



TASMANIAN LIVESTOCK

# SERVICE-KILL PROCESSING

INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

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APRIL 2025





*Photo Credit: Samuel Shelley*

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia, and pay respects to the Elders both past and present.

We honour their deep knowledge, wisdom and ongoing connection to Country, and seek to learn from this wisdom in the way we interact with each other and the land, sea and sky.

We recognise that we farm, work and live as stewards on unceded lands, and together we have the responsibility to care for Country.

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## WITH THANKS TO

Sprout Tasmania would like to thank the farmers, abattoir operators both within Tasmania and broadly across the mainland, butchery operators and many other stakeholders that have taken the time to have input into this project.

We acknowledge this is a complex system with many moving parts, and we are extremely grateful for the trusting nature in which people took part, and how they shared their thoughts honestly with us.

Thanks of course must go to the Sprout team including Jennifer Robinson, Calum Jacobsen and Dominique Bowen Butchart, the Sprout Board, in particular Kate Plaschke & Ruth Geale for contributing to this project; it takes a team to accomplish this work and we are grateful for everyone playing their part.

This project was made possible through Tasmanian State Government funding, as part of a successful grant application to the Strategic Industry Partnership Program. Thank you to the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania staff for their support.

SUPPORTED BY



*Photo Credit: Samuel Shelley*





*Photo Credit: Anna Brozek*

## ABOUT SPROUT

Sprout Tasmania is a not-for-profit organisation that supports and advocates for the small-scale producer sector across Tasmania.

Our vision is of a strong network of well-resourced and productive small-scale farmers, who are recognised for the role they play in a fair, resilient food and farming system, where communities thrive and landscapes are regenerated.

Through our close connection to the farmers in this sector, we are aware of the various challenges they face in operating viable, sustainable agricultural businesses. When we see an opportunity for improvement, or a need for advocating for change, we make it our mission to be a collective voice for these producers, to shine a light on challenges, and where appropriate, undertake projects to make change happen. Access to livestock service kill processing is one of these such projects.



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# TASMANIAN SERVICE KILL PROCESSING REPORT

Food. We all need it. Every day. To nourish, survive and thrive! Everybody needs access to healthy food.

Tasmania's small-scale livestock producers are the backbone of our regional food systems, delivering high-quality, locally grown meat to Tasmanian communities, tourism markets, and beyond. But the infrastructure they rely on—particularly access to service-kill abattoirs—is in crisis. With only a handful of small, multispecies abattoirs left operating on mainland Tasmania, and many of those nearing the end of their viable lifespan, producers face long wait times, high costs, and diminishing control over welfare outcomes of their animals and the quality of their end product. In key regions like the Huon Valley, there are currently no local service-kill options at all. This has already driven farmers out of the sector and is a major roadblock for new entrants.

Without immediate investment and reform, we risk a total breakdown of Tasmania's small-scale meat supply chain. That means significantly fewer farmers, a loss of regional jobs, less access to local food, and an increased reliance on boxed meat trucked in from interstate—undermining both our food security and the Tasmanian clean, green brand.

This report was developed by industry, for industry and outlines a clear path forward. What's needed now is direct government funding and support to secure multi-species processing in the south and expand capacity in the north. We must develop scale-appropriate regulation that supports innovation—like mobile or hybrid abattoirs—and provide farmers and prospective operators with clear, accessible guidance through the approval process. A cross-departmental task force can help streamline red tape, and targeted funding for infrastructure, waste innovation, logistics, and training will build long-term resilience. We want to acknowledge that this report was developed at a given point in time and that some positive activities in this space have already begun.

The message from producers is loud and clear: they want to farm ethically, sustainably, feed their communities, and grow their businesses—but they need certainty in the processing sector. With the right support, Tasmania can lead the nation in building a fairer, smarter, and more secure local meat industry.



## RECOMMENDED FUTURE ACTIONS

### FOR TASMANIAN STATE GOVERNMENT

No.	Action	Detail
1	Funding and support to secure multispecies service kill processing in the state	Find ways to further provide funding and support to aid in securing processing across the entire state including multispecies, micro abattoirs that adequately address the demand for service kills on a regional basis.
2	Commit to enabling small businesses in the meat processing sector.	<p>Develop and support an enabling culture both internally within the Government and externally that enhances efficiencies and fosters innovation within the sector to encourage novel business models and approaches.</p> <p>Commit to ensuring easy access to clear, up to date and relevant information in relation to livestock slaughter and processing.</p> <p>Genuinely engage and consult with small scale producers in relation to the roadmap guideline resources being developed as part of the cross sectoral working group, facilitated by Felicity Richards.</p> <p>Commit to implementing statutory response timelines for the review of abattoir enterprise applications by relevant departments.</p> <p>Establish a right of appeals process for applicants who have their abattoir applications declined (by departments that don't currently have an appeals process).</p>
3	Review related regulations & where appropriate make changes to ensure they are scale appropriate and outcomes focussed.	<p>Review all relevant regulation and engage with the small scale sector to make any changes necessary to ensure it is scale appropriate, outcomes focused and not prescriptive.</p> <p><i>For example (but not limited to):</i></p> <p>State Planning Scheme - review of the definition of a small scale/micro abattoir within the planning scheme to ensure scale appropriate requirements such as smaller buffer zones for micro abattoirs.</p> <p>Work with the relevant authority to determine clear specifications for a 'special use building' (<i>Building Act 2016</i>) as there are with other classes of building, and develop appropriate guidance material to assist producers to understand the practical implications and application process changes.</p>



## RECOMMENDED FUTURE ACTIONS

No.	Action	Detail
4	Increase appropriately skilled resources within Biosecurity Tasmania	Urgently address the lack of required expertise and resources within Biosecurity Tasmania, particularly within the Product Integrity branch, to ensure there is the right number of staff with the appropriate skills to aid in the timely review of applications and support for producers.
5	Provide meaningful, on the ground support for any scale Tasmanian processor.	<p>The areas of support recommended would ideally cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Animal Welfare - as per #4 recommendation from the Tasmanian Livestock Processing taskforce.</li> <li>• Food safety - what needs to be done in order to comply</li> <li>• Slaughtering and meat processing - guidance around the appropriate flow of animals and meat products through a facility, in order for that facility to meet standards.</li> <li>• Waste processing - sharing information about best practice waste processing.</li> </ul>
6	Accessible qualifications to support the supply chain	<p>Equitable and fit for purpose qualification opportunities in the various skills needed throughout the supply chain.</p> <p>Reviewing what is available and introducing scale appropriate skills.</p> <p><i>For example:</i> Work with a Tasmanian RTO to enable local delivery of the standard qualifications for meat inspecting and meat processing, as well as micro abattoir qualifications.</p> <p>The Functional controller approving the use of the Micro Abattoir meat processing qualification <a href="#">AMPMSY414</a> to be undertaken where appropriate for small scale abattoir facility operators/staff.</p>

## RECOMMENDED FUTURE ACTIONS

### FOR SPROUT

No.	Action	Detail
7	Innovative waste processing	Undertake a desktop research project collating innovative techniques for capturing abattoir waste on site, to value add or generate alternative products, used in other scale appropriate settings both in Australia and internationally.
8	Innovative abattoir models	Assist producers to look at various models for setting up a small scale abattoir.
9	Collaboration	Continue collaborating with any stakeholders that are keen to work together in this space, with the main outcome of increasing ease of access to service kill for Tasmanian producers as well as more local produce into the State's food system.
10	Increasing knowledge and awareness amongst producers of best practice across the supply chain.	Develop support mechanisms to enhance producer acumen in this space.





## RECOMMENDED FUTURE ACTIONS

### FOR INDUSTRY

No.	Action	Detail
11	Review of intrastate logistics	Map the location and movement of assets across the state and build out methodologies for efficient use of these assets, for cold supply chain provision (including carcass transporting).
12	Research to be undertaken on outdoor meat processing.	<p>An appropriate research organisation could look at undertaking a research project that assesses the risk of pathogen contamination of meat products (including poultry) when an animal is slaughtered and dressed in an outdoor environment.</p> <p>This project would look at what would need to be done in order to achieve the 'outcome' of any standards that currently apply to this activity. This collaborative project could involve Food Safety from The Dept of Health (Public Health) as well as a research body, a livestock producer and both abattoir and mobile butchery operators.</p>



### DEFINITIONS

<b>abattoir</b>	A site where animals are taken to be slaughtered, and may involve further processing such as carcass cut up, specific cut sheet portioning, and packaging.
<b>micro abattoir</b>	A fixed, licensed meat processing premise, that operates at a lower throughput than large scale abattoirs.
<b>mobile abattoir</b>	A unit that is driven to a site and animals are then processed. It may be providing both slaughter and butchery services.
<b>abattoir - hybrid</b>	Where you have a mobile unit that travels to a site and slaughters the livestock on the farming premise, then carcasses are transported using cold chain logistics to a local boning room or butcher.
<b>service kill</b>	When a farmer is able to access animal processing services (slaughter and butchery) and retain ownership of the end product to sell how they wish.

### SCOPE

The scope of this project was to review the state of play for service kill processing across the state of Tasmania, including the following livestock species:

- Cattle
- Sheep
- Poultry (inc ducks)
- Pigs
- Buffalo
- Goat

This project did not include a review of any game meat processing, nor did it cover the processing of deer within Tasmania.

The following activities were undertaken as part of this project.

1. Systems mapping - desktop research into the current system in order to map the movement of product from farm to plate, with an overlay of regulation and training touchpoints.
2. Farmer survey – survey conducted of 145 livestock farmers across the state
3. Butcher experience interviews – conducted discussions with 7 butchers from across the state
4. Tasmanian abattoir processors - engagement with Tasmanian livestock processors
5. Alternative abattoir Case studies - review of abattoir models from the mainland[JR3]
6. Legislation review – Tasmanian and other states
7. General engagement with industry including
  - EPA (Government)
  - AgriGrowth (Government)
  - Biosecurity Tasmania (Government)
  - Transporter
  - Broad agriculture stakeholders
  - Mobile butcher operators



### SCOPE

It's important to note that this project is the first of many steps in understanding and rectifying the issues that exist in the Tasmanian service kill industry. There is further scope to explore certain parts of the supply chain in more depth.

### BACKGROUND RATIONALE

Over the past two decades, Australia's meat processing industry has experienced significant transformations, impacting both large-scale operations and small-scale abattoirs, with notable implications for local food systems.

Between the mid-1980s and 2000s, more than 90 abattoirs closed across Australia. This trend continued into the 2010s, with an additional 16 cattle and sheep processing plants shutting down. Factors contributing to these closures include declining livestock numbers, rising operational costs, and increased competition in the global meat market. (Reference – [beefcentral.com](http://beefcentral.com))

Most recently, there has been closures of abattoirs or a reduction of access to service kills occurring in multiple states across the country. Farmers are rapidly losing their ability to process their animals and without access to this vital step in their provision of product to their customers, their business either hangs in the balance or is unviable altogether.

There is growth in the small-scale livestock farming sector in Tasmania, where farmers are focusing on providing a high quality product direct to customers be those individuals, retail, restaurants or cafes. The benefits of this scale of food production are felt from an economic, social, environmental and food security perspective. The elements of the supply chain that underpin this part of our local food production, post the farm gate, are processing and butchering as well as transport and logistics. There are challenges for producers in accessing processors for service kills, as these businesses have been slowly consolidated over time. There has also been a noted reduction in the ease of access to this custom kill provision from those abattoirs who offer this, coupled with a reduction in the number of independent butchers providing butchery services to farmers.

Small-scale meat farmers in Tasmania underpin much of our paddock to plate tourism experiences, as well as ensuring provision of high-quality produce to the local Tasmanian community. These producers often have channels to market which are business to customer, selling direct to their customers via farmgate markets, farmgate sales, online sales channels or in person bulk sales to the hospitality industry. They are driven to provide a high-quality product, ensuring animal welfare and environmental care are also at the core of their business values. These are the farmers that require service kills for their livestock, where they engage an abattoir to conduct the slaughter and processing of their animal (with the exception of those circumstances where the farmer will arrange for the carcass to be transported to a butcher or boning room for further processing). For many of these farmers, they are driven by a nose to tail philosophy, and as such having their entire animal returned to them, including meat, hides, hoofs, head, offal etc. is part of their business model.

### BACKGROUND RATIONALE

While these farmers, or a farmer of any scale, are able to control what happens to their animals when they are on their property, as soon as they send an animal for processing at an abattoir, they lose control of the treatment of their animal and in turn the overall quality of the end product. For those that are able to find an abattoir offering service kills that are fit for purpose, they are able to ensure consistent produce processing for their customers. Unfortunately, there are fewer abattoirs who are able to provide this type of service.

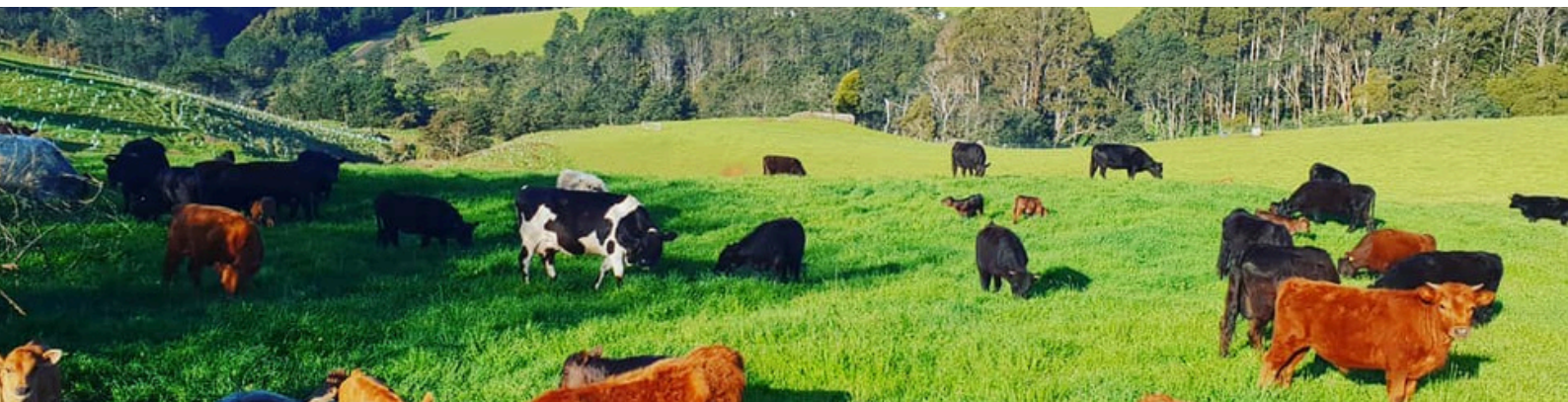
The withdrawal of multinational Jose Batista Sobrinho (JBS) from the Devonport City abattoir back in 2018 highlighted the risks that many producers face when having only one option for an abattoir, and that the system is currently focused on larger scale throughput and agent-based sales for interstate and overseas markets.

Sprout was a member of the Tasmanian Red Meat Advisory Council to the State Government in 2019 and understands that the Meridian Report for this Council titled - [The Feasibility of Establishing Further Meat Processing Capacity in Tasmania Study Report Final May 2019](#) stated that there is a decline in service kill provision in Tasmania, there is a lack of trust between butchers and abattoirs and also a decline in the number of independent butchers nationally. It discusses that mobile abattoirs (adhering to correct legislation and regulation for commercial production of meat) may be a solution for assisting in service kill provision for small-scale producers in Tasmania.

Fast forward from 2018 to the current context, and the situation remains just as critical, if not worse. The recent closure of one of the few southern based abattoirs, coupled with the tenuous nature of some of those still operating and the fact that very little latent capacity exists (as identified in this report), makes for a fragile livestock processing system in Tasmania, that is vulnerable to collapse.

A collapse in the service kill processing system would have a flow on effect throughout the supply chain including butchers being unable to source meat directly from farmers, transporters experiencing a reduction in the movement of carcasses, and most importantly, customers being unable to buy meat direct from farmers or via their local independent butcher.

Other pressures within Tasmania that would be interesting to explore, but were outside the scope of this project include the number of animals being transported live to the mainland for processing. There are lost opportunities through animals being processed interstate including local jobs, food security, and hyper local traceability.





### PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

This project was conducted in order to understand the current risks and opportunities that exist within the full supply chain of the paddock to plate meat industry in Tasmania, and provide further information about possible solutions to bolster and underpin the livestock sector and enable growth for small-scale livestock farmers.

This project undertook a review of the current state of play in Tasmania, with a broad lens to encompass processing, logistics, butchery, value-adding, abattoirs, essential qualifications, training and education.

The goal was to identify gaps, map out the supply chain landscape for small-scale meat processing, and deliver a final report with recommended future actions to reduce risk and support growth in the sector. There are many models out there, and this report aims to highlight options that may be suitable for a Tasmanian context.

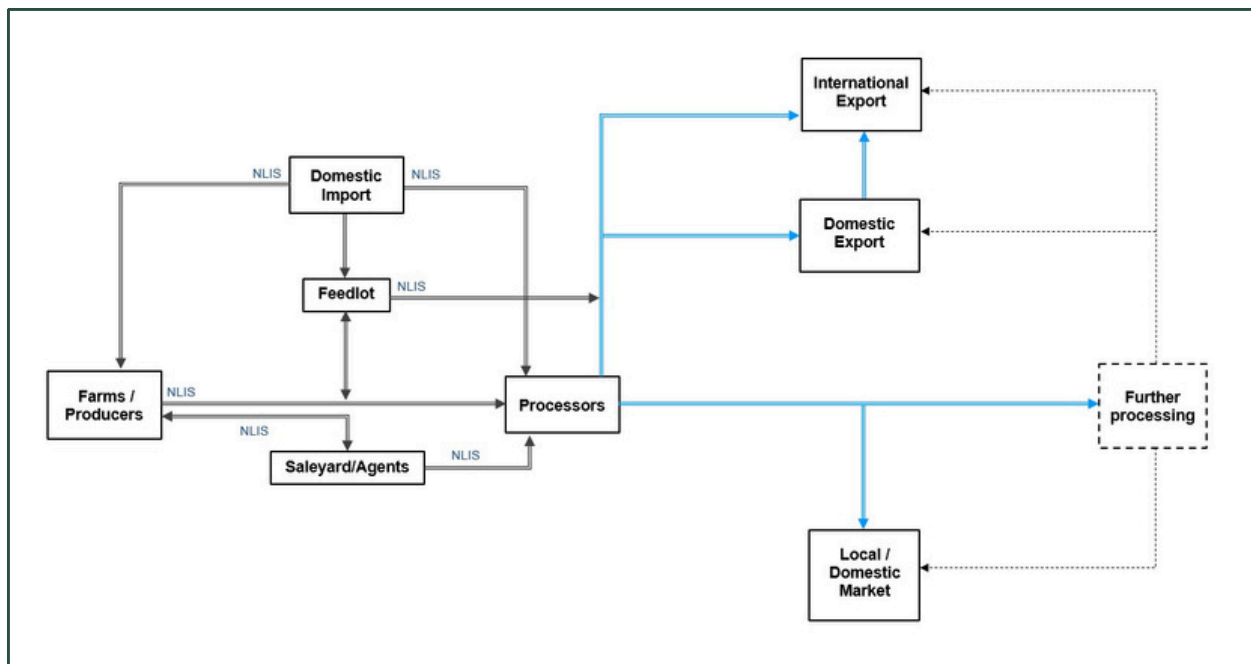
### WHY SERVICE KILL PROVISION IS IMPORANT

- Survival and growth of regional communities and their farms
- Supply of locally sourced meat for consumers & industry
- Survival of butchers/retail industries who source whole carcass meat
- Provides control of product essential for direct market access for farmers
- Supports regional economies and communities
- Bolsters the Tasmanian local food system through shorter, more robust supply chains

## TRADITIONAL MEAT SUPPLY CHAIN

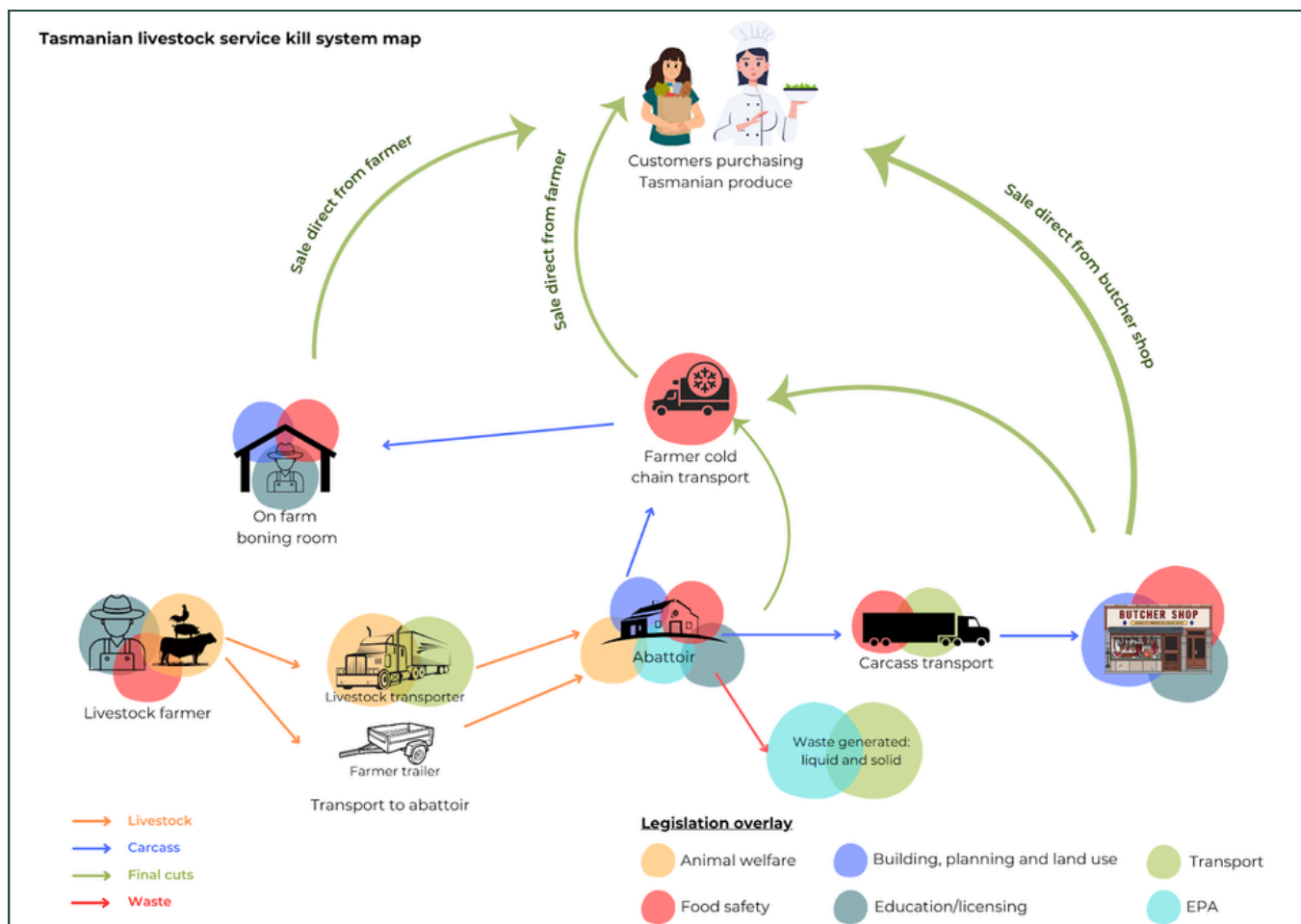
Traditional supply chain structure for commodity farming for the domestic and international markets, where service kills are not a part of the picture. (Ref: Department of Natural Resources & Environment).

IMAGE 1: TRADITIONAL MEAT SUPPLY CHAIN



## CURRENT SERVICE KILL SUPPLY CHAIN

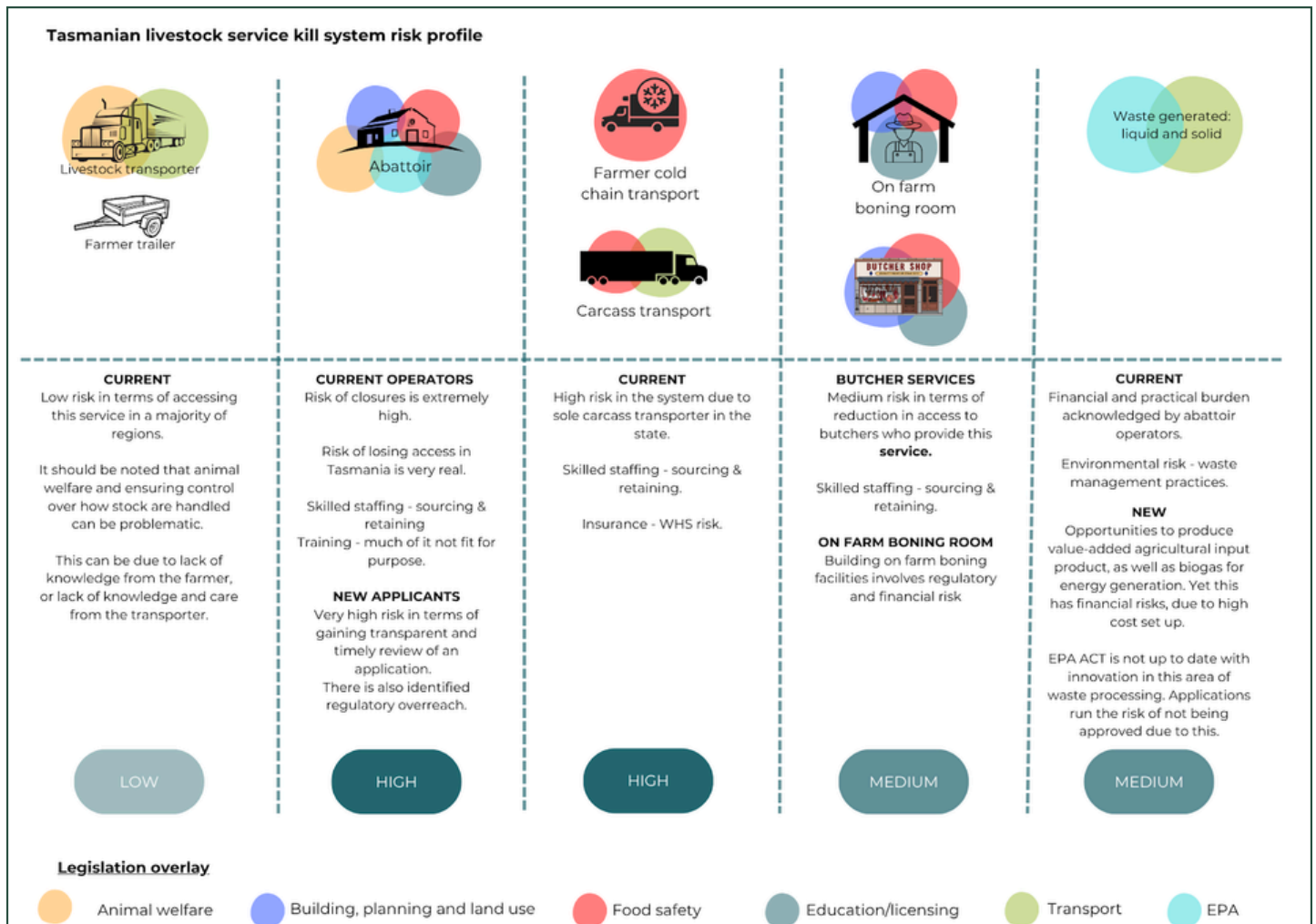
IMAGE 2: TASMANIAN SERVICE KILL SYSTEM MAP





## RISK IN THE CURRENT SERVICE KILL SUPPLY CHAIN

IMAGE 3: RISK PROFILE OF SERVICE KILL SYSTEM

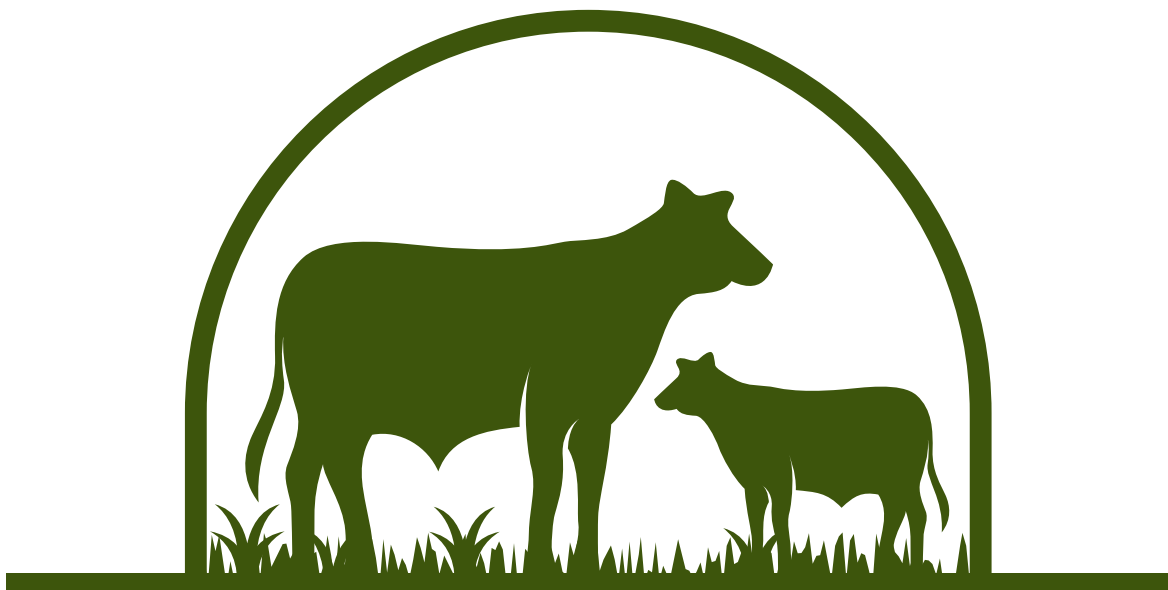


### OVERLAY - PRODUCER LOST DEMAND VS ABATTOIR

Mapping was completed of the location of producer businesses that have ceased operating a commercial livestock business (Map 1 through to Map 5), sorted by species, then overlaid with the location of abattoirs.

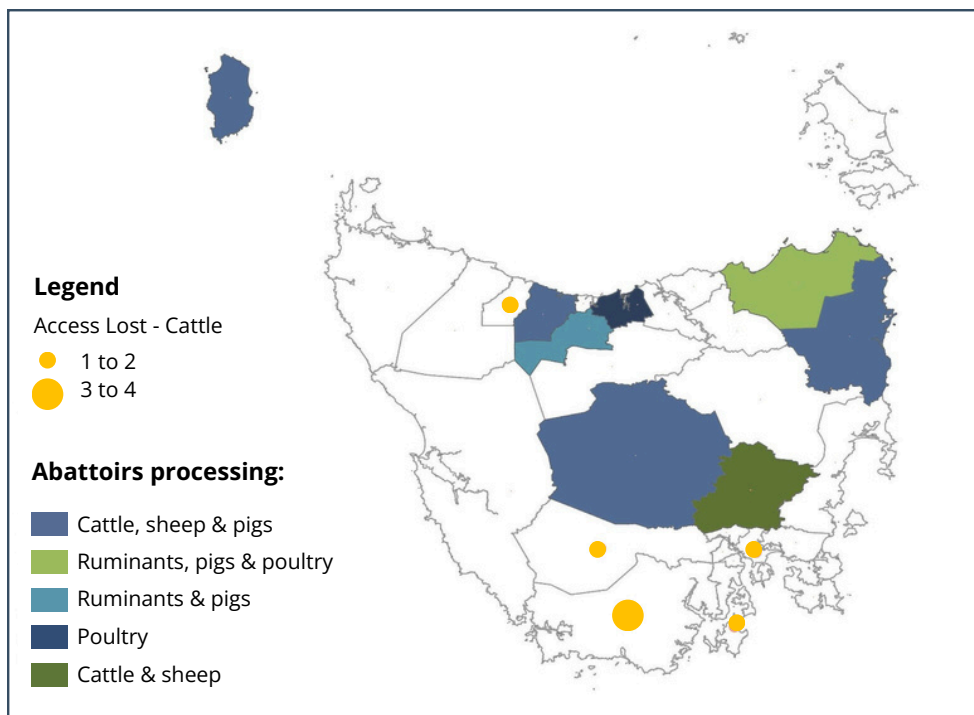
Regardless of the species, the location of these producers is weighted heavily towards the southern part of Tasmania. This is the region where abattoir operations have offered inconsistent service to producers and some have found it difficult to access those services that are available. With the larger of the operators currently closed (at the time of this report), and other two southern based abattoirs being much smaller in capacity throughput, it makes sense that the southern region has the concentration of producers who have stopped livestock farming for meat production.

This correlation demonstrates that the lack of access to abattoirs is directly related to the viability of small-scale livestock producers.

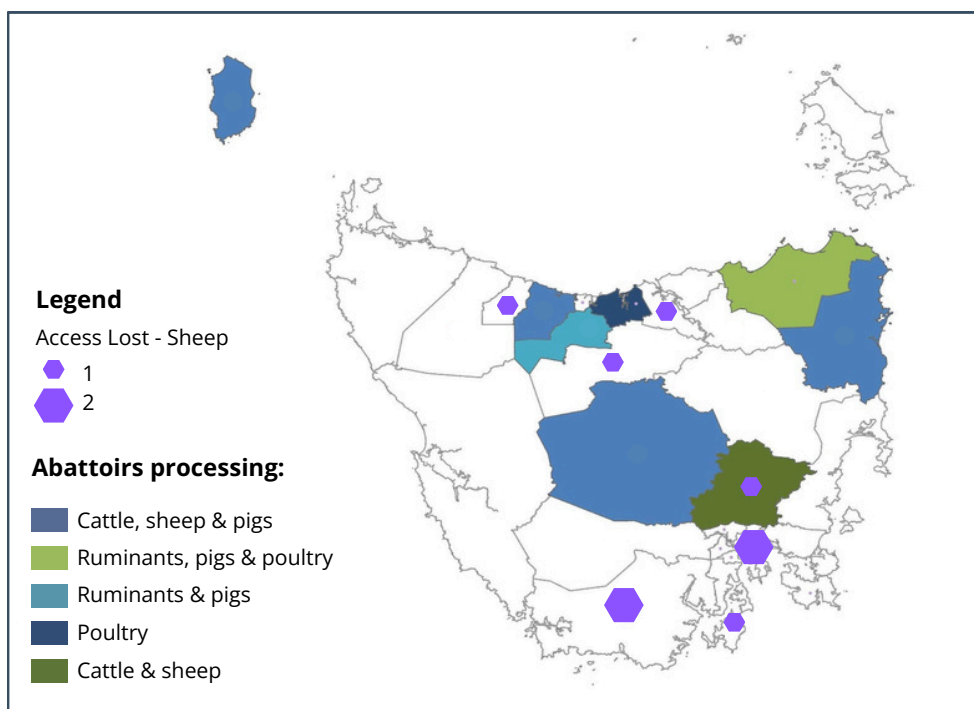


## OVERLAY - PRODUCER LOST DEMAND VS ABATTOIR

Map 1 - Cattle enterprises no longer operating



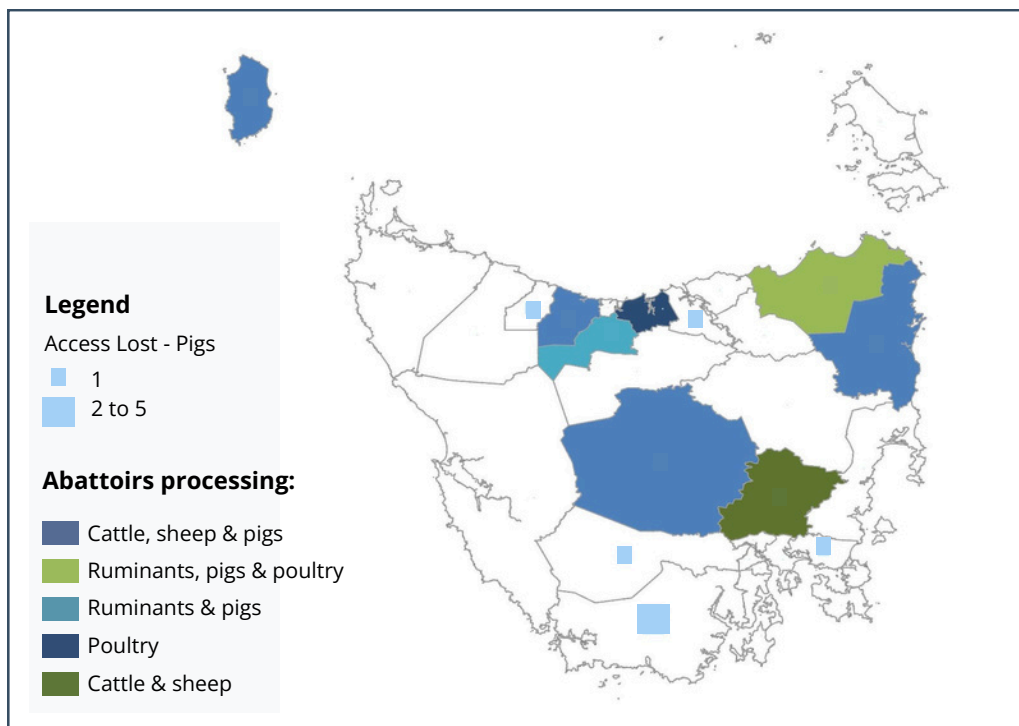
Map 2 - Sheep enterprises no longer operating



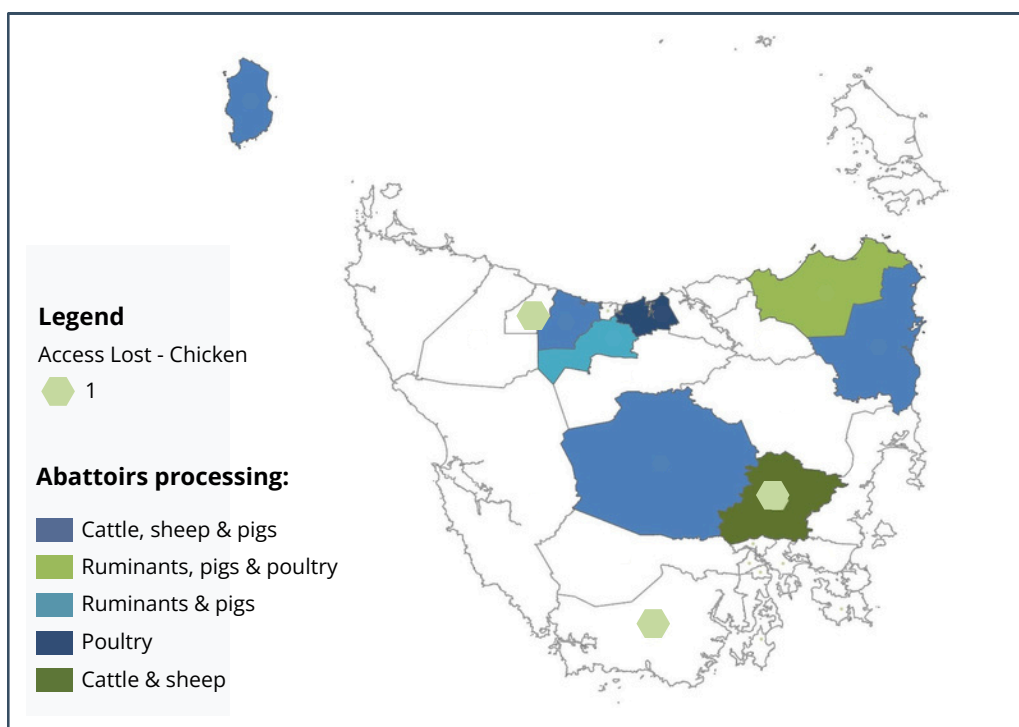


## OVERLAY - PRODUCER LOST DEMAND VS ABATTOIR

Map 3 - Pig enterprises no longer operating

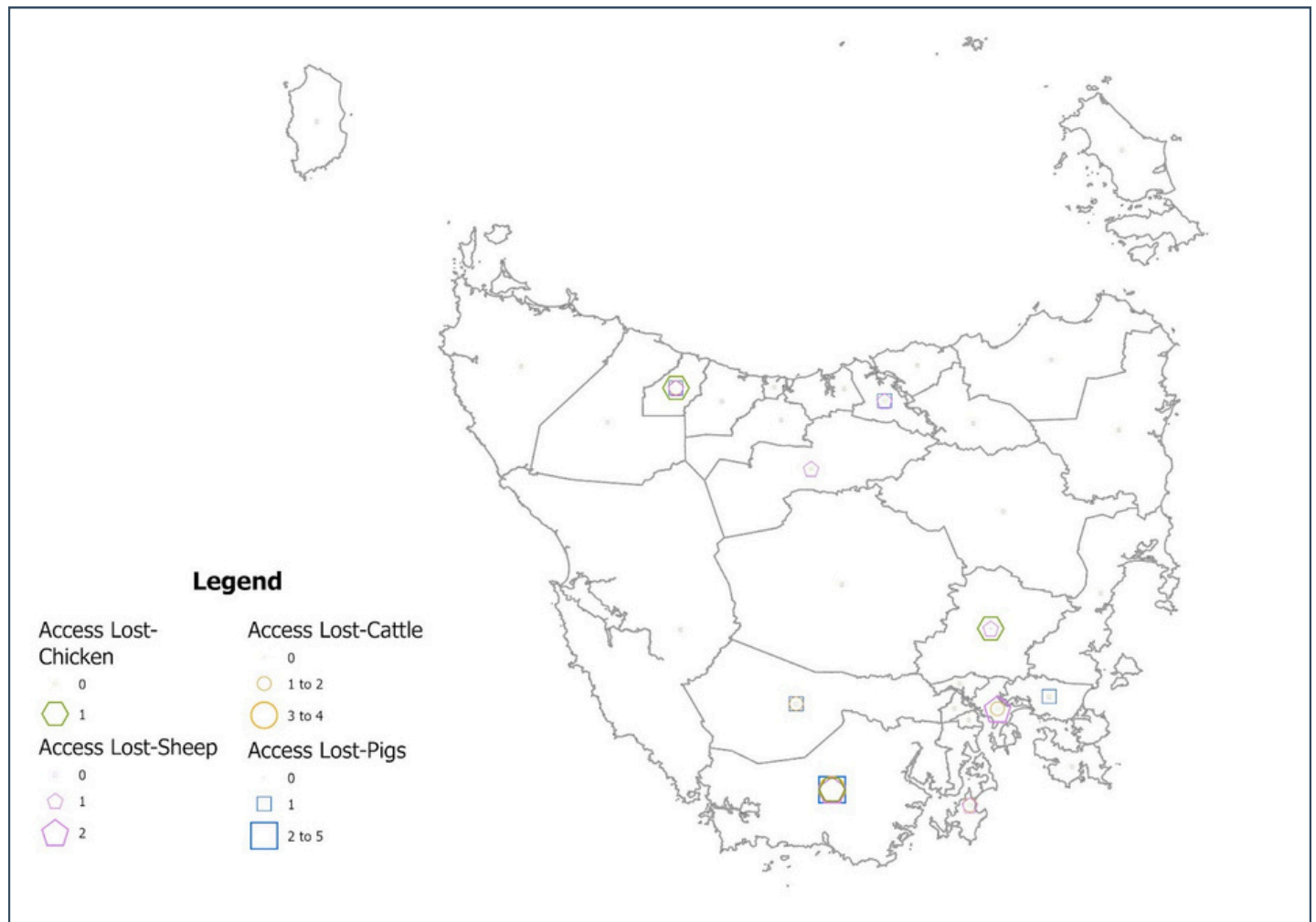


Map 4 - Chicken enterprises no longer operating



## LOST DEMAND STATEWIDE

Map 5 - All species enterprises no longer operating



### METHODOLOGY

The farmer experience was vital to include as part of this research project. In order to gather information from this cohort, a survey was developed.

Initially, a review of past Sprout Survey data (from 2021 and 2023) was undertaken, in order to understand any data that was already available to inform the development of this specific meat processing survey. Then, a desktop research piece was undertaken in order to look at what surveys had previously been undertaken across Australia, in order to inform the style and depth of questions.

A draft version of the survey was developed, with three main cohorts of producers in mind;

1. Those currently farming, using service kills and selling their product. (CURRENT)
2. Those who were farming in this way, but have stopped (LOST)
3. Those who are aspiring or plan to farm livestock for commercial sale of meat, yet haven't started. (POTENTIAL)

This methodology in survey design was to attempt to understand the opportunities and challenges for those that are currently farming, as well as understanding more about the lost and potential demand for service kills through surveying the other two cohorts. To attempt to understand what is shaping their decisions, what barriers (internal and external) may exist for those who are in cohort 3, and for all respondents we wanted to understand how the current state of play compares with their ideal world scenario for processing their animals.

The draft survey was then tested with 5 livestock farmers. Their feedback was then reviewed and adjustments made to the survey questions as required.

The final version of the survey was then launched to the public, with a target of 150 completions (a stretch target of 200).





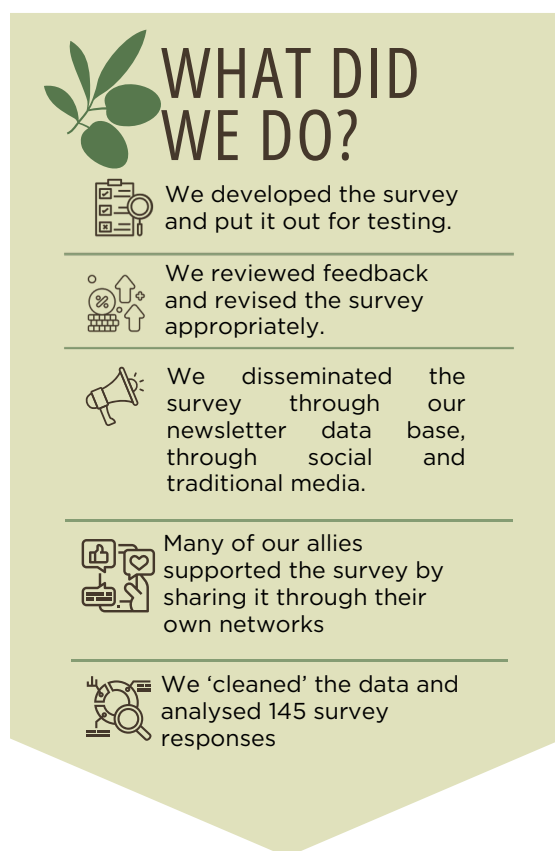
### METHODOLOGY

The survey was shared via the following channels:

- Sprout newsletter
- Social media – Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn (including farmers sharing our posts)
- Local radio interview – ABC Country Hour
- Stakeholder network sharing – TasFarmers, NRM, Tas Farm Innovation Hub etc.
- Sprout website
- Print – Tas Country newspaper, Examiner, Advocate

The survey period was extended to remain open until 19th January 2025, to ensure we captured responses over the Christmas period. Overall, 148 farmers completed the survey, covering 27 of 29 local government areas (LGA). With 145 completions being included in the final data set, there were three entries excluded from the data set due to lack of completed information.

The final data set was then cleaned and analysed in order to gather a broad understanding of farmers' experiences.



### FINDINGS

#### Geographic spread of respondents

The producers who completed our survey were from 27 of 29 LGAs (see *Graph 1*). The greatest representation was the Huon Valley and it may be attributed to a variety of factors, some of which are;

- There is a high concentration of small-scale farmers in this region
- The processing services in this region have been challenging over the last few years and are now non-existent. Understandably, abattoir processing is top of mind for livestock producers in this region, and they are keen to see change.

#### Status of farmers

A majority of producers were either currently farming and processing their livestock for direct sale or currently farming and keen to explore selling their meat (68% in total, or 100 out of 145 producers) see *Graph 2*. The challenges faced by livestock farmers is evidenced by the fact that over 15% of respondents were farming livestock for meat, but aren't any longer.



#### **15% OF RESPONDENTS STOPPED FARMING LIVESTOCK FOR MEAT**

This highlights the challenges faced by livestock farmers, and the impact of supply chain pressures on their ability to get their animals processed and product to market.



*Photo Credit: Samuel Shelley*

## FINDINGS

### Livestock quantities by species and status

Producers were asked to give estimates of their annual processing quantity, in the categories of current processing, used to process, or hope to process. Graph 6 in Appendix shows the quantities of animals in each species, per annum, collated into:

- Current - those currently farming and processing for commercial sale
- Lost - those who used to process for commercial sale
- Potential - those who would like to process yet haven't at this point

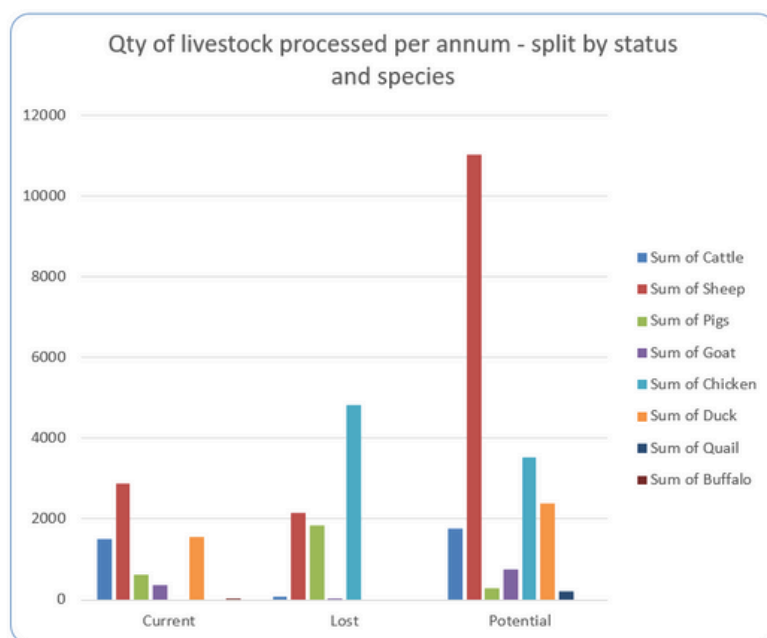
Cattle and sheep currently make up the majority of small-scale meat processing; however, there are no chickens included in this category due to the limited processing options available within the state. There is clear demand from producers seeking to process chickens for meat, presenting a viable opportunity for industry growth. However, the commercial viability of small-scale chicken meat production remains challenging, and access to local processing facilities would be essential to support establishment of this industry.

The decline in pig processing is evident, largely due to the closure of abattoirs in 2018 and again in 2024. The reduction in processing capacity has created significant challenges, as extended travel distances for pigs raise welfare concerns and further limit industry growth.

Sheep processing, by contrast, demonstrates strong potential. Current data indicates that a number of farmers who are currently selling through agents would prefer to diversify their production channels by incorporating direct-to-consumer sales. However, the lack of accessible abattoir service kill options is preventing this transition. Addressing these processing limitations could enable greater market diversification and support the long-term sustainability of producers that are seeking to contribute to local food economies.

### Why did producers stop farming livestock?

Those producers who identified as previously farming livestock for meat were asked to identify what had stopped them from operating this way with 52% stating it was due to abattoir closures, and another 4% due to loss of access to a service kill abattoir (see Graph 7). Another 23% cited that they stopped due to no longer being able to access appropriate, values aligned service from an abattoir. Of the 9.5% who stopped farming, some pointed towards challenges in financial viability due to long travel distances, others pointed to environmental challenges.





### FINDINGS

#### **What would need to change for these farmers to return to the industry?**

Producers were asked to explain what would need to change (if anything) in order for them to re-enter the livestock farming sector. Here is a summary of the main points from their comments:

##### *Need for More Local and Accessible Abattoirs*

- A strong call for more decentralised, small-scale, or regional abattoirs.
- Current reliance on very few operators is limiting and unsustainable.
- Local facilities are often inaccessible, unaffordable, or unavailable for small-scale producers.
- Many producers are unable to return to livestock farming due to lack of processing options.

##### *On-Farm and Mobile Processing*

- High support for on-farm slaughter and butchery, including mobile abattoirs.
- Desire to see scale appropriate regulation that enables the safe production of product on farm.
- On-farm processing is perceived as humane, efficient and well-aligned with ethical farming practices.

##### *Regulatory Red Tape*

- Regulations are seen as overly burdensome and hostile to small producers.
- Desire for clearer, simpler regulation tailored to small batch operations (especially poultry).

##### *Animal Welfare Concerns*

- Animal welfare is a core priority for producers, yet many raised concern over the lack of control of this beyond their farmgate.
- Emotional and ethical investment in humane end-of-life for animals raised with care.

##### *Economic Barriers*

- Processing costs are high, sometimes making small-scale livestock farming unviable.
- There's a desire for cooperative facilities (e.g. boning rooms) to reduce cost burdens.
- Lack of competition in the sector contributes to high prices and inflexibility.

##### *Consistency, Reliability, and Transparency*

- Producers want consistent and reliable service from abattoirs.
- Many shared experiences of poor communication, unreliable bookings, and long wait times.
- Transparency in traceability, handling, processing, and distribution is lacking.



### FINDINGS

#### *Logistics and Distribution Challenges*

- Need for integrated logistics: refrigerated transport, direct delivery of packaged products, etc.
- Some propose shared distribution models or third-party solutions to ease producer burden.

#### *Support for Small Producers*

- Emphasis on supporting paddock-to-plate models and local food systems.
- Producers want infrastructure that scales with their needs, not industrial-scale systems.
- Calls for investment in infrastructure designed for and by small-scale farmers.

#### **External barriers for new entrants**

Of those producers who self selected into the POTENTIAL status (see *Graph 8*), we asked them to provide insights into whether there were any EXTERNAL barriers preventing them from operating their meat production business. 66% of producers identified no abattoir near to their location, or lack of access to an abattoir. Other barriers included 12% being unable to access butchery services (either from an abattoir or an independent butcher). Another 14% highlighted that carcass transport was an issue in terms of access.

#### **Are farmers happy with the current system?**

Producers were asked to nominate their ideal scenario/s for processing their livestock, from the following options (see *Graph 9*):

- Current system is fine
- Local small-scale abattoir/micro abattoir
- Farmer led co-op abattoir
- Own on-farm abattoir
- Mobile service kill for commercial sale
- Other

When collated together, 42% of producers highlighted either a micro abattoir business or farmer led co-op abattoir as their preference, with 15% demonstrating a drive to build an abattoir of their own on their property for full control over their supply chain and animal welfare outcomes. 36% of producers would ideally like to see accredited on-farm processing that allows commercial sale of any meat products.

#### **Accessing independent butcher services**

Of those producers that access carcass cut up services from an independent butcher (rather than their abattoir), over 52% of them found it difficult or very difficult to access.

**66%**

have NO access to  
an abattoir

**52%**

find it difficult to  
access butchery  
services

**93%**

want an alternative  
to the current  
system

# FINDINGS

### Survey open responses analysis

The final question in the survey was open ended and enabled producers to share their thoughts about the current system. A qualitative review has been completed and the top 11 themes are listed here, with a summary provided in Appendix.

- Local Food Systems
- Meat Processing - Abattoirs & butchers
- Small-Scale Farming
- Need for Support & Funding
- Market Access & Distribution
- Animal Welfare & Ethics
- Regulations & Policy
- Land Access & Costs
- Sustainability & Environment
- Education & Knowledge Sharing
- Risk to Small Businesses & Brand Tasmania



Tasmanian small-scale livestock farmers are facing increasing challenges due to limited access to local meat processing facilities, forcing many to transport animals long distances or even interstate. This has led to higher costs and increased stress on animals. The lack of viable local abattoirs, butchering services, and cold-chain logistics is especially problematic for small producers as they are unable to bring their product to market. Many respondents expressed frustration at the lack of government support for small to medium-sized abattoirs, while larger international corporations continue to receive funding.

The survey suggests there is strong community support for reinvigorating local processing capacity, particularly through cooperative models, public-private partnerships, and investment in mobile or micro-abattoirs. These solutions would reduce transport emissions, support local circular farming practices, and help maintain Tasmania's "clean and green" brand. Respondents also called for education, workshops, and policy reforms to ensure regulations are scale-appropriate. Without urgent intervention, small farmers may exit the industry, threatening the viability of regional food systems.

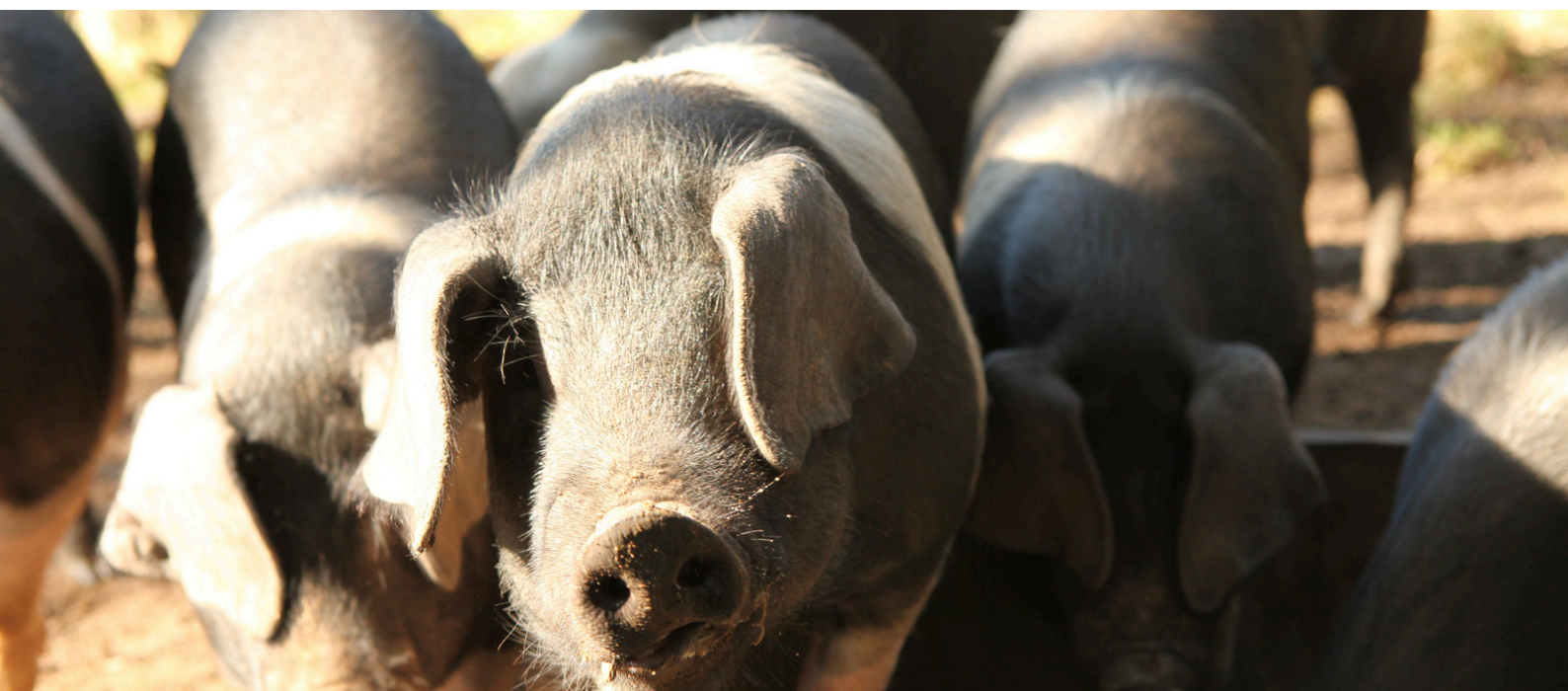


### SUMMARY

#### **Farmer survey summary**

Tasmanian small-scale livestock producers are facing critical challenges due to the lack of accessible, affordable, and appropriate meat processing infrastructure. This farmer survey, conducted across 27 of 29 LGAs, revealed that abattoir closures, long travel distances, high processing costs, and regulatory burdens are driving farmers out of the industry or preventing new entrants from starting. A majority of respondents were currently farming or hoped to farm for meat production, but over 15% had already stopped, largely due to processing barriers. Producers reported that the absence of service kill facilities and on-farm or mobile processing options restricts their ability to grow or sustain their businesses, especially in regions like the Huon Valley where local processing has disappeared entirely. These issues are compounded by limited access to independent butchers, lack of cold-chain logistics, and inconsistent service from existing facilities

Farmers overwhelmingly support the development of small-scale, decentralised, or cooperative processing solutions, including micro-abattoirs, mobile units, and farmer-led facilities. There is strong demand for scale-appropriate regulation, better animal welfare standards, and more reliable service delivery from processors. Economic viability is a recurring concern, with calls for shared infrastructure and government support to lower costs and reduce barriers to market access. Respondents emphasised the urgency of regulatory reform, investment in infrastructure tailored to small producers, and better support for local food systems. Without these changes, the future of ethical, small-scale livestock farming—and Tasmania's clean, green brand—is at serious risk.





### METHODOLOGY & FINDINGS

Understanding the role that butchers play in the provision of local meat to communities is a crucial part of this project. These butchers are often playing a dual role in our food system; one as a service provider to farmers, taking carcass from abattoirs on behalf of the farmer, and enabling further butchery of that carcass, and packaging, before returning this to the farmer for their own sale of the product. The second role is in the provision of quality, locally sourced meat to their customers. Some farmers choose to sell direct to a butcher, and as such a dressed carcass will be transported to a butchery for further processing and sale.

#### **Methodology**

Seven butchers were contacted via phone, and a simple 6 questions survey was undertaken. Butchers were located across Tasmania covering five local government areas. It is important to note that this area of the project needed further exploration to find statistically significant data, yet budgets did not allow for this. This is an opportunity for further work to be undertaken to explore this cohort further.

#### **Findings**

Most butchers feel local abattoirs are essential to be able to provide high quality Tasmanian produce with known provenance and traceability which is essential to the successful marketing of their product. The general feeling is that many of the smaller abattoirs have not been adequately maintained, meaning that to meet current standards costly upgrades are required.

There are currently a number of abattoirs providing reliable service to butchers who are keen to access service kills and carcass purchases.

Most butchers source a mix of boxed meat from JBS Longford and Scottsdale Pork along with local product from select farmers they have a direct relationship with. Some feel it is easier to source just boxed supply while others feel the quality of this product is not guaranteed and that it actually decreases demand for local product and hence the viability of smaller abattoirs.

Those who sourced ONLY boxed meat tended to be located in the CBD centred local government areas.

Those who source meat direct from farmers utilise a local abattoir to provide the slaughter service for them, then a carcass transporter to their butchery, then they undertake the carcass cut up from there.

Three of the seven interviewed offer butchery services to local farmers.

Providing butchery services to farmers is costly and many simply don't have the staff to accommodate this. The service is more likely to be offered in more remote locations such as the North East and on King Island where there is no other option.

Butchers are not so keen to support on-farm kills as they feel standards may not be met. For example, the need for refrigerated transport of meat that is intended to be cut up off farm.

Two raised concerns about the reduction of availability of service kills for butchers and producers, and what the potential knock on effects of this may be for the system.

### SUMMARY

Tasmanian butchers play a key role in the local meat supply chain, both by processing carcasses for farmers and supplying locally sourced meat to consumers (including restaurants). Three of the seven butchers surveyed offered processing services to farmers, citing cost and staffing constraints (due to skill set and availability).

Most surveyed butchers stressed the importance of accessible, well-maintained local abattoirs to ensure provenance, traceability, and quality.



### METHODOLOGY

It was a crucial part of this project, to draw information and insights from those currently running a fixed site abattoir in Tasmania, and providing a service kill option for farmers. This service provision plays a vital step in the supply chain for farmers to be able to farm their animals, and produce safe, high quality, ethically raised, sustainable food, which they can sell directly to their customers.

The intention was to gather data in relation to the species each plant processes, quantity of throughput, certifications available, and more. Building rapport with these business owners was fundamental to them feeling comfortable to share their thoughts about the broader meat processing industry, where topics such as training, waste, staff retention, support from government regulatory staff were discussed. A limitation of this data gathering activity was that despite building strong relationships with these operators, some were hesitant to provide specific throughput data. A position which we felt it was important to respect. As such, there is no direct summary of total numbers of stock able to be processed through the abattoirs in Tasmania currently offering service kills.

Game meat processors were also on the list, yet it was decided that this was outside of the current scope of the project, due to these operations being governed by different sets of legislation, as per the FSANZ AS4464 standard.

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment provided a list of all currently accredited abattoirs in Tasmania. It is noted that this information is not readily available to the public and this is a hurdle for producers seeking this information in an accessible format. A draft list of abattoirs was compiled, with the knowledge that this list may change over the course of the project.

A series of questions was developed in order to understand throughput, species information, challenges if any, and draw out any other issues that may be being experienced by this scale of abattoir.

Rather than email a link and ask abattoir operators to respond online, the decision was made to call each of these operators individually. This enabled flexible questioning based on the responses from the applicant, with data being populated into an excel spreadsheet.

A total of 13 abattoirs were contacted from across Tasmania, with data collected from each telephone conversation.

This data and information were then analysed and a summary developed of both quantitative and qualitative data.



### FINDINGS

There are currently 11 abattoirs operating throughout Tasmania, offering service kills.

Of those 11 operating, there are some that are potentially nearing the end of their operation. Reasons vary, but the most prominent is the age of the business owner/operator, as some are reaching the end of their careers as slaughtermen, without any current plans for succession. So, with this in mind, it is likely they will cease operation in the short to medium term.

During the course of this project, two abattoirs closed. One in the north west and one in the south, thus taking the total from 13 to 11, as of February 2025.

There was only 1 abattoir in the state, providing a certified organic service kill offering in the South, yet this abattoir has now closed, therefore we currently have NO certified organic abattoir operating in Tasmania currently.

The table below provides a snapshot of each abattoir, identified by region only, enabling you to understand the overall status of each abattoir.

It is important to clarify that the NW also includes one abattoir on King Island. This abattoir however only provides service kills for the local community to use their meat for their own purposes, not for commercial sale. The majority of their processing is for the co-op to on-sell the finished product to various channels on the island (such as supermarkets and butchers).

The NE area classification includes Flinders Island, yet there are no abattoirs on this island that operate domestic livestock service kills, only a game meat abattoir, and as such isn't included in the table below.

*Current service kill abattoirs in Tasmania (as of February 2025)*





## FINDINGS

Table 2: Service kill abattoir summary by region with traffic light vulnerability rating.

Traffic light - vulnerability	Region	Interview identified latent capacity	Species	Size/throughput
GREEN	NW	No	Multi	Medium
GREEN	NE	Unsure	Pigs	Large
GREEN	STH	No	Multi	Small
GREEN	NW	Potentially	Multi	Small
GREEN	NW	No	Poultry	Small
GREEN	NE	No	Poultry	Small
ORANGE	NE	No	Multi	Small
ORANGE	STH	No	Multi	Very small
ORANGE	NE	No	Multi	Very small
ORANGE	NW	Yes	Multi	Medium
RED	NW	No	Multi	Very small
RED	NE	No	Multi	Very small
RED	STH	Yes	Multi	Medium

## FINDINGS

Some abattoir operators were open with their throughput data during our interview process, and others were not. We wanted to respect their right to privacy, and as such have made various classifications based on an assessment of operating days per week, staff and throughput figures where possible.

*Table 3: Description of size/throughput classification*

Very small	1 – 2 staff for operations (most often owner/operator), with low throughput of approx. 2 cattle and 20 sheep per week. 1-2 days per week in operation.
Small	2 staff, operations with low throughput of 3-4 cattle and 30-40 sheep per week - 2-3 days per week in operation.
Medium	More staff (7-10), operating 4-5 days per week.
Large	10 + staff, operating 5 days per week.

### SUMMARY

This research has shown just how vulnerable the service kill industry is in Tasmania.

Out of the six facilities classified as Green, 2 are small scale poultry processors, 1 is pigs only and 1 is located on King Island.

This leaves 2 that are currently operating as multispecies abattoirs, one in the NW and one in the STH. One of these facilities is small, with relatively aged equipment and will most likely stay that way with no desire to expand or grow the business. The final processor has the potential to scale up, which is positive.

Of those processors classified as ORANGE in the vulnerability status, there are 3 that are almost definitely going to cease operating in the next 2-5 years. Leaving one medium multispecies processor in the NW with identified latent capacity.

Of those processors classified as RED, one closed during the interview period of this project. Another went into administration, which was the only medium sized southern processor, and the one that is operating, has had a short-term closure due to an injury and may not return to full operations.

In reality on the ground, we have three abattoirs currently operating and providing service kill provision for multispecies on mainland Tasmania. Two are located in the NW of the state, one in the STH. One of these operations currently has identified capacity to increase throughput, one will not increase capacity and the final has a desire to increase, yet needs to follow the appropriate licensing and documentation requirements to do so. This does not assist with the void of processing availability across the state.

The challenges identified by the abattoir operators in running their business include:

- Finding staff with the right skills and retaining them.
- Training staff with appropriate skills
- Large amount of overheads in electricity, labour and insurance
- Balancing throughput with staff welfare
- Lack of expertise in animal processing from within the Government



*Photo Credit: Dalhousie Farm*

### SUMMARY

The areas that work well for the abattoir operators interviewed include:

- Previously, having a knowledgeable person from within the Department enabled operators to turn to someone for advice and assistance, without any regulatory ramifications.
- Sharing their expertise with local people who are keen to be involved and work on site
- Working closely with farmers and butchers to help make their businesses viable

Those respondents to the farmer survey who were keen to process larger volumes of lamb as part of their direct to customer sales channels, will struggle to access any service kill abattoir. TQM is a large scale lamb processor in the state yet they do not currently offer service kills to the farming community.

It has been identified above that abattoir operators find it hard to access training options for their staff. The courses applicable to those working within an abattoir are currently not offered from within Tasmania (TasTafe used to run these qualifications). Being small businesses, these abattoir operators are less likely to be able to afford the investment required to bring a suitably qualified trainer from the mainland.



### SUMMARY

The scope of this project did not cover the area of mobile butchery in terms of engagement or research, however it is evident that this model of meat processing is being used by many for personal use, and potentially increasingly used for the unregulated commercial sale of meat due to pressures on the meat processing system.

Mobile butchers are not required to be accredited meat inspectors, and operate outside the Primary Produce Safety Act. Survey data from farmers indicates that, particularly in the south, mobile butchers are booked out for many months and it is difficult to find any availability. There is also evidence of farmers opting to utilise the services of mobile butchers, in order to then provide this meat product to their community, against current regulations.

Brief discussions with one operator of a mobile butcher business in Tasmania has brought to light their desire to see a pathway for becoming an accredited mobile abattoir operator. They felt strongly that if the regulatory framework could be scale appropriate for their setting, they could offer personal service kills as they do currently, but also commercial service-kills as well for those customers that require a commercially saleable product. They would need to ensure that food safety, animal welfare, waste and biosecurity requirements were all met. This system could provide processing security for many producers who are currently relying on the very small abattoirs across the state, that currently are 'tenuous' in their sustainability.

It is important to note that through the Farmer survey it is clear that producers would ideally like to see a model where their animals are able to be slaughtered on-farm. Some discuss the concept of a hybrid abattoir model, where the subsequent cut up and butchery of the animal is undertaken either at a more centralised facility or in a mobile until that meets all the relevant requirements.



*Photo Credit: Fred and Hannah*

### METHODOLOGY

In order to provide some insight into viable alternative models for livestock processing, a desktop review was undertaken to identify examples from the mainland.

The following case studies were undertaken, via a combination of desktop review, webinar attendance and phone call conversations (links are provided here to access the full case study documentation, and they can also be found in the Appendix):

[Casino Co-op NSW](#)

[Provenir - VIC & NSW](#)

[Murray Plains Meat Co-op - Barham NSW](#)

[Tablelands Premier Meats - NSW](#)

[Southampton Homestead & Farm - WA](#)

### FINDINGS

#### **Access and security of land**

Long term tenability can be difficult if an abattoir is built on land that subsequently changes hands, as this can then place a site and its operations in jeopardy. When considering working with landowners, considerations should be made as to the long term nature of agreements. Legal protection mechanisms should be considered to ensure the ongoing operation of facilities. Consideration for whole entities to own land (like a Coop, such as Murray Plains Meat Co-op and Casino Food Cooperative) rather than one individual party should be made, as a way of securing meat processing from any given site in perpetuity.

Establishing a privately owned and funded abattoir on related privately owned land reduces the complexity of negotiating land access and use rights. In this context the long term sustainability of facilities usually depends greatly on the circumstances of the operators. Where possible succession plans and contingency plans should be considered to ensure ongoing serving of clients and communities in the event of ownership and operation disruption.

#### **Scale appropriate regulation**

Setting up an abattoir that is micro and human scaled, in contrast to the larger scale mechanised facilities, can be challenging under a regulatory environment that is not aligned with smaller and manually operated facilities. These challenges have presented themselves in ways that put the onus on small operators with limited assets to float timeline blow outs. This has been identified by the Southern Tasmanian Association of Meat Producers (STAMP) as a major barrier for the establishment of new farmer-led facilities in Southern Tasmania (Reference - [Sustainable table round table on Farmer led collective abattoir models](#). Time stamp 19:10). In the case studies undertaken, three of the 5 experienced significant challenges navigating regulatory hurdles. Each system experienced regulatory challenges in their own ways with all challenges leading to lengthy delays in project timelines.

Southampton Homesteads poultry processing facility is primarily housed in a demountable prefabricated building with ancillaries built around it on site. Ancillaries had been constructed inline with the building codes and the standard for *Construction of Premises and Hygienic Production of Poultry Meat for Human Consumption*(AS 4465:2006). The core facility had been operating in North Queensland previously and was relocated to the South West QLD when Jeff purchased it. Jeff experienced timeline blowouts and lengthy approval processes due to a lack of knowledge from state regulators as to how to oversee regulation of their small facility. All small poultry facilities had closed in WA by the early 2000's and thus the current regulatory staff were unsure of how to address certain aspects of their scale appropriate facility and processes that fell outside of their understanding of facility operations. This proved to be a learning experience for the regulators but Southampton Homestead's facility was eventually approved to operate. While they were able to work to find a suitable solution the lack of scale appropriate standards meant that the process was significantly more cumbersome resulting in significant costs to both parties.

### FINDINGS

The Barham micro abattoir experienced significant timeframe blowouts associated with building compliance issues. Due to the nature of their funding model the Coop had minimal control over the build with council assuming all project management responsibilities and appointment of relevant contractors. While the origin of the issues were not able to be pinpointed the facility was not compliant having to redo plumbing, flooring, wall cladding, roofing height, load out railing as well as changes to both the pig and cattle knock boxes. These compliance issues while not uncommon with niche builds go to show that the expertise needed for small facility construction is lacking and costs small operators substantially.

Provenir's model is the first 100% mobile abattoir facility to be approved in Australia. They constructed the mobile processing facility in a customised semi trailer that enables them to process all cattle on the farm of origin. There were many complexities to this build as they required it to fit within the semi trailer, adhering to vehicle construction standards and national heavy vehicle regulations in addition to processing facility standards. Despite being based in Victoria the facility was first granted approval to operate within NSW as Victorian legislation was not able to grant approval for the facility due to its mobile nature. Provenir worked to have legislation amended to alter the definition of an abattoir premise to include one located in a vehicle. Following these legislative amendments approval of their model was granted and they commenced operations in Victoria.

Each of these examples highlights how necessary it is to ensure that small operations have legislative and regulatory support from all levels of government across the country. Small operators currently bear the financial weight of ensuring food security of regional communities with very little support and often a disproportionate amount of red tape for their operations complexity. From an auditing perspective the establishment of pre-approved models of operation for micro-abattoirs could lessen the burden on often under resourced regulatory departments. This would not only streamline compliance auditing for departments but also provide prospective operators the guarantee that facilities could be constructed and approved with minimal cost and timeline blowouts.



*Photo Credit: Huon Douglas*



### FINDINGS

#### **Community collaboration**

Abattoirs are not the first place people think of when they think of community collaboration but throughout these case studies communities often underwrite the success and purpose of these small facilities. None of the facilities studied are run for big profits but providing food security to local communities, essential processing capacity to local farmers and employment for our regions. These case studies showcase some great success stories that involve collaboration between farmers, community members, and State and Local government, to secure regional processing, local food security and event disaster relief and recovery.

Southampton Homestead supports a large community of small poultry producers in Western Australia's South West. They are the only poultry processing facility that work with small producers in their region and currently provide processing for 40,000 birds per annum. Their ethos centres around their facility being a food hub for their region, they process 2,000 of their own birds with the remainder being other local farmers. They allow their customers to utilise the facilities' boning space and cool stores as needed and have visions of expanding their facility to incorporate more food distribution and security projects in the future. They employ a range of local farmers, retired chefs and butchers as well as provide opportunities for young people in their community to get hands-on experiences through their annual Farm Residency Program. They foster community connection through collaborating with local initiatives, farmers and community groups.

The Barham Micro-abattoir is a unique example of community collaboration that came from a point of crisis with the closure of local processing facilities. The micro-abattoir was born from the work of the Murray Plains Meat Cooperative that pulled together local farmers to find a solution to their collective processing issues. The facility which was initially a project of the Murray Plains Meat Cooperative became a collaborative project between cooperative and council when project funding depended on grants only accessible to organisations with a trading history. The cooperative being newly established lacked this criteria and thus the local council stepped in to apply for grants on the projects behalf and manage the construction of the facility. The council has assumed ownership of the facility itself with plans to transition it into cooperative ownership in the future. The cooperative raised the necessary funds through their member base to purchase the land on which the facility was built as well as to pay for the ongoing legal, operational and licensing fees of the cooperative.

The Casino Food Cooperative is Australia's largest cooperative owned abattoir located in the Northern Rivers of NSW. The cooperative runs excellent programs to help foster farming sustainability for their members and are championed for being exceptional employment providers by staff past and present for their people-first approach to business and community. In the 2022 floods which saw widespread devastation to the Northern Rivers Region with many communities being cut off from support, the Casino Food Cooperative stepped in to aid recovery and relief efforts. They were able to leverage their vast network of community ties to get rapid access to resources and information, they repurposed their car park as a helipad for evacuation efforts and resource distribution as well as repurposing their extensive cool stores and packing space to house 22 pallets of food that was distributed by air to 4,000 people in need of supplies in the area.

### FINDINGS

Their community-first approach made the pivot from processing to recovery centre an incredibly quick decision process; they were able to set up and access resources quicker than local emergency services due to their vast community ties which made their facility a hub for community recovery efforts. Many cooperative staff also volunteered their time to pack supply packages, assist with door knocking and recovery and clean up efforts.

These case studies have highlighted how abattoirs can serve as vital catalysts for community engagement and interaction. They not only provide processing capacity but they provide community with purpose, connection, employment, food security and even disaster relief. They are vital to healthy communities and prosperous regions.

#### **Logistics and cold chain transport**

Logistics and cold chain transport is potentially one of the largest costs to small producers when considering direct to consumer business models, it is an essential component to ensuring the safe transport of processed meat from butcher or abattoir to their final customer. Often producers purchase or hire a refrigerated vehicle to distribute that product but this can be at great cost especially given producers may only utilise the vehicle once a month. It was noted in Southamptons case study that many of the producers that process with their own transport solutions with some producers even processing on the same day making the same trip from abattoir to butcher in separate vehicles. While each farmer is running their own operation it does highlight that with small segregated systems there are opportunities to pool resources to reduce labour costs and vehicle emissions while splitting the running costs and upfront costs associated with vehicle ownership. This also highlights the opportunity for facilities to provide services to producers in the realm of logistics, cold chain transport and market access as is the case with the Casino Food Cooperative. The Casino Food Cooperative provides cold chain transport solutions to their members domestically and internationally as well as having connections with retailers all over the country. Such a service could help producers transport in more cost effective ways while getting their products into new markets.

#### **Workforce**

Staff are crucial to any sized abattoir but their impact is potentially felt more in small facilities with tight-knit teams that do not rely on automation and conveyor style systems. The Southampton and Provenir case study highlighted the importance of workplace culture and environment in the retention of staff both pointing to healthy, connected relationships that prioritise openness and support. The Tablelands Premier Meats and Southampton case studies both highlight preferences for training staff from scratch to work in their facilities as this enables the operators to train based upon their specific process and procedure. All facilities face struggles finding staff in this sector but it was noted by some that the best approach for them has been to look for local community niches that share an ethos focused on the respectful and honourable processing of animals such as small farmers looking for a few days of work off farm, retired butchers and chefs with a passion for food origin. Most facilities with the exception of Casino do not draw from workforces outside of their local communities.

### FINDINGS

#### Skills & Training

The operators of these abattoirs take on training and mentoring roles to ensure skills can be shared and passed on to those keen to learn. Staff and operators with formal qualifications are able to take part in upskilling peers and this is often encouraged to avoid future skills shortages within each operation. Stephen from Tablelands Premier Meats is a certified trainer and assessor which enables him to train and assess staff in qualifiable roles in conjunction with RTO's. This helps to ensure he has more than one qualified slaughterman and meat inspector within his business at a time. Training at Southampton Homesteads facility is carried out by Jeff with all staff being trained on the job by him and fellow senior staff. In their operation he holds the necessary food safety qualification to operate the facility however this is the only qualification required by his regulators. Provenir prioritises staff with small mixed species abattoir experience but also provide training for all abattoir staff to ensure they hold the required licenses to drive oversized vehicles necessary for transporting their semi trailer mounted facility. It was identified that staff who come from high flow facilities, don't usually have the breadth of skills required in a small facility, where diverse skill sets are needed for multiple roles within an operation. Skills in the realm of boning, slaughterman and meat inspection were all highly valued and difficult to come by despite the essential nature of them for operating facilities.

#### Funding

The facilities studied all operate on cash flow from processing however funding is touched on here in the context of facility establishment. Small regional abattoirs are there to provide essential services and are often established and run with lean budgets that provide limited profits to operators. Some small facility builds are privately funded while others have relied on crowdfunding, cooperative funding and grant money. The right funding model is very much dependent on the ownership model of the facility and the preferences of those involved. The Barham Micro-abattoir provides a great overview of some of the nuances in accessing funding for the establishment of an abattoir. They were able to draw funds from cooperative members to form the cooperative and purchase land. They were then able to fund the facility with a collection of grants from state and local government with a final grant figure of \$2.3 million. For further information on abattoir build costs the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance have produced a guide for their members that outlines indicative costs for micro-abattoir construction based on the micro abattoir build at Jonai Farms. Due to the facility not being operational at the time of writing it has not been included in our case studies.



### SUMMARY

#### **Land Access and Regulation**

Securing long-term land access is a major challenge for small abattoirs, especially when facilities are built on privately owned land without strong legal protections. Cooperative ownership models, like those used by Murray Plains and Casino Food Cooperative, offer greater stability by embedding the facility within the community. However, outdated and ill-fitting regulatory frameworks often hinder small-scale operations. Case studies from Southampton, Barham, and Provenir highlight how regulatory delays and a lack of scale-appropriate standards can cause significant cost and timeline blowouts.

#### **Community, Workforce and Training**

Strong community collaboration underpins many successful small abattoirs. These facilities often exist not for profit, but to support regional food security, local producers, and employment. Examples like Southampton Homestead and Barham Micro-abattoir show how community-driven models can build resilience, especially during crises. Staffing is often local, with training delivered in-house or through regional partnerships. Operators prioritise workers who share their values, and multi-skilled staff are essential in small, hands-on environments.

#### **Logistics and Funding**

Logistics and cold chain transport are major costs for small producers, often resulting in inefficiencies when farmers operate independently. Shared transport solutions or services embedded within facilities, like those provided by Casino Food Cooperative, can reduce costs and improve market access. Funding for abattoir establishment varies—ranging from private capital to cooperative investment and government grants. Barham Micro-abattoir's success shows how community cooperation and strategic grant applications can overcome financial barriers and support long-term infrastructure development.





## SUMMARY

Legislation touch points - the following table represents the various ACTS and associated regulation that may apply to any abattoir.

Area/Legislation	Touchpoint/authority	Comments
<p>Land use approval -</p> <p>Land Use Planning and Approvals ACT 1993</p>	<p>State Planning Authority &amp; Local council</p>	<p>Abattoirs are a permitted use in Rural zoned properties, and a discretionary use in Agricultural zones.</p> <p>Attenuation code also applies.</p> <p>It would be beneficial to explore the reasons why abattoir operations are discretionary in agricultural zones, and whether there is a way of ensuring scale is taken into consideration when reviewing a micro abattoir application as an example.</p>
<p>Environmental impacts -</p> <p>Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994 (EMPCA)</p>	<p>Environmental Protection Authority</p>	<p>Currently the EPA is involved with abattoirs that are undertaking a Level 2 activity, where they are producing greater than 100 tonne per annum of 'meat or meat product'.</p> <p>Clarity around statutory response times for an application, as well as transparency of what requirements an applicant will need to meet.</p>
<p>Food safety -</p> <p>Primary Produce Safety Act 2011</p> <p>Primary Produce Safety (Meat and Poultry) Regulations 2024</p> <p>Food Standards Australia &amp; New Zealand Act 1991 (Cth)</p>	<p>Biosecurity Tasmania - Product Integrity Branch</p>	<p>Abattoir applicants must be accredited under the relevant food safety scheme and implement their own food safety program.</p> <p>The application of the FSANZ standards for Primary Produce Safety involves interpretation of the standards and whether the activities and function of the site are achieving the outcomes prescribed.</p> <p>It is NOT the regulators job to stipulate prescriptive activities, but rather ensure applicants are achieving the outcomes laid out in the standards.</p>

## SUMMARY

Area/Legislation	Touchpoint/authority	Comments
Biosecurity Biosecurity Act 2019	Biosecurity Tasmania	Everyone has a General Biosecurity Duty as per the legislation.
Animal welfare Animal welfare Act 1993 Animal welfare guidelines	Biosecurity Tasmania	Handling of animals at any abattoir must follow the requirements of the Act and also the newly implemented guidelines.
Traceability - Biosecurity (Livestock Traceability) Regulations 2024	Biosecurity Tasmania	All producers must have their PIC information updated in the online system, and ensure all livestock has both movement documentation completed and e-ID tags visible and easily identified.
Construction of buildings Building Act 2016 Building regulations 2016 National Construction Code	CBOS & Local councils	Referral to functional control authorities process is NOT clear.  This referral of authority tends to mean that approvals for buildings and activities with a local council via a surveyor are complicated, sometimes unnecessarily.

### SUMMARY

The legislative landscape governing abattoir operations in Tasmania is highly complex, involving multiple layers of regulation across land use, environmental protection, food safety, biosecurity, animal welfare, traceability, and construction. Each element is governed by separate legislation and enforced by distinct authorities, including State Planning, Local Councils, the EPA, Biosecurity Tasmania, and CBOS. For instance, land use approvals differ depending on zoning, with abattoirs being permitted in rural zones but discretionary in agricultural zones—raising questions about the appropriateness of this distinction, particularly for micro-abattoirs.

Environmental approvals add further complexity for operations over 100 tonnes per annum, requiring Level 2 assessments from the EPA. Food safety legislation requires applicants to not only adhere to national standards but also interpret and implement outcome-based safety programs. Meanwhile, the building approval process is clouded by unclear referral pathways between councils and control authorities, and requirements for livestock traceability, biosecurity obligations, and adherence to animal welfare standards further add to the complexities. This fragmented and often ambiguous system can make the establishment of an abattoir convoluted, time-consuming, and expensive, especially for small-scale or innovative operators trying to navigate and comply with overlapping regulatory demands.



### SUMMARY

#### **Environmental Protection Authority**

As abattoir operators, only those classified as Level 2 are required to liaise with the EPA. The threshold for moving from Level 1 to Level 2, is producing greater than 100 tonnes of meat and meat product per annum.

The definition of meat and meat product, is that which is fit for human consumption, as per the cross referencing between the EPA Act and the Primary Produce Safety Act (Tas).

Developing appropriate statutory requirements for response times, as well as transparency in the review of any waste processing activities, particularly those that are novel.

#### **Training & workforce**

The areas that are impacted by training are meat inspection, meat processing and butchery.

##### *Meat Inspection/Meat processing - an abattoir setting*

There are currently 5 national Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) accredited to deliver the training packages associated with processing and inspecting meat. Response Group is one of these RTO's and is delivering the Meat Inspection training courses in Tasmania. TasTAFE is currently not accredited to deliver these courses. A requirement of these qualifications is to gain experience on the job in an accredited, domestic abattoir, across the course of 100 hours in both ante and post-mortem processing for a chosen species of animal.

What options are there for the practical element of meat inspector training in Tasmania?

- **Option 1** - if you are building your own abattoir, or planning to manage one and currently don't have qualifications, you could employ a qualified meat inspector and processor to work alongside and undertake the 100 hours of experience in this way.
- **Option 2** - get a position as a trainee in a domestic, accredited abattoir in Australia, and undertake the requirement of 100 hours of experience. Within Tasmanian, this would most likely have to be TQM or Greenhams' abattoirs.

Recognition of prior learning is something that many people have spoken about (farmers, butchers and abattoir operators) during our consultation as part of this project, where if they could demonstrate their level of knowledge and skills from working within an appropriate facility, then this should be able to be appropriately assessed and if deemed sufficient, should enable them to access the certification required. There are also real challenges attracting skilled people into this sector of food production. Migrant labour makes up a majority of the workforce in medium to large scale abattoirs, yet not the case for smaller processors. Some abattoir operators interviewed, talked about how important it was to them to support and employ people from their regional community.

Beyond the scope of this project, but something which should be explored is the [AMPMSY414](#) qualification which is presented as an alternative for those who want to learn either in a smaller processing plant or on the job in their own facility. It must only be selected for training and assessment in states/territories where the controlling food safety authority deems it is appropriate. In Tasmania, this would be the Product Integrity Chief Inspector of Food Safety.



### SUMMARY

#### *Butchery skills - whole carcass*

It was identified by abattoir operators, farmers and butchers alike that there is a general decline in the skills being obtained by apprentice butchers that enable effective carcass cut up. Ensuring these skills are not lost in our regional communities is fundamental to sustainable, local food supply.

#### **Transport - carcass carting**

Carcass transport is a challenging business, but the state's only independent provider is committed to maintaining and growing this vital service. The system is highly interdependent: transporters rely on butcheries to continue sourcing carcass meat; butcheries depend on having both demand and skilled staff; and both rely on abattoirs offering service kills for farmers who want their animals processed for direct sale.

While some abattoirs have invested in refrigerated trucks with rails to support their customers, there remains strong demand for dedicated carcass cartage services.

It must be acknowledged that with only one independent provider of this service in Tasmania, there are very real challenges and risks for producers accessing this service.

#### **Broad stakeholder interviews**

Among the various interviews undertaken, there were people within the Agribusiness, food system and food relief sectors. It was important to ensure a broad view was captured throughout the course of this project.

Common themes that emerged from these discussions were:

- Local processing of primary produce is fundamental to the provision of local, seasonal and accessible food for all Tasmanians.
- Shortening supply chains within the food system is a MUST.
- Novel solutions to abattoir processing needed to be considered, for example: Government owned or subsidised abattoirs where a percentage of meat product is donated through to other programs such as the School Lunch Program.
- Accessibility to livestock processing is a fundamental tool for managing climate variability pressures on farmers, especially within Tasmania.

### SUMMARY

#### Broader context

*National and global research and trends*

Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA) [National Small Scale Meat Processing in Australia Report 2025](#) issued recently, summarises the state of play from a national perspective. There are many similarities to the situation here in Tasmania.

Widespread Loss of Abattoir Access:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ~80% of survey respondents (153 farmers nationwide) have lost or are about to lose access to abattoirs.</li> <li>• This loss is threatening the viability of small and medium-scale livestock operations.</li> </ul>
Rising Costs and Animal Welfare Concerns:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmers now often travel over 250 km (some over 500 km) to process animals.</li> <li>• This increases costs by up to 130% and stresses animals, reducing welfare standards.</li> </ul>
Impact on Local Food Systems and Regional Economies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closures undermine local butchers, restaurants, markets, and consumer access to traceable, local meat.</li> <li>• Family farms and small-scale operators are being pushed out of the industry.</li> </ul>
Limited Feasibility of Reviving Large Closed Abattoirs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many recently closed facilities are not suitable for restoration due to size, cost, or condition.</li> <li>• AFSA advocates instead for micro- or mobile abattoirs with community ownership and governance.</li> </ul>
Diverse Livestock and Products at Risk:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farms process multiple species: cattle (most common), sheep, pigs, chickens, goats, and others.</li> <li>• Wide variety of value-added products (sausages, bacon, pâté, jerky, broth, pet food) enhance local food security.</li> </ul>
Labour Shortages:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty finding skilled abattoir workers, butchers, and meat inspectors.</li> <li>• Shortage of accessible training for Cert. III in Meat Safety for new workers.</li> </ul>
Regulatory and Policy Barriers:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-size-fits-all regulation disadvantages small operators.</li> <li>• Lack of legal provision for “field harvest” or on-farm slaughter despite its viability and animal welfare benefits.</li> </ul>

SUMMARY

Broader context

National and global research and trends

Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA) [National Small Scale Meat Processing in Australia Report 2025](#)  
continued...

Call for Action (Recommendations):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regulatory reform to define and enable micro-abattoirs</li><li>• Regulatory reform to define and enable on-farm processing.</li><li>• National coordination and leadership to support reform across state jurisdictions.</li><li>• Learn from international models (NZ, Canada, EU, UK, USA).</li><li>• Provide public funding and remove planning/zoning obstacles for micro-abattoirs.</li><li>• Address meat inspector training gaps and workforce shortages.</li></ul>
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### NATIONAL

#### Research & Trends

Location	Drivers
<p>CSIRO report – <a href="#">Reshaping Australian food systems 2023</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity 3: Support localised food systems and innovative business models</li> </ul>	<p>Internationally, there is widespread recognition that food systems must change to meet a number of critical challenges.</p> <p>The National Skills Commission has highlighted several sectors facing chronic labour and skills shortages with implications for the efficient functioning of food systems, including meat processors.</p> <p>Localised food systems and social enterprises can proactively respond to the varying needs of communities. Localised food systems and social enterprises can also build resilience in the face of increasing climate threats.</p> <p>In addition to improving consumers' access to healthy and seasonal food, stakeholders noted that these systems can provide farmers with more consistent income sources and brand visibility while boosting local economies and promoting environmentally friendly production practices. Localised food system businesses and social enterprises have also been found to influence sustainable urban food production, provide training and employment opportunities, initiate value-adding activities to food, and promote cross-sector and community collaborations. (reference 95 in report)</p>
<p>Future Food Network (Western Australia)</p> <p><a href="#">Mobile Abattoir's Deep Dive</a></p>	<p>The concept of mobile abattoirs is gaining traction as a flexible, ethical, and sustainable solution to livestock processing. Key points include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-Farm Slaughter: Mobile abattoirs are self-contained units that travel directly to farms, allowing livestock to be slaughtered on-site. This reduces stress associated with transportation and enhances animal welfare.</li> <li>• Meat Quality Improvement: By minimizing pre-slaughter stress, on-farm slaughter can lead to better meat quality.</li> <li>• Regulatory Compliance: These units adhere to standards such as Australian Food Safety and Meat Standards Australia (MSA) regulations, covering aspects from animal welfare to hygiene and food safety practices.</li> <li>• Challenges in Western Australia: Despite successes in other regions, Western Australia has not yet implemented mobile abattoirs due to regulatory hurdles, including zoning, environmental, and health regulations, as well as high operational costs.</li> <li>• Current Status: The Department of Health in Western Australia has reviewed various mobile abattoir projects over the years, but none have advanced beyond the concept stage.</li> </ul> <p>This exploration highlights both the potential benefits and the challenges of implementing mobile abattoirs in Western Australia.</p>



## GLOBAL

### Research & Trends

Location	Drivers
<p>The Lancet Group  <a href="#">Food in the Anthropocene: the EAT–Lancet Commission on healthy diets from sustainable food systems - 2019</a></p>	<p>“Food is the single strongest lever to optimize human health and environmental sustainability on Earth. However, food is currently threatening both people and planet.”</p>
<p>Science Direct - What policy support do smallholders in high-income countries need to contribute to healthy, sustainable food systems? A scoping review</p> <p><a href="https://www.google.com/url?g=https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S221912425000148&amp;sa=D&amp;source=docs&amp;ust=1743249818378302&amp;usg=AOvVaw0lpOCWXzFrssFALRiNizT0">https://www.google.com/url?g=https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S221912425000148&amp;sa=D&amp;source=docs&amp;ust=1743249818378302&amp;usg=AOvVaw0lpOCWXzFrssFALRiNizT0</a></p>	<p>Supporting smallholders in high-income countries (HICs) is essential for transitioning to more sustainable food systems. While some needs expressed by HIC smallholders differ from those in low- and middle-income countries, targeted policy support can enhance their contributions to healthy, sustainable food systems.</p> <p>In summary, policy support for smallholders in HICs should focus on creating equitable subsidy systems, enhancing market access, and providing targeted capacity-building resources to enable their meaningful participation in sustainable food systems.</p>
<p>United Kingdom</p> <p>In 2023 – the UK Government committed £4m to support current small abattoirs through the <a href="#">Smaller Abattoir Fund</a>.  In 2024 – the UK Government committed £3m to support the creation of new and mobile abattoirs in England through the <a href="#">Farming Investment Fund</a>.</p>	<p>Acknowledgement of pressures on smaller abattoir operators.</p> <p>Vital role smaller abattoirs play in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food security</li> <li>• Viable &amp; competitive routes to market</li> <li>• Higher animal welfare outcomes</li> <li>• Social and economic benefits to communities</li> </ul> <p>To support the sustainability and efficiency of the red meat and poultry processors across England.</p>
<p>United States of America (Kansas)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Butcher Block Act (Sep 2023) with bipartisan support.</a></li> </ul>	<p>Improve competition and capacity in rural areas by authorizing USDA loans and loan guarantees to increase and modernize small and medium meat processing and rendering facilities.</p> <p>Include eligibility for cooperatives that are producer-owned and eligible for refinancing.</p> <p>Create a new USDA grant program to expand, diversify, and increase resilience in meat processing and rendering facilities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping facilities receive technical assistance to manage and train a new workforce.</li> <li>• Helping small and medium-sized facilities achieve compliance with state and federal regulations.</li> </ul> <p>Developing new innovative or mobile facilities to improve local and regional access to processing and rendering services.</p>

### Research & Trends

Location	Drivers
<p>United States of America</p> <p><a href="#">Strengthening Local Processing Act of 2023</a></p>	<p>This bill is related to meat and poultry processing establishments classified as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smaller - =10&lt;500 employees</li> <li>• Very small - &lt;10 employees and &lt;\$2.5m USD annual sales</li> </ul> <p>Focus areas are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish an <i>online resource</i> of sample, peer-reviewed Hazard control plans</li> <li>• Award <i>grants for activities to increase resilience and diversification of meat processing</i> focussing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Health and safety of plant employees, suppliers and customers</li> <li>◦ Increased processing capacity</li> <li>◦ Resilience of the small meat and poultry processing sector.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Grant programs to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>establish or expand meat processing career training programs</i> at community colleges, vocational schools, NFP orgs and universities</li> </ul> <p>support smaller and very small establishments by <i>offsetting the cot of training new meat processors/inspectors</i>.</p>

### SUMMARY

Tasmania is not alone in the challenges related to livestock processing, as there has been a global trend of meat processing consolidation.

Recent research and global trends underscore the need to reconsider the centralised structure of meat processing in Tasmania and Australia for that matter. The CSIRO's "Reshaping Australian Food Systems" report emphasizes the importance of localised food systems and innovative business models to enhance sustainability, productivity, and resilience in Australia's food sector.

Internationally, countries like the UK and the USA are investing in smaller and mobile abattoirs to support local economies, improve animal welfare, and bolster food security. For instance, the UK's Smaller Abattoir Fund provides grants to support smaller abattoirs, recognizing their vital role in the food supply chain. Similarly, the USA's Strengthening Local Processing Act of 2023 aims to enhance competition and capacity in rural areas by supporting small and medium meat processing facilities.

These developments suggest that decentralising meat processing in Tasmania could address challenges, such as labour shortages and supply chain vulnerabilities and access issues, while promoting regional economic resilience, high animal welfare standards and environmental sustainability.

## APPENDIX 1

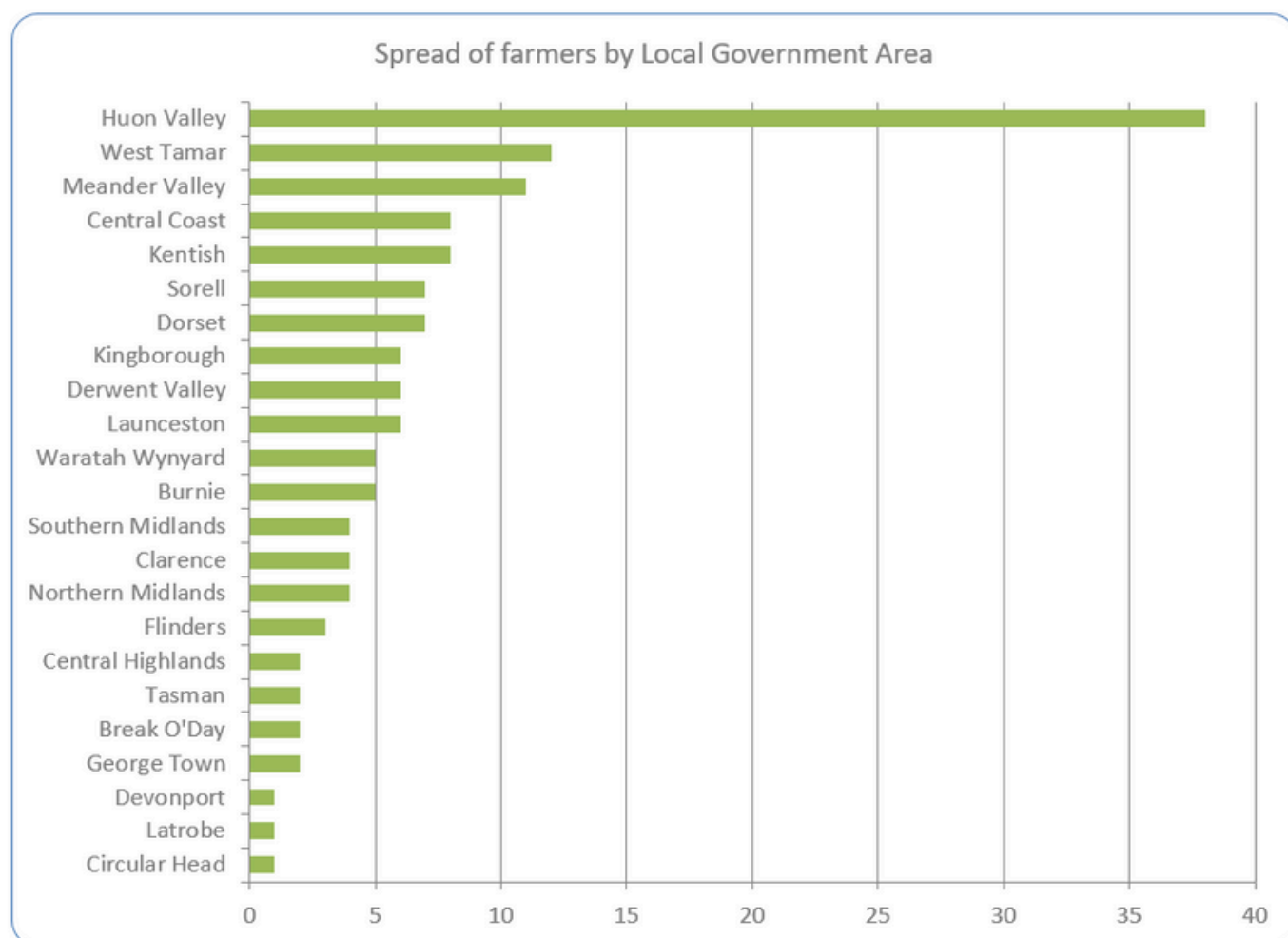
### Farmer survey findings extended

#### Geographic spread of respondents

The greatest representation of respondents to the survey, in terms of LGA, was the Huon Valley and this is attributed to two factors;

- There is a high concentration of small-scale farmers in this region.
- The processing services in this region have been challenging over the last few years and are now non-existent.

*Graph 1: Spread of farmers by local government region in Tasmania that responded to the survey.*





## APPENDIX 1

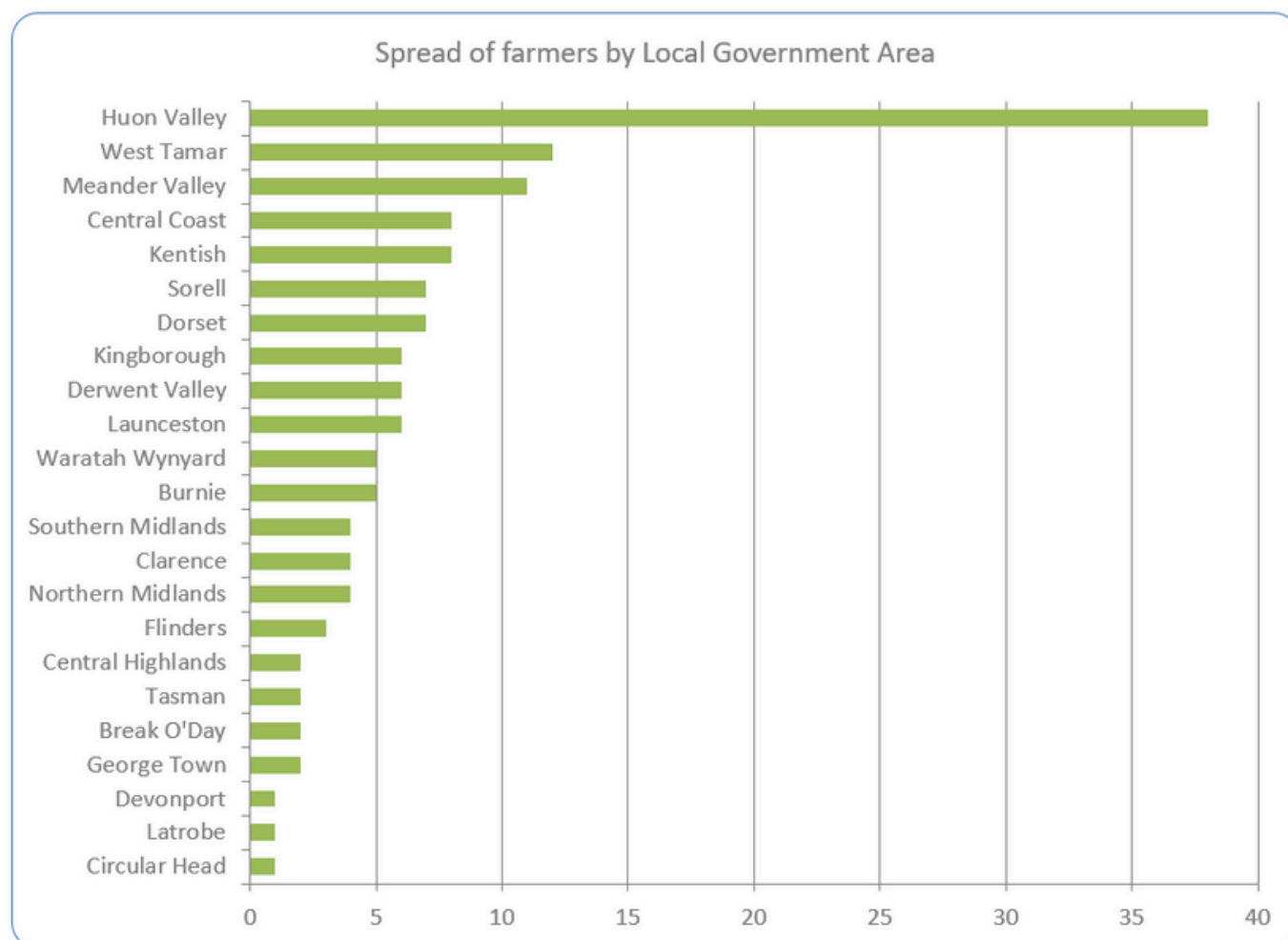
### Farmer survey findings extended

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Graph 1: Spread of farmers by local government region in Tasmania that responded to the survey.



## APPENDIX 1

### Farmer survey findings extended

#### Status of farmers

A majority of farmer respondents were either currently farming and processing their livestock for direct sale or currently farming and keen to explore selling their meat (68% in total, or 100 out of 145 respondents). The challenges faced by livestock farmers is evidenced by the fact that over 15% of respondents were farming livestock for meat, but aren't any longer.

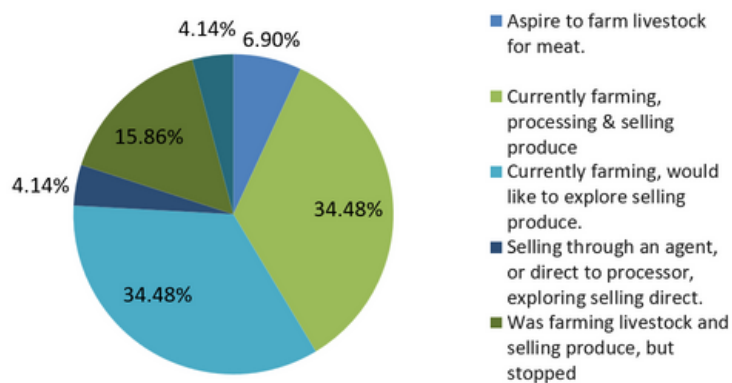
#### Services accessed from abattoirs

We asked those respondents who are currently farming and selling their produce, to select what kind of services they access from their abattoir provider. The highest percentage were slaughter services, however many are also accessing hanging, butchery, packaging and offal return where possible.

There are producers who sell full carcasses to customers (such as butchers or restaurants) and so as such do not require the cut up service from their abattoir. To a lesser extent, people are accessing extra hanging times, hide return or organically certified processing. It should be noted here, that there was only one abattoir in the state that was certified for organic processing, yet this site has now ceased operations. Further information can be found in the abattoir section of this report.

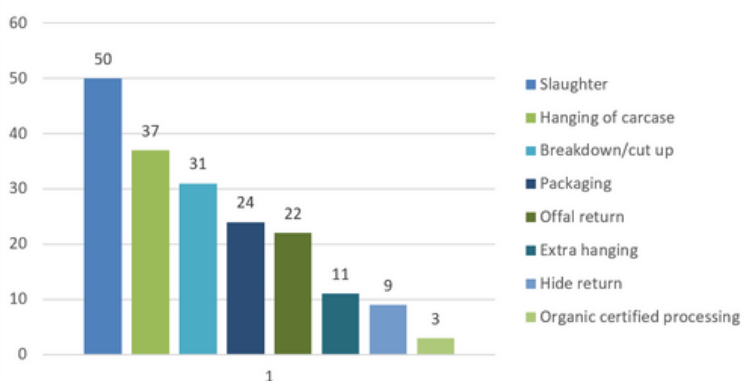
Graph 2: The split percentage of farmer respondents based on their status in farming and selling their produce.

#### % of farmers in various status



Graph 3: Services accessed through abattoirs by farmers in Tasmania

#### Abattoir services accessed by farmers who are Category = Current





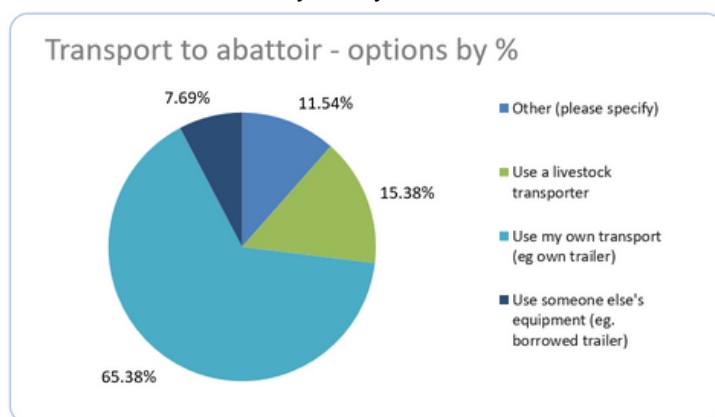
## APPENDIX 1

### Farmer survey findings extended

#### Transport options to abattoir

For those in the CURRENT section of the survey, over 65% of farmers tend to use their own transport to move their stock to an abattoir from their farm, with only 15% using a livestock transporter. Of the 11.5% OTHER responses, this generally included those who were using a combination of the specified transport options, with only one who noted no requirement for travel due to the abattoir being available to them on their property.

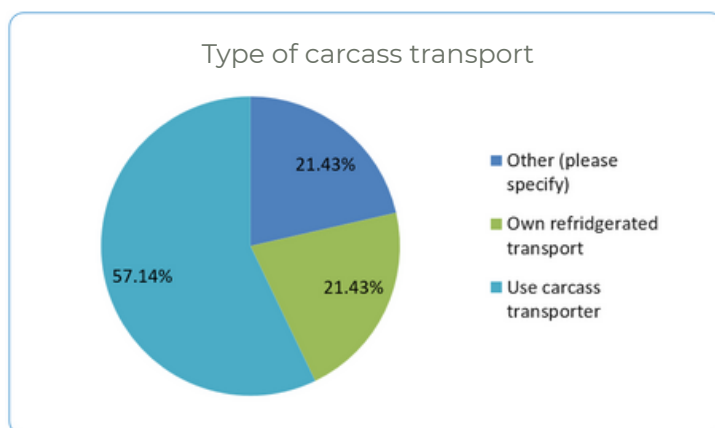
Graph 4: Methods of transporting livestock to an abattoir from a farm



#### Transport - carcass

For those producers that required their carcass to be collected from the abattoir and transported, over 57% use a carcass transporter, with another 21% using their own refrigerated transport (for larger cattle carcasses this may mean they request for the carcass to be broken into 4 quarters to ensure they can transport it without rails).

Graph 5: Methods of transporting carcass from an abattoir for those who require this step.



## APPENDIX 1

### Farmer survey findings extended

#### Livestock quantities by species

Respondents were asked to give estimates of their annual processing quantity, in the categories of current processing, used to process, or hope to process. The below graph shows the quantities of animals in each species category, per annum, collated into:

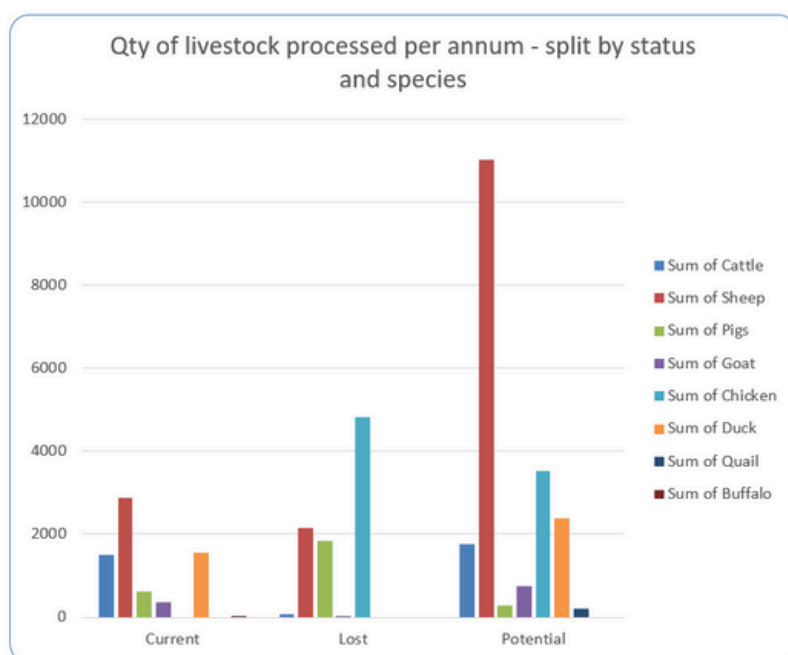
- Current - those currently farming and processing for commercial sale
- Lost - those who used to process for commercial sale
- Potential - those who would like to process yet haven't at this point

Cattle and sheep currently make up the majority of small-scale meat processing; however, there are no chickens included in this category due to the limited processing options available within the state. There is clear demand from producers seeking to process chickens for meat, presenting a viable opportunity for industry growth. However, the commercial viability of small-scale chicken meat production remains challenging, and access to local processing facilities would be essential to support establishment of this industry.

The decline in pig processing is evident, largely due to the closure of abattoirs in 2018 and again in 2024. The reduction in processing capacity has created significant challenges, as extended travel distances for pigs raise welfare concerns and further limit industry growth.

Sheep processing, by contrast, demonstrates strong potential. Current data indicates that a number of farmers who are currently selling through agents would prefer to diversify their production channels by incorporating direct-to-consumer sales. However, the lack of accessible abattoir service kill options is preventing this transition. Addressing these processing limitations could enable greater market diversification and support the long-term sustainability of producers that are seeking to contribute to local food economies.

Graph 6: Quantity of livestock numbers processed per annum, segmented by status then species.





## APPENDIX 1

### Farmer survey findings extended

#### Why did producers stop farming livestock

Those producers who identified as previously farming livestock for meat were asked to identify what had stopped them from operating this way with 52% stating it was due to abattoir closures, and another 4% due to loss of access to a service kill abattoir. Another 23% cited that they stopped due to no longer being able to access appropriate, values aligned service from an abattoir. Of the 9.5% who stopped farming, some pointed towards challenges in financial viability due to long travel distances, others pointed to environmental challenges.

#### Respondent comments sample

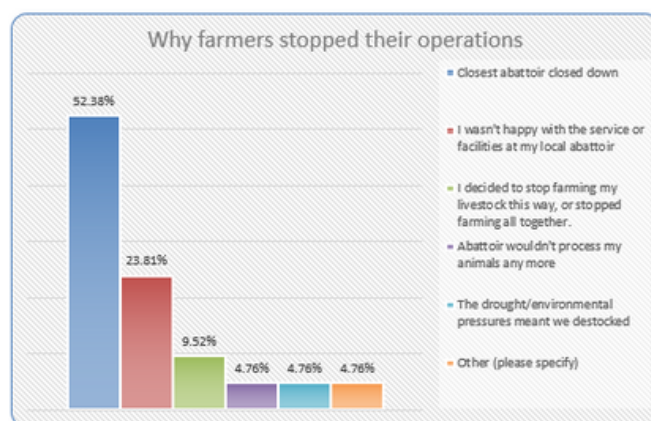
*"Our local abattoir closed down, and we had a tough season, so we used an alternative abattoir further away - the distance and the cost means we won't utilise that service again and have put our meat sale business on hold until a southern abattoir solution that meets our animal welfare standards is found."*

*"I have returned to farming but not livestock yet because there is no option locally for me to process the meat."*

*"The current situation has made it almost impossible for small businesses to offer a 'paddock to plate' business model. We want to invest in our future and build capacity for locally farmed, ethically raised livestock, direct to customers under our own branding. We were able to have our lambs in the paddock in the morning, small numbers moved and processed by lunchtime. Our animals had the best end of life possible. Local customers, local restaurants would get to enjoy our lamb, who grazed on chemical free, multi species pasture, grown out to produce full bodied and developed flavour. Now (due to abattoir closures) our animals are required to be out of paddock, packed like sardines on a truck, transported for hours, penned in yards to be sold, transported again and we do not know where they end up. Not only that, no one cares about how well our animals are cared for. As farmers we care for our animals, we want the best for them, we invest time, energy and resources into producing the healthiest animals we can. We were emotionally invested in our paddock to plate business plan and it was successful and profitable. Our network and community of local producers are also hurting and struggling with access and availability. We all desperately need reliable and efficient production services again."*

*"More competition and options would help mitigate the risk associated with only having one local facility. A Coop boning room run with the interest of farmers at heart would be refreshing since this is such a huge cost and an important part of the process. Sloppy work at this stage can ruin a farm's reputation."*

Graph 7: Spread of reasons why farmers stopped their commercial livestock operations

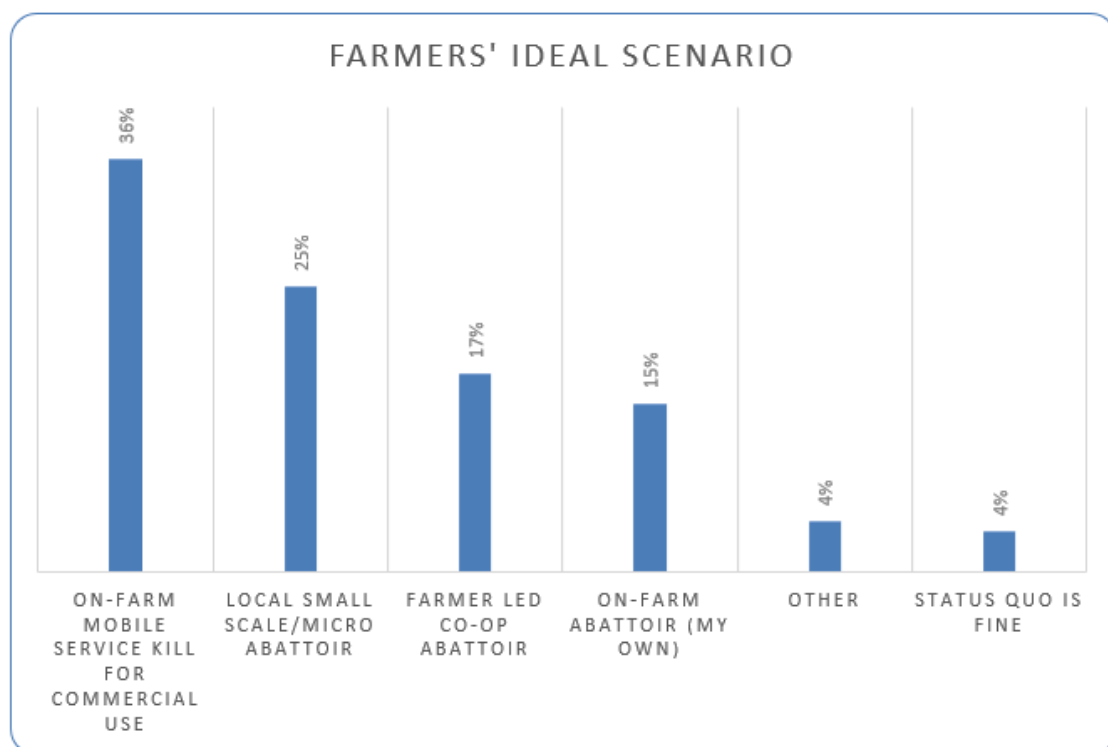


## APPENDIX 1

### Farmer survey findings extended

#### Are farmers happy with the current system?

Graph 7: Spread of reasons why farmers stopped their commercial livestock operations





## APPENDIX 1

### Farmer survey findings extended

#### External barriers for those producers who are keen to enter the livestock for meat industry.

Of those producers who self selected into the POTENTIAL status, we asked them to provide insights into whether there were any EXTERNAL barriers preventing them from operating their meat production business. 66% of respondents identified the barrier of there being no abattoir near to their location, or if there was that abattoir had no availability for more throughput. Other barriers included 12% being unable to access butchery services (either from an abattoir or an independent butcher). Another 14% highlighted that carcass transport was an issue.

#### Summary of farmer survey data - open responses

##### *Local Food Systems*

With limited abattoir access, Tasmanian farmers are increasingly reliant on facilities that are geographically distanced from their farm or even accessing processing on the mainland. Respondents stressed the importance of enabling regions to strengthen their local food production and keep it community focused. There were mentions of how poorly our supply chains withstood the challenges of the Covid-19 Pandemic. TFES is not viable for small scale producers to access so they need to sell their product within Tasmania.

##### *Meat Processing - Abattoirs & butchers*

Strong emphasis on how many respondents had lost access or had limited access to meat processing facilities. Respondents used words like 'difficult', 'risky', 'not viable' when talking about the system as it stands. Strong references to the lack of animal processing, including abattoirs, butcher services and also carcass carting. Many respondents commented on increased lead time when attempting to access other facilities, higher transport costs, and, crucially, more stress on animals due to longer trips, meaning a decrease in animal welfare and overall meat quality. Strong sense of a positive collective desire to see Tasmania be a national leader in this space by supporting local processing.

##### *Small-Scale Farming*

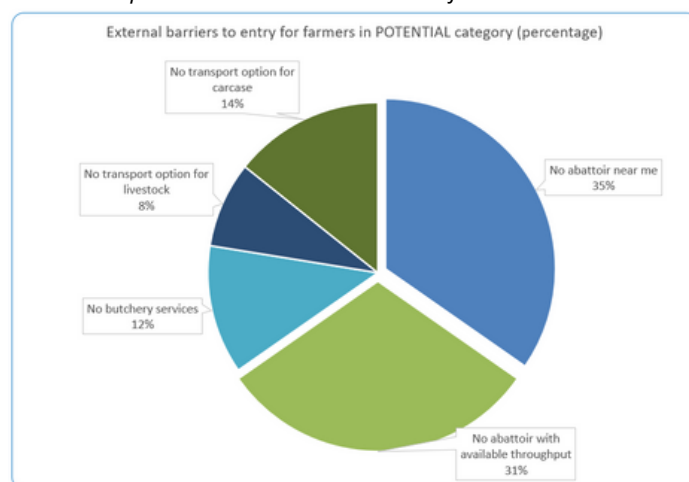
Tasmania has a strong community of small producers — many of whom offer high-quality, high-welfare, sustainably produced (and some organically certified) meat products (e.g., grass-fed beef, rare breed pork, heritage lamb). The impacts of limited abattoir availability for small producers means they are being forced to exit the market or scale back their operations. Strong comments around the rise in demand from consumers to source ethically farmed and locally processed products direct from farmers.

##### *Need for Support & Funding*

Many comments were centred around the lack of funding and support for both small-scale farming enterprises and for local meat processing. Comments included a genuine frustration about the level of Government support for large international corporations operating some of the meat processing facilities in the state, yet no investment in small to medium sized abattoirs to service the local market. Many respondents from the south stressed the region urgently needs support and funding to restore processing capacity. Potential pathways discussed were:

- State and Federal Grants: Targeted infrastructure funding for mobile or micro-abattoirs.
- Cooperative Models: Farmers pool resources to build/run a shared facility.
- Public-Private Partnerships: Councils or regional development bodies partner with agribusinesses to co-fund a facility.

Graph 8: External barriers to new farmer entrants





## APPENDIX 1

### Farmer survey findings extended

#### Summary of farmer survey data - open responses

##### *Market Access & Distribution*

Many respondents voiced concern about the risk faced by Tasmanian producers of losing their local market share to cheaper mainland imports due to lack of local processing. Distribution (particularly cold chain logistics of both carcass and finished product) was mentioned as a challenge.

##### *Animal Welfare & Ethics*

Long transport times to abattoirs conflict with Tasmania's strong stance on animal welfare. Many producers are being forced to transport their animals considerable distances which means increased transport stress on animals and a lack of alignment with farmers' low stress ethics.

##### *Regulations & Policy*

Some respondents commented on the regulatory burden placed upon alternative/low throughput abattoir facilities requiring them to meet food safety, biosecurity, and animal welfare standards that are more aligned with larger, high-flow abattoir facilities.

##### *Land Access & Costs*

Larger, established abattoirs tend to cluster in regions with extensive infrastructure — leaving remote areas underserved. Land for new infrastructure near Southern Tasmania's key livestock zones (Huon Valley, Channel region, Derwent Valley) may be expensive, but mobile units sidestep this issue entirely. If a permanent facility is needed, council-owned land could be repurposed for a community-run abattoir or central processing facility to service mobile slaughter units.

##### *Sustainability & Environment*

Long-haul transport to distant facilities increases the carbon footprint of Tasmania's meat industry. By keeping processing local:

- Transport emissions drop significantly.
- Farmers save on fuel and vehicle wear.
- Animal waste can be composted locally, contributing to circular farm practices.

Mobile abattoirs powered by renewable energy (e.g., solar refrigeration) could align with Tasmania's renewable energy goals and strengthen the region's eco-friendly reputation.

##### *Education & Knowledge Sharing*

Farmers in Southern Tasmania may benefit from:

- Workshops on mobile abattoir operations, regulations, and financing models.
- Farmer co-op discussions to explore shared ownership of micro-abattoirs.
- Knowledge exchanges with regions that have successfully adopted mobile or micro-processing facilities (e.g., Victoria, NSW, International).
- Government led innovation to help pilot and educate around model nuances

If a mobile unit becomes a reality, having on-the-ground training programs for farmers could ensure they can confidently oversee the ethical handling and slaughter of their livestock — creating new skills and empowering the local farming community.





## APPENDIX 1

### Farmer survey findings extended

#### Summary of farmer survey data - open responses

##### *Risk to Small Businesses & Brand Tasmania*

The closure of local abattoirs poses a significant risk to small producers and Tasmania's premium food reputation.

- **Small Farmers Are Being Squeezed Out:** Without nearby processing, small-scale farmers face higher transport costs and longer wait times — reducing profit margins and forcing many to stop livestock production altogether. This leaves the market more reliant on larger, industrial-scale producers, which will dilute the diversity and quality of Tasmania's meat supply.
- **Brand Tasmania at Risk:** Tasmania markets itself as a producer of high-quality, ethically sourced meat — a brand built on small, family-run farms, sustainable practices, and animal welfare. If local producers can't process animals locally, they may have to send livestock to mainland facilities, breaking the "Tasmanian-grown and processed" chain. This threatens the integrity of the brand, especially in premium export markets (e.g., Japan, Hong Kong) that value Tasmania's unique provenance and high welfare standards.
- **Loss of Traceability and Transparency:** Consumers increasingly demand to know where their food comes from. With fewer local processing options, farmers lose control over the slaughter and packaging process — damaging trust in the supply chain.

Restoring regional processing ensures Tasmania maintains its brand edge as a clean, ethical, and premium food producer. Mobile or micro-abattoirs would help safeguard this reputation by keeping the entire production cycle — from paddock to plate — within Tasmania's borders, reinforcing consumer confidence and protecting small business viability.



## ABATTOIR CASE STUDY

# CASINO FOOD CO-OP

*cooperative owned export*

## OVERVIEW

The Casino Food Co-op was established in 1933 as a farmer-owned cooperative to provide local producers with reliable meat processing services. Over the decades, it has expanded significantly, evolving from a small regional facility into Australia's largest farmer-owned meat processing cooperative. Through continuous and substantial investment in infrastructure, technology, and industry best practices, the Co-op now operates two advanced processing sites, handling up to 9000 cattle and 5,000 pigs per week. In addition to beef and pork processing, its integrated operations include a rendering plant, tannery, and Controlled Atmospheric Packaging (CAP) technology to enhance product quality and shelf life. Today, the Co-op remains a vital part of the Australian red meat supply chain, supporting farmers, employing local workers, and supplying both domestic and international markets with high-quality meat products.

The cooperative operates on a member-owned model, allowing farmers to become stakeholders in the enterprise. Prospective members must apply for approval by the Board. The current membership fee is \$250, granting the new member 250 shares, each valued at \$1. Producer members are required to supply a minimum of 500 kg Hot Standard Carcase Weight (HSCW) annually to maintain active membership.

Operator members benefit from access to the cooperative's state-of-the-art processing facilities without the substantial capital investment typically associated with owning a processing plant. This arrangement enables farmers to process their livestock efficiently while focusing on their core agricultural activities. Additionally, the cooperative's governance framework emphasizes strong corporate governance, sound business practices, and ethical conduct, ensuring that logistical operations align with the best interests of its members and the broader community.

The Casino Food Co-op also provides essential packaging and distribution support for its members through advanced meat processing, cold storage, and logistics services. Its facilities ensure high-quality packaging that meets domestic and export standards. The Co-op manages efficient domestic and international distribution networks, helping local farmers and producers reach broader markets while maintaining product integrity and freshness throughout the supply chain. With a strong focus on innovation, it continues to enhance packaging solutions and streamline distribution processes.

### AT A GLANCE

**Operator:** casino food cooperative

**Model:** cooperative owned export abattoir

**Species:** Beef/veal & pork

**Where:** New South Wales

**Throughput:** 9000 beef / 5000 pork / week

**Clientele:** Cooperative members

### The Model

Cooperative owned  
People before profits  
Domestic Market  
Export Market  
On site tannery  
On site rendering facility  
Retail ready packaged product  
Freight and logistics solutions





## ABATTOIR CASE STUDY

# CASINO FOOD CO-OP

*cooperative owned export*

## EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

The Casino Food Co-op plays a vital role in education and environmental stewardship, offering valuable resources to engage members in sustainable practices. The Co-op Soil Club initiative focuses on enhancing agricultural productivity through soil health. It provides with members soil testing and management advice, as well as hosting educational field days, workshops and events like the 'Soil, Our National Capital' event, which attracted over 200 participants.

The co-op is also involved in the Red Meat Industry Carbon Neutral by 2030 target. As part of this their Carbon Farming Project, farmers are educated on adopt soil carbon sequestration practices that support carbon-neutral beef production while generating Verified Carbon Units (VCUs) that can be monetised, enhancing both sustainability and farm financial viability.

They also operate the River Crystal initiative which is aimed at restoring water quality and clarity to the Richmond River. The initiative both helps and encourages farmers to invest in livestock water infrastructure, to reduce damage to and restore riparian zones along the river. In conjunction with water access they've also contributed to the restoration through tree planting projects which have seen over 2,000 trees planted to help stabilise riparian zones and reforest koala corridors.

The co-operatives commitment to providing value beyond processing to its shareholders has benefited not only farm operations and environmental health but also the cooperatives value to their community. Together, these initiatives empower the Co-op's members to take a leadership role in sustainable farming, offering both ecological, economic and community advantages.

## COMMUNITY AT ITS HEART

The Casino Food Co-op plays a vital role in supporting their members and community. In response to the devastating 2022 Northern Rivers floods, the Casino Food Co-op became a critical hub for disaster relief. The Co-op transformed its car park into a helipad, enabling helicopter rescues and supply drops to isolated areas. Its cold storage facilities were repurposed to store and distribute emergency food supplies, including 20 pallets of fresh produce, which were delivered to 15 locations, feeding over 4,000 people.

Employees volunteered to assemble food hampers, assist with home cleanups, and support food distribution efforts. The Co-op also provided meat for community barbecues and coordinated emergency fodder drops to sustain stranded livestock. By leveraging its infrastructure, resources, and strong community ties, the Casino Food Co-op played a crucial role in recovery efforts, demonstrating the power of cooperative action in times of crisis. This also highlights the strength in a cooperative model that puts people before profits, in times of crisis they can pivot to assist communities in disaster relief and recovery.



## ABATTOIR CASE STUDY

### Provenir

*Mobile On-farm Processing*

## OVERVIEW

Provenir was founded in 2017 with a commitment to 'Better Beef' through a true 'paddock to plate' business model. Their story began two years earlier, in 2015, when Co-Founder Chris Balazs sought to change how his beef was processed. The long-distance transport of cattle to foreign, unfamiliar, and stressful environments for slaughter did not sit well with him. With a background in science, he also had a deep understanding of how transport and slaughter stress impact an animal's biochemistry which unequivocally reduces meat quality.

Provenir set-out to establish the first transportable, self-contained abattoir in Australia. To them this represented the best possible outcome for animal welfare and in turn meat quality. It requires zero transportation of animals off farm and thus removes most of the stressors associated with slaughter.

In 2019 Provenir had completed the build of their abattoir and commenced operations in New South Wales. They began processing in Victoria the following year after a successful pursuit of legislative changes necessary for them to operate.

Their abattoir has been designed to operate across two semi trailers with enough capacity to process up to 35 cattle a week. Unlike traditional abattoirs, Provenir does not offer service kills instead opting to build relationships with regenerative beef farmers, purchasing their cattle to process and sell under the 'Provenir' brand. The Provenir brand is marketed direct to consumers as well as through niche B2B relationships with food retailers, manufacturers and restaurants.

**The slaughter process:** Cattle are coaxed by the farmers up a ramp at the rear of the processing unit. This leads to a perspex window with a view through to pasture on the other side. Once in, the cattle are restrained with specially designed restraints, stun and stick take place utilising a captive bolt with a stun to stick time of less than 10 seconds. Following the halving of the carcass; the farm, age, gender and state of origin are allocated to a QR code that is affixed to each side to ensure 100% traceability as it moves through Provenir's central processing facility in Geelong. At the facility its butchered and value added, packaged and distributed across the eastern seaboard.

### AT A GLANCE

**Operator:** Provenir

**Model:** Mobile - Private Company

**Species:** Bovine

**Where:** Victoria / New South Wales

**Throughput:** 10 - 35 head / week (6T cwt)

**Clientele:** Owner Operator  
(Purchases livestock to process)

### The Model

100% transportable

Sourced from 85 farms

Cattle purchased from farmer

All animals processed on farm

Central value add location

(Geelong)

QR Provenance traceability

DTC & B2B





## ABATTOIR CASE STUDY

### Provenir

*Mobile On-farm Processing*

## WORKFORCE

- Total workforce = 14 employees
- Mobile Processing Unit is run by a minimum of 4 staff
- Staff are also employed at their Geelong HQ for butchery and packaging
- Staff are provided the training to obtain a truck license needed to transport the abattoir.

As they are a small operation it is imperative that their staff are sufficiently skilled to carry out multiple roles within the facility, while this seems logical they face ongoing issues sourcing staff with varied skill sets. They attribute this to the fact that staff with experience often come from large processing facilities that depend on singular repetitive duties in a 'conveyor belt' system. While that is efficient in an industrial context it is impractical for small processors that require few bodies and diverse skill sets to manage a wide array of tasks within the facility.

Their unique mobile model brings inflated training costs making high staff retention essential. It's noted that while the industry operates with a high turnover rate, Provenir finds it easier to retain staff. They have attributed this to the fact that their model operates in a peaceful rural setting alongside passionate farmers while providing staff access to sunshine, fresh air and varied responsibilities that help develop a wide range of skill sets.

## OPERATION SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS

Provenir provides unmatched animal welfare standards but this comes with additional considerations.

- National Heavy Vehicle Code Compliance
- Vehicles require additional qualifications to drive
- Additional costs associated with maintaining a fleet of heavy vehicles (Servicing, registration, insurance)
- Vehicle consumables; fuel, tires, coolant etc
- Travel Distance to destination farm (up to 520km)
- Staff travel costs
- Route planning and property access requirements
- Water and electricity sources at destination
- No lairage requirements as they utilise the onsite 'farm yards'
- High biosecurity outcomes due to no livestock movement



## ABATTOIR CASE STUDY

### Provenir

*Mobile On-farm Processing*

## REGULATION

Provenir is governed similarly to most other abattoirs with the exception of not requiring local council planning approval due to the mobile nature of their operation.

Provenir have to comply with regulations across both NSW and Victoria including:

- Environment and waste management regulations
- Meat Processing & Food Safety Regulations
- Animal Welfare & Livestock processing regulations
- National Heavy Vehicle Code & Road Design Rules
- WHS Regulations
- NLIS
- Traceability and Consumer protection requirements
- Biosecurity Regulations

## LEGISLATION

Provenir have successfully set precedence within the Australian regulatory landscape for the establishment and operation of a mobile on farm abattoir. In June 2019 the NSW Food Authority granted Provenir approval to operate Australia's first mobile abattoir.

In November of 2019 the Victorian Parliament passed The Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2019, which amended the Meat Industry Act 1993. Under Part 8, this amendment expanded the definition of abattoir to include vehicles used for slaughter.

After the legislation was successfully amended, Provenir's model was effectively legalised and they were awarded the necessary accreditation to operate within Victoria.

## MOBILE OPPORTUNITIES

Provenir's innovative mobile slaughter unit redefines meat processing by prioritising animal welfare, sustainability, and transparency. By eliminating the need for long-distance transport, the model ensures a humane slaughter process, reducing stress on livestock and enhancing meat quality. The seamless integration of on-farm slaughtering with a centralised facility in Geelong allows for efficient butchery, value-adding, and distribution while maintaining full traceability through QR coding.

This approach not only provides a solution to the declining number of traditional abattoirs but also enhances access for farmers, improves biosecurity, and supports regenerative agriculture. While mobile processing presents logistical challenges, Provenir's commitment to high standards, skilled workforce development, and ethical meat production sets a new industry benchmark, by bridging the gap between farm and processor.





Image Credit: Deniliquin Pastoral Times

# ABATTOIR CASE STUDY

## BARHAM MICRO-ABATTOIR

*Micro-abattoir*

### OVERVIEW

Established in 2021 in Barham, New South Wales, the Barham Micro Abattoir was created by the Murray Plains Meat Cooperative in partnership with the Murray River Council. This community-led, sustainable micro-abattoir emerged in response to the closure of nearby facilities, which left small farmers without accessible processing options. Driven by a commitment to animal welfare, environmental responsibility, and local food sovereignty, the community united to form a cooperative, ensuring local livestock producers could continue operations without relying on distant industrial abattoirs.

The construction and operation of the micro-abattoir were made possible through \$2.2 million in combined state and federal funding, which covered infrastructure, roadworks, waste treatment, landscaping, power connection, and project management. Funding was sourced from the Drought Communities Program (\$375,000), the Murray Darling Basin Economic Development Program (\$450,000), and the Growing Local Economies Program (\$1,384,000).

However, the funding guidelines required a government body to oversee the project, which meant the Murray River Council (MRC) had to step in as the lead applicant and project manager — a role the cooperative, MPMC, could not fulfil due to its ineligibility to apply for these funding streams.

The Murray River Council took on responsibility for managing the funds and overseeing the build on behalf of the MPMC. In line with its internal policies, MRC tendered the project, awarding the construction contract to Tablelands Premier Meats. MRC appointed an internal Project Manager to supervise the project, liaising with the contractor to handle budgeting, materials, design, and communication. Tablelands Premier Meats coordinated the planning and construction phases, engaging local trades for electrical, plumbing, and steelwork to ensure the project supported the regional economy.

While the government funding covered physical construction and infrastructure, MPMC members independently raised capital through membership fees. These funds supported the cooperative's establishment, purchased the land for the abattoir, and covered ongoing financial costs, administrative expenses, and consultant fees during the licensing process. This partnership structure — with MRC securing funding and managing the project, Tablelands Premier Meats leading construction, and MPMC providing ongoing operational capital — allowed the micro-abattoir to become a reality despite the cooperative's inability to directly apply for funding.

### AT A GLANCE

**Operator:** Murry Plains Meat Cooperative  
**Model:** Co-operative micro-abattoir  
**Species:** Mixed Species incl Poultry  
**Where:** New South Wales  
**Throughput:** 3000kg / week  
**Clientele:** Small producers

### The Model

Government Funded  
Co-operative owned  
Farmer Led  
Multi-species  
Animal Processing  
Butchering  
Packaging  
Distribution





## ABATTOIR CASE STUDY

# BARHAM MICRO-ABATTOIR

*Micro-abattoir*

Image Credit: Deniliquin Pastoral Times

## OPERATIONS

The Murray Plains Meat Cooperative set out to create a multi-species facility that integrates slaughter, processing, packaging, and distribution, enabling local farmers to shorten their supply chains and retain control over their products. The cooperative is aimed at supporting direct-to-consumer sales and local food networks by partnering with local small farmers, farmers' markets, restaurants, and regional food co-ops.

The abattoir is designed to process approximately 10–15 animals per week (3,000kg per day), including cattle, sheep, pigs, and poultry. Each animal is handled humanely, with an emphasis on reducing stress. The facility ensures full traceability from farm to plate, reinforcing transparency for farmers and consumers alike. The cooperative ownership model also ensures that profits remain within the local economy, supporting ongoing operations and community investments.

With the facility being newly constructed they have implemented a phased operational approach, commencing with poultry processing in late 2024 after receiving the necessary approvals. This initial phase allowed the facility to begin operations while awaiting further certifications. In March 2025, the abattoir achieved a significant milestone by obtaining approval from the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) to process red meat, thereby expanding its services to include cattle, sheep, pigs, and poultry.

## THE SLAUGHTER PROCESS:

Being a micro-abattoir means that they do not have extensive resources to acquire, operate and maintain industrial scale systems. Instead they employ scale appropriate practices that are common amongst small abattoirs. Poultry and pigs are processed individually using the Stun, Stick, and Shackle method, while beef, goat, and lamb are dispatched using captive bolt stunning followed by sticking. These methods, recognised as the most humane with every step being subject to approval by animal welfare authorities and the Department of Primary Industries.



Image Credit: Riverine Herald





## ABATTOIR CASE STUDY

# BARHAM MICRO-ABATTOIR

*Micro-abattoir*

Image Credit: Deniliquin Pastoral Times

## WATER, WASTE AND REGULATIONS

The Barham micro-abattoir operates with a strong focus on sustainability, animal welfare, and environmental responsibility. Its water supply comes from a repurposed connection originally installed for a now-retired dairy on the same property. This low-pressure town water line has been fitted with a dedicated meter, with the Murray Plains Meat Cooperative (MPMC) covering all water costs. The facility uses a two-tank system: one tank slowly refills from the water line, while the other processes wastewater using a microbial treatment system. This ensures the water is purified and safe for irrigating the extensive tree plantings around the site. Both incoming and treated water are routinely tested to meet the high standards set by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) and the Food Act, with the final output cleaner than the water initially supplied.

To comply with strict EPA and Department of Primary Industries (DPI) regulations, the micro-abattoir maintains tight controls on waste, noise, and animal welfare. The facility's daily processing capacity is limited to 3,000 kg — approximately 30 pigs or 10 cattle — with live animals only allowed on-site during daylight hours. This restriction helps minimise noise, with animal numbers lower than those typically found on surrounding farms. Additionally, a composting unit processes organic waste within 24 hours, preventing unpleasant odours.

Before beginning operations, the micro-abattoir had to meet comprehensive licensing requirements, including detailed Food Safety Plans, Standard Operating Procedures, and compliance with the Building Code and Food Act. The DPI oversaw this process, conducting rigorous inspections to ensure all guidelines are met. To uphold food safety and animal welfare standards, the facility must employ qualified staff, including a Meat Inspector and an Animal Welfare Officer, ensuring ethical and efficient operations from start to finish.

## THE POWER OF GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY

The Barham Micro Abattoir stands as a powerful example of what can be achieved when local communities and government collaborate to solve regional challenges. In the face of larger processing facilities closing down, small farmers were left without accessible options, threatening their ability to stay in business. The partnership between the Murray Plains Meat Cooperative (MPMC) and the Murray River Council (MRC) turned this challenge into an opportunity, blending community-driven determination with government-backed funding and oversight.

Many regions around Australia could benefit from a similar approach — one that empowers local producers to maintain control over their supply chains, supports ethical and sustainable practices, and keeps profits within the local economy. The Barham project demonstrates that the community's vision and leadership helps drive success, but such achievements wouldn't be possible without the essential government funding and regulatory guidance.

By combining local knowledge with public resources, small community led initiatives like the Barham Micro abattoir are helping to fill gaps in processing capacity, fostering food sovereignty, enhancing animal welfare, and securing economic resilience for its farmers.



Image credit: Orange City Life

## ABATTOIR CASE STUDY

# Tablelands Premier Meats

## Service Kill Abattoir

## OVERVIEW

Tablelands Premier Meats, located in Canowindra, New South Wales, was established in 2012 by Stephen Tamplin. Privately owned and operated, it functions as a small-scale abattoir providing custom slaughter and processing services to local farmers and small commercial producers. The facility processes a diverse range of livestock, including cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, chickens, ducks, and turkeys. Stephen founded the abattoir after his local facility stopped handling small quantities, leaving farmers without an alternative. With extensive experience auditing and building abattoirs across eastern Australia, he constructed Tablelands Premier Meats to fill this gap. The business operates sustainably, with all processing fees covering costs and contributing to a profitable model.

To maintain efficiency the abattoir books in multiple farmers with similar livestock types on the same day, this ensures smaller producers can still access slaughter services without minimum quantity requirements. Tablelands Premier Meats supports local farmers by offering a reliable alternative to larger abattoirs that no longer provide private kill services. The business also engages with the community through school tours, scientific research projects, and mentoring for those interested in learning about abattoir operations. As a part of their commitment to transparency all producers are welcome to observe the slaughter process of their animals with prior arrangement.

Tablelands Premier Meats has consistently met rising demand for chemical-free, locally processed meat. The abattoir maintains long-term relationships with farmers, including a chicken producer who books out a weekly processing slot for 300 birds. Stephen remains fully booked six weeks in advance, reflecting ongoing trust and demand from the community.

His approach emphasises transparency and customer service, with farmers able to collect hides, offal, and other by-products as desired. Stephen continues to mentor aspiring abattoir operators, sharing his expertise to strengthen small-scale meat processing across the region.

## AT A GLANCE

**Operator:** Tablelands Premier Meats

**Model:** Fixed Premise Service Kill

**Ownership:** Owner Operator

**Species:** Mixed species incl. Poultry

**Where:** New South Wales

**Throughput:** 300 birds / 50 lambs per wk  
Cattle & pigs unspecified.

**Clientele:** local small producers

## The Model

Fixed site  
Slaughter  
Carcass aging  
Cut-up and pack  
Value add  
(bacon, ham, small goods etc)  
Full transparency





## ABATTOIR CASE STUDY

### **Tablelands Premier Meat**

#### Service Kill Abattoir

Image credit: Orange City Life

## WORKFORCE

Stephen holds all necessary qualifications, including Slaughter-man, Meat Inspection, and Food Safety certifications. He is also a registered trainer and assessor, which enables him to train his staff to meet regulatory standards, ensuring operational compliance and high-quality outputs. At the time of interviewing Tablelands Premier Meats employed six staff members, with one of those team member also being a certified meat inspector & slaughter-man having trained in full under Stephen. This ensures that if Stephen is unable to work the facility can still operate; as by law, one qualified inspector & slaughter-man must be on-site to process.

When looking to hire Stephen's preference is to hire local unskilled workers as this enabled him to train them to operate according to his preferred methods. As a part of the training Stephen ensures all staff training programs are recorded and where necessary supported by external Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to cover areas of animal welfare, meat inspection, and slaughter practices.

## CLOSING THOUGHTS

Stephen's long tenure in the meat processing industry gave him the expertise necessary to navigate the regulatory frameworks to construct, license, and operate a micro-abattoir when his community needed it most. Drawing from his extensive experience more recently he was heavily involved in the construction of the Barham micro-abattoir, also referenced in this report. Stephens understanding of the complexities of building and operating facilities of this nature is of tremendous value which he openly shares with those that need it.

Over the 13 years of operation, Stephen built a thriving business that was always booked out weeks in advance. He fostered a vibrant community of producers through his commitment to ethics, transparency, and quality workmanship, which enabled him to operate across a full working week while employing and training countless locals. His dedication to supporting the farming community was a hallmark of his success.

At the end of 2024, Stephen and his wife Dorothy decided to close the abattoir. They acknowledged the incredibly successful business and community they had established; however, with recent health scares and both being in their 70s, it was simply no longer viable for them to continue operating it. While the abattoir is no longer processing, they have placed it under maintenance to ensure it is kept in good order, with the aim of transitioning it to new owners. Their story emphasises the need for succession planning in small, owner-operated facilities to ensure continued service and operational sustainability, especially in the face of changing personal circumstances.



## ABATTOIR CASE STUDY

# Southampton Homestead

## Micro Poultry Processing

### OVERVIEW

Southampton Homestead abattoir was established in 2014 in Southampton, Western Australia, by Jeff Pow and Michelle McManus. Their privately owned micro-abattoir, is dedicated to ethical meat production through a pasture-raised, on-farm processing model. Their approach prioritises animal welfare, regenerative farming, and local food security.

Southampton set out to create a facility that integrates slaughter, processing and packaging, ensuring full traceability and humane handling. Processing takes place only two days a week to ensure sustainability for their farm and to avoid unnecessary scaling away from the human powered model. In its early years, Southampton Homestead faced significant regulatory challenges. Local government inspectors lacked experience with small-scale abattoirs, utilising hand processing techniques. There was confusion amongst State Government departments and local councils as to who was to regulate the various aspects of their abattoir build and operation. They found that the regulations in Western Australia that were designed for large industrial facilities did not account for the unique needs of their human-scale operations. Through persistence and collaboration, Jeff and Michelle worked with regulators to establish standards for their facility, setting a precedent for other micro-abattoirs in Western Australia.

Southampton processes up to 40,000 birds annually, with only a few thousand of their own going through the abattoir. The rest of the birds are from local small poultry farmers that sell direct to customers in the South West and into larger markets in Perth either, direct to customers, retailers and restaurants or through distributors such as Dirty Clean Foods.

Southampton's abattoir provides slaughter and packaging for whole birds. They allow other local producers to hire their boning room to piece out their own birds; some producers opt to partner with local butcher shops for this service instead.

The slaughter process: Birds are humanely handled one by one being loaded into killing cones where they are stunned and bled. Birds are then scalded and plucked utilising machine pluckers. Once eviscerated, birds are chilled and packaged according to producer preference inline with Southampton's approved process. Each bird is processed in batches from single farms only to ensure the product is traceable back to its farm of origin, this is crucial for maintaining supply chain transparency and ensuring producers are receiving the birds they raised.

### AT A GLANCE

**Operator:** Southampton Homestead

**Model:** On-farm - Privately Owned

**Species:** Poultry

**Where:** SW Western Australia

**Throughput:** 40,000 birds annum  
(2.1t/Week)

**Clientele:** Local small poultry farmers

### The Model

Micro abattoir - fixed premise  
Hand harvested poultry  
Per farm batch processing  
Supporting small farms in the  
south west



## ABATTOIR CASE STUDY

# Southampton Homestead

## *Micro Poultry Processing*

### WORKFORCE

Southampton Homestead has employed people under various arrangements over their years of operation and they have found that local is best! They've previously hired staff with various working visa's but they've found that the time and cost to train them is not recoverable within the short time frames they are employed for.

Jeff has found that by fostering a culture that focuses on food resilience, food sovereignty and community supported agriculture the right people for the job naturally appear. At the core of their business is a commitment to animal welfare, respect and care for their people, their land and their animals. By fostering these values openly Jeff has built a workforce of likeminded individuals comprised of local small farmers, ex chefs, butchers and young people wanting to enter agriculture that are looking for valuable work experiences.

The work culture fostered on the job is respectful and incredibly honourable. They acknowledge the difficulties of the job and pull together to ensure that small producers have options for processing that treat their animals with the respect they would while prioritising traceability and sustainability.

Being a small human scaled facility means that all of the work, bar plucking, is done by hand. There are no conveyor lines or automated evisceration plants, every bird is handled by hand from their transportation crates through to packaging and labelling. While this process is more labour intensive it provides the advantage of being scalable, requiring lower capital investments and is still manageable by a small team of 4 to 8 staff. Quality control takes place at every step within the processing 'chain' to ensure that birds are handled appropriately and any quality issues are identified.

Jeff undertakes all staff training and is more than happy to train beginners as it is easier to train them to work within his system and to his government approved processing standards. Knife skills and food safety knowledge are both valuable skills he looks for when hiring.





## ABATTOIR CASE STUDY

# Southampton Homestead

## Micro Poultry Processing

### REGULATORY CONSIDERATIONS

The Southampton Homestead abattoir is a privately owned, on-farm micro abattoir specialising in poultry processing. While classified as a micro abattoir, it must still comply with strict regulatory requirements to ensure food safety, biosecurity, and animal welfare. These regulations include:

- Environment and waste management regulations
- Poultry Processing & Food Safety Regulations
- Animal Welfare regulations, including transport standards
- Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) Regulations
- Traceability and Consumer Protection requirements
- Biosecurity regulations
- Building regulations
- Council zoning regulations

Unlike mixed-species abattoirs, Southampton Homestead is not required to have a meat inspector on-site at all times. Instead, as a human-scale facility, the poultry is inspected at least five times throughout processing by different staff members, ensuring that any unsafe carcasses are identified and removed. Their dedicated food safety officer, Jeff, is always present, providing further inspection and classification in accordance with their audited and approved HACCP plan & food safety plan. This approach ensures high food safety standards while maintaining efficiency and regulatory compliance.



### PINCH POINTS

Jeff noted that there are many pinch points where his producers are doubling up on resources and labour. For instance he has multiple customers collect processed birds on the same day from the abattoir that then drive hours to the same butcher to have them parted out. This is an example of producers making substantial investment in equipment and labour that wouldn't be necessary with better access to cartage and cold freight options.

In the future Jeff hopes to see a community lead co-operative established to operate multiple small abattoirs in the South West that are able to pool employees and resources to operate across different days of the week. Such a co-operative would help to increase access to facilities close to food production areas while providing resources to producers to access markets such as centralised cold chain storage and transport.



A photograph of a brown and white cow standing in a green field at sunset. The sky is orange and yellow, and there are mountains in the background. Other cows are visible in the distance.

## APPENDIX 2

### Further reading

Baltimore food system resilience report	<a href="https://clf.jhsph.edu/sites/default/files/2019-01/baltimore-food-system-resilience-advisory-report.pdf">https://clf.jhsph.edu/sites/default/files/2019-01/baltimore-food-system-resilience-advisory-report.pdf</a>
Mobile abattoir soon to start rolling in Australia - article	<a href="https://www.beefcentral.com/processing/mobile-abattoirs-soon-to-start-rolling-in-australia/">https://www.beefcentral.com/processing/mobile-abattoirs-soon-to-start-rolling-in-australia/</a>
Stock underpass document - producers are given a set of parameters that need to be adhered to in order to know their plan and whether it has pre-approval or not.	<a href="https://www.transport.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/164503/Guide_for_Submission_of_Stock_Underpass_on_State_Roads.pdf">https://www.transport.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/164503/Guide_for_Submission_of_Stock_Underpass_on_State_Roads.pdf</a>







TASMANIAN LIVESTOCK

# SERVICE-KILL PROCESSING

INVESTIGATIVE REPORT