



Farm & Rural Crime

Agreed to by the VFF Policy Council

Meeting 175

9 March 2022

Policy Statement

General Principles

1. The VFF believes farm and rural crime is a serious concern for rural communities and that governments have neglected to adequately deal with it. These crimes negatively impact on the safety and security of farmers and their families and contribute to significant economic loss for the rural economy.
2. The VFF supports increased government support for preventing, investigating and penalizing farm and rural crime.
3. The VFF believes the farming community has a duty to proactively manage and mitigate farm and rural crime. The VFF supports increased government support to assist the farming community achieve this objective.

Victoria Police

4. The VFF supports the adequate resourcing of a dedicated farm crime unit in Victoria Police to ensure that it can fulfill the duties of investigation, analysis, intelligence gathering, media and community outreach.
5. The VFF supports the continuation of the Victoria Police Farm Crime Liaison Officer Program for specialist general duties officers to receive training in farm crime related matters, maintain contemporary knowledge of local issues and trends, providing assistance and guidance to other officers and to engage and liaise with the farming community.
6. The VFF supports the creation of a specialist Farm and Rural Crime Squad to sit within Victoria Police Crime Command. The role of the squad would be to respond to and provide primary investigation accountability for offences including livestock theft, farm machinery and equipment theft, trespass, firearms offences, rural related fraud and other crimes that significantly impact rural communities. The squad should have a dedicated command structure and dedicated resourcing separate to Divisional Command.
7. The VFF believes police officers working in rural areas and regional centres should be trained in matters of rural crime; this includes both theoretical/research-based knowledge in rural criminology as well as the practicalities of responding to farm crime.
8. The VFF supports measures undertaken by Victoria Police to recruit and support officers from rural communities.

9. The VFF supports adequate staffing of 24-hour police stations in regional areas to ensure that rural communities can receive a reliable level of service and protection.
10. The VFF supports greater coordination between state jurisdictions to better prevent and respond to criminals operating across state borders.
Penalties
11. The VFF believes penalties and sentences for rural related crimes are not strong enough and that the judiciary has failed to impose penalties and sentences in line with community expectations, or to a level adequate as to be a strong deterrent to offenders.
12. The VFF supports government action to ensure adequate penalties and sentences for rural related crimes, and to ensure the judiciary understands the significance of these crime when imposing penalties and sentences.
13. The VFF believes trespass and illegal hunting offences need to be treated more seriously by government and the judiciary and that these crimes multiply the likelihood of opportunistic crimes such as firearm theft, diesel theft, property damage and vandalism. The VFF supports tougher sentencing for these offences.

Crime Prevention

14. The VFF supports government developing crime prevention education, tools and strategies that are purpose built to address farm crime.
15. The VFF believes that farmers should be supported and encouraged explore new and innovative technological approaches to combatting farm crime.
16. The VFF believes government should support farmers to financially to uptake crime prevention efforts given the unlikelihood of an immediate policing response. Financial assistance should aim at ultimately reducing cost to government through prevention.
17. The VFF supports the provision of mechanisms to allow direct feedback from farmers on crime issues to increase opportunities for police intelligence gathering and crime reporting.
18. The VFF supports ongoing research into farm and rural crime related issues to expose and allow for comparative long-term analysis.

Public Awareness

19. The VFF supports government funding state based and national rural crime campaigns to increase wider community awareness about the prevalence and impact of farm crime.
20. The VFF supports government funding of campaigns to create public awareness and confidence in the actions being undertaken to address farm crime and to highlight areas in which authorities are having success.