

Farm planning worry

MYRTLEFORD TIMES 11 OCT 2017

By JAMIE KRONBORG ■ Local small farmers concerned by draft livestock proposals

AN Australian farming and food organisation believes the enterprise of North East small farmers free-ranging pigs and poultry will be at risk unless the Victorian government makes radical changes to draft animal industries planning controls.

The Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance – which represents about 250 small-scale farmers – has this week launched a petition to alert the government to the effect of the draft changes on farmers and their communities.

Alliance president Tarezi Jones, who on Sunday and Monday was in the North East where there is a growing number of small-

scale producers, told the Times Observer the government in 2015 had established an Animal Industries Advisory Committee.

It had been set up to determine how the state planning provisions might, as the government described the strategy, "better support the establishment and expansion of productive,...

animal industries...balancing environmental outcomes and community expectations".

Planning Minister Richard Wynne has subsequently released a "Planning for sustainable animal industries" discussion paper about the draft recommendations which is open for public comment until

November 14.

In contention is a proposal to introduce a system of "graduated" planning controls.

"The draft graduated controls don't appear to reduce red tape for small-scale commercial farmers, nor homesteaders or hobbyists, and yet they make it easier than ever before to set

up a 1000-cattle feedlot," Ms Jones said.

"The proposed new controls would mean that farms like mine (at Eganstown near Daylesford) with 12 cows and two boys – so about 100 pigs on 10 hectares of our 28-hectare farm at any time – would have to apply for a permit just like those with 1000 pigs in a shed."

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Farm plan changes worry



back," Ms Jones said. "The draft controls would only apply to those who are not already on a permit, and we are not sure if they will be able to manage the transition to a permit system in a way that is fair to all farmers."

Ms Jones said the draft scheme failed to account for the diversity of small-scale farming. She said it would force farmers to a large area without any of the restrictions placed on a small farm with 100 chickens, and herds of up to 1000 cattle in a farming zone without a permit, and 100 pigs and poultry in a zone with a maximum of 1000 pigs and poultry.

"If we don't get the right the great number of new farmers wanting to come into farming – when put up at all – will be a \$1000, more or less, permit fee – will they be 1000 hect, - one hect, - we don't need a permit - we're farming in the planning zone. I keep coming back to this. I keep coming back to this. I keep coming back to this."

The government believes the changes will reduce regulation for farmers. "Through these decisions, we will be able to give farmers more control over their own land and put our farmers back to work," Minister Jamie Hubbert said.

More information is available from als.org.au and agriculture.vic.gov.au/planning/grange-industries.

PRINCIPLES: Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance president Tarezi Jones said the draft animal industries planning changes. PHOTO: Jamie Kronborg

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...the fence next door could put up to 1000 cattle in a herds right up to our fence line without a permit or a shed."

Ms Jones said the proposed graduated controls would allow hobbyist poultry growers to keep up to 200 birds without a permit but require a 50-metre setback from dwellings on any property. "The controls are designed to better enable low-risk, small-scale residential livestock production in an urban farming zone, only allow up to 400 birds and requires a 100m

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OCTOBER 12 2011

Come and talk to us, urge irrigators

BY ANDREW MILLER

IRRIGATORS have urged new Victorian opposition water spokesman Euroa MP Steph Ryan to get out on the road as soon as she can to help her come to terms with what one said was "a massive portfolio."

Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) Water council chairman Richard Anderson said he was surprised at what appeared to be a sudden change, with former spokesman Peter Walsh taking over the new Decentralisation portfolio.

"I always thought it was that close to Walsh's heart that he would keep it as long as he was in politics," Mr Anderson said. "People would ask, 'why now?' because water is a big portfolio."

Mr Anderson said the Murray Darling Basin Plan was the key area Ms Ryan needed to address. "She needs to bring herself up to speed with where we are," he said. "We want to keep pretty positive pathways and lines of communication open, in terms of what's good for Victoria, so we can have those frank talks about what we think is right and wrong."

Loddon Valley irrigator Ken Pattison agreed the change caught him by surprise. "Water and agriculture were two of the plum jobs for the deputy leader and opposition deputy leader and to be throwing that over, to a newcomer, seems to me that Mr Walsh is trying to avoid the mess he left, when they went back into opposition," Mr Pattison said.

He said he wasn't "holding his breath" for the National Party to deliver on resolving some of the issues facing the



NEW SPOKESWOMAN: New opposition Water spokeswoman Steph Ryan, Nationals Euroa MP, said she was surprised, but excited, at getting the role. PHOTO: Andrew Miller.

sector. "All politicians toe the line, they all pat the same puppies, they all run with the mantra that the Basin Plan has been agreed to by everybody and it has to be delivered on time and on budget."

Central Goulburn Water Services Committee (WSC) chairman Peter Hacon said he'd like to see Ms Ryan meet with irrigators. "The biggest threat is water leaving the area, not only for irrigators, but also for Goulburn-Murray Water (GMW)," Mr Hacon said. "Grassroots advice has not been listened to - they've run into trouble in the past because they didn't listen to us." He said water was a "massive portfolio - it's virtually impossible to learn about it, straight up. If she listens to the usual crew, she is going to end up with the usual problem: she needs to broaden her horizons."

VFF Sunraysia Branch water spokesman Bill McClumpha said Ms Ryan's appointment was "a surprise move by the Nats." "Mr Walsh has been welded to the water portfolio in government and in opposition

for decades and it is hard to accept that he would let it go without some pressing imperative." He said the branch was looking forward to advising Ms Ryan about some of the ongoing issues, facing irrigators in the north-west. That included the election of irrigators to the board of Lower Murray Water, a move he said was promised by Mr Walsh, when he was in opposition.

"The changes to the carry over rules, following the review, have burnt local irrigators, and those new rules need to be overhauled," Mr McClumpha said.

He said he was concerned Ms Ryan's initial comments indicated a "populist" approach to water policy, "more so than the rigorous and informed approach that would be required should she become the next water minister."

He said it would be a shame if Ms Ryan persisted in going down the easy road of pointing the finger at water reform and the Murray Darling Basin Plan (MDBP) as being the downfall of the

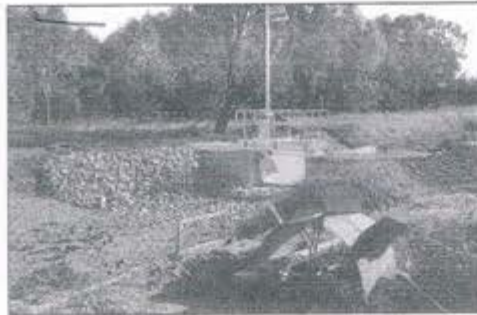
Goulburn Murray Irrigation District (GMID) and the dairy industry.

"It's in everybody's interests that economic realities aren't pushed to the side, like they are by present state and Federal incumbents. There are other irrigators than dairy farmers and other districts than the GMID. Ms Ryan must take that on board."

Upper Goulburn River Catchment Association spokeswoman Jan Beer, Yea, said Ms Ryan must stand up and state the 450GL could not be recovered, or delivered to South Australia, without massive social and economic impacts. "To transfer another 450GL out of the GMID and Southern Connected system will destroy these areas entirely. The current Water minister, Lisa Neville, knows and understands this only too well," Ms Beer said.

"Nor can that water be delivered - it is technically unachievable and as the spring 2016 floods showed would create millions of dollars damage all down the river systems."

STOCK & LAND OCTOBER 12 2017



WATER POLITICS: Nationals Euroa MP Steph Ryan has stepped into the contentious water role.

Water and politics good mix for Ryan

THE first new Victorian coalition Water spokeswoman - in government or opposition - for about 15 years has said she was surprised about being handed the role.

Euroa Nationals MP Stephanie Ryan said she was also excited by the opportunity to take over from long standing opposition spokesman and former minister Peter Walsh.

"Peter Walsh has obviously had the portfolio for close to 15 years now and I think he'd need a very compelling reason to give it up," Ms Ryan said. "He does realise he has a lot of work to do in the Decentralisation portfolio, which has been newly created.

Ms Ryan said she grew up on an irrigated dairy farm, so understood the importance of how water was managed, in northern Victoria.

"The politics of water was the reason I got into parliament in the first place." She said her key challenge was getting out and talking to irrigators. "I have worked in the water space but my head hasn't been fully there - I want to get out and hear what people have to tell me,"

Ms Ryan said.

Victoria needed to continue making the case around the socio-economic impacts of losing the 450 Gigalitres (GL) of upwater. "I don't think the Southern Basin, and northern Victoria, can afford to lose more water," she said. "The impact of that is devastating, not just on the social fabric of the community, but also those irrigators who remain with a bigger cost burden of running the system.

"I will be very focussed on that and making sure the Victorian government is arguing that case and interests of Victorian irrigators are defended, as the Basin Plan progresses."

Ms Ryan said she was aware of balancing competing demands, from irrigators across Victoria. "Thankfully I only have to balance the needs of Victoria. Someone once told me that if you make everybody a little bit unhappy you have generally achieved the right balance. If someone is really happy, and someone is very unhappy, then typically speaking the balance is wrong."

- ANDREW MILLER

Fee-gouging fears over land registry

Noel Towell
Benjamin Preiss

Fees for basic real estate transactions could skyrocket if the state government goes ahead with plans to lease the land titles registry, an expert has warned.

The Andrews government is assessing a proposal to lease out Land Use Victoria, the government agency that keeps records of land ownership, in a deal that could see up to \$2 billion flow into the state's coffers.

But former state surveyor-general Keith Clifford Bell told Fairfax Media he had a "hell of a lot" of concerns about a private sector player taking over the registry. He said private operators had hit consumers with fee increases of more than 300 per cent after similar deals overseas.

But he said Australian govern-

ments, hungry for short-term cash, continue to misrepresent the evidence that private lease deals were good for consumers.

The government, which flagged in its May budget the possibility of a private sector deal for Land Use Victoria, said it was examining the proposal so that it could learn from the experiences of similar deals.

At his May budget press conference, Treasurer Tim Pallas said the state government was "committed to the idea of asset recycling".

"We'll start the work of looking at the processes of how we might better commercialise the value and the asset that is the land titles office. Certainly we've seen in NSW a commercialisation of the land titles office which has returned \$2.5 billion to that state," Mr Pallas said.

The long-term lease of the NSW

titles registry proved highly controversial, sparking a backlash from sections of the property sector.

Dr Clifford Bell, who served as surveyor-general from 1999 to 2005, said he shared the concerns of some opponents of the proposal that sensitive information held by a private firm might fall into the wrong hands.

But the former surveyor-general, who now works at the World Bank, said his worries did not end there.

He said gouging of consumers was a real concern, with transaction prices increasing more than 300 per cent in two Canadian provinces that reached private lease deals similar to the one proposed in Victoria.

"That has most definitely happened in Canada - both Ontario and Manitoba provinces," Dr Clifford Bell said. He said there was a lot of evidence emerging that the taxpay-

ers of NSW had been short-changed by their government when it leased out its land registry operation.

"The real return to the state through the [public-private partnership] versus what would have been realised over 35 years was not provided for public scrutiny," Dr Clifford Bell said.

"Media has reported 'insider' views that the sale was a bargain and the real upfront payment should have been \$3 billion to \$4 billion.

"Leaked government sales pitch documents stressed the billions of dollars' profit that would be made by the private investor."

Dr Clifford Bell said he believed the NSW government, fixated on a short-term cash injection, overrode reasonable objections to the deal.

"The government chose to ignore widespread public opposition to the

[Public-Private Partnership] and proceed," he said.

"The NSW PPP is held to be a great success by both the Victorian and South Australian governments."

The NSW government declined a request on Monday to respond to Dr Clifford Bell's criticism.

A spokesman for the Andrews government insisted the lessons from around the world and from other states would be heeded before a decision was made about the future of Land Use Victoria.

"We are undertaking a scoping study to ensure we learn from the experiences of past transactions in other jurisdictions, and that appropriate safeguards are in place to best protect the interests of Victorians," the spokesman said.

The study is expected to be complete by the end of the year.

Planning for Sustainable Animal Industries

20 September 2017



The Victorian Government is overhauling Victoria's agricultural planning rules with a suite of proposed reforms that strike the balance between delivering for farmers and meeting community expectations.

The proposed changes will simplify planning requirements for animal based farming and will improve the consistency of how the rules are applied. The reforms aim to make the land use planning process clearer for farmers, councils and the community.

This work delivers on key actions under Planning for Sustainable Animal Industries, the Victorian Government's response to the 2016 Animal Industries Advisory Committee report.

A two month consultation period begins today seeking feedback on proposed new land use terms and definitions, graduated planning controls and guidance to help improve the quality of planning applications and permit conditions.

The reforms have been developed with significant input from a reference group comprising key industry sectors, local government and community members.

The changes include new land use terms and definitions that will reduce regulation for farmers with grazing animals and small-scale pig and poultry farms that are low risk.

Benefits for farmers include greater certainty due to clearer land use definitions and planning controls, more flexibility to supplementary feed their livestock without the need for a planning permit, and permit exemptions for small scale pig and poultry producers.

Further opportunities to simplify planning requirements for low risk farming will be explored in 2018 and 2019 as part of the ongoing Planning for Sustainable Animal Industries initiative.

To facilitate feedback during the consultation period, several information sessions will be held across the state and public responses can be submitted until **Tuesday 14 November 2017**.

To find out more about the planning reforms, including the timing and location of information sessions, go to agriculture.vic.gov.au/planning-animal-industries

<http://www.vic.gov.au/news/planning-for-sustainable-animal...> 16/10/2017