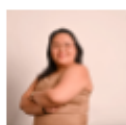




 PREMIUM NEWS

## Farmers rally against landscape overlays in Mitchell Shire elections



By **Faith Macale**

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*Landowner and farmer Lyndon Arnell said that it's time to stand up for farmers' right in the community. Photo: Faith Macale Photo by Faith Macale*

In August, Mitchell Shire Council announced that it was considering introducing Significant Landscape Overlays in parts of the LGA.

An SLO is a planning tools designed to protect and manage significant landscapes.

The announcement led to the formation of **Protect Our Farms**, a lobby group aimed at opposing the introduction of SLOs.

**Country News** reported on **Friday, August 23** that modifications to the proposed SLOs were made following feedback from **Protect Our Farms**.

It, however, is still concerned about the severe restrictions the overlays will impose on Mitchell Shire's agricultural landowners.

Now, members of the group have announced they will be campaigning in the upcoming council elections to preserve their farms.

Local landowner and farmer Lyndon Arnell said it's time to stand up for farmers' rights in the community.

"There's three meet the candidates meetings, and we're going to attend those and ask them questions," he said.

"We are quite happy to support people who recognise that farming is a major contributor to the place."

Mr Arnell said that even with the modifications on the overlays, it will still add 'burdensome bureaucracy' and increased costs.

"Affected farmers will even need to get a permit to lop a branch off a native tree," he said.

"This is part of a disturbing movement across Victoria and Australia to ban and restrict (the) use of the land that can only cost us all dearly."



*Protect Our Farms members will be surveying candidates for the Mitchell Shire Council with questionnaires to find out where they stand on the proposal of Significant Land Overlays. Photo: Faith Macale Photo by Faith Macale*

According to Protect Our Farms' website, the proposed SLOs will cover 12 per cent of Mitchell Shire, excluding Puckapunyal Military Area, Kinglake National Park, and Tallarook State Forest.

It also states that they could threaten the livelihood of hundreds of farmers.

"Mitchell Shire's overlay will severely impact farmlands, and 300 properties are impacted which is almost 10 per cent of the shire, and 94 per cent of this is actually zoned 'farming,'" Mr Arnell said.

"The SLOs will also require us to get permits for agricultural buildings of certain sizes, and permits for certain types of fences.

"This is private farmland.

“The SLO says, ‘Oh nothing to see here, it doesn’t affect you,’ but what we’re finding is when they put the amendments in, they water them down.

“Some of it's just changing the wording, really, to make it sound a little different.”

He also mentioned that this SLOs could affect the economy negatively.

“This could also have unintended consequences that impact the local economy and jobs, as well as the social fibre, the backbone, of our rural communities,” Mr Arnell said.

“Council wants to preserve the ‘views’ of the land, but it is our farmers here in Mitchell Shire who have been protecting the landscape for generations.”

Protect Our Farms are also taking extra steps to let people know of their cause through circulating flyers and billboards.

“We need the public to know what's going on,” Mr Arnell said.