



Victorian  
Farmers  
Federation

THE VOICE OF VICTORIAN FARMERS  
AND RURAL COMMUNITIES SINCE 1979.



# ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023

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# FROM THE PRESIDENT



Hello members,

On behalf of the VFF Board of Directors, I am pleased to once again present the report for the 2022-2023 financial year.

Writing this as I reflect back on the VFF's performance and what I said to you in this very update this time last year, I believe it can be summed up in one word- change.

We forecast a year of volatility, unpredictability and to an extent, that's exactly what has happened. Most people's minds instantly cast negative thoughts when we hear 'change'.

However, for the VFF the entire advocacy business model as a whole, it's exactly what we need and what you said you wanted us to do.

Yes, there was always going to be resistance and there has been. I would be more worried if there was none, after all we exist to be the voice of many thousands of individuals that each have their own ideas and aspirations.

Now, as we look back on a year of change, it can also be seen as a year of progress, delivery and building towards what we promised to do.

I told you last year that farmers rightly do not want their membership dollars propping up debt. Likewise, you don't want your hard-earned dollars being squandered by ineffective operations. Every time we have asked members what you want, you have been clear.

Why is returning the organisation to financial surplus so essential? It allows us to fund our own operations without the reliance on financial and property assets in the future.

It's absolutely critical and is the very first building block that allows investment returns to be utilised for projects that enrich our organisation and the farming community.

For the very first time in a long time, we are spending within our means without burden of debt. That's vital, especially in these tough economic conditions.

There remains a much smaller portion of debt, that we will continue to pay down, and a huge amount of work to do, but we are finally heading in the right direction.

Speaking of heading in the right direction and this year of change, it's been an absolute jam-packed year for the VFF.

After years of talking and planning, we've introduced the biggest transformation of our membership packages in the VFF's history.

It's about making our membership options work for today's farming needs and for the first time, members can easily personalise their membership by choosing between four new membership tiers, each offering a range of benefits best suited to them and their business.

We exist because of our members and I'm glad to say fairness and inclusivity are the features of this new system. We must stand united together, on the top issues that affect us all.



# FROM THE PRESIDENT



Central to the operation of the VFF has long been our constitution. As we continue to evolve the organisation for the future, the question is whether the rules and governance guidelines that we operate within evolve along with it?

That's the question for VFF members to decide, but I would like to remind everyone that it's a key part of how the VFF operates, so it's essential everyone has a genuine say.

Whatever you decide, our mission remains clear. Change for the future is well underway and we continue to represent, protect and progress Victorian farmers' interests.

I would like to thank the extremely dedicated and hard working staff we are so fortunate to have on hand at the VFF. I'm sure if you were one of the 300 people that we had the pleasure of hosting at this year's VFF Conference at the MCG, you would have seen first-hand how incredible our staff are.

They look forward to working with you all as we gear up for a busy, but exciting 2024 and can't wait to share it with you.

A big thank you to the VFF Board for helping steer the organisation throughout the year and a warm welcome to the new faces, Special Skills Directors Terrie Morgan and James Downing and VFF Chicken Meat President, Colin Peel.

A board of directors should be a group of trusted advisors, and the current board is certainly that, I appreciate the thoughtful guidance that they have provided during turbulent times.

Last but certainly not least, I would like to thank the members. We exist because of you and that is not taken for granted.

We are the voice of Victorian farmers because of you.

I invite you to read this Report further and ask any questions that you may have in our Annual General Meeting, or email [vff@vff.org.au](mailto:vff@vff.org.au) at any time should you have any feedback or queries.

The VFF belongs to the members, and I am simply the caretaker of it during my presidency.

I look forward to continuing this with full transparency and accountability.

Happy farming,

**EMMA GERMANO**  
VFF PRESIDENT

# FROM THE CEO



Dear Members,

I am pleased to report a much-anticipated, positive 2023 financial year. For the first time in many years, the VFF has ended its financial reporting period with a profit.

While by no means a huge operating profit, it does represent a major steadying of the VFF ship after years of financial catchup as we weathered the bruising financial shocks of the capital grants programs and pandemic, amongst other things.

This has been driven by a continued focus centralised capability and systems to service all members equally and equitably and substantial containment of costs through efficiencies and reduction in consultancies that has allowed the organisation to re-establish its focus and bolster our key revenue generating drivers of membership, partnership and sponsorship revenue.

It's been a year of progress for the organisation, with our number of key elements introduced into the core day to day operations of the VFF.

This year we unveiled the largest transformation for the VFF's membership offering.

The new simplified VFF's membership packages replaced the confusing and unfair previous 30 separate memberships types, with new streamlined options to deliver great value for members.

This represents an enormous leap forward in ensuring that our members not only receive the most suited and best membership for their business, but also at a fair price that delivers genuine value for money.

The response from the majority of members has been overwhelmingly positive and our focus over the next year during implementation remains on making VFF membership work for those transitioning to the new model and attracting new members to the VFF.

Ensuring our members get the best deal is one thing, but making sure the organisation is structured to best deliver results and outcomes on the issues that matter most to our members has also been a priority for the VFF.

As flagged last year, there has been a continued emphasis on review, strategic change and development.

Our key business areas of policy and advocacy, communication and engagement, projects, partnerships and sponsorship are now working to aligned and fit-for-purpose strategies that are already heralding the green shoots of progress.

Our policy and advocacy team is transitioning away from taking a purely reactive stance to issues, to being proactive.

By setting our advocacy priorities, it enables us to respond to the challenges that arise and also helps us shape the future of farming in our state.

There is every opportunity for members to get involved in policy and advocacy plans for all commodities and multiple areas of interest.

This sets the rest of the business up for success and I cannot wait to share with you the results of this into the future.

Communications and engagement is the bread and butter of the VFF. It's here where we engage with members and help tell our story to the masses and those making the big decisions.

I'm glad to again say when the media wants to talk to farmers and get our view, they turn to the VFF. We clearly remain the voice of Victorian farmers.

This year we've been mentioned thousands of times in the media, directly reaching more than three million people right across the country.

# FROM THE CEO



This combined with the hundreds of thousands of views generated by our social media, direct emails and website networks helps to provide a network that's hard to ignore and what's what we want.

In this fast-paced world, we know we can't rest on our laurels, so there still remains plenty of work to do to help ensure we remain the voice of farmers.

In mid-2023, we had the opportunity of hosting the VFF Conference at the iconic MCG. In this increasingly online focussed world, it gave us the chance to catch up and network face-to-face. While we know online is the way of the future, it's events such as these that remain critical to engaging with everyone.

The event was a raging success, attracting over 300 people across the two days. It was a pleasure to host farmers, government, stakeholders and our corporate partners and the feedback we received was very encouraging.

A huge thank you to those who came along and we look forward to hosting you again.

Gatherings such as this and our large network of farmers across Victoria remains enticing to our corporate partners.

A big thank you to the VFF partners that offer discounted products and services to our members. These valuable member benefits target parts of farm business where even a small discount can help your profitability and productivity, especially in today's current economic climate.

I would also like thank our sponsors that assist in covering the costs of events and other activities, so they are cheaper for members. You are integral to help making the wheels at the VFF keep turning. The partner and sponsor contacts are on our website, so I ask you to please keep supporting them.

While it's clear there has been an enormous amount achieved in recent times, I am under no illusions there still remains work to be done.

We will look towards greater efficiencies in the IT space and a continued focus on our internal communication functions to ensure our message reaches our intended audiences. I look forward to sharing the progress in these areas.

Congratulations and thank you to all VFF staff for their commitment to the organisation and members throughout the year. You are truly the essential cogs that keep this place running and a big reason why I look forward to turning up to work each day.

It must be said that it's been another complex year, with rapid change and the flexibility of our staff and their dedication to both the VFF and ensuring that challenges were overcome and opportunities realised whenever possible has never wavered.

We now look forward to a continued period of progress and consolidation as we implement a series of operational strategies to focus on communication and delivery of services and key advocacy outcomes.

I thank the Board and each Director for their steady hand in navigating the business throughout the year.

I welcome the new faces on the Board and look forward to hitting the ground running in 2024 as we progress the delivery of our 2021-26 strategic plan.

Last of all, on a personal level I would like to thank the Board giving me the opportunity to lead the VFF as CEO in a permanent capacity earlier this year and look forward to working on behalf of members and all Victorian farmers.

I commend to you the 2023 VFF annual report.

**BRENDAN TATHAM**  
VFF CEO

# POLICY AND ADVOCACY

In July 2023, the VFF Board adopted a Policy and Advocacy Strategy to guide the future activities of the organisation. The strategy sets out three clear outcomes that the VFF needs to achieve:

- Victorian agricultural industries, farmers and regional communities prosper from a favourable policy framework and allocation of resources.
- VFF is recognised as the leader for agriculture and regional policy solutions.
- Members are engaged in policy and advocacy and supported in their advocacy needs.

Management is working to a comprehensive project plan to deliver key actions contained in the strategy, which include:

- Defining and communicating the VFF policy and advocacy supply chain including roles and responsibilities for branches, committees and role of technology.
- Establishing farmers' advocacy expectations through clear VFF internal engagement and advocacy policies and member service level agreement.
- Develop the policy and advocacy frameworks including prioritisation criteria and options for advocacy plans.

Most of the key actions are expected to be completed in early 2024 and will form the foundation for policy development and advocacy activities moving forward.

## Advocacy Priorities

As part of VFF's renewal in February 2023, the VFF Policy Council established six advocacy priorities. Our advocacy priorities for the next two years have been selected after thorough consideration of both the threats to our industry and the opportunities for success.

These six key priorities are the cornerstone of our efforts:

- Getting the transition to renewable energy right.
- Fixing regional roads.
- Maintaining animal health and welfare.
- Protecting biosecurity and sustainability
- Standing up for Victorian irrigation communities.
- Making every farm safer.

Progress against these advocacy priorities is monitored and evaluated by the VFF Policy Council with the VFF's Commodity Policy Councils and Issues Advisory Committees actively involved in delivering the advocacy objectives.

## Farm Business

The VFF continued to be vigilant in ensuring land tax is not applied to farmland. Through participation in the Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee's Inquiry into Land Transfer Duty, the VFF argued against proposals for a broad-based land tax to be imposed as a replacement for stamp duty.

The VFF was the only organisation that warned against imposing land tax on farmland. This, combined with VFF's lobbying efforts helped ensure farmland remained exempt from the Victorian Government's land tax reforms announced in the 2023-24 State Budget which were confined to commercial and industrial properties.

In August 2023, the VFF submitted to the Victorian Government's consultation on the proposed valuation averaging mechanism recommended by the 2020 Independent Inquiry into Local Government Rating.

The government had committed to implement this policy by 2022 and though it has been delayed, it is positive to see work has now commenced.

The VFF continues to engage with the government to progress this reform which would help alleviate 'rates-shock' that many farmers experience through volatile land valuation increases.





# POLICY AND ADVOCACY

In October 2023, the Victorian Treasurer announced the Vacant Residential Land Tax would be extended to regional Victoria. The VFF immediately sought confirmation that the tax would not apply to vacant farmhouse, noting the need of these houses for seasonal workers.

The government responded to the VFF's concerns committing that the tax would not apply to houses in the farm zone. This was welcome news which highlighted the government's responsiveness to the VFF's advocacy efforts.

## Farming Systems

Throughout 2023, the Victorian Government undertook work to progress its new animal welfare legislation which it had previously committed to implement at the 2018 state election. In late 2023, the VFF was engaged in confidential discussions with the government over the proposed reforms.

In these discussions, the VFF was the only organisation representing farmers and the agricultural supply chain. The draft legislation was released for public consultation in December 2023 and the VFF has developed a strategy to coordinate advocacy efforts across the farming community and industry to ensure the new laws don't threaten responsible animal management practices.

The VFF actively participated in the creation of the Victorian Government's Biosecurity Strategy which was launched in November 2023. VFF member representatives through the Farming Systems committee helped shape and direct the proposed outcomes of the strategy with the VFF's advocacy now focussed on its implementation and ensuring it is funded by government.

The VFF was engaged in consultation with the Victorian Government on proposed reforms to biosecurity legislation which were introduced into parliament in late 2023. The new reforms increase penalties for people breaching biosecurity rules such as animal activist trespassers.

The VFF's lobbying efforts helped to ensure the new laws will not overreach and that the rights of farmers

who innocently contribute to biosecurity events are maintained. The VFF was shocked to see the proposed introduction of a new Biosecurity Protection Levy in the 2023-24 federal budget. The VFF strongly opposed the new tax labelling it as completely unworkable given it would be based on the rates of existing statutory levies which are not standardised across commodities.

This argument was back by the Productivity Commission's findings made in late 2023. The VFF in partnership with the NFF will continue advocate for sustainable funding model that ensures risk creators pay their fair share.

## Planning, Environment & Climate Change

Dealing with the transition to renewable energy has been a core focus for the VFF with recent reports suggesting that up to 70% of Victoria's agricultural land would be required for renewable energy development in order to reach the state's transition targets.

In response to the issue, the VFF Energy and Transmission Taskforce was established in June 2023 with member representative across impacted regions leading policy and advocacy development.

Its work has focussed on developing rules and codes to protect farmers rights, particularly concerning land access arrangements, and ensuring fair compensatory mechanisms.

The VFF has engaged in numerous government and industry consultations through submissions and direct meetings, most notably with the Essential Services Commission's development of a land access code.

The VFF secured a major commitment from the Victorian Government to undertake a state-wide plan for transmission infrastructure.

This was a key ask in the VFF's 2022 State election platform and something we have fought for since 2018. As part of the plan to be completed in 2025, a strategic agricultural land assessment is being undertaken with the VFF being the key stakeholder in its development.



# POLICY AND ADVOCACY

Unfortunately, the commitment for proper planning of transmission has come too late for the Western Renewables Link and VNI-West where projects are already underway.

The VFF played a critical role in informing and supporting communities in North Central Victoria about the impact of the proposed VNI-West project when it was announced in February 2023.

In August, the VFF also supported direct farmer advocacy with the protest at Parliament House in opposition to the VNI-West and Western Renewables Link projects.

In response to failure of the Government to release their planning document on agricultural land the VFF presented four professional development courses on agriculture and planning to improve understanding of right to farm issues in the planning profession.

We have commenced discussions on how to improve the operation of exemptions for removal of native vegetation so fences, roads and drains can be maintained and deliver a safe operating environment.

Crown land management has remained an important issue for VFF. Discussions with the highest levels of government have focussed on improving cross-agency management of pest plants and animals.

These issues were also advocated for as part of the new Victorian Government Biosecurity Strategy. In addition, we have continued to advocate for greater recognition of the impacts on agriculture as part of the government's new Bushfire Management Strategy.

## Transport and Infrastructure

The VFF has maintained a strong voice calling for increased funding for regional road maintenance and repair. This formed the core ask in the VFF's 2023/2024 State Budget submission, and whilst the government did commit long term funding over a ten-year period, this fell well below expectations.

The VFF has used other avenues to highlight the critical underinvestment in road infrastructure including our submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional

Development, Infrastructure and Transport in early 2023. Disappointingly, the attempts to launch a Victorian parliamentary inquiry into road maintenance supported by the VFF were blocked by the government and crossbench members.

The VFF was invited by WorkSafe Victoria to join the committee to develop a Telehandler Licence course for Victoria. The VFF was concerned by attempts to force training for farm telehandler operators to be taken over two days. This represents an unfair regulatory and cost burden.

The VFF argued strongly for training to be undertaken within one day, however we were unsuccessful, with training likely to have to take place over two days. This is however an improvement on the four days required for a crane licence.

At a national level, the VFF has worked to progress the issue of right to repair for agricultural machinery. The VFF has stated its preference for the NFF to pursue changes to legislation to enforce a right to repair, rather than the pursuit of a voluntary and unenforceable arrangement direct with tractor manufacturers.

## Water

Disappointingly, the Albanese Government secured legislative changes to the Basin Plan through the parliament in November 2023. In the lead up to this, the VFF fought hard to defend the position of irrigation communities in Northern Victoria who will suffer under the Commonwealth's plans to buyback water, and to recover water for the 450GL up-water target.

The VFF's lobbying efforts included submissions to the Productivity Commission and the Senate Inquiry into the legislation introduced by the Albanese Government.

The VFF worked hard to ensure a strong partnership with the Victorian Government in opposing the federal Labor's proposed changes to the Basin Plan. In June 2023, the VFF hosted an industry forum with the Victorian Water Minister Harriet Shing with representatives across the primary and secondary industries across the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District including Bega, Fonterra, SPC and Kagome.



# POLICY AND ADVOCACY

This effort underscored the united concerns of industry and community towards the impact of water buybacks on local jobs. In addition to this, the VFF successfully ran a series of workshops in Northern Victoria to inform irrigators about issues impacting water supply and markets, as well as the impact of proposed changes to the Basin Plan.

In response to the November 2022 flood events, the VFF participated in the Victorian Parliament's inquiry and hosted a member forum at Rochester to hear the concerns of farmers, particularly those that were impacted by the operation of Loch Gary on the Lower Goulburn River. The VFF's recommendations to government included maintaining and upgrading infrastructure including stream gauges.

The VFF has maintained strong support for the proposed Southern Wimmera & Northeast Pyrenees Water Supply project and is pleased to see the completion of its feasibility study and progress to a business case. The VFF advocated for funding for the project as part of the 2023 state election campaign.

## Workforce & Social Infrastructure

As part of the 2022 state election, the VFF was successful in achieving a commitment from the Victorian Government with dedicated funding for farmer health and wellbeing, including a \$900,000 commitment to the National Centre for Farmer Health.

The VFF has also intensively lobbied government to secure funds in order to continue the successful Making our Farms Safer Project. The project has delivered tangible benefits for safety outcomes with a direct impact on shifting the culture towards safety in the agriculture industry.

The VFF was disappointed in the Victorian Government's failure not to consult industry on its proposed changes to the WorkCover scheme which were developed throughout 2023. Failure by the government to manage the scheme has seen premiums increase in response to an exponential increase in mental health claims. This is particularly unfair on the agricultural industry where most claims based on physical injury.





# COMMODITY GROUPS



## Grains

The VFF Grains Policy Council took a leading role alongside Grain Growers and Grain Producers Australia in opposition to the proposed development of an office tower next to the Port of Geelong which would limit traffic flows and port expansion. The united front demonstrated across the groups eventually led to the developer withdrawing its proposal.

The Grains Policy Council has also taken a keen interest in addressing shortages in regional housing to support grain growing communities and to attract labour. Ongoing briefings with Wimmera Southern Mallee Development have highlighted innovative responses to the issue at a local level.

Ongoing engagement with the Department of Transport has led to a host of local road access issues in grain growing district being identified and actioned. This is an important partnership for the VFF Grains Group which is being strengthened into 2024.

## Livestock

The VFF Livestock Group has taken a leading role in representing producers on a range of biosecurity concerns including Foot and Mouth Disease, national traceability reform and the new Victorian animal welfare legislation.

The need for a harmonised approach to the rollout of a national eID system for sheep and goats has been a priority for the VFF and our work to encourage other states to follow Victoria's lead is proving successful.

VFF has also been engaging with the Victorian Government in relation to the continuation of its Wild Dog Management Plan. The VFF's efforts helped secure the for at least another year and we will continue to seek long-term certainty for the program in 2024.

The VFF has also been advocating for an expansion and reform of the Kangaroo Harvesting Management Plan and will continue to lobby the government on behalf of producers.

In addition to this advocacy on behalf of producers, the VFF Livestock Policy Council has adopted a range of new policy positions relating to loading ramp safety, livestock agent licensing, and carcass tracking in abattoirs.



# COMMODITY GROUPS

## UDV

The UDV is playing a leading role in advocating for Victoria to allow the use of virtual herding technology which is currently banned. The VFF/UDV has engaged in productive discussions with Agriculture Victoria and technology providers with our efforts focussed on seeing a change to Victoria's strict regulations.

On the back of UDV's advocacy in 2022 surrounding the Environment Protection Authority's crack down on use of tyres on farms, dairy farmers have worked hard to comply with new regulations that allow the continued use of tyres for silage storage.

The UDV's advocacy on the continuation of the Cattle Underpass Scheme has led to the Victorian Government undertaking work to provide standards for construction which will make it easier for dairy farmers to overcome regulatory barriers. This work is expected to be completed in 2024.

## Horticulture

Elections for the VFF Horticulture Policy Council were held in May 2023 with representation based on five new regions across the state. The Policy Council met later in 2023 to agree to a new policy and advocacy plan which will guide its work over the next two years.

Priority issues include the protection of strategic land for horticultural production, improved support for seasonal labour and for continued investment in biosecurity programs that specifically protect Victorian horticulture against emerging and ongoing threats.

## Intensives

Following increased animal activism including break-ins at abattoirs and piggeries, the Victorian Parliament announced an inquiry into the state's pig industry. The VFF Pig Policy Council undertook preparations for the inquiry in collaboration with Australian Pork Limited, including a detailed submission.

The VFF Chicken Meat Policy Council has been actively engaged in the NFF's project to towards creating greater market transparency and competition in the poultry meat sector, following concerns raised by growers and the ACCC.

The 12-month research project, funded by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, explored the potential for a Code of Conduct as a mechanism to address these concerns. The interim report revealed a widespread lack of market transparency, misuse of market power, and economic harm within the poultry meat supply chain and has recommended that a mandatory code be implemented.

Following the announcement of changes to the national Standards and Guidelines for Poultry which aims to phase out the use of conventional cages by 2036, ongoing representations have been made to the Victorian Government to ascertain its position. The VFF has advocated for an extension to the phase out as a minimum in recognition of Victoria's different industry structure.





stock  
sense

# PROJECTS



The Stock Sense project has greatly expanded its network and reach in the past 12 months, and is successfully raising Victorian producer's awareness and knowledge on key livestock health, welfare and biosecurity issues.

In 2023, Stock Sense conducted 18 workshops and 3 webinars. 10 new factsheets have been uploaded to the Stock Sense website and a number of network group meetings have been conducted and 5 field days attended to increase networking within the industry.

Stock Sense's key impact has been to mitigate the high risk of poor biosecurity practices, especially around peri urban livestock producers by providing advice and resources on putting together biosecurity plans, handing out biosecurity signage and promoting 'come clean, go clean' messages.

The data collected from workshops and events indicates that Stock Sense is a valuable project, reaching a large number of producers who were not yet aware of their full responsibilities and the knowledge or skills required when owning livestock.

- 78% of workshop attendees were not VFF members and 81% had not attended a Stock Sense event before.
- 48% of attendees did not currently have a biosecurity plan.
- 97% of attendees learnt something valuable at the workshop.
- 86% of attendees planned to implement something they had learnt from the workshop on their farm.

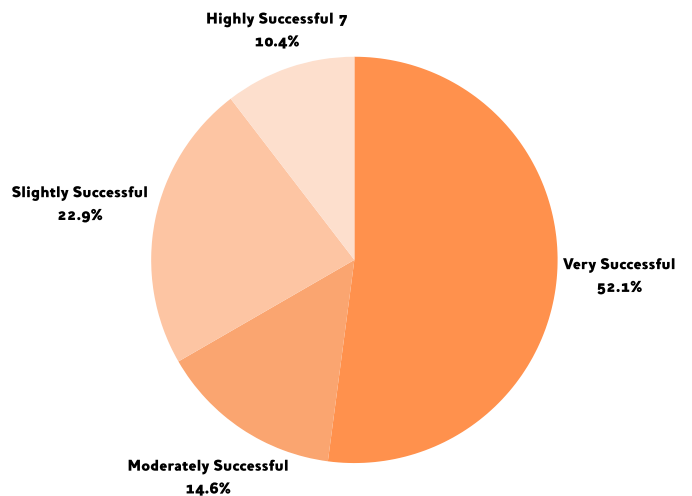
Late last year, Stock Sense engaged Kristy Howard of Inspiring Excellence to conduct an independent evaluation of the Stock Sense project in 2023.

Kristy's evaluation of the project was positive and included the following recommendations, to enhance

- engagement of producer and peri-urban landholders with Stock Sense workshops by:
- More clearly defining the target audience.
- Working in partnership with more organisations and business.
- Build in hands-on activities into workshops.
- Target event promotions to highlight 'hot' topics.
- Develop email marketing campaigns for workshops.
- Develop a follow up communication process post workshop.
- Provide training/mentoring to existing project staff.

- Better define impact Stock Sense wants to have on biosecurity, welfare and health practices.
- Review existing interim project objectives to make them more specific and measurable.
- Develop tracking metrics for ease of reporting.
- Review purpose of Stock Sense workshops for audience.

In light of this evaluation and further research, Stock Sense's key focus, with the secured funding for the Sheep & Goat compensation fund of \$365,000 for 2024, will be peri urban landholders who are deemed to be the highest biosecurity risk to Victorian Agriculture. Stock Sense is working in greater partnership with Agriculture Victoria and with their support to mitigate the peri urban biosecurity risk.



**Above:** Stakeholder perception of the success of the Stock Sense program in meeting the objective of 'Increased awareness of animal welfare and biosecurity issues and producer responsibilities'.







**MAKING OUR  
FARMS  
SAFER**

# PROJECTS

The MOFS project has been running since October 2020, and up until 30th September 2023 has delivered:

- 141 farm safety briefings and presentations across the state
- 345 on-farm visits
- 4 industry-led guidebooks
- 34 newsletters
- 18 fact sheets
- 9 podcasts
- 40+ videos

We have also led the Making our Farm Families Safer (MOFFS) campaigns which address the issue of child safety on farms, and tackle older farmer safety and succession planning.

The Child Safety on Farms: A Practical Guide for Farming Parents handbook has been downloaded thousands of times since it was put on our website in October 2022, and 55,000 views of one of our Child Safety campaign videos were received on YouTube.

Statistics from survey respondents about this campaign are:

- 73% have heard of the campaign,
- 68% say the MOFFS resources have made them more educated,
- 76% say they're more committed to child safety,
- 76% say they have rethought which tasks to give their kids, and
- 52% say they have implemented changes since engaging with the campaign.

### Our Stay Farming Longer and Safer:

A Practical Guide for Older Farmers and their Families Handbook, is slated for launch and digital distribution in early 2024.

Our one-on-one farm visits are highly valued and trusted in the farming community, because they exemplify our approach of engaging with farmers in a meaningful and respectful way.

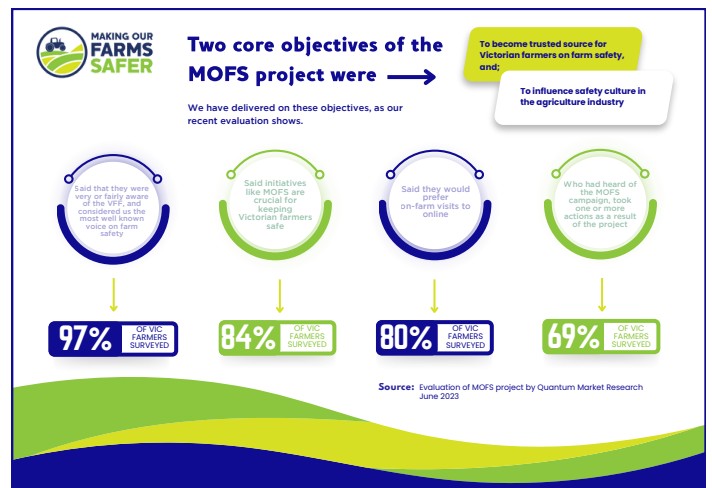
Feedback on our visits shows that:

- 100% of farmers surveyed say that they will act on farm safety advice following a visit from MOFS, and
- 98.4% rated the farm safety visit as of high or very high quality.

In June 2023, we organised an independent evaluation of our project, through Quantum Market Research.

The results from this evaluation prove that the Making Our Farms Safer project has had a real impact on the safety culture in the Victorian agricultural community, and has become the most trusted source for Victorian farmers for health and safety information:

- 97% said that they were very aware, or fairly aware, of the VFF, and considered us the most well-known voice on farm safety;
- 84% said that farm safety initiatives like MOFS are crucial for keeping Victorian farmers safe;
- 80% said that they would prefer on-farm visits to online meetings; and
- 69% of those surveyed who had heard/interacted with the MOFS project, had already taken one or more actions as a result of what they learned from us.





## 2023 VFF ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The VFF held a highly successful Conference at the Melbourne Cricket Club over two days on the 24th and 25th July 2023, where over 300 members, industry leaders and government representatives attended.

The theme of the conference was “Nothing about us without us: modern advocacy for Regional Victoria.” On Day one, the members engaged in insightful agricultural discussions and networking opportunities.

Highlights of the day included the opening address by the Hon. Gayle Tierney, who at the time was Victorian Minister for Agriculture, while the keynote address was delivered by the Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon, CEO of the Australian Forest Products Association and former Federal Minister for Agriculture.

Attendees also heard from David Stanko, Head of Commercial Sustainability at Nutrien Ag Solutions who presented on sustainable solutions for the agriculture industry.

There were also three interactive panel sessions covering topics in the areas of innovation, advocacy and investment and risk management. We would like to thank all the panels members who provided their expertise and time to present and the conference.

Day one concluded with a dinner, where all guests were entertained by award-winning singer and songwriter Mike Brady, along with a football panel including AFL Premiership players and legends, Anthony Stevens, Heath Shaw and Peter Daicos.

Day two of the conference included the Commodity conference, where our members engaged with several panel sessions and guest speakers, that covered a wide range of topics and issues affecting the farming community.

We would like to thank all our partners and sponsors, especially Nutrien Ag Solutions, who were the Platinum and Bursary partner of the conference and provided the opportunity for 23 young farmers to attend the two-day event.





# 2022/23 FINANCIAL REPORT

## Overview

The result for the financial year ending 30 September 2023 was a surplus of \$404k. The key driver of this was the renewed focus on cost containments and internal efficiencies.

This is evident at the operating level where there was a positive movement of \$1.3m. The reduction in income was offset by greater savings made in expenses.

Current assets were used to reduce the level of current liabilities, and this is the main reason both have reduced in 2023.

## Revenue

Revenue from memberships for FY23 of \$3.2m was below the previous year of \$3.4m and was due to a reduction in levies received.

Management has embarked on the roll out of a new membership model which is expected to greatly simplify matters for current and prospective members.

Project income has reduced to reflect the completion of some projects and the changing of focus in others.

Rental income from Farrer House rose as a result of work to secure new tenants. Renewed focus on leasing out unoccupied space has continued through the year.

Investment income was slightly down due to the reduction in investments that was used to pay down debt.

The increase in commercial and other income is reflective of an increase in sponsorship income and the gain for financial assets.

## Expenses

Significant cost reductions were made across almost all areas of the organisation. The main savings were made in staff costs, legal fees and promotional and newsletter expenses.

Management has worked to further review working relationships with external parties and these realignments will continue to provide efficiencies through 2024.

## Projects

Both project revenue and expenses were down due to the decreased activity in this area, with some coming to completion.

Active projects during the year included:

- Making Our Famers Safer
- Stock Sense
- Supporting Water Markets, Trade and Compliance

Projects are vital to maintaining and strengthening the VFF's positive image throughout Victoria and supports the organisation's positioning and marketing strategies with key stakeholders in government and industry.

## Farrer House

Rental income from Farrer House increased by 7% during the year, with building costs have increased by the same amount. Management have started a top-to-bottom review of all costs associated with the building which have already highlighted some savings that can be made. This work will continue throughout 2024 along with some additional work to ensure that Farrer House continues to function well.

## Reserves

The Board reviewed the make up of investments within the VFF and decided to use some of these funds to reduce debt levels. The remainder of these funds continue to be invested which in turn continued to provide income throughout the year.

## Balance Sheet

Net assets at 30 September 2023 were \$49.1m compared to \$48.7m at 30 September 2022.

Statement of Financial Position	2023	2022
	\$	\$
<b>Assets</b>		
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	800,538	502,360
Trade and other receivables	704,735	1,232,790
Other financial assets	5,097,137	9,339,856
Other current assets	47,143	78,724
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>6,649,553</b>	<b>11,153,730</b>
<b>Non current assets</b>		
Investment properties	41,206,932	41,112,657
Property, plant and equipment	7,901,260	8,209,015
Right-of-use assets	78,386	111,684
<b>Total Non Current Assets</b>	<b>49,186,578</b>	<b>49,433,356</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>55,836,131</b>	<b>60,587,086</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
<b>Current liabilities</b>		
Trade and other payables	983,498	1,052,759
Contract liabilities	1,447,595	1,916,574
Borrowings	3,581,881	8,108,613
Lease liabilities	20,211	68,371
Provisions	210,814	237,260
Other current liabilities	367,003	367,003
<b>Total Current liabilities</b>	<b>6,611,002</b>	<b>11,750,580</b>
<b>Non-current liabilities</b>		
Lease liabilities	60,545	46,873
Provisions	42,047	71,592
<b>Total Non-current liabilities</b>	<b>102,592</b>	<b>118,465</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>6,713,594</b>	<b>11,869,045</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>49,122,537</b>	<b>48,718,041</b>
<b>Equity</b>		
Reserves	15,727,945	15,727,945
Retained surpluses	33,394,592	32,990,096
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>49,122,537</b>	<b>48,718,041</b>

<b>Statement of Profit and Loss and Other Comprehensive Income</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
	\$	\$
<b>Revenue</b>		
Member income	3,159,886	3,381,125
Project related income	1,031,311	1,987,835
Rental income	1,740,998	1,631,110
Investment income	210,940	274,543
Commercial and other income	2,088,713	1,803,386
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>8,231,848</b>	<b>9,077,999</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Employee expenses	(2,951,570)	(3,863,088)
Project and operational expenses	(3,009,457)	(4,455,896)
Building and depreciation expenses	(1,280,282)	(1,191,221)
Investment expenses	(350,503)	(146,258)
Other expenses	(235,541)	(349,293)
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>(7,827,353)</b>	<b>(10,005,756)</b>
<b>Operating deficit before revaluation of financial and investment assets</b>	<b>404,495</b>	<b>(927,757)</b>
Net fair value gain / (loss) on revaluation of financial assets	0	(1,360,438)
Net fair value gain / (loss) on revaluation of investment properties	0	10,225,688
<b>Surplus / (deficit) before income tax expense</b>	<b>404,495</b>	<b>7,937,493</b>
<b>Total comprehensive income / (loss) for the year</b>	<b>404,495</b>	<b>7,937,493</b>

This is an extract from the full VFF Financial Report that can be viewed at the VFF website.

**INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT  
TO THE MEMBERS OF VICTORIAN FARMERS FEDERATION & AND ITS CONTROLLED ENTITIES**

**Opinion**

We have audited the financial report of Victorian Farmers Federation (the Company) and its controlled entities (the Group), which comprises the consolidated statement of financial position as at 30 September 2023, the consolidated statement of comprehensive income, the consolidated statement of changes in equity and the consolidated statement of cash flows for the year then ended, notes to the consolidated financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies, and the directors' declaration.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial report of the Group is in accordance with the *Corporations Act 2001*, including:

- (a) giving a true and fair view of the Group's financial position as at 30 September 2023 and of its performance for the year then ended; and
- (b) complying with Australian Accounting Standards – Simplified Disclosure Requirements and the *Corporations Regulations 2001*.

**Basis for Opinion**

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report* section of our report. We are independent of the Group in accordance with the auditor independence requirements of the *Corporations Act 2001* and the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including Independence Standards)* (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We confirm that the independence declaration required by the *Corporations Act 2001*, which has been given to the directors of the Company, would be in the same terms if given to the directors as at the time of this auditor's report.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

**Other Information**

The directors are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Group's annual report for the year ended 30 September 2023, but does not include the financial report and our auditor's report thereon.

Our opinion on the financial report does not cover the other information and accordingly we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial report, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial report or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

**Responsibilities of the Directors for the Financial Report**

The directors of the Company are responsible for the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards – Simplified Disclosure Requirements and the *Corporations Act 2001* and for such internal control as the directors determine necessary to enable the preparation of a financial report that gives a true and fair view and is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.



In preparing the financial report, the directors are responsible for assessing the Group's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters relating to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the directors either intend to liquidate the Group or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

#### **Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report**

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Group's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the directors.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Group's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Group to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with the directors regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

We also provide the directors with a statement that we have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence, and to communicate with them all relationships and other matters that may reasonably be thought to bear on our independence, and where applicable, actions taken to eliminate threats or safeguards applied.

*DFK Kidsons Partnership*

DFK Kidsons Partnership

*Robert Wernli*

Robert Wernli  
Partner

Melbourne  
13 December 2023









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Federation

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**The voice of Victorian farmers and  
rural communities since 1979.**