

13th May 2026

The Hon Amanda Rishworth MP
Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations
Parliament House,
Canberra, ACT 2600

Via Email: Amanda.rishworth.mp@aph.gov.au
CC: marie.boland@swa.gov.au minister.collins@aff.gov.au

Dear Minister,

Re: Workplace Exposure Limit for Phosphine – Grain Industry Concerns

This letter follows our recent communication to you and follows an industry meeting with Safe Work Australia.

Its purpose is to seek immediate consideration of a deferral of implementation of the phosphine Workplace Exposure Limits (WELs) planned for implementation on 1 December 2026.

A deferral will enable continued engagement between governments, regulators, workers, unions, technical experts and industry to undertake:

- A targeted, substance-specific scientific review of phosphine;
- Validation of monitoring capability and operational feasibility before implementation proceeds.

The grain industry supports strong, evidence-based worker protection. However, the proposed phosphine WEL (0.05 ppm TWA and 0.15 ppm Peak) cannot currently be implemented as a functioning regulatory standard.

If implemented in its current form, the proposed WEL is unlikely to improve safety outcomes and instead risks widespread non-compliance, regulatory confusion, and disruption to Australia's grain export system.

There are three core issues:

1. No demonstrated proportional health benefit

There is no clearly articulated or quantified burden of disease at current exposure levels (0.3 ppm TWA / 1 ppm STEL), nor a transparent explanation of the incremental health benefit expected from the proposed reduction.

2. The standard is not currently measurable or verifiable

Compliance at 0.05 ppm—and particularly verification of a 0.15 ppm instantaneous Peak—cannot be reliably achieved using available monitoring methods in real-world grain operations. A standard that cannot be measured cannot be enforced.

3. The standard has not been validated for real-world feasibility

The revised framework resulted in limits being set without prior testing in key industries. As a result, industry is now being asked to implement a standard without a practical pathway to compliance.

This creates a high risk of systemic non-compliance—not due to unwillingness, but because the standard is not yet and may never be operationally achievable.

There are also broader implications:

- Misalignment with existing APVMA fumigation label requirements (0.3 ppm clearance).
- Disruption to grain storage, handling, and export logistics and the resultant impact on grain values.
- Increased costs and regulatory uncertainty across a nationally significant supply chain.

Phosphine is essential to Australia's grain system. If this issue is not resolved appropriately, there is a real risk to both supply chain performance and regulatory credibility.

We are requesting Ministerial intervention to:

- Defer implementation of the phosphine WEL
- Initiate a targeted, substance-specific review
- Ensure transparency of the scientific basis
- Validate measurement and feasibility before enforcement
- Align SWA requirements with APVMA settings

Deferral of implementation is required. The industry is actively undertaking research (including Grains Research & Development Corporation programs); however, this work will not be completed until approximately 2030. Proceeding with the change in WEL ahead of this evidence risks embedding a standard that cannot function in practice.

We remain committed to working constructively with government to deliver safe, effective, and enforceable outcomes.

We would welcome the opportunity to brief you or your office further. An **opportunity exists** on Wednesday 27th of May as Grain Trade Australia's Chair and CEO will be in Canberra and would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you and / or your advisors.

Yours sincerely,



Pat O'Shannassy
CEO, Grain Trade Australia



Gerard McMullen
Chair, National Working Party on Grain Protection



Shona Gawel
CEO, Grain Growers

