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**2021-2022 Budget Community Consultation - TFGA submission.**

Dear Premier Gutwein,

The Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association is pleased to provide our submission to the 2021-22 Budget Community Consultation.

Agriculture continues to be an important economic pillar for the state's economy, which provides flow on benefits to tourism; the Tasmanian brand; and to rural and regional communities across Tasmania.

We look forward to your support in continuing to grow a vibrant agriculture industry in Tasmania that sustains successful businesses and contributes to our state's health, wealth, and prosperity.

TFGA hopes to secure your commitment to help us pursue the below opportunities outlined in our Budget submission.

Yours sincerely,

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TFGA President  
19th March 2021

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## **2021-2022 Budget Community Consultation - TFGA submission.**

### **TFGA On Farm Biosecurity Project**

With the TFGA On Farm Biosecurity Project (Strategic Industry Partnership Program) having been in effect since 2017-18, this project has undergone a significant transformation. The positive effects that this program has had in the agricultural sector being visually measurable by the very successful free sign program. The intention of such programs is never to resolve issues but to assist in greater understanding and to create a greater level of mobility and understanding should and when an outbreak occurs. The TFGA has shown itself to be an effective and proactive advocate in this space, which has been reinforced by the ongoing support and involvement of the relevant departments and Ministers.

The changing nature of biosecurity within the state is worthy of noting in the context of this program, with the impending development of new regulations under the Biosecurity Act and the announcement of the General Biosecurity Duty (GBD), the work of this program has never been more important and relevant. The potential for changes in the traceability space will also be a major concern for many producers and is a key aspect of many trade agreements. The TFGA sees the value in the continuation of this project and is concerned that the impending end of this project in December 2021 as a missed opportunity for the agricultural sector and Biosecurity Tasmania. The TFGA sees great potential for the continuation of this project beyond its current iteration and can see the possibility for further developments beyond its current scope. Items for potential inclusion include:

- Agritourism – development of biosecurity resources and information.
- Development of school-based resources and education programs and involvement in the delivery.
- Working with other programs such as (Kids 2 Farms (federally funded), Living Next Door to a Farmer & the Landcare Action Grants program) to reach a broader audience.

#### **Request to Government:**

- **The TFGA requests that further funding be allocated to the TFGA On Farm Biosecurity project to better support primary producers and Biosecurity Tasmania and further develop the program.**

### **TFGA Landcare Action Grants (LAG)**

The successful delivery and uptake of this program has been a resounding environmental and economic success. This proactive program has allowed primary producers to take environmental and economic steps to better their businesses and benefit Tasmania's natural resources and natural heritage. There are many well known benefits for the environments and farm businesses including: preservation of habitat, stock exclusion, cleaner waterways, stock shelter, shade, weed management, etc.

The LAG project is currently reviewing applications in the third of four rounds of small grant applications under the current funding agreement. The LAG has on every occasion had applications which exceeded the amount on offer, this is a trend which is expected to continue for the life of the program.

The LAG program is slated for completion in mid-2022 without further funding. While this will allow the TFGA another budget round to request funds, it may however reduce its ability to provide continuity for the project officer and the program itself should it be delayed.

#### **Request to Government:**

- **Further funding put towards the TFGA Landcare Action Grants program.**

### **Workers Compensation:**

Workers Compensation premiums have noticeably increased across insurance companies and started to have serious implications for many rural businesses and the primary industries sector as a whole. Tasmanian farmers are concerned about the viability of this situation continuing and many will have to make difficult choices as a result. These increases are also occurring on farms without previous claims and is not an issue for those that are not doing the right thing. This matter is largely beyond the control of the sector and will require serious intervention to resolve.

### **Request to Government:**

- **That the government consider appropriate methods by which to reduce premiums for primary producers.**

### **Living Next Door to a Farmer - LNDF**

Tasmania is the place to be. Tasmania has been an exceedingly popular place to move in recent years, which has been heightened by the pandemic and its management in Tasmania, coupled with the State's economic success story, how could people stay away? This popularity has meant that we as a state have welcomed many new Tasmanian to the fold and have added many different ideas and expectation into the places we live and the ways in which we choose to live our lives.

The introduction of new people into a community or culture can always have its points of tension, and living next door to a farmer doesn't need to be one if people have the information they need.

The Living Next Door to a Farmer program has been designed to create a conduit between new neighbours in agricultural and peri urban settings. The resources developed as a result of this project allow for neighbours to understand expectations and create greater awareness of everyone's obligations in an agricultural or peri urban setting.

This successful and cost-effective program is due to end 30 June 2021. With the influx of new Tasmanians expected to continue, this program has a revitalised and important purpose. Living Next Door to a Farmer will continue to grow its relevance with changing biosecurity regulation (E.g. the General Biosecurity Duty) and increasing urban spread.

### **Request to Government:**

- **That the government fund the continuation of the Living Next Door to a Farmer.**

### **Roads and freight**

Freight is very important to the agriculture sector and having a reliable freight system is critical to our members businesses for retaining markets and accessing new ones.

Agriculture is a major growth area for Tasmania, this has been driven in part by the ongoing investment in irrigation schemes, which isn't expected to slow. The increased and positive investment in irrigation across the State, especially in the midlands will significantly increase the pressure on the Tasmanian road system. Most of Tasmania's agricultural freight is moved on the State's road network prior to intrastate movement. The majority of interstate movement is by sea across Bass Strait, all of which is reliant on capacity and the efficiency by which freight can be transferred.

The TFGA support the upgrades on the Midlands and Bass Highways, and roads within the core freight network, however if agriculture is to compete on domestic and international markets it must have freight systems that are efficient and that have capacity to cope with future demands and needs of the sector. The TFGA believes that the agriculture sector, associated industries and others like tourism are growing at a rate that justifies a dual carriageway in key areas, which would be in line with government projections and policy.

Infrastructure doesn't end at the port, Tasmania need a rigorous, flexible and efficient logistics plan with the capacity to adapt and move commodities and value-added products off the island and to bring valuable inputs, equipment and people here. The TFGA would like to see considerable effort

put into future proofing the logistical needs of states sea freight capacity and potential. The TFGA notes that the government's decision to move away from a dual carriageway to the 2 plus 1 road design across the core freight network as a limiting factor in reaching the AgriVision 2050 target of \$10 billion by 2050. The creation of bottle necks, real or perceived in the freight system do and will have ongoing implications for investment in industry and agriculture.

**Request to Government:**

- **That the government invest in futureproofing the state's logistical infrastructure.**
- **That the government progress the sea freight initiatives and outline its plan moving forward.**

**On farm safety**

Farming is well known as being a high-risk industry to work in and it shouldn't be. The nature of the various industries which encompass agriculture means that there is no single silver bullet which will resolve many of the hazards.

Safety costs, and more often than not other business activities and costs are prioritised over a primary producer's own safety, or the safety of their family or employees. For agriculture to be considered a desirable vocation it needs to be attractive and seen to be proactive and safe, no one goes to work with the intention of not coming home or doing serious damage to themselves or others. An example of an investment which is costly and regularly overlooked is a shearing shed. Shearing sheds are often outdated and may have not been upgraded since they were built, many of which were state of the art in the 50's or 60's or even later but wouldn't comply with the most basic of contemporary OH&S regulations today.

Understanding that it is not the role of government to proactively involve itself in various aspects of an individual's business, government does have the opportunity through largely existing mechanisms and funds to assist businesses with investments in safety. Mechanisms such as the AgriGrowth Loan Scheme could be amended to allow for safety investments to be considered in conjunction and collaboration with the Safe Farming Tasmania program. Another method which could be considered is advocating for amendments to the RIC (Regional Investment Corporation) loan mechanism nationally to encompass safety investments.

Investment in safety is an investment in people, efficiency and the success of the industry as a whole.

**Request to Government:**

- **Ongoing and secure funding for Safe Farming Tasmania.**
- **That the government consider options for primary producers to make investments into on farm safety infrastructure.**
- **That the Government advocate federally for mechanisms to make it easier for primary producers to make further investments into farm safety.**

**Education / Pathways / Subsidies for training**

An educated and well-trained workforce increases efficiency, productivity and safety. Getting appropriate training is a barrier to further employment, improving employment outcomes and personal improvement for both employees and employers in the agricultural sector. Training is often seen as an unattainable, expensive and a waste of time for many employers and their employees. This should not be the case, if the value proposition isn't obvious enough other incentives should be considered. Basic agricultural skills such as using a chainsaw, tractor or quad bike operation and chemical handling are often not completed by producers and employees because of time and financial constraints.

Attracting young people or otherwise into agriculture has proven to be hard enough. Government

over many years has invested in various initiatives to increase involvement in the sector, and for various reasons this has largely failed. The improvement, education and upskilling of current employees and employers should be prioritised. The creation of a skilled and safe workforce will not only relieve some of the current pressures, but it could have the added potential of attracting those outside of the sector in.

**Request to Government:**

- **Ongoing and secure funding for Safe Farming Tasmania**
- **That the government consider options for the improvement of basic skills in the primary industries sector.**
- **That the government consider subsidies for training for primary producers and their employees.**
- **The Government continue to invest and support activities which create clear pathways into agriculture.**

**Energy**

Power is a hot topic at the moment, its generation, transmission and cost. Tasmania is blessed with many natural advantages which have endowed us with great potential for power production. This power and associated infrastructure is largely used for the benefit of Tasmanians but could be more so. Tasmania has a natural advantage in that it can produce electricity at very low cost, this advantage should be used to benefit Tasmanians, to drive the Tasmanian economy and not to subsidise the needs of other states. Tasmania has the capacity to fuel an economic and industrial revolution which will create jobs and economic prosperity in a low carbon manner. Businesses globally are increasingly looking to work in a socially progressive manner. Tasmania can and should be in a prime position to take advantage of this, instead it uses its natural advantages to fuel the economies of other states.

Reaching the goals of AgriVision 2050 will require huge investment into value adding which means industry and power. The TFGA intends to advocate that this power be available for these industries at an affordable price and give business the advantage that it needs to prosper and create new markets for our members.

It is also worth noting that primary producers wear the brunt of many of the infrastructure activities occurring around the state. Many, if not all are necessary for the betterment of agriculture, the Tasmanian economy and the lifestyle we enjoy, but it does mean that ditches are cut through the middle of people's livelihoods and towers build on prime agricultural land. Consideration must always be made.

**Request to Government:**

- **That the government consider options for the development of Tasmanian industry to derive extra value from current resources and commodities to drive AgriVision 2050 into reality.**
- **That the government direct Government Owned Businesses to develop options for infrastructure which do not affect visual amenity or impede agricultural activity.**

**Irrigation development**

The TFGA supports the continued investment in irrigation development and infrastructure.

The increased agricultural production from the Pipeline to Prosperity program will add significantly to Tasmania's and the nation's bottom line, which is based on the fact that irrigated agriculture contributes more than 50 per cent of the value of the state's agricultural production from eight per cent of the land.

Based on the Tasmanian Irrigation public-private funding model whereby the split across public-private is approximately 50% Federal; 25% State; and 25% private, the Federal Government has

committed \$100 million (further \$150m required) and the State Government have committed \$70m.

**Request to Government:**

- **The TFGA supports the strong investment in irrigation development and infrastructure.**
- **That the government direct Government Owned Businesses to develop options for infrastructure which do not affect visual amenity or impede agricultural activity.**

**Continued Commitment to Reduce Business Red-tape**

There are several regulatory issues that we need to be addressed in a timely manner to assist farmers in their daily business and to minimise the impact of regulatory imposts.

**Down-stream dam consequences:**

The Agri-Food Plan 2019-23 states: Water surety underpins sustainable agricultural growth and gives farmers confidence to invest and secure high value contracts. This can apply to large scale dams, as is being undertaken by Tasmanian Irrigation or on-farm dam developments.

Unfortunately, there isn't a system in place to protect farmers from developments downstream.

Meaning, even if a farm dam has been there prior to a development, the planning commission nor local council don't have to take it into consideration for that development application. This means a farmer will potentially have to upgrade their dam, which can be a huge financial and time impost, based on what type of development is undertaken downstream.

**Request to Government:**

- **To develop in conjunction with TFGA a policy on downstream dam consequences.**

**Land Tax Changes from Primary Production to General Provision:**

TFGA continues to get enquiries from members informing us that they have received a land tax bill from the State Revenue Office (SRO). The reasons why SRO have generated a land tax bill may include, the landowner undertaking boundary adjustment; selling off a small proportion of their property; or changes to the property title to another name (i.e. death or succession).

**Request to Government:**

- **To improve and remove red tape in the system which dictates when a farmer must prove they are a primary producer.**

**Mining on private land:**

Agriculture and mining are two sectors that are key to the State's economy. What the TFGA doesn't want is disputes between the sectors. This issue can occur when landowners don't want mining activities on their farm, which the TFGA supports.

We want to see the government work with both sectors to minimise the disruption of mining activities on agricultural land, especially where landowners are against such developments on their farm.

**Request to Government:**

- **To develop a policy where it demonstrates support for the agricultural sector and minimises disputes between the sectors to prohibit mining activities on farmland where the landowner is against mining development on their farm.**