



ELECTION 2018

DELIVERING FOR AGRICULTURE GROWING COMMUNITIES



Media Release

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Enough is enough: Farmers demand a moratorium

The Victorian Farmers Federation is demanding a moratorium on future rates increases until the State Government, election candidates and councils commit to demolishing and rebuilding Victoria's broken rating system to ensure a better deal for farmers.

The move comes as the VFF hosts rural and regional MPs in Melbourne this morning to mark the final sitting week of the current term of Parliament, and calls for definitive action on the rates issue.

VFF President David Jochinke said with the VFF continuing to receive reports of annual rate increases exceeding 40 per cent for some farmers, it was time to draw a line in the sand before farms were rated out of existence.

"Enough is enough. Action on the unequitable rural rates situation is a key ask of the VFF's Delivering for Agriculture 2018 state election campaign. So far the response from the parties and candidates has been unsatisfactory," said Mr Jochinke.

"Agriculture in Victoria is responsible for more than \$13 billion of food and fibre production each year, and employs more than 87,000 people, largely in rural and regional areas.

"It is difficult to think of any small or large business that could remain viable in the face of 20 to 40 per cent hikes to such a significant fixed cost each year. Compounding this, the challenges of drought and difficult seasonal conditions facing many farmers are making the significant increases even harder to absorb.

"Our rates system is completely broken. It needs to be demolished and rebuilt from the ground up."

Around half of Victoria's rural and regional councils have indicated they will charge farmers more than the 2.25% rate cap this year. If farmers withheld their rate payments from these councils, that would result in around \$133 million not contributed to council coffers and kept in farmers' pockets.

To highlight this point, the VFF is encouraging farmers with concerns about their rates bills to contest their valuation. Those farmers with the option of doing so are also encouraged to withhold their rates payments until the final lump sum payment is due to council, rather than paying in instalments.

"While many of these rate increases on their own are unsustainable, there is also the question of value," said Mr Jochinke.

"As farmers continue receiving excessive rates notices, they are rightfully questioning the levels of service they receive, with poorly maintained roads, roadside vegetation and inadequate drainage among the most common complaints.

"This sort of thing just wouldn't fly in the city.

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“For farmers to continue doing their job of growing fibre and food for Victoria, Australia and the world, they need decent roads, energy security, infrastructure and a fair rates system.

“It’s time for parties and candidates to start delivering for agriculture and address the rates issue before the state election on 24 November.”

Find out more about the VFF 2018 state election campaign at: www.deliveringforagriculture.org

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About the VFF

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) is dedicated to representing the interests of farmers and making a positive difference to their businesses and communities. We strive to create an environment for our members, our farmers, that enables profitable, safe, sustainable production to ensure an enduring social licence in a community that respects and values the sector.