; updated their website to make it easier for stakeholders to locate information on their obligations; and changed the way export advisory notices are used – now using them as a notification tool with requirements published on the relevant webpage.

Review assessment

Implemented.

The department has comprehensively addressed this recommendation and fulfilled its intent. The original intent was to make it as easy as possible for AAVs to comply with regulatory requirements by providing easily accessible information regarding their obligations. Improved animal welfare is the ultimate objective. Having ongoing, effective relationships with accredited veterinarians is essential in clarifying the guidance and applying this material in a practical sense.

2.2.6 Recommendation 10

That Australian Government accredited veterinarians are accessed as a professional group to contribute to industry co-design of relevant monitoring and reporting standards and formats.

Department's response: Support

Regular engagement with AAVs via the AAV Working Group will provide a forum to access AAV expertise when designing monitoring and reporting standards and formats.

Department's closure entry (summary)

The department recognises the Australian Government accredited veterinarians as a professional group and will engage with them in the development of monitoring and reporting standards. The department engaged with AAVs to:

- develop guidance material for the ASEL rejection criteria
- updated the AAV accreditation procedure in line with legislation and the ASEL
- rewrite the AA Vet Accreditation Course material to incorporate legislative, process and standards changes to support new AAVs.

The AAV Working Group was established by AAVs as a group under the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA). The department will continue to consult with the AAV working group on future policies and products involving AAVs.

Review assessment

Implemented, ongoing.

Implemented in full and achieved the recommendation's intent. The original intent was for the department to ensure that the monitoring and reporting standard and formats worked for the people using them daily. The department has done considerable work in this area and continues to access the AAV cohort for co-design of monitoring and reporting standards. The department continues to support an ongoing, collaborative relationship with AAVs.

2.2.7 Recommendation 11

That the department support Australian Government accredited veterinarian forums, in addition to debriefing individual veterinarians after voyages, that allow the exchange of information, knowledge and experience of effective approaches to managing onboard risks between veterinarians and the department.

Department's response: Support in principle

Given AAVs are dispersed across Australia, the department will work with the recently establish AAV Working Group to confirm the best format for a forum to exchange information.

Department's closure entry

The department continues to hold regular teleconferences with the AAV Working Group as the primary forum to exchange information. The department is planning to share the notes from these meetings with the broader AAV cohort.

Review assessment

Implemented in part, ongoing.

The inspector-general notes that the department supported this recommendation in principle. The department continues to engage with the AAV Working Group every 6 months. The purpose of these meetings is to maintain regular exchange of information between the department and AAVs on issues related to the services that AAVs provide to the livestock export industry. A range of topics are covered in this forum, including shipboard activities. The department does not share notes from this meeting with the broader AAV cohort. The information provided by the department in these meetings complement, but do not duplicate, information published by the department or shared in the monthly industry teleconference meeting. The review notes that only AAVs who are members of the Australian Veterinary Association can attend the AAV Working Group meetings.

All AAVs, as well as exporters and registered establishment holders, are now invited to the monthly industry teleconference. Key information and messages from these meetings are emailed to all those invited.

Post-voyage debriefings were undertaken on a sporadic basis. The department considered them to be relationship building exercises rather than a regulatory function. At present, these debriefings occur infrequently. However, the inspector-general was informed that the department is considering increasing the frequency of these post-voyage debriefings in the future.

2.3 Implementation of Moss Review recommendations

2.3.1 Recommendation 1

The department should change from a 3-year review of the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock to an annual update of the standards. The review should address emerging issues and advances in scientific knowledge and technology associated with improved animal welfare outcomes.

Department's response: Supported

Department's closure entry

Implemented, ongoing. The department is currently consulting on the first annual update to the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL 3.2) and intends to publish the updated standards in November 2021. Proposed changes in this update are a result of stakeholder engagement and feedback received on ASEL 3 since it was implemented on 1 November 2020. Complex issues that cannot be addressed in the update have been recorded in an issues register and will be prioritised. Future outcomes of livestock export welfare reviews and advances in animal welfare science and technology will also be considered. Issues that require a regulation impact statement will follow the prescribed process before changes are made to ASEL.

Review assessment

Implemented, ongoing.

The department implemented this recommendation in full and achieved its intent. The intention was to enable the department to make timely changes to ASEL in response to emerging science, improved practices, and/or changes in international standards. It also allows the department to consider any issues raised by industry and facilitate any practical changes. The department now updates ASEL annually following public stakeholder consultation. The department provides a summary of the key changes and comparison tables on their website. The department continues to undertake comprehensive reviews of ASEL every 6 years, with minor updates occurring between these if necessary. Where significant impacts on animal health or welfare are identified as part of reviews undertaken, the department may consider an out-of-session update.

An unintended consequence of implementing this recommendation is that exporters are now required to update their approved arrangements annually, consistent with the updates to ASEL. This has placed an additional administrative strain on exporters and the team within the department that processes approved arrangements.

2.3.2 Recommendation 2

The department should ensure that the significant investment in improved IT infrastructure announced in the 2020–21 budget:

- delivers improved regulatory operations and knowledge on animal health and welfare through effective use of data and information analysis
- enables disparate parts of the department to work more effectively through real-time access to all relevant records, policy, guidance and procedures
- reduces delays and duplication for industry through streamlined application processes, decisions and reporting.

Department's response: Supported

Department's closure entry (summary)

Implemented in part. The department has invested in measures setting up the IT infrastructure foundation which will be built on over time, as resourcing allows, to deliver the benefits identified by the IGLAE and continuously improve the department's business. The challenges of funding, staffing, time to develop tools, compatibility of legacy applications and uncertainty of advantages of transitioning from the Tracking Animal Certification for Export (TRACE) to NEXDOC applications has prevented the timely, full implementation of this recommendation.

Enhancements were made to the TRACE application to improve system usability, automated advice on documentation requirements, automatic verification of information, and data capture. POWER BI reporting has been adopted, enabling reports to be generated using data from different systems. This has been achieved by importing data stored in various systems (TRACE, LIVEXCollect, NLIS) into a Biosecurity Analytics Centre data warehouse, which POWER BI accesses for reporting.

Review assessment

Implemented in part.

The department has made some significant improvements to TRACE and data analytics capability, given the limited funding available. The intention of this recommendation was for the department to allocate funding to improve IT infrastructure for livestock exports, as part of the Taking Farmers to Market Program, and to provide a case for the department to apply for funding to close the IT efficiency gap. The department has actively sought and received additional funding to continue this work. In addition to the \$222.2 million provided in the 2020–21 budget, the department received an additional \$127.4 million as part of the 2022–23 budget.

The department continues to explore ways to increase IT efficiency to support timely and effective delivery of regulatory services and has committed to continuous improvement through their recent transformation action plan, which is designed to uplift capability over 4 years and includes improving regulatory service delivery, digital investment and information and data maturity.

2.3.3 Recommendation 3

The department should ensure it has detailed business process maps for all live animal export regulatory processes to support improved regulatory effectiveness and efficiency, and to inform optimal IT investment in the systems that support these processes.

Department's response: Supported

To support the introduction of the Export Control Act 2020, the department is reviewing its business and regulatory decision-making processes to ensure they continue to align with legislative requirements. This work will provide a sound platform for a new and comprehensive business process mapping exercise to support the development of improved IT infrastructure, as announced in the 2020-21 budget. Business process mapping will be undertaken in department will take a user co-design approach in developing new IT systems, including any external interfaces that may be used by industry.

Department's closure entry (summary)

Implemented in full. In May 2021, the then Business Reform Branch commissioned ConceptSix to compile an interactive process catalogue of existing business process maps with high level functional value chain and process groupings for agricultural exports. The final report *Review of Agricultural Export Processes – findings and gap analysis and the interactive catalogue of business process maps* are available to all staff on PRISM.

Review assessment

Implemented.

The department has comprehensively addressed this recommendation and fulfilled its intent. The intention was for the department to create business process maps to maintain corporate knowledge and support consistent administration and decision making, and to assist in identifying what processes can be automated to help inform future IT investment. It also adds to the effectiveness of controlling risk by identifying where in a process a risk is being created, whether a risk is being controlled at multiple points and helps determine the best place to control a risk.

The department continues to use these business process maps to support improved regulatory practice and to inform IT investment.

2.3.4 Recommendation 4

That the department address the challenge that dispersed regulatory functions pose to improved regulatory practice. This could include:

- accelerating the expansion of the role of the Principal Regulatory Officer consistent with its original intent
- secondments and placements of staff from relevant functional regulatory areas into the Plant and Live Animal Exports Division
- instituting cross-functional multidisciplinary projects at strategic and operational levels as a business-as-usual approach to compliance monitoring.

Department's response: Support in principle

The issue of potential disconnect across regulatory areas of the department and how to address is a key issue for the department. The Future Department Review released in November notes "At times, there is a disconnect between the policy and operational parts of the department, which leads to unclear lines of responsibility and potentially impractical policies."

The department is already addressing this in a number of ways. In addition to the progress on the development and implementation of the Regulatory Practice Statement, the Regulatory Practice Committee works across the department to improve regulatory practice, encourage consistency and work through roles and continues to address issues related to regulatory practice across the organisation. Since the Moss Review, machinery of government changes have broadened the department's regulatory reach, and the Regulatory Practice Committee has been an effective approach to managing shared regulatory practice issues. While it is not planned for the PRO position to expand in the immediate term, the PRO is deeply involved in the work of the Regulatory Practice Committee, as well as being a member of the department's Risk Committee.

Export related divisions within the department are also looking closely at processes and approaches to Instructional Material. A key recommendation of a preliminary report on instructional material recommends the close involvement of staff who are undertaking regulatory roles in the drafting and consideration of such material. Live Animal Exports Branch has been using this methodology for some time, ensuring that practitioner input is a key part of the process and that front line regulatory staff are in the team, rather than just consulted.

Further, Plant and Live Animal Export Division, along with the rest of the Agricultural Trade Group, is moving to use Agile project methodology for much of its work. This includes establishing multi disciplinary teams to tackle projects. As the division becomes more mature in using Agile methodology to run projects, it could examine whether this approach could be used to as a business as usual approach to compliance monitoring.

The Management Review Committee also operates across the dispersed functions of live animal export regulation to discuss and agree upon approaches to shared issues. This Committee will continue to strengthen oversight, information sharing and common regulatory attitudes and approaches.

The division has used secondments to bring in staff on an ad hoc basis.

Most recently, staff from the VEMG were seconded to help with ASEL 3 implementation. The division will continue to look to do this for specific tasks subject to timing and availability of staff in other divisions.

Department's closure entry (summary)

The department has made many improvements across the organisation, and specifically in livestock export regulation, to address this recommendation. These changes were focussed on embedding engagement and collaboration amongst regulators across the live animal export chain (and other areas) to develop a common sense of purpose and improved understanding of roles, responsibilities and processes which is necessary to ensure accountability and regulatory responsibilities are met.

The remit of the Principle Regulatory Officer (PRO) has been expanded to include plant exports.

The department instituted cross-functional multi-disciplinary projects at strategic and operational levels as 'business as usual'. The plant and live export division use secondments and placements on an ad hoc basis, both as subject matter experts and training/work experience.

The department established regular engagement with responsible groups involved in livestock exports regulation and other departmental regulatory areas.

Review assessment

Implemented in part, ongoing.

While the department agreed to this recommendation in principle, they have expended considerable effort in addressing the challenges that dispersed functions place on the livestock export regulatory system (and other regulatory systems) without changing the department's structure.

The general sentiment within the department was that communication and collaboration between different regulatory areas has greatly improved. The department has utilised secondments to increase interaction, awareness and understanding between operational and policy areas and to contribute to business improvement. The inspector-general encourages the department to continue to address the challenges of dispersed regulatory functions.

Although the department did not expand the role of the PRO to all regulatory systems, consistent with the original intent for the role as stated in the Moss review, the department has adopted other approaches to work toward achieving this recommendation's intent. For example, the department developed the Export Regulatory Knowledge Hub with the aim of increasing the capability and knowledge of departmental staff delivering export regulatory services. The inspector-general understands that the Live Animal Export Branch contributed significantly to this and is working with the Veterinary and Export Meat Branch to link their functions.

During this review, the department established the position of a Chief Regulatory Officer, who will be responsible for the department's approach to regulatory business across the department.

2.4 Review of the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS)

2.4.1 Recommendation 6

The department should change the required self-reporting period from 5 days to 'as soon as is practicable'.

Department's response: Agree

The department will amend the current condition from:

The exporter must notify the department in writing within five working days of becoming aware, or receiving information that suggests, that:

- a) an animal or animals exported to the supply chain(s) have or may have been transported to locations other than those specified in the ESCAS;*
- b) the location of an individual animal or animals exported to the supply chain(s) is not able, or may not be able to be verified by the exporter in accordance with the animal traceability and tracking system specified in the ESCAS; or*
- c) the animal welfare standards provided for in the ESCAS have not, or may not have, been met in relation to an individual animal or animals exported to the supply chain(s).*

to

The exporter must notify the department in writing as soon as possible and not more than five working days of becoming aware, or receiving information that suggests, that:

- a) an animal or animals exported to the supply chain(s) have or may have been transported to locations other than those specified in the ESCAS;*
- b) the location of an individual animal or animals exported to the supply chain(s) is not able, or may not be able to be verified by the exporter in accordance with the animal traceability and tracking system specified in the ESCAS; or*
- c) the animal welfare standards provided for in the ESCAS have not, or may not have, been met in relation to an individual animal or animals exported to the supply chain(s).*

Department's closure entry (summary)

The department has amended its processes to ensure that all new ESCAS approvals and ESCAS variations now include a condition requiring exporters to notify the department in writing as soon as possible and not later than five working days after becoming aware of, or receiving information that suggests that: see department's response above.

Review assessment

Implemented.

The intent of this recommendation was to emphasise the need for frankness and transparency by exporters and encourage them to report to the department as soon as they become aware of any specified ESCAS issues/infringements. The department implemented this recommendation in full and achieved its intent.

2.5 Livestock export permit systems and processes

2.5.1 Recommendation 3

The department should consider a single integrated application process to include notice of intention to export, export permits and health certificates.

Department's response: Agree in principle

Department's closure entry (summary)

The department has assessed the feasibility of this recommendation and has decided that the development of a single integrated application process, although highly desirable, it is not currently possible to implement due to the need for a substantial capital budget to execute it. However, department has adopted other options to streamline and reduce duplication across the NOI, export permit and health certificate processes.

Review assessment

Implemented in part.

The intention of the recommendation was to reduce duplication and repetitive documentation and processes. The department agreed to this recommendation in principle and endeavoured to address the recommendation, but unfortunately was unable to obtain the necessary financial resourcing. However, the department did streamline some processes.

2.6 Observations

Of the 13 closed recommendations, the inspector-general considers that the department has:

- fully implemented 6 recommendations that were agreed in full
- partially implemented 3 recommendations that were agreed in full
- partially implemented 4 recommendations that were agreed in part/principle.

The closed recommendations fit within the themes listed in Table 3.

Table 3 Closed recommendation themes

Theme	Implemented in full	Implemented in part	Agreed in full	Agreed in part/principle
Communication	0	2	1	1
Improved regulatory practice	5	3	6	2
Streamlining process	1	0	1	0
Technology	0	2	1	1
Total	6	7	9	4

3 Governance arrangements

3.1 Governance processes

The department's governance processes should support the effective implementation of inspector-general recommendations. 'Governance' includes the arrangements and practices which enable an entity to set its direction and manage its operations to achieve outcomes and fulfil its accountability obligations. Public sector governance:

encompasses leadership, direction, control and accountability, and assists an entity to achieve its outcomes in such a way as to enhance confidence in the entity, its decisions and its actions (ANAO 2014).

The department's Plant and Live Animal Exports, Animal Welfare and Regulation Division is responsible for responding to inspector-general review report recommendations, and the management and implementation of recommendations.

The department's procedure for managing inspector-general recommendations has continued to evolve since the inception of the inspector-general position.

3.1.1 Previous governance process

In August 2022, the first document was drafted, detailing how the department managed IGLAE review recommendations (DAFF 2022b). This document was produced for the department's internal audit review on the implementation of inspectors-general recommendations.

In November 2022, the internal audit review concluded that the department had overall effective governance arrangements to respond to, monitor and implement recommendations. However, it was recommended that the department formally document guidelines and standard operating procedures for supporting the management and monitoring of IGLAE recommendations, including roles and responsibilities and processes for implementation, due by November 2023 (DAFF 2022c).

In June 2023, the document was revised. The key changes provided guidance on how to develop a formal response to review recommendations, the introduction of implementation plans and using standardised templates for implementation plans and closure reports (DAFF 2023a).

These documents were not formal operating procedures.

3.1.2 Managing recommendations

In February 2024, the department revised and formalised the procedure for the governance and management of inspector-general review recommendations (DAFF 2024b). This is now an official instructional document, requiring departmental staff to comply with its direction.

Consistent with the internal audit recommendation, key improvements to the instruction are:

- outlining roles and responsibilities for managing recommendations and undertaking tasks at each step of the process
- including the process for assigning roles and responsibilities for implementing each recommendation

- outlining and describing the steps in the governance process
- including the requirement for an implementation plan for each recommendation.

Table 4 The department’s process for the management of inspector-general reviews and recommendations

Stage	Action
Support review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relevant SES attend entry meeting with the inspector-general • departmental subject matter experts provide information to the inspector-general
Fact-check draft report	<p>The department:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fact-checks draft report for the inspector-general • considers feasibility of and responses to recommendations • identifies recommendations leads for each recommendation agreed to or agreed in principle • formal response to recommendations, approved by the secretary, provided to the inspector-general
Report published	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recommendations agreed to or agreed in principle are now ‘live’ • governance of recommendations’ life cycle managed in the parliamentary document management system
Recommendation implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recommendation leads develop an implementation plan for each recommendation • implementation plans approved by the senior responsible officer • amend implementation plans as required
Recommendation reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recommendation leads provide updates on progress in implementing recommendations in line with Senate Estimates hearings 3 time per year • provide progress status reports as requested to the audit and risk committee and other business areas as requested
Recommendation closure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prepare closure report • responsible deputy secretary approves closure of recommendations

Source: DAFF 2024b

This instruction does not include key governance steps including, review and evaluation of closed recommendations or the principal regulatory officer’s roles and responsibilities for executive oversight and accountability.

This instruction also details the roles and responsibilities of the inspector-general and their office. The inspector-general notes that they and their office were not consulted when this document was being revised and formalised.

3.2 Oversight of recommendations

The oversight of the management of recommendations should focus on the capability and effort to effectively implement recommendations in a timely manner (ANAO 2014).

When the department provides their management response and the inspector-general signs off and publishes their review, the department becomes responsible for the management, implementation and closure of agreed recommendations.

The department considers that there are no legislative requirements to implement IGLAE recommendations (DAFF 2022a). The department responds to IGLAE recommendations in good faith and is committed to implementing agreed recommendations as soon as practical (DAFF 2022c).

The inspector-general acknowledges that while there are no legislative requirements, there is an expectation that any agreed recommendation will be implemented.

The Inspector-General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports plays an important role in providing independent oversight of Australia's livestock export regulatory system. To maximise the usefulness of the IGAWLAE position, it is important that the department makes every effort to implement all agreed recommendations, within the limits of available resources.

During a Senate Estimates hearing in October 2023, the department's secretary stated that:

[...] we'll be working very closely on any [Inspector-General of Biosecurity] recommendations on the process to monitor the implementation of those. This is a very important independent part of the whole biosecurity process (Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee 2023).

The IGAWLAE assumes and expects the same commitment to monitoring the implementation of inspector-general recommendations related to livestock exports.

3.2.1 Executive oversight

Effective implementation of recommendations requires senior management oversight and monitoring (ANAO 2021).

The PRO is the first assistant secretary of the Plant and Live Animal Exports, Welfare and Regulation Division. They are also the senior responsible officer (SRO) for the implementation of recommendations. The PRO oversees implementation progress 3 times a year in line with Senate Estimates hearings. This is standard practice in preparation for these hearings. The level of oversight is at the PRO's discretion. For example, a more in-depth update on a recommendation will be provided if the PRO requests it. The responsible assistant secretary (AS) oversees, provides guidance and champions the implementation of recommendations in collaboration with the executive level staff responsible for implementation.

In 2022 the department established a biannual meeting for the senior executives to monitor and review the status of independent review recommendations. This meeting allowed for thorough discussion and assessment and to review actions to implement and close recommendations. Also discussed were issues that may have impeded implementation progress. This provided a feedback loop between senior executives and the officers responsible for progressing the implementation of recommendations. This meeting no longer occurs, and it is unclear how the department is now providing coordinated scrutiny of implementation progress.

Although the inspector-general has no legislative responsibility to follow-up on the progress of recommendations, the inspector-general requires regular progress status updates by the senior executives. These updates could be included as part of their routine business process.

Recommendation 1

The department should reinstate the biannual meetings for the senior executives to review the status of inspector-general recommendations. Updates from these meetings should be provided to the inspector-general.

3.2.2 Office of the principal regulatory officer

The Office of the Principal Regulatory Officer (OPRO) has a key governance and coordination role to manage inspector-general recommendations. OPRO's responsibilities include:

- the central contact point between the inspector-general and their office, and the department throughout the review process
- coordinate the fact-check and department's response
- provide advice and guidance on developing implementation plans and variations, and closure reports for recommendations
- coordinate recommendation implementation status reporting, including for the audit and risk committee and Senate Estimates
- document owner of the process instruction
- record keeping for implementation of recommendations.

3.2.3 Audit and risk committee

The Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) reviews the appropriateness of and provides independent assurance and advice to the secretary regarding, the department's financial reporting, performance reporting, system of risk oversight and management, and system of internal control. Under the ARC charter, the committee is responsible for reviewing the implementation status of agreed recommendations from all external reviewers and scrutineers, including inspector-general recommendations, and ensuring the department has the mechanisms to manage and implement recommendations, appropriate to the business risk they address (DAFF 2024a). The Internal Audit Team supports the ARC and administers the annual internal audit program.

4 Responding to recommendations

The departmental response formalises the department's commitment to take action relevant to agreed recommendations, provides the inspector-general and other stakeholders with an understanding of the department's position and outlines whether the department's views differ from the inspector-general's with an explanation of why (DAFF 2024b).

4.1 Consideration of recommendations

The inspector-general conducts an exit meeting with departmental executives to provide an overview of review findings and recommendations.

After receiving the draft inspector-general review report, relevant senior executives and executive level staff attend meetings to discuss how the department will respond to the recommendations.

4.2 Response options

The department's response to recommendations can be:

- Agree (in full) – the department commits to complete implementation of the recommendation.
- Agree in part – the department commits to implementing part of the recommendation.
- Agree in principle – the department acknowledges that improvements can be made and agrees with the general idea or intent of the recommendation and will implement to its capacity.
- Disagree – the department does not agree with the recommendation and does not commit to implementation.

The Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) states that departments should set out what parts of a recommendation will be implemented and the related actions, and what parts will not be implemented (ANAO 2021). This increases the department's accountability and transparency when committing to implementing all or parts of a recommendation and outlines a clear pathway to implementation for the department's staff and external stakeholders.

The inspector-general emphasises that when the department agrees to a recommendation in full, the department should explain the rationale for the response and describe associated actions or deliverables to address the recommendation. When the department agrees in part or in principle to a recommendation, it is important that the departmental response is open, honest and clearly explains what parts of the recommendation will or will not be implemented and the reasons, including any limitations or hindrances.

The inspector-general acknowledges that timeframes to provide a formal response have not always allowed sufficient time for the department to consider their response in depth. Consequently, how a recommendation is implemented may evolve following further consideration.

The review was informed that there have been differing views within the department in relation to what it means to agree to a recommendation in principle. This has caused disagreement regarding the department's actions in response to these recommendations, after the inspector-general review report has been published. The department should clarify and formalise what it means to agree to a recommendation in principle.

4.3 Response approval

The OPRO briefs the secretary to approve and sign the departmental response. The brief outlines the key points of the review, the departmental response and formal response letter to the inspector-general. If requested, the OPRO will also prepare a brief for the minister about the departmental response. The departmental response is included in the final review report published on the inspector-general's website, where it is publicly available.

5 Implementation and closure

In their Audit Insights paper on the *Implementation of recommendations*, the ANAO states:

Where implementation plans are not prepared, evidence shows that actions are not always implemented to address the identified issue, or not implemented in a timely way, or not implemented at all (ANAO 2021).

Implementation plans support more effective and planned implementation, progress tracking, and the closure of recommendations as evidence would align to the actions and deliverables in the plans. This supports SRO oversight and visibility and helps to identify implementation interdependencies between lines areas in the department.

5.1 Assigning responsibility

Assignment of recommendation leads, the person primarily responsible, is essential because ‘things get done when someone is responsible for doing them’ (ANAO 2021).

A recommendation lead is identified and assigned to each recommendation that is agreed to, agreed in part, or agreed in principle. This is a specific position responsible for administering and implementing the recommendation. If a recommendation lead changes their role, they are responsible for notifying the OPRO regarding the new recommendation lead (DAFF 2024b). This is important, to maintain responsibility to continue progress to implement recommendations.

While the AS, PRO and deputy secretary are also responsible and accountable for the implementation of recommendations, the procedure does not outline what roles these positions play in the oversight of recommendations or who has overarching management accountability. This information should be clearly set out in the procedure to provide guidance and clarity to officers responsible.

All IGLAE recommendations are assigned to the Live Animal Export Branch, regardless of a recommendation’s focus. Recommendations related to animal welfare should be assigned to the Animal Welfare Branch. The review was informed that inspector-general recommendations from 2024 onwards will be assigned to the relevant branches, according to a recommendation’s focus.

5.2 Implementation plans

There appears to be little evidence that the department is treating the full implementation of IGLAE recommendations in an effective way. To date, the department has not developed specific implementation plans for any IGLAE recommendations.

From 2024, consistent with the new instruction, an implementation plan must be developed for each recommendation that is agreed in full, part or in principle. The recommendation lead is responsible for drafting implementation plans in the prescribed template and for gaining approval from the responsible AS and the SRO. Implementation plans contain:

- the intent of the recommendation
- findings that lead to the recommendation

- a risk assessment of not implementing the recommendation
- proposed actions and deliverables
- implementation due date
- senior management endorsement.

The inspector-general understands that the department intends to develop implementation plans for new recommendations from 2024 onwards but will not include recommendations prior to 2024.

The department incorporates the implementation of some inspector-general recommendations into other bodies of work and reform projects. For example, recommendations related to Australian accredited veterinarians are implemented under the Live Animal Export Round Table Working Group Projects. The inspector-general views this as entirely appropriate. However, these recommendations require individual implementation plans that clearly articulate the linkages between the recommendation and the project. This will support the visibility of the recommendation being implemented and provide evidence for closure. The project planning documents should also link to the recommendations being addressed as part of the project. Additionally, implementation plans should include an evaluation plan to demonstrate the effectiveness of recommendations (see [chapter 7](#)).

Implementation plans must be approved by the SRO within 60 days of the publication of each review. The Internal Audit Team requires that implementation plans for ANAO or internal audit reports to be approved by the SRO within 30 days of a review's finalisation. The inspector-general proposes that the approval requirement for implementation plans for inspector-general recommendations be amended to 30 days, to align with this.

Recommendation 2

The department should create implementation plans for all open and future inspector-general recommendations. Implementation plans should include an evaluation plan.

5.3 Timeframes and risk assessment

The department's internal audit review found there was no consideration of the overall system risk of a review outcome when establishing timeframes for the implementation of recommendations (DAFF 2022c). The report recommended:

- Development of methodology for assigning timeframes and allocating priorities to each IGLAE recommendation. This was to include consideration for business priorities and overall system risk of each recommendation.
- Development of an approval process by the delegate to extend the implementation timeframe. This was to consider the overall system risk of delaying the implementation of a recommendation.

The OPRO confirmed that the timeframes for implementation of recommendations are the business area's estimation of when a recommendation can be implemented (DAFF 2022c). The new procedure states the department needs to ensure recommendations are implemented within 5 years but does not refer to the process to establish initial timeframes for implementation (DAFF 2024b). The inspector-general was informed that the department does not have definite implementation dates.

The process to establish a timeframe should include a risk assessment. Importantly, this should consider the risk of not implementing a recommendation and the risk of not addressing the issues identified that lead to the recommendation. The establishment of timeframes should be approved by the SRO. Any extensions of timeframes should consider the risk of a delay in implementing a recommendation and approved by the SRO.

There appears to be a lack of accountability for implementing recommendations within the timeframes initially indicated by the department. The timelines for implementation of recommendations often appear to be extended at a later stage as an administrative convenience, rather than based on a rigorous assessment of the overall system risk of delaying implementation.

The department's Internal Audit Team has advised that ANAO recommendations are expected to be implemented within 2 years after a report is tabled. The inspector-general is concerned that the full benefits of recommendations will not be realised if they are not implemented in a timely way.

Recommendation 3

The inspector-general recommends that the department commit to a shorter timeframe for implementing all inspector-general recommendations.

5.4 Closure

Entities will often undertake a quality assurance process before determining that a recommendation has been implemented and can be considered closed (ANAO 2021).

5.4.1 Closure evidence statement

In February 2024, the department introduced a formal process to gather and record evidence to support recommendation closure and intends to adopt this process for new recommendations from 2024 onwards.

The closure evidence statement details the agreed actions or deliverables as set out in the implementation plan, whether the actions have been completed or not, and date of completion. The closure evidence statement must also explain the actions taken against each deliverable and provide accompanying evidence. Evidence may include:

- new or revised policies, procedures or processes
- new business line area report(s) or resource allocation
- links to new material on the department's internal or external websites
- records of communications with stakeholders
- details of review or analysis including expected improvements
- assistant secretary approval of elements that are implemented by business areas other than the live animal export branch.
- where a recommendation is to be closed without having been implemented, the closure statement must detail:
 - why it is appropriate to close the recommendation, including the risk of not implementing and how it will be managed

- evidence of the rationale not to implement.

The inspector-general considers the utilisation of closure evidence statements and closure briefs concurrently to be a more robust process for providing assurance that a recommendation has been implemented.

5.4.2 Closure brief

When it is decided that a recommendation has been implemented and can be closed, a closure brief is prepared for the deputy secretary to provide final closure approval. This is the only closure process for recommendations prior to 2024. The closure brief contains:

- the recommendation
- the department's response
- a high-level comment advising if the recommendation was implemented in full, in part or not implemented
- a high-level summary as to how the department implemented and if there were challenges
- subsections addressing each 'do' point of the recommendation, providing examples of how the point was implemented.

Sufficient evidence must accompany the brief to allow the deputy secretary to assess if a recommendation can be closed.

The inspector-general found that for closure briefs prior to 2024, the department did not always include sufficient accompanying evidence, for example, planning documents, project plans, policy documents and decisions. Additionally, there were inconsistencies in the amount of information provided in closure briefs.

The inspector-general was informed that while the responsible deputy secretary did not always receive copies of the evidence listed in the closure briefs, they were aware of the evidence to support closure. However, the department had difficulty in providing the inspector-general with all associated evidence of many closed recommendations.

The department should ensure that sufficient accompanying evidence is provided to support closure, and to ensure that the actions taken to address recommendations are linked. Additionally, the person in the position delegated to provide final closure approval should be assessing the evidence to support closure. The department should ensure all evidence is provided to the delegate to support closure of open and future recommendations.

6 Monitoring and reporting

6.1 Tracking implementation

Maintaining complete and accurate data is an important part of monitoring progress of the implementation of recommendations and provides a clear line of sight for those accountable personnel and supports governance processes and performance oversight. The systems used to monitor and track implementation should be fit-for-purpose and ensure the actions of business areas are recorded (ANAO 2021).

The department's monitoring process recently changed, to formally record recommendations in the Parliamentary Document Management System (PDMS).

The OPRO also uses an Excel spreadsheet to track progress of recommendations in more detail and updates this spreadsheet three times a year, in preparation for Senate Estimates hearings. Updates are sought from recommendation leads and approved by the assistant secretary and any other responsible assistant secretary.

The department's process for tracking is a manual process and progress updates are not transferred to the official PDMS record. The inspector-general notes that at present, the department is deciding how to best utilise PDMS for the management of recommendations. In the meantime, progress updates should be transferred to each recommendation's PDMS record.

6.2 Records management

Departments needs to ensure sufficient and appropriate records are maintained to support all aspects of their responses to, and monitoring and implementation of, recommendations (ANAO 2021). Effective records management supports accountability and transparency by enabling access to records related to the management of recommendations including response documents, decisions, implementation plans, closure reports, supporting evidence and evaluations.

There appears to be little evidence that the department is undertaking effective records management related to the implementation and closure of recommendations. The documents the department currently uploads to PDMS are:

- the original inspector-general report
- the recommendation number and the department's response
- the closure report and/or the deputy secretary's approval email trail.

However, the inspector-general's recommendation, implementation planning, progress updates and the supporting evidence for closure are not uploaded. The department had difficulties in providing the evidence for closure of many recommendations, including recommendations implemented as part of other bodies of work and projects. This leads to a lack of transparency, and an inability to assess whether a recommendation has been effectively implemented and/or addressed the original intent. Departmental officers need to be able to open a record in PDMS and see the entire implementation process for each recommendation to support visibility and maintain corporate knowledge.

6.3 Reporting

The OPRO reports on the status of recommendations internally through various channels for different purposes.

6.3.1 Senate Estimates

The OPRO develops a brief for the PRO in preparation for Senate Estimates hearings. The brief contains high level information and statistics of open and closed recommendations, including any other key information on recommendations proposed for closure.

The responsible senior executives review progress on each recommendation prior to each Senate Estimates and follows up with responsible areas as needed. This is the only formalised process for the SRO to have oversight of the implementation of all IGLAE recommendations.

6.3.2 Audit and risk committee

The OPRO develops a brief for the ARC on a quarterly basis which contains statistics of open and closed recommendations. The ARC requests more detailed briefs bi-annually for overdue recommendations. The due date for implementation of recommendations is provided by the responsible area. These briefs support the ARC so it can fulfil its responsibilities.

Based on evidence provided by the department, it appears that the department has not had any overdue IGLAE recommendations. Therefore, more detailed briefs have not been prepared.

6.3.3 Public reporting

The inspector-general reports, together with the departmental secretary's responses, are published on the IGAWLAE website. The department communicates to stakeholders through various forums and channels about their work and projects in train. For example, the Live Animal Export Roundtable Working Group Projects. However, it appears the department does not always link this work to the IGLAE recommendations they relate to. The department reports on IGLAE recommendation status statistics to the Livestock Export Industry Consultative Committee.

The inspector-general was informed that stakeholders are keenly interested in the progress the department has made in implementing these recommendations. The department has advised that work is underway to publicly report on inspector-general recommendations on their website. The inspector-general supports this initiative.

Recommendation 4

The department should publicly report on progress in implementing inspector-general recommendations and provide a summary of reasons to support closed recommendations.

7 Verification and evaluation

The department does not have a formalised process to assess whether closed inspector-general recommendations have been effectively implemented. The Inspector-General of Biosecurity, in their previous review about the implementation of their recommendations, stated:

The inspector-general has been the primary mechanism that assessed the department's implementation of inspectors-general review recommendations. [...]

It should not be the responsibility of the inspector-general to assess and verify the department's effectiveness in implementing these recommendations (IGB 2021).

The inspector-general strongly endorses these findings. The department should have a formalised process to verify how effective implementation has been, within a defined timeframe after closure.

The department's Internal Audit Team conduct an annual verification process of a sample of closed recommendations from external reviewers or scrutineers. The objective was to assess whether the selected recommendations were closed with sufficient verification of implementation and is supported by a general evaluation framework (DAFF 2023b). The process verifies whether the department has:

- evidence supporting the adequacy, effectiveness and timeliness of actions and decisions undertaken to address and close the recommendation
- an implementation plan
- evidence of implementation to adequately and effectively address the identified issue
- implemented recommendations in a timely manner
- evidence of closure in alignment with the department's requirements*
- evidence that the recommendation is operating in practice (DAFF 2023b).

*In the context of livestock exports, in alignment with the procedure for managing inspector-general recommendations.

The verification process does not include the evaluation of the effectiveness of implemented recommendations. The department was unable to provide the inspector-general with any evidence that they have an evaluation process in place to determine the effectiveness of the implemented recommendations.

The inspector-general understands that the department seeks feedback from stakeholders regarding their experience of changes made due to the implementation of inspector-general recommendations and other continuous improvement initiatives. For example, the department recently sought feedback during the AVA Working Group meeting to gauge whether AAVs were satisfied with the level of engagement.

In 2023 the Australian Public Service Commission undertook a capability review of the department. It found the department undertakes limited evaluation of whether its services and delivery measures respond to identified needs (APSC 2023). The department needs to build a robust evaluation capability to assess whether implemented recommendations are improving livestock export

regulation and systems. The evaluation plan should be made part of the implementation plan (see Recommendation 2).

Appendix A: Department's response

OFFICIAL



**ADAM FENNESSY PSM
SECRETARY**

Ref: EC24-000493

19 August 2024

Dr Michael Bond
Acting Inspector General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports
igawlae@aff.gov.au

Dear Mike

Thank you for providing your draft report, *Implementation of Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports recommendations* to the department on 1 July 2024, and for the opportunity to review the report and respond to your recommendations.

As the regulator of livestock exports, we are committed to continuous improvement of our regulatory activities, including our systems, processes and policies. Independent reviews of our standards, systems, processes and policies are an important tool to identify opportunities to further improve our regulation of livestock exports.

We are committed to implementing agreed recommendations that improve our regulatory performance, as soon as practical, as our priorities and resources allow. The department is further committed to working with the future Inspector-General and their office to develop recommendations that are wholly implementable, practical and achieve the best regulatory outcomes.

Where a recommendation is not able to be implemented in the manner in which the Inspector-General anticipated, the department will adopt an equivalent approach to address the identified risk/s. Additionally, when implementation of a recommendation transitions to business as usual, the department continues to review these activities as part of our commitment to continuous improvement. It was pleasing to see the recommendations you identified as on-going aligned with our ongoing work.

The department acknowledges that the implementation of some recommendations has taken time. Many factors impact the implementation of recommendations, including the broad scope of some recommendations, a requirement for significant information technology investment, amendments to legislative or policy frameworks, or recommendations having substantial dependencies. The department assesses the risk of open recommendations to support appropriate prioritisation.

As you noted in your report, the department has evolved its governance and management for the implementing of recommendations. As part of our Transformation Program to uplift

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key capabilities by 2027, we will continue to build on this including developing an program evaluation model and establishing a system to track and record the implementation of recommendations.

In relation to your recommendations, the department agrees with recommendations 2 and 4, and agrees in principle with recommendations 1 and 3. I have enclosed the department's response to the recommendations.

Thank you also for your service as the acting Inspector-General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports. I wish you success in your next endeavour.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam Fennessy', followed by a period.

Adam Fennessy PSM

Enc: Department's response to recommendations

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Department's response

Recommendation 1

The department should reinstate the biannual meetings for the senior executives to review the status of inspector-general recommendations. Updates from these meetings should be provided to the inspector-general.

Department's response: Agreed in principle

The department agrees it is essential for relevant senior executive staff to be active in the oversight of the implementation of recommendations. Currently, each recommendation is allocated to a Senior Responsible Officer, normally a First Assistant Secretary, who is responsible for the managing the implementation of the recommendation.

The department will commit to increased executive oversight by establishing regular meetings between the Senior Responsible Officer and the business area/s responsible for implementing the recommendation, consistent with the department's existing governance framework.

The department reports on the implementation of IGLAE/IGAWLAE recommendations quarterly to the Audit and Risk Committee through the Internal Audit Program Sub-Committee. This allows the Audit and Risk Committee to form a view on the appropriateness of systems of internal control including the management of recommendations which they communicate to the Accountable Authority.

Recommendation 2

The department should create implementation plans for all open and future inspector-general recommendations. Implementation plans should include an evaluation plan.

Department's response: Agreed

The department updated the processes for the governance and management of recommendations in February this year.

The processes now include developing implementation plans for each recommendation. Current implementation plans are consistent with implementation plans used by the Internal Audit team for the management of Australian National Audit Office and internal audits.

Implementation plans will be updated to include evaluation plans and will be shared with Internal Audit.

Recommendation 3

The inspector-general recommends that the department commit to a shorter timeframe for implementing all inspector-general recommendations.

Department's Response: Agreed in principle

The department is committed to implementing agreed recommendations as soon as practicable. The time taken to implement a recommendation is dependent on several factors including:

- scope of the recommendation
- type of recommendation, and whether it involves legislative frameworks, policy, processes, or information technology
- dependencies
- departmental and government priorities.

Recommendation 4

The department should publicly report on progress in implementing inspector-general recommendations and provide a summary of reasons to support closed recommendations.

Department's response: Agreed

The department agrees transparency regarding the implementation of recommendations is important for stakeholder confidence and has developed, and will publish soon, a webpage on the department's website reporting on the implementation status of recommendations.

Appendix B: Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports review recommendations

Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports review recommendations and the department’s implementation status, as at 16 February 2024

Table B1 Monitoring and reporting during livestock export voyages

Recommendation number	Recommendation	Status
1	That the department develop a data quality and management strategy that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) adopts the Australian Government’s quantitative data standards b) includes actions to develop detailed guidance and training resources for all qualitative data to reduce subjectivity c) uses co-design to develop electronic report formats that increase standardisation and support data upload for analysis d) supports clear, accurate and efficient reporting. 	Open
2	That the department work with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority to require all vessels used in the live export trade to install automated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) CCTV cameras to record representative pens on all decks and any pens that have been identified as problematic b) wet and dry bulb temperature monitors at representative locations on each deck and on the bridge c) data loggers that can provide monitored data to those onboard in real time and that retain data records in a verifiable form for compliance purposes. 	Open
3	That the department increase the resourcing and capability of the Technical Analysis Team in both statistical analytical expertise and epidemiological expertise. This analytical behaviour, drivers and asset performance (for example, vessels, decks and pens).	Closed
4	That the department reframe approved arrangements for exporters to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) deliver the benefits of streamlined documentation and approval processes b) incorporate characteristics and indicators of dynamic risk management as a requirement of exporters operating under their approved arrangements c) ensure that demonstrating dynamic risk management by an exporter is an enforceable requirement d) design and undertake unannounced and targeted regulatory projects aimed at detecting poor dynamic risk management. 	Open
5	That Independent Observers be deployed as part of a risk-based compliance monitoring program that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) targeting of industry participants based on analysis, intelligence and the nature of voyages (with an element of random targeting) b) a proportion of Independent Observer deployment occur as part of integrated audit and inspection projects. 	Open

Implementation of Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports recommendations

Recommendation number	Recommendation	Status
6	That Independent Observer summary reports be published within a service-level commitment period after the conclusion of a voyage. Any matters under further investigation should be noted. Details of matters under investigation may be excluded, as appropriate, until the department's course of action is determined. Once this is determined, the published report should be updated to explain the issue and the department's response.	Closed
7	That the department consider whether cost recovery of the Independent Observer program should be incorporated into the general cost of regulation.	Closed
8	That the department work with LiveCorp and industry to update training for stockpersons, particularly in relation to monitoring and reporting. The department should consider the utility of establishing a stockperson network.	Closed
9	That Australian Government accredited veterinarian training, monitoring and reporting obligations be updated and clarified with improved guidance, support material and advice.	Closed
10	That Australian Government accredited veterinarians are accessed as a professional group to contribute to industry co-design of relevant monitoring and reporting standards and formats.	Closed
11	That the department support Australian Government accredited veterinarian forums, in addition to debriefing individual veterinarians after voyages, that allow the exchange of information, knowledge and experience of effective approaches to managing onboard risks between veterinarians and the department.	Closed
12	That the department develop a risk-based compliance monitoring program for Australian Government accredited veterinarians, including a firm approach to escalating sanctions, to support good performance and a level playing field.	Proposed for closure

Table B2 Implementation of Moss Review recommendations

Recommendation number	Recommendation	Status
1	The department should change from a 3-year review of the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock to an annual update of the standards. The review should address emerging issues and advances in scientific knowledge and technology associated with improved animal welfare outcomes.	Closed
2	The department should ensure that the investment in improved IT infrastructure announced in the 2020– 21 budget: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivers improved regulatory operations and knowledge on animal health and welfare through effective use of data and information analysis • enables disparate parts of the department to work more effectively through real-time access to all relevant records, policy, guidance and procedures • reduces delays and duplication for industry through streamlined application processes, decisions and reporting. 	Closed
3	The department should ensure it has detailed business process maps for all live animal export regulatory processes to support improved regulatory effectiveness and efficiency, and to inform optimal IT investment in the systems that support these processes.	Closed

Implementation of Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports recommendations

Recommendation number	Recommendation	Status
4	<p>That the department address the challenge that dispersed regulatory functions pose to improved regulatory practice. This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accelerating the expansion of the role of the Principal Regulatory Officer consistent with its original intent • secondments and placements of staff from relevant functional regulatory areas into the Plant and Live Animal Exports Division • instituting cross-functional multidisciplinary projects at strategic and operational levels as a business-as-usual approach to compliance monitoring. 	Closed

Table B3 Review of the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System

Recommendation number	Recommendation	Status
1	<p>In delivering the Australian Government’s Busting Congestion, Deregulation and Modernising Agricultural Trade budget reforms, the department should improve its business-facing systems and digitised services to streamline the efficiency of industry interactions and decision-making. These systems should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitate efficient submission of applications • assist with the quality of applications, including facilitating compliance • support efficient decision-making and access to information for departmental officers. 	Proposed for closure
2	<p>The department should update the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) animal welfare standards (Export Advisory Notice 2018–01) to be consistent with the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) Terrestrial Animal Health Code 2019.</p>	Open
3	<p>The department should use a risk-based approach to requiring the use of a visual recording devices and fixed radiofrequency identification (RFID) tag scanning in markets, or for specific exporters, where loss of control and traceability is a systemic problem.</p>	Open
4	<p>The department should undertake, and publish, a review of available technologies for accurate sheep and goat counting, and individual identification. The department should also undertake a cost-benefit analysis of requiring the use of improved counting and individual identification technology for sheep and goat exports. Depending on the outcome from the technology review, the department should consider requiring all sheep and goat exporters to utilise improved technology, or consider imposing this requirement on markets, or individual exporters, where counting inaccuracy and loss of control and traceability is systemic.</p>	Open
5	<p>The department should monitor the performance of independent auditors and consider not accepting reports from auditors who do not detect issues that may have contributed to non-compliance or who provide poor quality audits.</p>	Open
6	<p>The department should change the required self-reporting period from 5 days to ‘as soon as is practicable’.</p>	Closed

Implementation of Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports recommendations

Recommendation number	Recommendation	Status
7	The department should report the range of detected non-compliance and the range and number of sanctions or other regulatory responses that resulted from the non-compliance. The department should record non-compliance to examine the performance of individual exporters over time and analyse and understand issues within each market.	Open
8	The department should review and update the <i>Biosecurity guideline for management of non-compliance</i> to incorporate the appropriate use of a proportionate response regulatory model that utilises the full range of sanctions and powers available under the <i>Export Control Act 2020</i> . The department should apply an escalating proportionate regulatory response model to improve compliance of exporters who continue to breach ESCAS.	Open

Table B4 Livestock export permit systems and processes

Recommendation number	Recommendation	Status
1	The department should replace the TRACE system with a modern IT system that supports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> streamlined application processes with automated verification of pre-existing approvals single point of truth for an applicant’s documentation, decision and compliance history (for both applicants and departmental officers). 	Proposed for closure
2	The department should streamline the notice of intention to export (NOI) assessment and decision-making process by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> implementing a risk-based NOI assessment process to redirect its resources to higher risk consignments and provide faster decisions for lower risk consignments publishing updated policy guidelines that define thresholds that trigger the need for a variation to the NOI application to be submitted. 	Open
3	The department should consider a single integrated application process to include notice of intention to export, export permits and health certificates.	Closed
4	The department should review the Performance management and compliance guidelines – approved arrangements for livestock exporters, including the livestock export consignment reports ratings, the way in which audits are utilised, and how this relates to performance levels, and the utility of performance levels.	Closed
5	The department should implement a risk-targeted multidisciplinary audit process that is conducted during the notice of intention to export application and export permit inspection process (consistent with the inspector-general’s recommendation 4(d) of the review Monitoring and reporting during livestock export voyages, and Moss Review recommendation 7).	Open
6	The department should trial the use of body cameras for regional veterinary officers and auditors for use during inspections and onsite audits.	Open

Implementation of Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports recommendations

Recommendation number	Recommendation	Status
7	<p>The department should continue to use its discretion in relation to the Fremantle model provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> that where a registered establishment is physically unable to fully comply with ASEL the occupier agrees to develop and submit a program of works that would enable the registered establishment to fully comply, and a schedule and time frame for implementation of those works if the works and the time frame are accepted by the department as being reasonably practicable, the department consider an enforceable undertaking to ensure that the works progress over the agreed time frame so that the exporters and registered establishments can be progressively brought into full compliance. 	Open

Table B5 Livestock export licences and approved arrangements

Recommendation number	Recommendation	Status
1	The department should conduct a holistic risk analysis of the livestock export framework to identify risks, and the critical control points for these risks in the department's business processes. Once identified the department should examine the effectiveness of the controls in place and undertake treatments to address any shortcomings.	Open
2	The department should prescribe a range of documents that are currently part of or connected to approved arrangements, such as standard export plans, vendor, spay and pregnancy declarations, health declarations, and elements of management plans.	Open
3	The department should change the approach to livestock export approved arrangements to one that is more aligned to the approach taken with meat export approved arrangements. This includes reviewing the performance indicators to improve clarity and including performance tests and targets that are directly linked to legislation and standards.	Proposed for closure
4	The department should develop options to provide a more accessible regulatory powers and sanctions regime, linked to clear and enforceable requirements in export licences and approved arrangements. If there are options that are within the power of the secretary, they should be implemented. If there are options that require legislative change, these should be provided to the minister for consideration.	Proposed for closure

Table B6 Communication and engagement in livestock export regulation

Recommendation number	Recommendation	Status
1	The department should increase meetings or workshops with stakeholders to ensure that those who are time constrained from providing formal submissions can be heard. This should target stakeholder segments to ensure that regional differences are identified, and so that stakeholders with widely disparate positions are heard separately.	Open
2	When the department undertakes a formal consultation process the subsequent decision should include a 'response to submissions' to inform stakeholders who made submissions of how their concerns were considered.	Open
3	The department should develop an annual regulatory activity report and publish it on its website.	Proposed for closure
4	The department should reformat summary independent observer reports to become outcome reports. The reports need to include all non-compliance against ASEL, observed and verified mortalities, exporter mitigating actions and departmental regulatory actions.	Open
5	The department should be consistent in its reports with naming of entities, scheduling publication, and inclusion of non-compliance and regulatory action taken information. In this regard, the department should consider whether integration and rationalisation of reporting would be beneficial to make information more easily accessible to stakeholders.	Proposed for closure
6	The department develop and publish a service level commitment for the provision of IO observational data to exporters, and for the publication of all of its live animal export reports.	Proposed for closure

Glossary

Term	Definition
Accredited veterinarian (AAV)	A veterinarian who is accredited by the department to carry out export operations in approved export programs. Previously referred to as Australian Government accredited veterinarian.
animal welfare	The ability of an animal to cope with the conditions in which it lives and dies as described in the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) Terrestrial Animal Health Code.
Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL)	The minimum animal health and welfare requirements the Australian Government expects the livestock export industry to meet throughout the supply chain from sourcing to disembarkation overseas.
closure report	A prescribed template that contains a summary of the actions to implement a recommendation and approved by the responsible deputy secretary.
closure statement	A prescribed template that sets out when actions and deliverables to implement a recommendation were undertaken, includes evidence to support the actions were taken and is approved by the senior responsible officer as the first assistant secretary of the division.
consultation	A formal process where the department seeks feedback from stakeholders.
governance	The arrangements and practices which enable an entity to set its direction and manage its operations to achieve outcomes and fulfil its accountability obligations.
implementation plan	A prescribed template that sets out the actions and deliverables required to implement a recommendation.
livestock	Cattle, sheep, goats, deer, buffalo and camelids, including the young of these animals.
recommendation lead	A position with responsibility to progress work to implement inspector-general recommendations.
regional veterinary officer (RVO)	A departmental veterinary officer authorised to inspect livestock for export and issue export permits and government certificates.
senior responsible officer (SRO)	A position with responsibility to ensure inspector-general recommendations are implemented.
the department	The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (and its predecessors).

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