



Victorian
Farmers
Federation

SUBMISSION

**C70moyn – Rural Housing and Settlement
Strategy**

November 2021

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) welcomes the opportunity to submit in response to the Moyne Planning Scheme amendment – C70moyn. The farming community routinely expresses concern that agricultural issues are not being properly considered by the Victorian and local planning systems.

The VFF represents a number of farmers in the Moyne Shire Council municipal area. Our members represent many different commodities including dairy, livestock, horticulture and grains. These farm businesses support many service sector and secondary processing jobs in the Shire.

Different commodities and production systems have different sensitivities to potential land use conflict. Given the landscape and amenity values of Moyne Shire the development pressure on high amenity areas can impact on the ability to maintain or grow production. The impact of this pressure on some of the Victoria's most productive and versatile soils, in conjunction with the Rutledge and Atkinson special survey lot sizes, has led to the loss of production in some areas, due to poor guidance on how to protect soils from inappropriate development.

For over 4 years VFF has had a well-developed policy position on the changes required to the planning system to support the retention and growth of agriculture in Victoria. Repeated failures to address or consider these matters in state policy or advice how to determine impact on agriculture has led to the loss of planning scheme content that actively promotes and protects agriculture.

Failure to properly consider land use conflict on the main land use (by area) in Victoria can be seen as an urban bias in the planning system. It leads to applications that describe farm land as 'vacant' and reports that don't outline how impacts on agriculture have been considered.

In that regard VFF is pleased to see that Council is attempting to lead the state in outlining the importance of agriculture to the Shire and the land use challenges it faces.

The VFF are generally supportive of changes proposed in the Moyne Planning Scheme amendment – C70moyn which is in relation to the Rural Housing and Settlement Strategy. The VFF understand that there is a balance between providing enough appropriately zoned land to accommodate a growing population and allowing residential uses on prime agricultural land.

Agriculture was taken out of "economic development" in VC71. Unfortunately the VC71 amendment documents and background report do not specify why agriculture was removed from the economic development sections of the then state planning policy framework.

Analysis of the changes in the planning system around this time demonstrate that there was significant change to allow urban development on high quality agricultural land as well as changes that prioritise land management outcomes on agricultural land in preference to its agricultural use, often without a clear nexus to land use and development.

The C70moyn amendment is proposing to make changes to a number of clauses within the Moyne Planning Scheme, however the VFF is particularly supportive of Clause 21.07 – Economic Development. The proposed Economic Development clause recognizes agriculture as the most significant land use in the Shire and that the economic wellbeing of the Shire and its towns are directly related to the agricultural sector. The VFF has been calling for agriculture to be included in the state's economic impact clause since it was removed.

The Moyne Shire Council recognizing that their economy is heavily dependent upon agriculture and that agriculture is the most significant land use within the Shire, is a significant step into ensuring that agricultural land will be protected from conflicts and inappropriate development. Introducing this information into the planning scheme enables a proper consideration of the economic development of agriculture when applying for planning permits that would not normally be a consideration as agriculture is not listed in the PPF economic development clause.

The VFF believes that this is one of the most significant inclusions within the amendment as it will help protect agriculture into the future. The inclusions of 'rural land is a finite resource that should be retained for productive purposes, and not used as a less expensive alternative to residential land' to discourage dwellings in the agricultural areas that are not associated with agriculture, will protect this land into the future.

Moyne Planning Scheme amendment – C70moyn is an opportunity for the Shire to be forward thinking and show how to work with industry to identify what is needed to see agriculture thriving in 30 years' time.

2020 demonstrated that Victoria was well placed in a pandemic as we produce a wide range of food and fiber, with good biosecurity systems. This provided not only food security but a key segment of the economy that kept people in work and earned income for the nation. The decisions we make now will impact our resilience to other global shocks. That future is at risk unless the planning system gives serious consideration to industry knowledge on what is needed to protect existing quality agricultural land.

With the proposed amendment to the Moyne Planning Scheme the VFF want to ensure that the small lot sizes do not affect the ability to farm and that no land use conflict occurs. This can be avoided by properly considering dwelling and other secondary applications for small lots in agricultural areas and the proposed changes will help with this.

Farmers often need to buy more land. This is often relatively small lots that give them the critical mass they need to maintain a viable farming operation. These lots may be distant from their main holding, and the distance can also help protect their business from total loss from local climatic events. Once development occurs on this land its ability to be purchased for farming is removed and the expectations of quasi rural residential potential increases values in the wider area, with flow on impacts for viability given that agriculture is a price taking industry.

Farming is part of the history and social fabric of the Moyne area and will continue to be an important part of the local economy and environment. The VFF has made the endorsements in this submission in an effort to ensure farming in Moyne Shire Council is not impeded by unnecessary or unintended impacts on the local agricultural industry.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission. The VFF remains committed to assisting all levels of government in developing the Planning Policy that has good agricultural outcomes and welcomes and encourages industry engagement.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emma Germano".

Emma Germano - President