

6 May 2026

The Hon. Paul Hamer MP
Minister for Corrections
Government of Victoria

The Hon. Michaela Settle MP
Minister for Agriculture
Government of Victoria

Via email: Paul.Hamer@parliament.vic.gov.au
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Dear Ministers,

Re: Ongoing Support for the Fulham Correctional Centre Dairy Education Program

On behalf of Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF), I write to express our strong support for the continuation and expansion of the dairy education program currently operating at Fulham Correctional Centre in Gippsland.

This program has demonstrated significant success in providing practical vocational skills, improving pathways to employment, and supporting the reintegration of prisoners into regional communities and the workforce. Importantly, it is delivering tangible outcomes for both the dairy industry and the Victorian community.

The program combines hands-on calf rearing, farm safety, animal welfare, biosecurity and dairy industry training with direct engagement from Gippsland dairy farmers and industry representatives. It has also provided participants with exposure to modern dairy farming systems and employment opportunities across dairy, beef and grain farming businesses.

The results to date speak for themselves. Thirty prisoners have participated in the program, with fourteen already offered employment opportunities following parole. These outcomes are particularly important given the ongoing workforce shortages facing the dairy industry and the broader need to reduce recidivism through meaningful employment pathways.

ADF strongly believes programs such as this represent a practical and cost-effective investment in community outcomes. The cost of supporting vocational education and reintegration initiatives is significantly lower than the economic and social costs associated with repeat offending and long-term incarceration. The program also provides an opportunity to connect participants with regional industries experiencing genuine labour shortages while supporting confidence, responsibility and long-term social participation.

We also acknowledge the strong collaboration between GippsDairy, dairy farmers, The GEO Group Australia and the Gardiner Dairy Foundation in establishing and delivering the initiative.

The willingness of industry participants to contribute their time, knowledge and resources demonstrates the value the dairy sector sees in this program and its outcomes.

ADF is concerned that without further financial support, the program may cease beyond the currently funded intake. We believe this would represent a missed opportunity to build on a proven model that is delivering positive outcomes for participants, industry and the broader community.

Accordingly, ADF respectfully requests that the Victorian Government consider providing ongoing financial support for the continuation and potential expansion of the Fulham dairy education program, including consideration of opportunities to replicate similar models in other suitable regional correctional facilities, possibly including youth centres.

The Victorian dairy industry remains committed to supporting practical workforce pathways, regional employment opportunities and programs that strengthen communities while delivering positive rehabilitation outcomes.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the program further and explore how industry and government can continue working together to support its future. Please contact ADF CEO Stephen Sherridan on 0408 664 841 to make arrangements.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



Ben Bennett
President
Australian Dairy Farmers