



SUBMISSION

4 September 2023

PlanSA Service Team
Service Desk
Planning and Land Use Services
Department for Trade and Investment SA

Via email: PlanSA@sa.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Submission to Far North Regional Plan Visioning

Livestock SA is the peak industry organisation for South Australia's red meat and wool industries. There are over 5,200 sheep producers and more than 2,700 beef cattle producers in the state. With a membership of over 3,500 sheep, beef cattle and goat production businesses, we work to secure a strong and sustainable livestock sector in South Australia.

South Australia's \$4.3 billion livestock industry is a key economic contributor to the state which supports 21,000 South Australian jobs across the red meat and wool industries.

Livestock SA is a member of Primary Producers SA (PPSA) and is the South Australian industry representative body of four national peak industry councils: Sheep Producers Australia, Wool Producers Australia, Cattle Australia and Goat Industry Council of Australia.

Background

Regional plans establish a long-term strategic vision for the integrated delivery of land use, transport and other infrastructure, and the public realm. The Far North region of South Australia plays an important role in the South Australian livestock industry, with substantial sheep and cattle production in this region. In the Arid Drylands NRM Region, there are approximately 139,271 head of cattle¹ and 817,877 head of sheep².

Producers farming cattle and sheep in the state's Far North contribute to the South Australian livestock industry's \$2.96 billion primary production value³. They need fit for purpose infrastructure and adequate support services to continue sustainably producing world leading food and fibre,

¹ MLA Cattle Numbers (June 2021) by NRM Region https://www.mla.com.au/globalassets/mla-corporate/prices--markets/documents/trends--analysis/fast-facts--maps/mla_cattle-distribution-map-june-2021_v02-final.pdf

² MLA Sheep Numbers (June 2021) by NRM Region https://www.mla.com.au/globalassets/mla-corporate/prices--markets/documents/trends--analysis/fast-facts--maps/mla_sheep-distribution-map-june-2021_v02-final.pdf

³ PIRSA Industry Scorecard (2021-2022) https://www.pir.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/431367/pirsa-score-card-2021-22.pdf

making this considerable economic contribution to the state, and supporting their regional communities.

Livestock SA recommends that in addition to the wide range of documents listed in tables 1, 2 and 3 in the 'Proposal to initiate the preparation of the far north regional plan' (October 2022)⁴, consideration also be given to the strategic plans for the red meat and wool industries: 'Red meat 2030'⁵ and 'Wool 2030'⁶. We also provide a brief outline of key infrastructure and services needs for the Far North Region.

Roads

Adequate roads in the Far North region are vital not only for livestock production to ensure the safe and efficient transport of animals and goods, but also for tourism and the entire region. Investment in the regional road network across the Far North is declining. The Outback Roads Maintenance budget has been reduced this year (2022-23) from \$13.5 million to \$12.23 million, resulting in reduced grading and wet maintenance activities for primary, secondary, minor and access roads.

Sporadic and lower investment in regional roads impacts livestock producers, the livestock supply chain and communities. The Far North Regional Plan Vision must recognise the importance of maintaining steady and adequate investment into roads, including adding bitumen to the Oodnadatta track (Marla to Oodnadatta and Oodnadatta to Coober Pedy).

Health Care

Access to primary health care in remote and regional areas is an ongoing issue, and the need for improved access to health services must be a major consideration of the Far North Regional Plan. Livestock producers in these regions are isolated and face ongoing issues including adequate staffing and on-farm support, and finding the time to travel vast distances (often on poorly maintained roads) for health care support can be difficult.

It is essential that during the Far North planning, the standard of current healthcare services available to producers in this region is reviewed and steps identified how these services can be improved. This may include investment into virtual healthcare or mobile healthcare units to provide support to producers in isolated areas who cannot leave their farm for long periods of time. Investment in preventive health measures will help reduce burdens on other regional healthcare providers by enabling producers to care for their health before they become seriously ill.

Future investment into health care must also consider mental health support services. The recent National Farmer Wellbeing Report (2023) highlighted the significant mental health burden on producers, with 30% of producers reporting mental health decline over the last few years and 45% reporting thoughts of self-harm or suicide, including 49% of South Australian producers⁷.

The Far North region of South Australia faces unique mental health challenges, and with predictions of increasingly dry seasons and a 70% chance of El Nino developing this coming season⁸, producers will need ongoing mental health support to meet these challenges.

⁴ Proposal to initiate the preparation of the far north regional plan - Preparation of Far North Regional Plan (2022) https://plan.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1135099/Proposal-to-Initiate-the-Preparation-of-the-Far-North-Regional-Plan.pdf

⁵ Red Meat 2030 <https://www.rmac.com.au/red-meat-2030>

⁶ Wool 2030 <https://2030.wool.com/>

⁷ National Farmer Wellbeing Report (2023) https://norcofoods.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/1212_Farmer-wellbeing-report_Navigation_FINAL.pdf?x64161

⁸ Australian Bureau of Meteorology ENSO Outlook 29 August 2023 <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/enso/outlook/#tabs=ENSO-Outlook>

Internet

Reliable internet access is needed to effectively run businesses, and access education and training opportunities. Agritechology is also rapidly evolving, and to be part of modern agriculture and use this technology producers in the Far North must have access to affordable, reliable, high-speed internet and this must be included in the Far North Regional Plan Visioning.

We thank the department for the opportunity to comment on the Far North Regional Plan Visioning and welcome continued engagement throughout this process. Please contact the Livestock SA office on (08) 8297 2299 or via admin@livestocksa.org.au if you would like to discuss this submission further.

Yours sincerely

Travis Tobin
Chief Executive Officer