



Protect Our Farms Support for an Agricultural Advisory Committee

Good evening Mayor, Councillors and staff of Mitchell Shire.

Protect Our Farms Incorporated is a not-for-profit association with 200 members that supports the establishment, by the Mitchell Shire, of an Agricultural Advisory Committee to help achieve a balance between protection of agricultural land and economic prosperity across the Shire.

For context, Victorian farmland is eight times more productive per hectare than the national average and produces a quarter of the nation's food and fibre, from just 3% of Australia's farmland. *(Source: Victorian Farmers Federation's - Victorian Farmland Protection Plan - released in April 2026)*

In Mitchell Shire farmland represents 34.2% of the land area and agricultural production has an output value of \$217.48 million, with \$147.64 million in exports. The value add to Gross Regional Product (GRP) is \$92.65 million. *(REMPLAN stats based on June 2025 ABS data)*

The Mitchell Shire is home to 408 primary-producer businesses,

largely family operated and employing more than 600 shire residents. Agriculture is the third largest industry sector in the shire, by number of businesses, preceded only by Construction (1,260) and Transport, postal and warehousing (883). Importantly agriculture is a key driver underpinning transport and warehousing services. *(ABS data as of 30 June 2025).*

Alongside the value of agricultural production is the economic contribution that comes from the visitor economy, valued at \$113.4 million annually *(Source: Mitchell Shire Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan 2020 - 2024)*. One of the attractions of the Mitchell Shire is the aesthetic beauty of rural landscapes, farmland, equestrian and agri-business tourism - that is destination-based food, wine and country living experiences, including the variety of farmers markets in relatively close proximity to peri-urban residents.

As the interface between agricultural, residential land and energy infrastructure use grows, so too does the potential for land-use conflicts. * Chiefly concerning is the amount of farmland being taken out of production that puts food and fibre security at risk. 'At the persistent rate of (farmland) decline, Australia is tracking to become a net importer of agricultural products in 11 years' - by 2037, *(Source: 'Caught in the Current' - 2026 book by Patrick Byrne)*.

Protect our Farms has been at farmers markets and field days raising awareness and recognition of the importance of farming to our food and fibre security. The most asked question from residents is "Given it is this important, what are you doing to protect the future of farming and our food and fibre?"

Hence Protect Our Farms wants to actively support this petition and the creation of an Agricultural Advisory Committee.

Individuals on an Agricultural Advisory Committee, drawn from the rural and farming communities, would provide Councillors and Council staff with an agricultural perspective and an understanding of the issues impacting the viability and productivity associated with farming and critically the retention of generational farming within the shire.

The benefit to Mitchell Shire would also be around community engagement - greater breadth and depth/scope and interaction - to understand the interface between farming enterprises and the prosperity of rural communities.

In summary, an Agricultural Advisory Committee would help Council to assess planning, zoning, investment, expenditure and development opportunities through a pragmatic approach that would seek to highlight the direct and indirect impacts on local agriculture - an industry sector that provides affordable food and fibre, sustains agri-business enterprises and enhances agri-tourism, all vital to the continued viability and vibrancy of

townships and rural communities.

Yours sincerely

Protect Our Farms- Executive Committee

David Waye - President/Chair - Pyalong

Phil Searle - Vice President - Reedy Creek

Therese Ryan - Secretary - Pyalong

Louise Lovering - Treasurer - Nullavale

Brendan Kelly - Pyalong

Lyndon Arnel - Tooborac

Taylan Atar - Tallarook

Marla Stone - Pyalong

Rae Clark - Melbourne

OUR FARMS YOUR FOOD AND FIBRE

<https://webcast.mitchellshire.vic.gov.au/video.php>