

# Media Release



Victorian  
Farmers  
Federation

4 October 2023

## New vacant residential tax to hit farmers

Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) has voiced concerns regarding the recent government announcement to extend the vacancy tax to houses in regional Victoria that have been vacant for more than six months.

VFF President Emma Germano has written to Treasurer Tim Pallas outlining the VFF's concerns toward the policy announcement, which could unfairly impact farmers who are unable to keep farmhouses occupied throughout the year.

"There are many farmhouses in rural Victoria that often remain vacant due to the inherent challenges of attracting and retaining a workforce in these areas."

"Farm businesses rely heavily on seasonal and transient labour, making it difficult to maintain continuous occupancy in farmhouses throughout the year."

"If this tax was extended to these farmhouses, farmers will be unfairly punished for factors that are totally beyond their control."

"I have asked the Treasurer to provide further clarity on how this policy extension will be implemented in rural areas and how it will account for the unique circumstances of farmhouses."

"I have also sought assurances that the government will consider the farming sector's concerns and the potential adverse effects on our businesses before finalising and implementing this policy," Ms Germano said.

Ms Germano added that under the existing rule that applies to vacant houses in Melbourne, a property must only be vacant for six months, which is not required to be continuous.

"This rule would trip up many farmers who have houses that are dedicated for seasonal workers. It would also unfairly treat farmers who haven't been able to secure permanent workers due to the tight labour market conditions we are facing."

"The VFF fully supports the need for increasing the supply of housing in regional areas. This is critical to solving workforce shortages in the agricultural industry."

"However, farmhouses are used by businesses to ensure their own labour supply. It is totally inappropriate and unfair to penalise farmers when they are not able to keep houses occupied year-round."

"The government needs to think carefully about the impacts of their policies before blurting out announcements," Ms Germano said.

**ENDS**

### Media Contacts

Ryan Moloney, VFF, 0400 874 589

Farrer House 24-28 Collins Street Melbourne 3000

Ph. 1300 882 833 | E-mail. [vff@vff.org.au](mailto:vff@vff.org.au) | [www.vff.org.au](http://www.vff.org.au)