RESPONSE TO PETITION

Petition No. 11 of 2026
House of Assembly

The petitioners ask the House to:

- Conduct an urgent independent review into Tasmania's vegetation clearing and land management enforcement framework.
- Ensure penalties are fair and proportionate, particularly where activities relate to ordinary farming practices and land management.
- End the culture of treating hardworking farmers like environmental criminals.
- Acknowledge farmers' fundamental right to farm.
- Ensure future laws and enforcement properly balance environmental protection with food production, regional jobs, private property rights, and the future of Tasmanian farming communities.

GOVERNMENT POSITION:

RESPONSE:

Thank you for the concerns raised in the petition regarding the regulation and enforcement of agricultural clearing activities in Tasmania.

The matters raised in the petition are important, and it is appropriate that the agricultural community seeks clarity regarding the regulation of routine farm management activities.

1. **Conduct an urgent independent review into Tasmania's vegetation clearing and land management enforcement framework.**

- The Government has recently announced two initiatives in response to these concerns:
    - A review of the Forest Practices Regulations 2017, which govern, among other matters, the circumstances in which forest practices may be undertaken without a certified forest practices plan. This includes, for example, routine clearing around infrastructure such as fence lines or clearing undertaken in accordance with a fire management plan.
    - An independent review of the Forest Practices Authority (FPA). An independent expert will be engaged to consult with stakeholders, including agricultural industry representatives, and develop proposed Terms of Reference for Government consideration.

- Both initiatives will include broad consultation to ensure a wide range of views can be provided and considered as part of the review process, including from the agricultural sector.

- The reviews will also occur in the context of proposed reforms to the Australian Government's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and will help ensure Tasmania's regulatory framework remains contemporary and effective.

2. The petitioners call for penalties to be fair and proportionate, particularly where activities relate to ordinary farming practices and land management.

- The Government supports the principle of fair and proportionate regulation of land management activities, including a regulatory framework that provides penalties proportionate to the circumstances of an offence and any resulting impacts.

- The FPA plays an important role in administering and enforcing Tasmania's forest practices system and has a range of compliance and enforcement powers available under the legislation.

- These powers include undertaking inspections, investigating alleged offences, issuing warnings, requiring remedial action and pursuing enforcement action where appropriate.

- The FPA generally seeks to achieve compliance through education, advice, remediation and other regulatory responses, with enforcement action determined according to the circumstances and seriousness of the matter.

- The Government acknowledges that concerns have been raised by some members of the agricultural community regarding the operation of the current compliance and enforcement framework.

- The reviews outlined above will consider whether the current framework remains effective and fit for purpose, including through consultation with stakeholders who have direct experience with its operation.

- Feedback regarding previous compliance and enforcement matters may assist in identifying opportunities to improve regulatory processes, guidance and stakeholder engagement.

- The Government will also consider requests for future FPA fine revenue to be paid into general consolidated revenue, rather than being retained by the FPA, as part of the 2027-28 Budget process. This will assist to ensure there is no perception of bias in relation to FPA enforcement activity.

- The Government notes that already under existing processes, any revenue from court-issued fines does not go to the FPA.

3. The petition calls for an end to the culture of treating hardworking farmers like environmental criminals.

- The Government acknowledges the concerns raised by members of the agricultural community regarding the operation of the current regulatory framework.

- The Government recognises the important contribution of Tasmania's farmers to the state's economy, regional communities and food production.

- The Government acknowledges that most farmers comply with the regulatory requirements that apply to their operations.

- The FPA administers compliance and enforcement activities in accordance with the legislative framework established by Parliament.

- The reviews outlined above provide an opportunity for stakeholders to raise concerns and provide feedback on the operation of the current framework, including compliance and enforcement processes.

4. Acknowledge farmers' fundamental right to farm.

- The Government recognises the important role of Tasmania's farmers and agricultural businesses in supporting food production, regional communities, employment and economic activity throughout Tasmania.

- The Government supports the ability of farmers to undertake lawful agricultural activities within Tasmania's regulatory framework.

- The Government continues to work with farmers, agribusinesses and industry representatives to support the long-term growth, productivity and sustainability of the agricultural sector. We will continue to work with the sector to achieve our AgriVision 2050 target of a $10 billion annual farmgate value by 2050.

5. Ensure future laws and enforcement properly balance environmental protection with food production, regional jobs, private property rights, and the future of Tasmanian farming communities.

- The Government recognises the importance of ensuring regulatory frameworks appropriately balance environmental objectives with the needs of productive industries and regional communities.

- The Government supports efforts to provide clear and accessible guidance regarding vegetation management and land clearance requirements for farmers and other landowners.

- The Government has introduced legislative changes to strengthen non-forestry agricultural representation on the Forest Practices Advisory Council.

- The reviews outlined above provide an opportunity to consider whether current arrangements remain effective and continue to support an appropriate balance between environmental outcomes, agricultural production and regional economic activity.

- The review processes will include consultation with stakeholders to ensure a broad range of perspectives are considered when developing recommendations regarding Tasmania's forest practices system.

Hon Felix Ellis MP
Minister for Business, Industry and Resources

Date: 22/10/2026