

Media Release



Victorian
Farmers
Federation

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Swan Hill and Loddon farmers to face rates rip-off

Farmers in the Swan Hill and Loddon shires are set for more rates pain with council draft budgets to be voted on soon.

Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) President Emma Germano said many farmers are unable to bear further rate increases.

“The farming community cannot be expected to continue to endure rate increases that result in less funds available to invest in farm businesses, create economic activity and provide local jobs. This threatens farmers’ security and the economic benefit that agriculture brings to these two shire councils.”

In the Swan Hill Rural City Council, the average rates paid for dryland farm assessments are set to increase by 20.4 per cent, while residential rates will increase by just 2 per cent, despite the Victorian Government’s rate cap set at 3.5 per cent.

“This is the largest farm rate rise across Victoria and is one of the most significant increases seen in recent years.”

In the Loddon Shire Council, where many farms were impacted by the 2022 floods, average farm rates are set to increase 8 per cent, whilst residential rates will be effectively cut by 8 per cent.

“This rate hike for farmers whose incomes were devastated by the recent floods is irresponsible and misguided of the Council”

“As this is a particularly busy time for farmers in the region with crops being sown, the VFF is concerned that many local farmers will be oblivious to Council’s proposed rate hike. They therefore have little ability to be consulted.”

“The increase represents significant rates shock for farmers and will hurt business growth and productivity, which are ultimately help creates local jobs and protects farm businesses into the future.”

Ms Germano said the solution for both councils is to implement a dynamic rating strategy.

“A dynamic rating strategy must be adopted that sees the active use of differential rating powers to counteract the valuation asymmetries between different property classes.”

“This system has been successfully employed by other Councils such as Ararat, Mansfield and Pyrenees. These councils in question are demonstrating that they are unwilling, despite having access and the knowledge to use a rating strategy that is fair on the whole community.”

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