

Concern rises with no response after talks back in May 2025

Since the meeting between AgKI, local freight companies, SeaLink and Department of Infrastructure and Transport (DIT) back in May 2025, there is still no response on the issues raised. At that meeting, there was assurance from Jon Whelan, Chief Executive DIT, that AgKI's justified concerns will be resolved with SeaLink and addressed.

"We have been pushing over the last three years for improved communication and transparency in the decision-making process for our community's lifeline, the SeaLink ferry" AgKI Chair Peter Cooper said.

"It is critical that we are able to negotiate the best possible outcome for our industry and community and despite our efforts have only received a dismissive response from Minister Koutsantonis and are yet to have our concerns properly acknowledged by the Department of Infrastructure and Transport," he said.

It is essential that the Deed of Contract meets its intent to provide cheaper access for the local community and freight, which was entered into with no consultation to the local Kangaroo Island community or local industries.

SeaLink confirmed that livestock would be charged at the same rate as Dangerous Goods, being 1.5 times the base rate when the new boats are operating.

"This will increase the cost per linear meter for both prime mover and stock crates from \$39.60 up to \$45.53 in year one," Mr Cooper said. "Going forward, this price will be indexed each year which could see livestock producers paying an additional 25 percentage on top of the new inflated rate".

"SeaLink advised AgKI that the higher rates for livestock were to account for additional requirements for segregation and deck utilisation compared to general freight," Mr Cooper said.

"SeaLink admitted at the May meeting that is not the case and there is no segregation for livestock freight, nor any additional deck space required, so there is no justification for livestock being penalised and charged at a higher rate to general freight."

AgKI have repeatedly requested that any port works for the new ferries not interrupt the busy livestock moving period from September through to the end of November without meaningful consultation and notice.

"We still don't know when the new ferries will be in operation nor when SeaLink will be doing their harbour infrastructure works which will see the ferry service shut down for four to five days" Mr Cooper said.

Freight companies have reported they are having to book forward loads for the busy livestock moving season on the new ferries' schedule and then duplicating them on the existing ferry schedule.

"Many farmers have booked in forward contracts to lock in good prices for their livestock but don't know if they can get them there or what the price for transport will be. The stress is showing and AgKI are very disappointed that our concerns have not been addressed" he said.

Mr Cooper said AgKI wrote to Minister Koutsantonis, who has the delegation under the Deed to change the price categories.

"The Minister's reply was dismissive. To say the contract went through a competitive process and represents the most cost-effective solution available for residents and freight reflects that the Minister is not across the situation." Mr Cooper said.

"AgKI were clear in our correspondence to the Minister that our concerns are around the unjustified increase for livestock freight and capacity of the new ferries to meet current and future demand" he said.

"This has been a poorly tendered and managed ferry contract that is the lifeline for our community and industry" Mr Cooper went on to say.

No consultation, no communication and no justification for the pressure the government and SeaLink are putting on the major industry on Kangaroo Island.

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