



**Victorian  
Farmers  
Federation**

# **SUBMISSION**

**Parliamentary Inquiry  
Renewable Energy**

**26 November 2021**

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

That this House requires the Environment and Planning Committee to inquire into, consider and report, by July 2021, on —

- (a) measures to enable Victoria to transition its energy supply to 100 per cent renewable energy;
- (b) jobs and economic benefits and implications of Victoria transitioning to 100 per cent renewable energy;
- (c) investment, both public and private, required to achieve 100 per cent renewable energy generation in Victoria, including investment in grid infrastructure and energy storage;
- (d) further opportunities for Victoria to reduce emissions, including through finding alternatives to industrial and household gas consumption;
- (e) government investment or action that would be needed to support workers in impacted industries to facilitate a just transition and ensure workers and communities are not left behind as Victoria transitions to 100 per cent renewable energy;
- (f) the economic risks of not urgently reducing emissions by transitioning to 100 per cent renewable energy; and
- (g) any other related matters.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For several years the VFF has been calling on the Government to have a ‘circular economy’ style strategy for renewable energy. This form of energy may have less impact on climate than fossil fuels, but if all aspects of dispersed generation are not planned for it can have other serious impacts on community, economy and environment.

The Electrical Industry Act is an example. Not only has government not prepared an access code in the 20 years since it was enacted, it overrides property rights and existing beneficial uses of the land with little safeguards or compensation for impacts on farming practice, machinery and irrigation. There is not consideration of compliance with federal or state biosecurity requirements, reporting on access and activities so landholders can fill in vendor declarations. The legislation without an access code has many impacts and few obligations to compensate or rehabilitate harm to lawful business activities.

Our members tell us that their land is their business. Many statutory processes undervalue agricultural land and uses. It is as though impacts are not considered, as the land is seen as being vacant.

This is compounded by decision making processes failing to consider individual agricultural impacts. Approving a generation site can have off site impacts. Issues regarding ability to get energy to market and the social, economic and environmental impacts are not considered in the approvals. Whilst a farmer can negotiate annual compensation / commercial agreement, rehabilitation and biosecurity requirements in hosting generation, these issues are not considered in the Electrical Industry Act.

EES processes put agriculture in with wider land use planning issues. This is often a desktop level discussion by planners. Unless agricultural studies are undertaken looking at the impacts on each farm business the result is unfair.

The last 12 months have shown not only the importance of biosecurity, but of food security and local supply chains. VFF has prepared a Managing Entry to Farms Policy and has reviewed its Renewable Energy Policy. These policy statements highlight the legislative changes, strategic planning and policy settings that are necessary to ensure that the transition to distributed energy is not at the expense of agricultural land uses and employment.

These policies can relate to each element of the terms of reference. Renewable energy and 100% renewable energy can be seen as a societal good. That does not mean that every renewable energy proposal will lead to a good outcome. There are a range of impacts that need to be considered. Accelerating development without ensuring a strategic and fair planning and operational framework will lead to developments that result in social and economic loss that a better regulatory framework would have avoided.

I have attached these policies and our submission to Renewable Energy Zones to assist you in considering how to ensure that regulatory settings are fair to agriculture and landholders property rights.

Gerald Leach  
Chair Environment Planning and Climate Change Committee  
**Victorian Farmers Federation**

### **Attachments**

*VFF Renewable Energy Policy*

*VFF Managing Entry to Farms Policy*

*VFF Right to Farm Policy*

*VFF Submission Renewable Energy Zones*