

22 August 2025

The Hon Ros Spence MP  
Minister for Agriculture  
Victorian Government  
E: [ros.spence@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:ros.spence@parliament.vic.gov.au)

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP  
Minister for Health  
Victorian Government  
E: [mary-anne.thomas@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:mary-anne.thomas@parliament.vic.gov.au)

Dear Ministers,

On behalf of the Australian Dairy Industry Council (ADIC), we write to request an urgent meeting with you to clarify the situation at Dairy Food Safety Victoria (DFSV).

The reason for the meeting is two-fold:

1. To discuss and understand the implications of three board members' resignation and the departure of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) from the DFSV, and the transitional and contingency arrangements to maintain regulatory continuity for our industry - now and into the future.
2. The proposed merger of DFSV into a new food safety regulatory structure and the status of this work, aligned with the serious concerns our industry has and continue to vocalise – DFSV works and dismantling it carries significant and unacceptable risk.

The ADIC – comprising its two constituent bodies Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF) and the Australian Dairy Products Federation (ADPF) – represents the dairy industry supply chain from farm to factory. It aims to create a more prosperous and sustainable future for the local industry and the regional communities that rely on it.

For more than two decades, DFSV has served as a trusted, efficient, and highly effective food safety regulator, purpose-built for the unique demands of the dairy sector.

We are dealing with highly perishable raw milk, that needs to be collected and processed within 24-48 hours of milking, and transformed into valued dairy products, every day of the year – there is simply no option to 'switch this off'.

It is a model of targeted, risk-based oversight, balancing regulatory rigour with real-world responsiveness. It is respected by our dairy processors, trusted by our farmers, and valued by international markets.

Victoria is the engine room of Australia's dairy sector. We produce 63 per cent of the nation's milk, which accounts for 71 per cent of dairy exports. More than 2,500 farms and 18,000 direct jobs rely on a system that supports compliance and competitiveness.

That system includes DFSV. Its deep sector knowledge, dairy-only focus, and close relationships with licensees have enabled a culture of safety and excellence relied on in Victoria – as well as other state and territory jurisdictions, and associated government departments such as the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF).

When issues arise, DFSV responds fast, and with authority.

The same is not true of multi-sector food regulators in other jurisdictions, with clear and troubling examples where generalist models have failed. In Western Australia, the lack of a dedicated food safety authority has eroded protections. In New Zealand, the botulism scare of 2013, exacerbated by diluted oversight, cost the country markets overnight and shook global confidence in its dairy system.

The proposed merger of DFSV introduces an unacceptable risk. In a global marketplace where trust is hard-earned and easily lost – one misstep can have multi-million-dollar consequences.

We acknowledge the government's intent to reduce duplication and improve regulatory consistency across sectors.

However, reforms that erase dairy-specific expertise, eliminate independent governance, or redirect dairy licence fees to broader use will not meet, rather undermine those goals.

A 'one-size-fits-all' regulatory model risks becoming slower, less responsive, and ill-equipped to manage emerging technologies, climate challenges, or food safety incidents.

There is no evidence a merged agency would outperform the current DFSV system. There is no data showing the model under consideration would be more effective, more accountable, or more trusted.

Therefore, we are calling on the government to:

- Maintain DFSV's independence and industry-led governance – even should you continue the merger of PrimeSafe and functions within Agriculture Victoria and the health department to meet government objectives.
- Maintain DFSV and protect cost recovery and accountability to those who fund it.
- Maintain DFSV and preserve dairy-specific, risk-based food safety oversight.
- Maintain DFSV and strengthen collaboration and adoption of future innovation and technology, not complexity.

To that end, we would appreciate a joint meeting with you, attended by ADF CEO Stephen Sheridan and ADPF CEO Janine Waller, to discuss these urgent matters and solutions.

Please contact Janine Waller directly on 0409 189 574 or via email at [janine.waller@adpf.org.au](mailto:janine.waller@adpf.org.au) to arrange a suitable time.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



Ben Bennett  
Australian Dairy Industry Council Chair  
Australian Dairy Farmers President



John Williams  
Australian Dairy Industry Council Deputy Chair  
Australian Dairy Products Federation Chair