

Hon. Julie Collins MP
Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Email: Minister.Collins@aff.gov.au

20 January 2026

Dear Minister Collins,

I write on behalf of respected national animal welfare charity Stop Live Exports to formally express our serious concern regarding the recent decision to relieve the live cattle export industry of significant regulatory cost burdens by transferring those costs to the Australian public.

Stop Live Exports' opposition is grounded in decades of documented evidence demonstrating that the trade exposes animals to suffering that is inherent, ongoing and unavoidable. Against that background, the decision to shift regulatory costs away from industry and onto taxpayers is deeply troubling.

While this measure has been presented as support for animal welfare oversight, its practical effect will be the opposite, and taxpayers will be subsidising an industry whose business model depends on constant regulatory intervention to manage harm. Regulatory systems exist in live export precisely because the trade places animals in conditions that cannot be adequately controlled. Long sea voyages, extreme heat exposure, overcrowding, disease risk, injury, stress and exhaustion are not anomalies. They are built into the process. Oversight does not eliminate these risks, it simply attempts to contain them.

Requiring the public to fund this oversight undermines a fundamental principle of fair regulation. Industries that generate private profit while creating significant welfare and compliance risks should bear the full cost of managing those risks. Transferring this burden to taxpayers, many of whom oppose the trade on grounds including economic and ethical, is neither equitable nor defensible.

There is also a broader policy concern. Absorbing industry compliance costs reduces the economic pressure to change. It signals that government is prepared to protect the viability of live export rather than actively encourage transition away from it. This risks entrenching the trade at a time when community expectations, animal welfare science and international trends are increasingly moving in the opposite direction.

From an animal welfare perspective, this decision locks in a regulatory approach that treats suffering as something to be administered and monitored, rather than prevented. Minimum standards, even when enforced, do not make live export humane. They merely define the lowest acceptable threshold of harm. Public funding of this framework entrenches systemic cruelty rather than addressing its root cause.

We are also concerned about transparency and public confidence. Many Australians would be shocked to learn that their taxes are being used to support the continuation of live export by underwriting its regulatory costs. The community expectation is clear: if an activity requires intensive monitoring to prevent cruelty, it is the responsibility of the industry profiting from that activity to pay for it, not the public.

Stop Live Exports strongly urges the Government to reconsider this approach. As such, we respectfully request clarification on the following critical issues:

- The scope and duration of the regulatory cost relief intended to be provided to live exporters
- The rationale for departing from established cost-recovery principles
- How this decision aligns with the Albanese Labor Government's stated commitments to improving animal welfare

This decision represents a serious risk to animal welfare and erodes public trust. We urge the Government to reconsider this course and pursue policies that reflect both community expectations and a fair and consistent approach to the application of cost-recovery principles.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Baker".

Lisa Baker
President
Stop Live Exports