

Protect our Farms has momentum

The Protect our Farms campaign, which is targeting the Mitchell Shire Council election, says it has garnered strong backing from local ratepayers.

"The campaign is supporting candidates who recognise farming as a key element of the local economy that ultimately affects every ratepayer," Protect Our Farms secretary Rae Clark said.

The campaign ramped up its efforts last week, blanketing the area with flyers and billboards, building on its existing social media, advertising and radio interview strategies.

"The ratepayer engagement has been phenomenal, with people coming forth from all corners of the shire offering their help," Ms Clark said.

"The support is coming

not only from farmers, but from a wide range of people across the community.

"This powerful response from residents shows they care about farming, and they care about integrity and responsible financial management.

"They have thanked us for the most in-depth analysis they have seen on local issues.

"The people of Mitchell Shire are ready for a new era of fair, transparent and accountable governance."

Last week, Protect Our Farms released a voting guideline on its top three candidates from each ward.

Ms Clark said that after preferencing these candidates first, it was important to make sure voters numbered all the other boxes to cast a valid vote.



The Protect Our Farms campaign in Mitchell Shire, led by secretary Rae Clark, is gaining 'phenomenal' support from local ratepayers.

Photo: Contributed

"After careful consideration we believe these candidates are the people we need to maintain farming as an important part of Mitchell Shire's future and to make sure our council has the highest standards of integrity," she said.

Protect Our Farms was established in response to council's proposal to implement Significant Landscape Overlays on agricultural land.

The group argues these SLOs would significantly impact farmers by

introducing complex regulations and raising operational costs.

According to the group, about 400 families are directly affected by the SLOs, but Protect Our Farms said the indirect effects would spread throughout the shire.

Protect Our Farms analysed the credentials and statements of all candidates, conducted interviews and monitored their presentations at candidate meeting sessions. Questionnaires were sent to all candidates with questions on farming and governance issues such as transparency and cost management.

"Current councillors were evaluated based on their voting record on key issues, such as endorsing the Landscape Assessment Study and allocating \$7 million-plus to restore the unused old

Goulburn River Bridge," Ms Clark said.

"These votes showed their priorities in rate spending and consultation processes."

Ms Clark also responded to the claim that it was unusual for a group such as Protect Our Farms to endorse candidates in local elections.

"It is not at all unusual," she said.

"Many community groups across various sectors endorse candidates to ensure their voices are heard at the local government level.

"In a shire where agriculture is an important part of the economy, not to mention all the challenges coming from international, national, state and local pressures, it's vital for farmers to be part of this conversation.

"Farmers need a local voice."