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Dr Warren Mundy  
Presiding Commissioner  
Performance Benchmarking Australian Business Regulation  
Productivity Commission  
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Dear Dr Mundy

In relation to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into business regulation and the role of local government, the South Australian Farmers Federation (SAFF) provides the following comments.

The Commission is focusing on the regulatory activities of local governments that materially affect costs incurred by business.

It is the experience of members of the South Australian Farmers Federation (SAFF) that overall the local councils in South Australia do not cause a hindrance to farmers operating their businesses. Usually it is State Government legislation and regulations that has the greatest influence in South Australia.

There are some areas where local government does have some influence, such as:

- **Unmade road reserves.** In parts of South Australia there are many unmade road reserves and various local councils treat these reserves differently. Where these unmade road reserves border farming land, often farmers gain virtually exclusive access to these reserves. But some councils require permits to be sought and put various barriers in the way so that access is denied. There needs to be a common approach.
- **Heavy vehicles.** Farmers can find that there are local government access restrictions to their properties limiting access for heavy vehicles, even though there are valid productivity, safety, environmental and economic reasons why heavy vehicles should be used.

In considering the regulatory activities of local governments, there needs to be a clear division of responsibility between local and State Governments. With more functions being transferred to local government, this division of responsibility becomes even more important. It is also necessary when transferring any functions that the funding to carry out these functions is also transferred from the State Government or else there will be difficulties in these even being undertaken.

## **Assisting existing land use by farmers**

One area where local government should have more influence is in protecting current land use by farmers when there are changes in land use in adjoining properties. This is referring to not only residential and industrial developments, but other types of agricultural production.

Often existing farmers find that when there is a change of land use in an adjoining property (regardless of whether it is residential, industrial or even another type of farming), it is the existing farmer that has to change common accepted practices and provide for buffers hence reducing the amount of productive land. This commonly happens for existing broadacre cropping farmers when a vineyard is planted in a neighbouring property with the vines being planted right up to the boundary fence. A buffer zone for the use of chemicals means that the existing farmer can now no longer grow crops up to the boundary. Not only is there then less cropping land available, but it is not possible to continue effective weed and insect control, and other sustainable land practices.

It needs to be recognised that there are often marked differences between various types of agriculture (such as vegetable production, horticulture, viticulture, broadacre cropping, pasture production, intensive livestock, feedlots and livestock production), and when these are required to co-exist there can be a wide range of aspects that need to be considered.

Local government should be involved in agreeing to a change in agricultural land use and ensuring that those wanting to change the production system not only know about such aspects as buffer zones, but incorporate these in to their planning for the change in land use. Otherwise this can and does result in economic hardship for existing farmers.

Yours sincerely

**Carol Vincent**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**