

GRAINGROWERS' AGRICULTURAL LAND USE POLICY

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Alisha Campbell (First harvest on the newly developed country at Nindigully)

Agricultural land is an invaluable finite resource crucial for Australia's ongoing prosperity and wellbeing. Balancing competing land use while protecting agricultural production requires a strategic, whole of government approach to land use decision making. New developments of any kind must be done in a manner that is sensitive to the impacts on agricultural land and takes all reasonable steps to avoid or minimise adverse effects on communities, landholders and the environment. Growers and landholders must be treated as partners, rather than just stakeholders, to ensure a fair and equitable transition across all land use changes. Growers must have a decision-making role in land use planning and change processes at all levels of government, from the beginning.

GRAINGROWERS SUPPORTS:

- The prioritisation of prime agricultural land and water resources in land use planning to protect Australia's food security and rural communities.
- A nationally coordinated approach to agricultural land use planning.
- A just and equitable land use change process that protects the rights of landholders, sustains rural economies, and maintains Australia's agricultural productivity.
- Growers and landholders having a formal, substantive role and decision-making authority in land use planning and change processes from the outset, rather than after decisions are made.

GRAINGROWERS RECOGNISES:

- Agricultural land is a finite, irreplaceable resource.
- Australia's food security is dependent on continued access to high quality land and water resources.
- The long-term societal and environmental benefits of food security and the ecosystem services that agriculture provides which must not come at the expense of short-term economic or political gain.
- Balancing Australia's future housing and energy needs with protecting agricultural production requires a strategic, whole of government approach to land use decision making.
- Local, state, and federal governments all play a role in protecting agricultural land use. The place-specific nature of land use conflicts requires national coordination, state leadership, and local engagement and solutions.
- There are often significant power imbalances between land holders and developers, such as mining and energy companies, that lead to inequitable outcomes.
- The need for certainty in the regulatory framework to support long-term investment for the sustainable development and management of prime agricultural land.
- The cumulative impact of competing land uses in some regions experiencing both energy and mining developments.
- The need to account for climate change's escalating impacts when planning and managing land use. Climate change is intensifying competition for agricultural land while threatening long-term sector productivity.
- That land use conflicts can have significant social impacts on growers and their communities leading to heightened tensions, mental health challenges, and the erosion of social cohesion.

GRAINGROWERS SEEKS:

- A national agriculture strategy to guide Australia's vision for long term, sustainable production of food and fibre, and to prioritise the protection of agricultural land and resources.
- Nationally consistent classifications for prime agricultural land to enable identification and protection of critical agricultural assets by all levels of government, placing them on par with the strategic importance given to other critical national infrastructure.
- That the Australian Government facilitates an enforceable code of conduct to ensure land use change decisions are made with growers and landholders, and there is appropriate compensation without adverse impacts on existing land use. This should include codified minimum community benefits and developer engagement obligations.
- Compensation formulae to ensure landowners receive appropriate compensation for loss of income, any decrease in property value and non-economic impacts including diminishment of natural or social capital.
- Increased data and land use trend information to inform land use planning and to monitor impacts on agricultural land where decisions are made to change land use or allow co-use.
- Cumulative impact assessments for all proposed land use change in regions experiencing competition from multiple industries to quantify the full economic, social and environmental impacts on affected landholders, communities and agricultural productivity.
- Carbon abatement strategies for large emitters that prioritise inseting approaches rather than relying on agricultural land-based carbon removals that diminish Australia's long-term food security.
- The attachment of robust social license requirements as a precondition for accessing capital from government agencies and programs such as the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, Rewiring the Nation, and Australian Made.

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