# Annual report 2024–25

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**Acknowledgements**

The Inspector-General thanks the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the Office of the Inspector-General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports for their assistance in preparing this report.

**Acknowledgement of Country**

We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia’s agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

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## Letter of transmittal

26 August 2025

Hon Julie Collins MP

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2900

Dear Minister

I am pleased to provide you with the annual report of the Inspector-General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports for the year ended 30 June 2025.

This report has been prepared in accordance with Section 40 of the Inspector-General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports Act 2019.

Yours sincerely



Dr Katherine Clift

Inspector-General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports

## Year at a glance 2024–25

Review activity:

* 2 reviews commenced
* 2 consultations completed and 23 submissions received
* 2 reviews completed.

Ongoing employees:

* 4 employees.

Stakeholder and government engagements:

* 44 stakeholder meetings
* 46 departmental meetings
* 2 briefs provided to minister
* 1 senate estimates attended.

## Inspector-General’s foreword



It is with great pleasure that I present the Inspector-General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports annual report for the year ended 30 June 2025.

This is my first annual report in the role, which I commenced on 30 September. The document also contains information gathered by the previous acting Inspector-General, Dr Michael Bond, and his team.

This annual report will show the important work of the office that has closely supported and allowed me to deliver on my role to monitor, investigate and report on the department’s implementation of animal welfare and live animal export legislation and standards.

### Our achievements

I acknowledge and sincerely thank the former Inspectors-General Ross Carter and Dr Michael Bond for their significant contributions in establishing a strong foundation for the role. Their commitment to integrity, transparency and continuous improvement has been instrumental in shaping a robust and independent oversight framework for the livestock export sector.

I am also very appreciative of my small but highly capable team for their dedication, professionalism and unwavering support. Despite our size, the team has consistently delivered high-quality work and their commitment to integrity and excellence has been critical to achieving our objectives and maintaining strong credible oversight.

As I am not a Commonwealth entity under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability* Act 2013, the department provides enabling services for me to fulfil my functions. I would like to express my gratitude for the assistance provided by the department.

### Reviews

On 20 August 2024, Dr Bond completed his tenure as acting IGAWLAE by publishing 2 reviews.

These reviews were on the Independent Observer Program and the Implementation of Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports recommendations.

The Implementation of Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports recommendations considered the status of all recommendations since the role was established in 2019. To maximise the effectiveness of the inspector-general’s role, the department must make every effort to fully implement and close all agreed recommendations. In summary, only a small number of the recommendations have been formally closed.

The department has made some significant improvements in its engagement and communication with stakeholders, regulatory practice, information technology systems, data capture and analytics. However, not all closed recommendations have been fully implemented, implemented in a timely manner. In some cases, implementation did not achieve the original intent of the recommendations.

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 status of the review recommendations as of 30 June 2025 has been provided to my office by the department and is included at [Appendix B](#_Appendix_B:_Recommendation). It has been more than 2 years since a review recommendation was closed and there has been no change in status in this reporting period.

I encourage the department to prioritise efforts to implement review recommendations in a timely manner.

### Commencement of new Inspector-General

Since taking up my role, I have consulted extensively with the following:

* Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry staff
* exporters
* veterinarians
* industry bodies
* registered establishments
* animal welfare groups.

This has increased my understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing the live animal export industry welfare and the regulatory system that supports it.

My team and I have travelled to Darwin and Western Australia to see firsthand several registered establishment facilities, the inspection processes and livestock being loaded for export. We have also received demonstrations of critical data collection, management and analysis platforms such as the Tracking Animal Certification for Export (TRACE) and LIVEXCollect systems. I would like to acknowledge the significant cooperation and generosity of all those people who made their time available and shared their knowledge and insights.

### Work plan 2024–25

Under the Inspector-General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports Act 2019 (IGAWLAE Act) I am required to prepare and publish an [annual work plan](https://www.igawlae.gov.au/work-program) outlining details of our oversight activities each financial year. The input from industry and other stakeholders has been invaluable as I identified potential inclusions for this year and future years’ work plan. In the development of the 2024–25 work plan I also consulted with DAFF and Minister Collins. My work plan was published on 31 January 2025, and I have commenced 2 reviews:

1. Review of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry’s responses to significant livestock export incidents.
2. Preparation of livestock for export.

We opened a public submission process, which closed on the 22 April 2025, to assist with these reviews. We also provided stakeholders with the opportunity to meet with us and undertook visits to regional areas to gather additional information. The public submission process included, for the first time, the ability for people to provide response through a short form questionnaire as well as the usual formal submission process. In addition to the public submission process meeting were held with departmental staff, stakeholders, peak industry representatives, welfare organisations and other organisations or individuals as requested.

We look forward to progressing these reviews over the coming months and continuing to engage with stakeholders.

### Collaborations

In January 2025 I presented at the World Organisation for Animal Health’s (WOAH) workshop in Tokyo on animal welfare in the Asia-Pacific. This meeting provided the opportunity to understand the animal welfare context, opportunities and challenges across the Southeast Asian region. This region is the destination for many of our livestock exported from Australia and supported a collaborative approach to addressing these.

The meeting also included updates on how the WOAH sets the proposed changes to the international standards relating to welfare. Including those animal welfare standards for slaughter that are used as the basis for the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System. This meeting provided a valuable opportunity to maintain current awareness of international developments in these standards that may impact on Australia’s regulation.

### Memorandum of understanding

During this period, work commenced on establishing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Inspector-General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports and the department. This MOU is an important step in clarifying roles and responsibilities between the 2 entities. It is intended to support the independence of the Inspector-General and confirm the enabling and support services provided by the department.

### Looking forward

Australia’s livestock exports continue to operate in a complex and evolving environment. The overall size of the industry has been gradually declining in recent years, with a reduction in the number of active exporters, changing markets dynamics and regulatory and policy reforms. The Australian Government’s announcement of the planned phase-out of live sheep exports by sea by May 2028 represents a significant transition for the sector, particularly Western Australia, where the trade has been most concentrated.

Animal welfare will remain a central focus and continue to be an area of high public scrutiny. Australia’s regulatory system must continue to be evidence based, drawing on current research, operational insights and practical experience to guide continuous improvement.

The decreasing number of exporters underscores the importance of ensuring that regulatory requirements are fair, proportionate and risk based.

## Overview of livestock exports

Australia’s livestock export industry is valued at over $1 billion and generates about 10,000 jobs across Australia. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) regulates the livestock export industry in accordance with the *Export Control Act 2020* and the Export Control (Animals) Rules 2021.

Only 26 of the 34 registered exporters are listed as active. From 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025 Australia exported 1,228,735 livestock. Table 1 shows the species by mode of transport.

Table 1 Livestock exported from Australia by air and sea, 2024–25

| Type | Cattle | Sheep | Buffalo | Goats | Camels | Alpacas | llamas | Total |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Air | 2,233 | 17,170 | 0 | 16,856 | 99 | 1,463 | 18 | 37,839 |
| Sea | 778,686 | 407,490 | 4,720 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,190,896 |
| **Total** | **780,919** | **424,660** | **4,720** | **16,856** | **99** | **1,463** | **18** | **1,228,735** |

Note: Figures are correct at 31 July 2025 and are subject to change.

Source: Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Export by sea has consistently been the dominant transport mode, both in the number of consignments and the total livestock shipped. Over the past 3 years, sea consignments have increased, driven mainly by rising cattle numbers, which have outweighed a decline in sheep shipments. After a significant jump in 2023, boosted in part by the return of camel and llama exports, air consignment numbers remained steady into 2024 (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Livestock consignments by air and sea, 2022–23 to 2024–25



Source: Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

## Purpose, role and function

The Inspector-General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports (IGAWLAE) reviews the performance of functions and exercise of powers by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry in regulating livestock exports under the Export Control Act 2020 and the Export Control (Animals) Rules 2021.

The Inspector-General is an independent statutory office holder with functions and powers under the *Inspector-General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports Act 2019* (IGAWLAE Act).

The Inspector-General role was established in 2019 under the *Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports Act 2019*. On 4 December 2023, this Act was amended to the IGAWLAE Act to strengthen animal welfare and increase accountability and transparency for animal welfare in livestock exports.

This means that the:

* functions and powers of the Inspector-General are set out in the legislation
* Inspector-General is appointed by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
* Inspector-General is appointed for a set term (5 years).

### Purpose

Our purpose is to provide independent assurance to the minister and the public as to whether the department is properly performing its functions as regulator of the livestock export industry.

The purpose is guided by the role of the Inspector-General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports outlined in Section 10 of the IGAWLAE Act:

The IGAWLAE monitors, investigates and reports on the department’s implementation of animal welfare and live animal export legislation and standards with the intention of:

* promoting continual improvements in the regulatory practice, performance and culture of the department
* providing an additional layer of accountability and assurance of the regulation of Australia’s livestock exports
* ensuring livestock export officials consider the welfare of animals when performing functions and exercising their powers
* increasing accountability, regulatory compliance and transparency with Australia’s livestock export legislation and standards.

### Functions

Conducting reviews is the main activity the Inspector-General uses to deliver on the purpose. Reviews can provide transparency and accountability for a regulatory system that has a high level of public interest. The reviews also deliver observations, findings and recommendations that identify potential improvements to the department’s livestock export systems.

### Annual work plan

The Inspector-General must develop an [annual work plan](https://www.igawlae.gov.au/work-plan) for each financial year. The work plan sets out the key outcomes and priorities for the year, including the reviews that are scheduled to be conducted along with details of the reviews.

The Inspector-General must consult with the minister in preparing the work plan, along with any other person the Inspector-General considers appropriate. The Inspector-General is not subject to direction by the minister in preparing a work plan.

The Inspector-General must publish the annual work plan on the IGAWLAE website as soon as practicable after it has been finalised. The annual work plan can be varied if the Inspector-General is satisfied that it is reasonable and appropriate to do so. The new varied work plan must be published.

### Review process

The Inspector-General may conduct a review on their own initiative. The minister may also, in writing, direct the Inspector-General to conduct a particular review. This is referred to as a directed review under section 10 of the IGAWLAE Act. When directing a review, the minister must have regard for the objects of the IGAWLAE Act, the functions of the Inspector-General, the work plan and available resources. The Inspector-General must comply with a direction from the minister.

The Inspector-General must consult with the minister following a directed review. The consultation is to help determine the terms of reference and the priority of the review. The independence of the Inspector-General means they are not subject to direction by the minister on these matters.

Another minister, or the secretary of the department, may also request the Inspector-General to conduct a particular review. However, the Inspector-General is not required to comply with this request.

Under section 11 of the IGAWLAE Act, the Inspector-General will require information. The Inspector-General may require a person to answer questions or give information in writing if the Inspector-General reasonably believes it is relevant to the review (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Overview of review steps



### Stakeholder engagement

The Inspector-General engages throughout the year with people and organisations that have an interest in livestock exports to help inform our work, including reviews. As part of this activity, the Inspector-General maintains a stakeholder contact list to help inform interested parties of public submission openings, annual work plans and publishing of reports. If you would like to be added to the email distribution list, email IGAWLAE@aff.gov.au.

The Inspector-General also maintains a website with the support of the department. It contains information about the Inspector-General’s functions and powers, contact information for the Office, the annual work plan and reports and completed reviews. Engagement on our website increased this year to 8,725 views (up 32%) including active users 2,613 (up 0.5%).

On occasion, the Inspector-General is invited to talk at international forums or committee meetings. This year the Inspector-General attended the annual meetings of the Australian Livestock Export Council and the Northern Territory Cattlemen’s Association. The Inspector-General was also invited to participate in the Regional Workshop: Focal Points for Animal Welfare – World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) – Asia 2025.

During reviews the Inspector-General seeks stakeholder views. This is crucial in understanding the complexities of the relationships and processes involved in exporting livestock and provides the opportunity for those either directly involved in the industry, or who have an interest, to provide their perspectives.

The Inspector-General uses the department’s ‘Have Your Say’ online public submission platform. The submission process typically opens for consultation from 3 to 8 weeks and may take the form of written submissions or, if offered, responses to survey questions. The Inspector-General also employs less formal methods for gathering information, including online or in-person meetings and direct submissions to the IGAWLAE email inbox.

Non-confidential written submissions are published on the IGAWLAE website at the conclusion of the review process.

We would like to acknowledge the high quality of public submissions and the thoughtful discussions that accompanied them. The insights, lived experiences and constructive ideas shared have significantly contributed to the reviews and current and future work plans. We sincerely thank all individuals, groups and organisations that took the time to contribute – your engagement is both valued and vital.

### Management and accountability

The Inspector-General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports is not a listed entity under the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (PGPA Act). The financial reporting and other information required under the PGPA Act are reported in the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry’s (DAFF) annual report. Risk management, policies and governance also fall under DAFF frameworks and are the accountability of the secretary. The Accountable Authority Instructions (AAIs) are issued by the secretary under section 20A of the PGPA Act to officials on matters relating to the use of public resources in the delivery of policies, programs and services. The AAIs apply to all officials in DAFF.

### Budget

In the 2022–23 Budget $4 million was allocated to the IGAWLAE over 4 years, commencing 2022–23. In 2024–25 expenditure for the IGAWLAE and support team totalled $734,138.

### Staffing

The Inspector-General is a part-time office holder whose remuneration and allowances are set by the independent remuneration tribunal. The Inspector-General’s daily fee is capped at 120 days per year under section 22 of the Remuneration Tribunal (Remuneration and Allowances for Holders of Part-time Public Office) Determination 2025. There are 4 office staff. All non-SES staff available to provide support for the IGAWLAE are provided by the department and employed under the Public Service Act 1999.

## Appendix A: Brief history of inspectors-general

The death of 2,400 sheep onboard a livestock export ship travelling to the Middle East in 2017 led to the *Review of the Regulatory Capability and Culture of the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources in the Regulation of Live Animal Exports*. This review initiated the establishment of the Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports:

Several submissions to the review suggested that a statutory authority should perform the role of regulator of live animal exports. The approach taken by the review was to recommend improvements to the current regulatory framework and the Department of Agriculture and Water Resource’s regulatory practice. These measures include the establishment of an Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports to provide independent oversight of the department’s regulatory performance. ([Moss 2018](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/sitecollectiondocuments/export/moss-review.pdf)).

In March 2019 Ross Carter commenced as Interim Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports. Following royal assent of the Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports Act 2019, he served as the IGLAE until his tenure ended in April 2023. During that period 6 reviews were completed.

In 2023 the Australian Government committed to expanding the office of the Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports to include animal welfare–related objectives and functions. Public consultation was open on the DAFF website between 2 February 2023 and 9 March 2023. Feedback was sought on additional animal welfare–related objectives, functions and expertise that could form part of the new role. A total of 24 submissions were received from industry groups, animal welfare organisations and other interested parties.

Dr Michael Bond was appointed acting IGLAE in August 2023. The Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports Amendment (Animal Welfare) Act 2019 received royal assent on 4 December 2023, expanding the responsibilities of the Inspector-General role.

Dr Bond then became the acting Inspector-General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports (IGAWLAE). Dr Bond ended his tenure in August 2023 after completing 2 reviews.

In September 2024, Dr Katherine Clift was appointed IGAWLAE for 5 years. Dr Clift published the [IGAWLAE work plan 2024–25](https://www.igawlae.gov.au/work-plan). in January 2025.

## Appendix B: Status of recommendations

The department is addressing 48 recommendations from 8 reviews conducted by the Inspector-General from March 2020 to August 2024.Thirteen of the recommendations have been closed and 35 remain open. Table B1 summarises the status of recommendations for these reviews. Closed means recommendations are implemented. Open means they are still in progress.

Table B1 Overview of inspectors-general reviews and recommendation status

| Inspectors-general reviews | Published | Inspector-General recommendations | Agreed by department a | Closed | Open |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Report on Monitoring and Reporting During Livestock Export Voyages
 | 2 March 2020 | 12 | 12 | 7 | 5 |
| 1. Implementation of Moss review’s recommendations
 | 15 December 2020 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| 1. Review of the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System
 | 28 June 2021 | 8 | 8 | 1 | 7 |
| 1. Livestock export permit systems and processes
 | 24 November 2021 | 7 | 7 | 1 | 6 |
| 1. Livestock export licences and approved arrangements
 | 11 October 2022 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| 1. Communication and engagement in livestock export regulation
 | 6 April 2023 | 6 | 6 | 0 | 6 |
| 1. Implementation of Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports recommendations
 | 20 August 2024 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| 1. Independent Observer Program
 | 20 August 2024 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| **Total** | **48** | **48** | **13** | **35** |

**a** Agreed or agreed in principle.