

COMMUNIQUE

Sheep Producers Australia Policy Council – April 2024

The Sheep Producers Australia Policy Council (Council) met virtually on 10 April 2024. As a sheep industry leader, the Council is responsible for policy and advocacy which addresses national issues unconfined by state borders, jurisdictions, individual regions, or enterprises.

Integrity systems – future direction of LPA and NVD

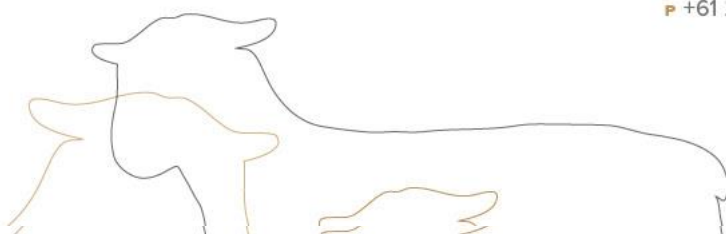
- The NVD and LPA program are facing several requests for enhancements and reviews from a diverse range of stakeholders. To effectively address these demands, SPA will develop a series of guiding Principles to aid decision-making on sheep industry integrity systems issues.
- A framework to steer the development of the Principles was presented to Council at the April 2024 Council meeting, along with a request for 2-3 members to provide guidance and assistance when developing the draft Principles.
- Issues including technical capability to support proposed or actual changes/ upgrades and change management processes with clear timeframes.
- Draft Principles will be presented for discussion at the June 2024 Council Meeting.

Sheep and Lamb Transaction Levy Review

- The Sheep Transaction Levy Review (STLR) is a priority under SPA's AOP. The scope of the review needs to be clearly defined, along with funding options.
- The Council is generally supportive of progressing the review, noting a review is estimated to cost approximately \$500,000–\$700,000. Funding options will be considered to support this investment.
- A working group, previously agreed, was reenacted, and will draft a Terms of Reference for the STLR Review.

SPA Environmental Workplan

- The SPA submission into the Agriculture and Land Sectoral Plan contained eight high level Principles. While draft recommendations on policy and research have been developed through independent expert advice commissioned by SPA, they have major implications for the industry and a careful process is now required to assess and map next steps.
- In support of this, SPA will commence development of a Climate Smart Work Plan to demonstrate that producers can meet supply chain requirements at an enterprise and industry level. The primary objective of the Climate Smart Work Plan is to enable SPA to advocate to government on policy settings and critical research needs.
- In recent discussions, the SPA Policy Council highlighted the need for further direction from Government on future policy and regulation, raising concerns about commercial implications if these are not developed in a realistic and effective manner.
- A working group has been established to commence drafting of the work plan and will present this for feedback at the June 2024 Council meeting.



Biosecurity Protection Levy

- David Nichols (Director, Biosecurity Strategy and Reform Division at the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF)) attended the April 2024 Council meeting to provide an update on the Biosecurity Protection Levy.
- The Biosecurity Protection Levy was part of a broader 2023 Budget sustainable biosecurity funding package including more than \$1 billion over the next four years, and \$267 million per year from 2027-28 onwards to support:
 1. biosecurity operations, policy and technical functions on a sustainable basis, including continuation of the Indigenous Biosecurity Ranger Program in northern Australia; and
 2. improvements to the biosecurity system via the Simplified Targeting and Enhanced Processing System (STEPS) – a modern digital initiative to improve effectiveness and efficiency of biosecurity clearance in cargo pathways.
- The Biosecurity Protection Levy Bills passed through the Lower House on 27 March and are now facing an inquiry at the Senate level through the Regional and Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee. A Senate inquiry hearing (attended by SPA) is scheduled for 23 April with the committee to report by 10 May. There is a tight timeline to get the Bills passed in readiness for the BPL implementation date scheduled for 01 July.
- SPA provided a second submission into the BPL on Wednesday, 17 April 2024 which reiterated SPAs position that it does not support the BPL.

Traceability update

- Updates on the following traceability matters were provided at the April 2024 Council meeting:
 - **NLIS Standards Update**
 - The Council met via an online OOS meeting on 28 February 2024 to discuss the revised Draft NLIS Sheep and Goat Standards. While the Council noted significant concern about this process and the behaviour of some stakeholders, the Council ultimately decided to agreed to the draft Standards, and to advise SAFEMEAT Advisory Group that:
 - SPA has engaged in the development of the Standards in good faith to support the implementation of a national traceability system for sheep, as agreed by Australian Ministers in 2022, and to ensure producers are supported with consistent and certain requirements to meet the implementation timeframes they agreed.
 - The process to develop and agree the Standards has been disappointing and frustrating for SPA and its members, undermining support and confidence in both the process and the ability of governments to deliver the agreed nationally consistent traceability system for sheep.
 - Producers will bear significant expenses with the introduction of an eID system, and governments should deliver the nationally consistent framework that was agreed and would ensure the traceability benefits of eID implementation are realised.
 - SPA considers that it is unacceptable for a jurisdiction to refuse to endorse and adopt the Standards, noting the commitment that all stakeholders have made towards the implementation of a national system and the marginal nature of the issues in question.
 - There is majority support from SPA to support the Standards for endorsement by SAFEMEAT Partners to progress the development of

nationally consistent minimum standards and support the implementation of eID for sheep and goats.

- However, there are strong views from some members that a fully harmonised national system is necessary to address the risk posed by a national traceability system that allows one jurisdiction to apply lesser requirements on some livestock sectors.
 - SPA requests SAFEMEAT develop a plan to achieve the outcomes desired by all stakeholders - a nationally consistent and harmonised system based on the agreed standards and a commitment to implement these in each jurisdiction - to be agreed by SAFEMEAT Partners.
 - As part of that plan, SAFEMEAT advise Agriculture Ministers that their agreement to a nationally consistent traceability system for eID implementation is essential and Victoria should be required to make the minor adjustments to achieve this.
- Unanimous support of the NLIS Standards is the target for the July 2024 meeting of the SAFEMEAT Partners. This process will be led by an independent facilitator and will engage relevant SAFEMEAT stakeholders, Victoria sees an independent facilitator as essential to resolving the issues. The facilitator is to provide SAFEMEAT with resolutions in May.
- **NLIS Database Uplift**
 - Council received an update on the NLIS Database Uplift Project from ISC
 - In 2023 the Commonwealth committed funding to Integrity Systems Company to manage the build of a new NLIS database. ISC is working closely with DAFF on the project, and the broader governance framework includes stakeholders from across industry and government. The first two stages of the project were completed by December 2023, and design stage is now underway.
 - The intention is for the renewed NLIS database to be fully operational in July 2026. The build process is to commence from June 2024 till December 2025 with a staged transition scheduled between October 2024 and June 2026.
 - **UHF Technology update**
 - ISC also provided additional updates on UHF technology, noting:
 - i. There are outstanding research questions identified in the 2024 report on UHF technology by TGD Acre Economics.
 - ii. Co-development of the technology with commercial players is an option, however commercial incentives and viability of technology continues to be a constraint.
 - iii. The International Committee on Animal Recording will be looking at next steps towards certification of devices now that the ISO standard is finalised.

Australian Animal Welfare Standards (AAWS)

- An update was provided on the renewal of the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS) and the review of the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines, both being led by DAFF.
- Input into the first stage of AAWS consultation is open until 20 May, and SPA will provide a submission in response to the consultation survey questions.
- There will be further opportunities for more detailed feedback and input as the strategy is developed over 2024-2027.