

Media Release



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Councils put on notice over farm rates

Victorian farmers are putting local government on notice as councils prepare their draft budgets for 2020-21.

This week VFF President David Jochinke wrote to the state's rural and regional mayors warning them that Victorian farmers will strongly oppose any unfair rate hikes.

"Victorian agriculture cannot be expected to shoulder an even greater rating burden as we work to help rebuild the state's economy in the wake of COVID-19."

"The VFF will be vocal in calling out councils that unfairly shift the rating burden onto farmers and the agricultural sector, whilst acknowledging and publicly commending councils that strike balance in their rating strategy," Mr Jochinke said.

Mr Jochinke said the VFF was also encouraging councils to join with farmers to lobby the state government for changes to the rating system.

"Victoria's rating system has created the situation whereby all regional and rural ratepayers pay more in rates as a percentage of the value of their property than ratepayers in metropolitan Melbourne."

"What's more, regional and rural ratepayers often receive and have access to fewer services from local government than ratepayers in the city."

"Changes must be made to the state's rating strategy in the long term and we would welcome the opportunity to work with councils to advocate for reform."

Mr Jochinke said the VFF will be looking closely at all council budgets this year to catch out councils trying to force through unfair rate hikes.

"The VFF constantly monitors and reports on the rates set by all local government councils to promote fair rating strategies and to actively campaign against unfair and inequitable rate hikes."

"Our expectation remains that all councils will put forward a fair and equitable rating strategy this year, particularly in light of recent drought conditions, the bushfires and the coronavirus pandemic," Mr Jochinke said.

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