



## Media Release

22 February 2019

### Drought acknowledgement welcomed but time for a bigger discussion

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) notes today's announcement by the Andrews Government acknowledging the devastating drought conditions across the State.

"The drought in Victoria is a near once-in-a-lifetime event and is certainly taking its toll on farm businesses and the mental resilience of our farmers," said Mr David Jochinke, VFF President.

"We are here today supporting our members and encouraging both State and Federal Governments to work together on a coordinated drought response that delivers real on-the-ground solutions, for both the short term and the longer term preparedness.

"We are seeing the perfect storm unfold with prolonged drought, feed costs doubling, farmers spending most of their days hand-feeding stock, and no end in sight in the near future.

"While acknowledging today's announcement and support for farmers, it is a timely opportunity for us to put this into some context. The VFF does not support knee-jerk reactions to drought or other important policy topics, however, it is time we started a conversation as a community about the place agriculture holds in Victoria.

"Do we as a State and community value the role farmers play in delivering us food – safe, sustainable, reliably supplied and delivered produce?" he said. "If we as a society value our farmers, then it is time to act and deliver a level playing field for them.

"As we look around the drought impacted areas we can see our farmers' care and commitment to animal welfare and the produce they supply. In addition to battling this near once-in-a-lifetime event, our farmers are working under substandard conditions - no fit-for-purpose roads, no reliable energy supply and many cannot even access basic telephone or internet coverage.

"We call on the State and Commonwealth Governments to understand the gravity of this situation and work in bipartisan collaboration to support farmers and the food and fibre they provide us.

"Victorian farmers need a level a playing field and the time is now," said Mr Jochinke.

ENDS

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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.