

To whom it may concern,

**RE: Local Government Rating System Review**

████████████████████

My name is ██████████ and I run a mixed cropping and livestock farm in ██████████ and ██████████ with my family.

The current rating strategy is inequitable for regional rate payers and is increasingly making broadacre farming unviable for farmers such as myself in our region.

Farming families are forced to pay large sums to council rates but often receive fewer services in return than people living in towns and suburbs. This represents money that families could better use investing in their business, thereby contributing to the economic prosperity of regional Victoria

As rate payers for both Colac Otway Shire and Golden Plains Shire, my family alone currently pay \$64,064.4/year including fire levy and associated charges.

Living on the border of two shires, we have access to very few council services, and rather than being reinvested back in our area, our rates seem to be primarily funding projects on the coast, Colac and Bannockburn. For example, one of the roads we need to use regularly, Poonneet Station Road is in poor condition and currently limited to dry weather access only preventing access to our property during critical periods.

Despite having limited access to this property, our rates bill for this block in the Colac Otway increased 37% last year, and is increased a further 26% this year. It is extremely difficult for farm businesses to manage such significant rates increases each year and it is important to note that whilst our land valuations may have increased on paper, our productive capacity or profits have not also increased.

This highlights the fundamentally flawed nature of a system based on land valuations with no cap in the amount individual farm rates can increase. A fair taxation policy must be predictable, however, the move to annual property valuations has introduced even greater volatility in the level of rates payed by farmers. This makes it harder for farmers to plan for their businesses. Whilst I am happy to pay rates, it must be a fair value and a predictable price that doesn't sharply fluctuate. I would urge the review to explore ways to limit sharp rate jumps to allow farmers to plan and budget for our rates.

To ensure the long term viability of productive broadacre agriculture in the region and disincentivize landbanking, it is critical significant differentials for farm land over 40 hectares are retained where it can be demonstrated that land is being used for the purposes of carrying on a business of primary production by an owner or occupier who is also regarded as a Primary Producer by the Australian Taxation Office.

Users who benefit more from council services should pay more for those services. It is inequitable for farmers to pay for services they do not use and it is important to note that farmers also do not benefit from the increases in property values that come as a result of improved council assets and services like public parks.

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