

Media Release



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Listening to farmers the key to solving state border confusion

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) recognises today's partial relaxation of border restrictions by the New South Wales Government as a step in the right direction, but expects the upcoming National Agriculture Worker Code to address many of the issues Victorian farmers continue to experience.

VFF President David Jochinke said talking and consulting with farmers in border regions is key to understanding the mass confusion and uncertainty that is jeopardising Victoria's almost \$40 billion agriculture industry.

"This announcement to reinstate the 50km border zone after meeting with and speaking to border residents demonstrates the value and importance of consultation."

"There's been genuine concern from farmers about the immediate future of their livelihoods and, in many cases, the viability of towns and communities in our border regions."

"We have farmers that can't access their properties interstate to check water, wean calves and mark lambs. All jobs that are absolutely vital to animal welfare."

"Decision-makers need to understand agriculture doesn't only operate within state borders, it transcends these and we need an ironclad agreement from all states so critical agriculture can continue," Mr Jochinke said.

The VFF has been liaising with key farming groups and has been communicating crucial concerns to both the Federal and State Governments ahead of the expected National Agriculture Worker Code. Our key requests are:

- Free up the movement of the agricultural workforce;
- Removal of arbitrary limitations on origin and destination travel;
- Smoother flow of agricultural goods and services intra state and interstate;
- Regulatory change to ensure that agriculture is deemed an essential or critical service;
- Asymptomatic testing should not be required, but if it is, testing should be accessible and affordable.

"We have been extremely clear that there is an urgent need for free movement of the agricultural workforce."

"Farmers simply can't afford the type of disruption we've seen recently. It's farmers and their farm businesses that are suffering now, but if the problem isn't fixed, it will be Australia's problem." Mr Jochinke said.

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