

2025 Tasmanian Election Platform

**Setting the Rural Agenda –
Putting Primary Production First.**

(Structural and Strategic)

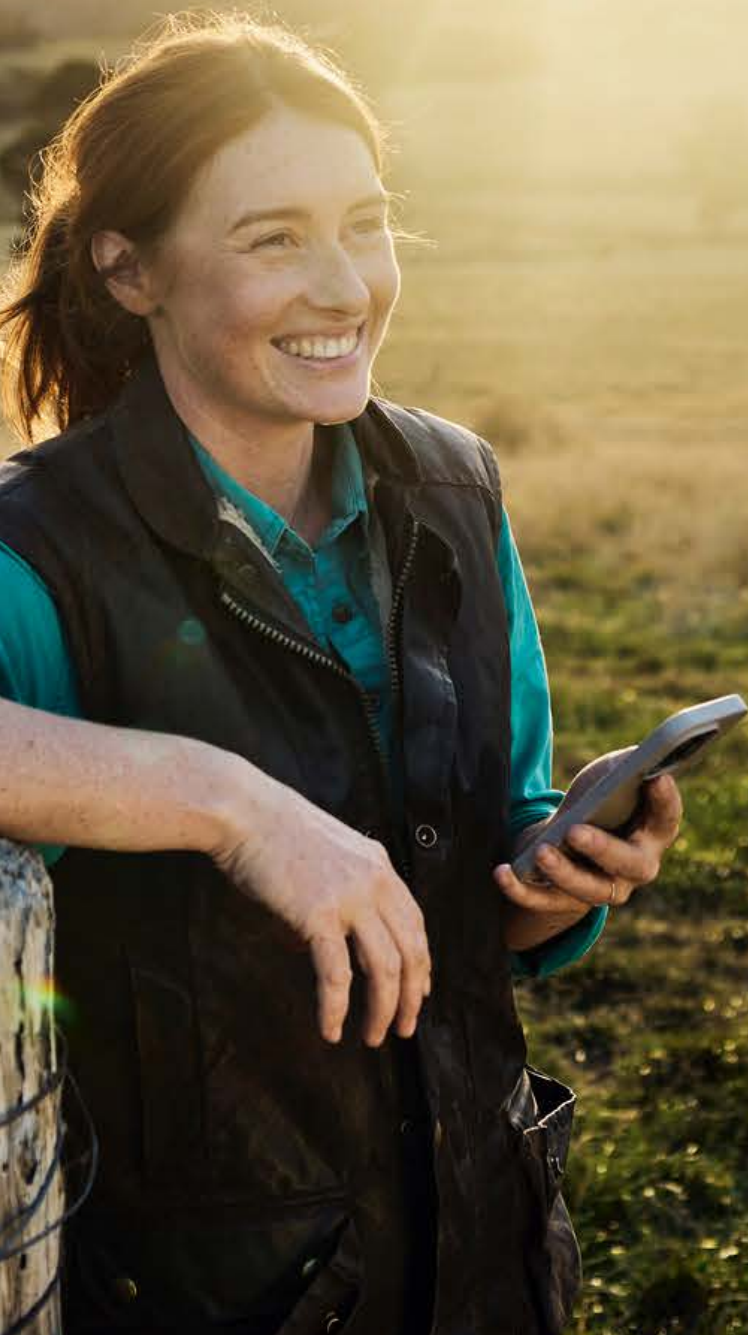


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1. Local Government Reform

Primary production faces many significant hurdles such as climate change and the impacts of weather, commodity prices, labour challenges and input cost fluctuations. As price takers rather than price setters, farmers have little stability as they develop profitable businesses upon which their communities rely.

A key factor is the variable nature of local government rates. The AAV rate is set at double what it should be (4% rather than 2%) and each local government area sets their cent in the dollar of AAV rates (the basis for all rate setting across the different property classes) at different amounts, making some agricultural areas more expensive to farm than others of similar land class.

Policy Request:

- The AAV rate for primary production land (including land used for forestry) be set at 2% rather than the current 4% rate.
- The cent in the dollar rate be standard across all local government areas, which should be 0.01833 cents in the dollar. This is currently the lowest rate charged in Tasmania.
- Compulsory maximum increase in rates to no more than 1% above CPI, except where approved by the state local government minister.
- Create transparency and accountability by all 29 councils publicly benchmark their key performance objectives.



2. Irrigation Development and Reform

Water is the key productivity driver for Tasmania's agricultural sector, making Tasmania the envy of the rest of the nation. While significant investment and returns on that investment have been made, there is significant scope for improvement.

This is three-fold: accelerate current schemes under planning, such as the Tranche Three Tamar Scheme, community self-management of existing schemes, such as the Winnaleah Irrigation Scheme, and provision for the strategic planning for cluster-based irrigation schemes, where adjoining properties can jointly develop water storages and supply for the benefit of those farms.

Policy Request:

- Expedite the commencement of the Tranche Three Tamar Irrigation Scheme to benefit agriculture and industry in the Tamar Valley and surrounds.
- Government to underwrite the Tranche Three Tamar Irrigation Scheme to foster regional economic development in northern Tasmania and to future proof Bell Bay for Tasmania's next major industries.
- Simplify and expedite the transition arrangements for existing Tas Irrigation Schemes for which there is community interest in self-management within the first 100 days of the new government being formed.
- Develop support structures to enable clusters of neighbouring farms to develop collaborative irrigation supply arrangements using a range of water resources including environmental supply, ground water and/or on-farm storage within the first 100 days of the new government being formed.
- Ensure that the state Rural Water Use Strategy does not introduce new levels of red tape or further cost for primary producers.
- Reform government regulations to protect primary producers from the costs associated with farm dam safety engineering reporting requirements within the first 100 days of the new government being formed.

3. Farm Access, NWTD and Forestry

While the Farm Access Code and Charter for Working on Private Farmland have been adopted on a voluntary basis by some government agencies, they should be enacted compulsorily. For biosecurity and general security reasons in addition to proper management of agricultural properties, landholders must have the final say in who comes onto their properties and in what circumstances. This is to achieve the building of better relationships between landholders and stakeholders, creating clarity around expectations.

At the 2024 state election government committed to working with TasFarmers and landholders to develop a contemporary compensation that included a Strategic Benefit Payment (SBP). The model approved by government did not consider the independent advice put forward by TasFarmers and landholders. The Tasmanian Liberal government failed to negotiate in good faith and instead delivered a take it or leave it ultimatum to TasFarmers and landholders impacted by planned new transmission line development.

Tasmanian farmers hold significant tracts of forest on their properties and manage these forests to the benefit of their farm businesses and for the safety of adjoining properties and communities. There is significant concern within farmers with forests as part of their farms that prudent management of these forests may be taken away from the landholder and placed in the hands of those not sympathetic to farmers' best interests. Management of private forestry must be based around principles of biodiversity management, fire risk, carbon sequestration and active and sustainable forest management.

Policy Request:

- The Farm Access Code and Charter for Working on Private Farmland are implemented compulsorily for all government agencies, GBEs and SoCs within 100 days of the new government being formed.
- Return to the SBP negotiating table in good faith within 28 days of the new government being formed.
- Give full and genuine consideration to the independent advice put forward by TasFarmers and landholders within 28 days of the new government being formed.
- As part of the SBP negotiations, give genuine consideration to a proximity payment.
- Ensure that transmission costs associated with the project are shared with mainland consumers or subsidised by the federal government.
- Management of privately-held Tasmanian forest and plantation estates be based on scientific, environmental and economic principles with active fire management for community safety benefits as a core principle.
- Tasmanian farmers, through TasFarmers, must be represented in state government policy development and formation as equals with other participants.
- Develop a robust Regional Forest Agreement that recognises the rights of farmers to manage the resource held on their property for effective fire management, commercial gain and for sustainable and healthy forests.
- Private forests continue to be subject to the Tasmanian *Forest Practices Act 1985* and associated Forest Practices Code, which should form the basis of continued exemption from the Federal EPBC Act in any future Regional Forest Agreements.
- Recognise the importance of managed forests for improved grazing productivity, water resource quality and biodiversity.

4. Strategic Feasibility Planning for On-island Processing

While there is currently an established down-stream processing for red meat, dairy and vegetable products, much of Tasmania's agricultural output is still exported either live or unprocessed. Tasmania exports around 50% of its prime lamb production for slaughter and processing in addition to significant numbers of prime beef and processor dairy cattle. While vegetable processing has significant activity in Tasmania, there exists scope, given the extensive irrigation resources available to Tasmania, to increase production and consequently scope for increased downstream processing.

Policy Request:

- Develop strategic feasibility studies for expanded red meat processing in Tasmania and scope for increased vegetable processing opportunities in partnership with growers, processing companies, agents and TasFarmers within the first 100 days of the new government being formed.
- Fund \$200,000 to task TasFarmers to develop these strategic feasibility studies over 12 months within the first 100 days of the new government being formed.



5. State-Owned Company (SoC) and Government Business Enterprise (GBE) Reform

It is self-evident that SoCs and GBEs have experienced significant difficulty operating to the expectations of the agricultural sector. These organisations should, as the first principle, be operated to the advantage of the Tasmanian economy, Tasmanian farmers and the extended agricultural supply chain.

Policy Request - All SoCs and GBEs:

- Strongly contribute to the competitive development of the broader Tasmanian
- Be directed by ministerial charters to specifically drive the activity, focus and outcomes of the business and reflect government economic development policy,
- Take direction from the Office of the Coordinator General (or equivalent agency) to align a SOC or GBE's actions to the state's broader economic interests,
- Have continuous disclosure to shareholder ministers in circumstances where progress and outcomes are materially different to the organisation's annual plan,
- Have board members selected solely on skills and experience,
- Have reporting regimes in alignment with contemporary listed companies, such as six-month updates and comprehensive annual reports
- Have specific charters and terms of reference that mandate these priorities.
- All SOCs and GBEs to have a suite of KPI's reflecting triple bottom line methodologies.
- Ensure GBE and SOCs do not limit market competition





6. Wildlife, Policing and Firearms

Primary producers are under increasing pressure to manage the impact of browsing wildlife and feral deer on their agricultural lands. To support management and allow producers to meet their biosecurity duties, primary producers need changes made to legislation and regulations.

It is estimated that the impact of non-controlled grazing by fallow deer costs Tasmanian agriculture around \$75M a year just in lost lamb production, let alone the impact on dairy and beef productivity, crop loss and infrastructure damage.

Policy Request - within the first 100 days of the new government being formed:

- Declare fallow deer outside of Zone 1 as vermin, permitting eradication as a species management strategy.
- Within Zone 1 simplify the deer permitting process to a simple single permit with optional conditions.
- Commit the government to managing deer populations on Crown land, National Parks and World Heritage Areas.
- Reform current framework to permit the use of suppressors for primary producers with a property protection permit to deliver greater occupational health and safety, and animal welfare, to manage browsing and pest species.
- Permit the use of wild shot deer for commercial human consumption.
- Continue work with TasFarmers to complete a legislative clean-up of the Firearms Act to create clarity for primary producers around current gaps in legislation.

7. Workforce

TasFarmers and Primary Employers Tasmania note that primary producers need support to attract and retain the workforce their business need to operate. Clarity and consistency are needed at the state level. There is a shortage of housing in Tasmania, especially in rural towns supporting local agriculture. Primary producers must have the ability to provide on-farm housing to accommodate staff and not be restricted by red tape and unreasonable requirements.

Current restrictions on primary producers building additional accommodation on their properties hinders the ability to employ more staff to meet productivity growth. Confusion among the various parties involved in workers' compensation exists as to the accrual of leave entitlements. Concern also exists as to the unreasonably high insurance premiums the sector pays, particularly in the sheep and wool industry where premiums range from 13-23%.

Upskilling of Ag workforce is required to improve productivity outcomes and worker safety. Training of employees is difficult to access and expensive. Education and Training is a key component to the future development of a productive agricultural sector. Our educational providers act in silos. We currently have a workforce skill gap, and no dedicated resource to support entrants to the sector to access education in line with their career ambitions. This all too often means that we fail to attract and retain workers in the sector.

Policy Request - (within the first 100 days of the new government being formed):

- Accommodation agreements between primary producers and employees living in housing on farms provided as part of their employment be excluded from the application of the Residential Tenancy Act.
- Practical changes to planning laws to permit greater on-farm accommodation that recognise the requirements of the industry and without unreasonable minimum requirements as to land size and existing infrastructure.
- Amendments to the Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act to clarify annual leave accruals while an employee is absent from the workplace and receiving workers compensation.
- The Government takes greater oversight and enforces the recommendations in Workcover Tasmania's Annual Report with actuarially assessed industry premium rates providing a guide to employers and workers compensation insurers.
- Government co-funding of safety training delivered by Tasmanian based RTOs to upskill and increase on-farm safety and productivity and administered by Primary Employers Tasmania.
- Support the development of a TasFarmers AgCareers Coach for three years (\$500K) within three months to work with school-age students to educate them about careers in agriculture and build understanding of the program
- The role will also work with people from age 15 to 35 to coach people about career pathways and education options to develop the skills and knowledge required to contribute to the sector.
- The program will also provide targeted financial support to schools to build engagement in the sector.

8. The Wool Harvesting Training Advisory Group

The Wool Harvesting Training Advisory Group (Wool-TAG) have worked tirelessly to implement new training programs in Tasmania which are addressing the shortage of wool harvesting workers. Continued funding will ensure Tasmania has a sustainable wool harvesting workforce and a future shortage is avoided.

Shearer Woolhandler Training Inc. (SWTI) have delivered accredited wool harvesting training to 170 Tasmanians since 2021. A memorandum of understanding is currently in place which states that SWTI are the organisation of choice to deliver wool harvesting training in Tasmania. SWTI delivered eight wool harvesting courses in Tasmania between 2023-25 through the Skills Tasmania Training and Work Pathways Program (TWPP), which is now complete.

SWTI are currently working with Skills Tasmania to extend the TWPP by a further 12-months (as per the original funding agreement) to deliver a further four courses between July 2025 and June 2026, but this is not guaranteed. Beyond June 2026 government support for wool harvesting training is uncertain.

The number of interstate wool harvesting contractors operating in Tasmania is increasing, which is negatively affecting local Tasmanian businesses (reduced local spending) and State revenue (missed payroll tax). Therefore, we need to ensure we continue to build the capacity of the Tasmanian wool harvesting workforce and support Tasmanian rural and regional communities.

Policy Request:

- \$120,000 annually for a minimum of three years from the Tasmanian Government to continue to support the industry-government co-funding model for the delivery of wool harvesting training in Tasmania. This funding will be matched by industry.



9. Climate Change and Drought Preparedness

TasFarmers currently implement a jointly funded project on behalf the Farm Innovation Hub and the state government through NRE that addresses drought response, drought recovery and future drought preparedness. This program is critical for future climate change adaptation as Tasmanian farmers experience continued dry and unpredictable seasons, but currently only funds key staff on King Island and mainland Tasmania and Flinders Island to the end of 2025.

This program has seen excellent progress with assisting farmers adapt to new seasonal paradigms and developing changed farming practices and decision-making methods.

Policy Request:

- Fully fund this important program for three years to enable the excellent initial work to be further developed - \$250,000 each year for three years.
- Make available to this program NRE's Ministerial Seasonal Conditions Report to enable better decision making and resource allocation within the program.

10. Registration of Farm Vehicles – Farm Fleet Registration Model

Farmers are continually subject to varying registrations for different classes of farm vehicle to enable their operation on public roads. This leads to a significant regulatory burden for farmers who might own multiple vehicles that are registered at different times in the year. Similarly, new regulatory and cost creep is imposing new levels of red tape upon farmers and creating unnecessary confusion for primary producers.

Policy Request:

- Streamline machinery registration to one simple cost category of 'Farm Vehicle' that covers all types, such as tractors, telehandlers, harvesters and so on.
- Enable all farm-related vehicles to be registered under one fleet registration that covers every Farm Vehicle in a simple annual renewal that can be updated as new vehicles are purchased and old ones are sold or retired.
- Eliminate red tape restrictions on telehandlers and tractors with loaded fodder feeders to traverse and travel on public roads adjacent and adjoining parts of working farms.

11. Bass Island Freight Policy

Freight between the two main Bass Strait islands of King and Flinders and mainland Tasmania is fraught with inefficiency and high cost with no clear consensus on a pathway forward. There are many reasons for this inefficiency including unsustainably inefficient operation of the King Island port, unsuitable vessels servicing King Island and logistical issues.

For King and Flinders islands to realise their full potential there needs to be a clear strategic plan that develops a plan for short term solutions to freight issues but also develops a long term plan. This should be facilitated by a non-government organisation such as TasFarmers.

Policy Request

- Fully fund TasFarmers to develop a long term strategic plan for each islands' freight requirements using external consultants as required - \$300,000 for 12 months.
- Lease the King Island Port to the private sector to enable competitive 24-hour operation of this critical piece of infrastructure.

12. Environmental Outcomes

Tasmanian needs a program to build the capacity of Tasmanian farmers to be 'business ready' for sustainability reporting to strengthen Tasmania's clean, green agricultural brand through the development and implementation of Tasmanian Sustainable Agriculture Recognition Systems, demonstrating agricultural sustainability from the farm gate. To develop the business case, TasFarmers seeks to operate a pilot study project to ascertain the suitability and operability of sustainable agriculture recognition systems.

Policy Request:

- TasFarmers to lead the research, working in partnership with the Tasmanian Government, value chain organisations and the financial sector to create a harmonized recognition system for Tasmanian Sustainable Agriculture.
- TasFarmers to be funded (\$200,000 for 12 months) to further develop and test Tasmanian Property Management Planning Systems (PMPS) for a pilot on 12 farms spanning the different Tasmanian agricultural commodities and NRM regions
- Investing in on Island plastic recycling capacity for agricultural waste products such as silage wrap, berry tray wraps and tunnel covers.