



farmers for  
climate action

Annual Report 2021-22





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## A message from the Chair, Charlie Prell

The past year has been one of huge growth and increasing impact for Farmers for Climate Action. I'm very proud of all that our organisation has achieved this year and of the vision we've created for the future of our 7,000+ farmer network.

A key achievement of the past 12 months is our new strategic plan which will guide our work for the next three years 2022-2024. We have set ourselves some very ambitious goals and targets, both in financial terms but also in measures of success within our organisation. So far, we've met and exceeded these targets.

Our work this year has been against a backdrop of significant challenges for farmers. Floods and wet conditions in some areas, ongoing drought in others, supply chain disruptions, labour, biosecurity and processing challenges across the country. The energy crisis and cost of living increases are exerting pressures on farmers and farming communities. This has emphasised the need for the rapid shift to renewable energy.

Political change occurred federally this year with the election of a Labor Government for the first time since 2013. The substantive changes in our parliamentary make-up across the political landscape mean independents have an increasingly important role to play. Our commitment to being fiercely non-partisan means Farmers for Climate Action is well placed to engage across politics to amplify farmers' voices calling for strong climate policy.

One of our greatest strengths is our ability to work with farmers across the ag sector, working together to build our influence. We will continue to work this way to achieve our ambitious goals with our partners and supporters. We have always been constructive and

willing to work with farmers in their own backyard, as well as with their representatives in industry and political organisations.

Our small but cohesive Board of Directors has worked with a strong focus on strengthened, robust governance and stewardship as we enter a new strategic phase. Our Board of Directors are focused on overseeing the organisation's rapid growth deliberately and judiciously, while keeping our vision and ambition in the front of our minds. We are committed to ensuring our corporate governance is best practice, and have streamlined our processes accordingly.

I want to acknowledge and applaud the dedication and performance of our CEO, Dr Fiona Davis, who stepped into the CEO role in mid-2021. She has built a formidable team within the Farmers for Climate Action staff and the Board is blessed to have such a strong leader in charge of such a capable and diverse team. Their cohesion, enthusiasm, capabilities, and work ethic are the foundation for the ongoing success of our organisation and our wider farmer network right across Australia.

Farmers for Climate Action continues to be a driver of leadership, supporting farmers and our representatives to be climate leaders. I'm really looking forward to the coming year, to meeting and beating our targets, and to all we will achieve together. This is THE decade for strong climate leadership that will produce deep cuts to our emissions. Farmers for Climate Action will play its part in ensuring that we have the leadership in Australia we so desperately need.

**Charlie Prell**  
**Chair, Farmers for Climate Action**



## A message from the CEO, Fiona Davis

Farmers across our Australia-wide network have made huge strides this year in their climate leadership, despite challenging conditions. I'm really proud of what our movement has been able to do. We're growing our reach and impact in public conversation, in the ag sector, and in the political landscape.

Farmers continue to be on the front lines of a changing climate, and their voices are a trusted and sensible messenger to the wider Australian community about the need for emissions reductions and strong climate policy to protect Australian farming businesses and communities. We are committed to ensuring farmers and farming communities can benefit from the opportunities that come from strong climate policy,

Some of the achievements you'll read more about in this annual report include:

1. **The Federal National Party's support for an economy-wide net zero emissions target**, signalling federal bipartisan support for the first time for such a target. Our work meeting with and briefing MPs, elevating farmer voices and influencing agriculture sector policy, including the National Farmers' Federation's climate policy which supported a 2050 economy-wide net zero goal, helped make this happen.
2. **Being able to show that the city and country united to vote for climate action** at the Federal Election. Our [polling](#) showed that across the three electorates of Gilmore, Page and Eden Monaro, more than 70% of voters said "effective climate change policies" were important to their vote.
3. **Growing the size and depth of our movement to include over 7,000 farmers across Australia.** This growth was supported by fellowship programs in

multiple states, [webinars](#), [conference](#); our "[I'm a farmer for climate action](#)" [farm gate sign](#) program; and road shows to [NSW's Northern Rivers](#) region and [Victoria's Goulburn Valley](#) region to connect with farmers in these communities and support them to build local farmer groups.

4. **Successfully launching two major reports** "[How can Australia's agriculture sector realise opportunity in a low emissions future?](#)" by Ernst & Young, and "[Fork in the Road](#)" by Stephen Bartos.
5. **Delivering successful fellowship programs** in Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, supporting 100 farmers to boost their skills and knowledge in climate science, creating change on-farm, and advocating for climate solutions beyond the farm gate.

Our staff has grown this year and every one of them is making a critical contribution to set and achieve our strategic goals. With staff working from farm and home offices, as well as from our office 'hubs', we've enjoyed meeting for two in-person retreats to plan and refine our work as a team. We've also benefited from the input of experienced political and ag industry advisors. Our Strategy Director Cam Klose left us to travel the world in March, and we remain grateful for the incredible contribution he made to our movement in the three years he was with us.

I would like to thank the Board, and particularly our Chair Charlie Prell, for their enthusiasm and critical strategic guidance. Their committed foundational governance continues to set our staff team and farmer movement up for great success.

**Fiona Davis**  
**CEO, Farmers for Climate Action**



# About us



*Farmers for Climate Action Chair and staff in Castlemaine in March 2022.*

**Farmers for Climate Action is a movement of farmers, agricultural leaders and rural Australians working to influence Australia to adopt strong climate policies by growing the number of farmers, farming communities and elected representatives championing ambitious action.**

We connect farmers with each other and support them to advocate for and enact climate solutions both on and off farm.

We are independent, non-profit and non-partisan. We represent more than 7,000 farmers across Australia, and our supporter base includes over 35,000 Australians committed to climate action for agriculture.

Our members and our Board can be found across the country from the tropical north of Queensland to the cooler climes of Tasmania, and from the wine growing regions of Western Australia right across to the sheep and cropping farms of New South Wales. Our staff members are spread across Australia, working remotely and from our office hubs.

We work closely with people and organisations across the agricultural and climate sectors to find opportunities to tackle the challenge of climate change and ensure rural communities' interests are represented.

We are a member of the National Farmers' Federation and a member of the Climate Action Network Australia.

## Our history

Farmers for Climate Action grew out of a meeting of frustrated farmers in the Blue Mountains in 2015. Many had spent decades voicing their concerns about climate change to no avail. They resolved to get to work.

That year, more than 100 farmers signed a letter calling on the Federal Government to set stronger targets to reduce carbon pollution. Another group ran a crowdfunding campaign to send two young farmers, Joshua Gilbert and Anika Molesworth, to the UN Climate Talks in Paris.

In 2016 we set up as a formal group and ran a nationwide survey of farmer attitudes towards climate change and renewable energy. More than 1,300 farmers around Australia took part, and in November 2016 a delegation of farmers presented the Australian Farmers Climate Survey results to politicians and industry leaders in Canberra.

Thanks to our supporters, in 2017 our Board was able to employ a CEO and some of our most active members worked together to help set our direction.

Since then, our farmer supporter numbers have grown to their thousands, our staff team has expanded and our supporter base increased. Our reach and influence continues to grow from the seed of an idea into a vibrant movement that is making real change on-farm, in regional communities, and on the national stage.

## Our mission

To influence Australia to adopt strong economy-wide climate policies and realise a prosperous and sustainable future, full of opportunity for farmers and farming communities.

## Our theory of change

We believe that if we grow the number of farmers, their communities and their representatives who are leading on climate-smart farming solutions and championing strong economy-wide climate policy, we can influence governments to implement climate policies that mitigate climate change and benefit rural communities.



## How we work

- We are **evidence-based** and informed by the **best available science**.
- We are **collaborative, inclusive** and **respectful**.
- We **respect and embrace** the **diversity and wisdom** of farming communities.
- We are **empowering** our farmers to be **bold and courageous** and **widening the space** for rural Australia to take action on climate change.
- We are **sustainable** and are committed to being here for the long haul through being **ecologically, financially and socially responsible**.
- We are **strategic** and work towards delivering **tangible, long-term results**, while **maximising our impact**.

## What makes us stand out

We are the only farmer-led organisation that specialises in climate action. Agriculture accounts for 15% of Australia’s emissions and yet we are the first organisation to focus on ensuring Australia reduces its emissions in a way that works for farmers.

We also help farmers communicate with the public about climate change. This is critical, as farmers are frequently recognised as some of the most trusted voices on climate change.

We are committed to bringing about multi-partisan political support for climate action and work across the political spectrum.

We work with farmers to influence rural and regional decision-makers to drive a rapid shift of our energy system away from fossil fuels to renewables, and ensure farmers and regional communities benefit.

## Our staff

Our staff come from various backgrounds including agriculture, farming, media, communications, community development, and campaigns. They work to bring our strategy to life, engaging farmers, industry and supporters to drive our programs and engagement. Our staff team grew in 2021-2022, expanding our capacity to engage with farmers, supporters, and industry.

## Our board

Our Board has over 200 years of combined experience in agriculture and is made up of industry leaders from across the country.

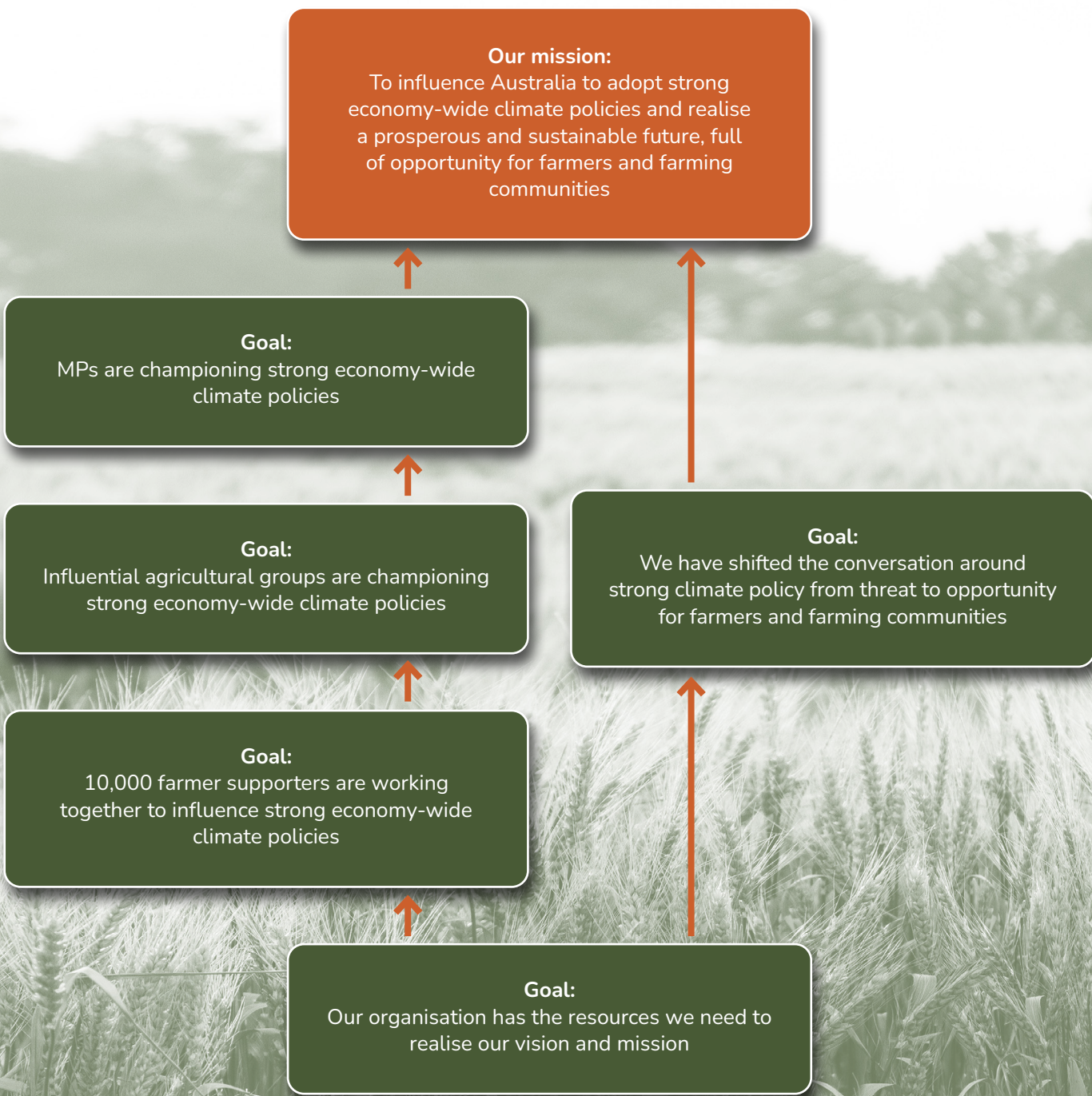
**Directors:**  
Charlie Prell, Chair  
Anika Molesworth, Deputy Chair  
Brett Hall  
Michael McDonald OAM  
Anna Rose  
Angus Emmott OAM



Farmers for Climate Action board in August 2022. Pictured clockwise from bottom left: Anika Molesworth, Brett Hall, Anna Rose, Michael McDonald, and Charlie Prell. (Angus Emmott not pictured.)



# New Strategic Plan 2022–2024



From the start of 2022 our work has been guided by our new 2022-24 Vision and Plan, which paves the way for us to achieve our mission, to influence Australia to adopt strong economy-wide climate policies and realise a prosperous and sustainable future, full of opportunity for farmers and farming communities.

Our Vision and Plan 2022-24 builds on the work we've done since Farmers for Climate Action began, and sets us on a focused path to achieve ambitious climate action in this critical decade and ensure our farming future is healthy and prosperous.

## Our goals are:

1. MPs are championing strong economy-wide climate policies;
2. Influential agricultural groups are championing strong economy-wide climate policies;
3. 10,000 farmer supporters are working together to influence strong economy-wide climate policies;
4. Shifting the conversation around strong climate policy from threat to opportunity for farmers and farming communities; and
5. Our organisation has the resources we need to realise our vision and mission.

There are many areas in which Farmers for Climate Action could contribute. These goals focus our efforts on where it is most strategically useful for achieving our central mission. Our plan is informed by wide consultation with farmers, rural MPs, agricultural industry colleagues, donors and partners. We surveyed our farmers in mid-2021 and gathered 400+ responses, plus 150 responses from agriculture sector workers. We held one-on-one interviews with industry leaders and rural MPs.

It was clear from that process that farmers need support to adapt to, and mitigate, climate change but ultimately they need strong climate policy underpinned by deep emissions cuts this decade if they're to continue producing the food and fibre on which we rely into the future. This strategy focuses our vision, experience, staff capacity and the energy of our movement toward achieving this goal.



We have clear measures of success underpinning each of our goals and will regularly review and report on our progress.

[Farmers for Climate Action's full strategic plan can be viewed here.](#)



# Highlights and Impact



Farmers attending our Northern Rivers NSW roadshow events in December 2021.



Our petition with Jody Brown, a grazier from Longreach in Queensland, gained more than 5,000 signatures ahead of the federal election, calling on the Prime Minister to make substantial emissions reductions this decade, backed by a plan to get us there.



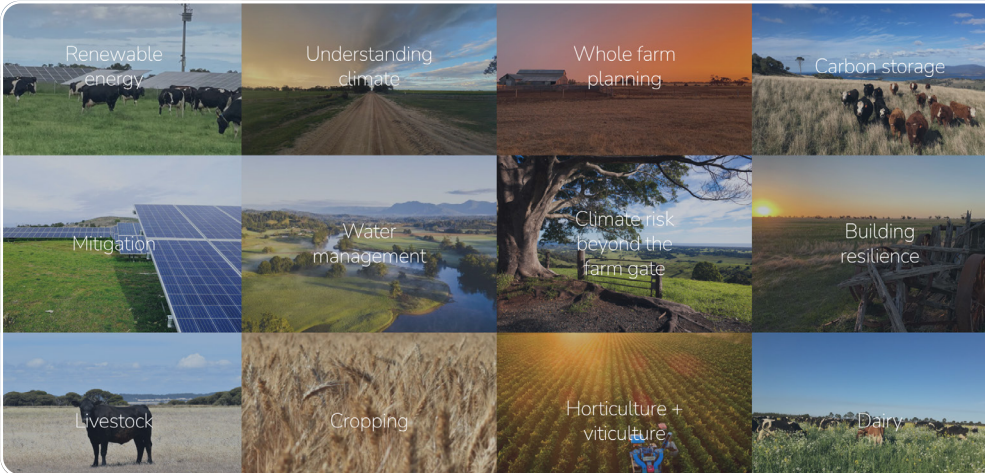
This year we distributed more than 1000 farm gate signs, making farmers' support for climate action visible in their community.



Out and about at Yorke Peninsula Field Days in SA.



Our network of farmer Climate Leaders is supported to advocate for strong climate policy in the public conversation. We have more than 150 farmer spokespeople who appear in local and national media.



Our Climate-Smart Agriculture Toolkit was refreshed this year, as an online resource that shares case studies, tips and strategies for farmers that match their farm business's needs, values and goals. [Find the toolkit here on our website.](#)



As a member of the National Farmers Federation, it was great to reconnect in person with other industry groups and farmers at their conference in Canberra.



Our report '[How can Australia's agriculture sector realise opportunity in a low emissions future?](#)' was launched in September 2021, written by Ernst and Young consulting. The report gained widespread media coverage and sparked conversations across politics and industry about taking climate action to protect Australia's farming future.



Our Fellowship programs rolled out in Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, supporting 100 farmers to boost their skills and knowledge in climate science, creating change on-farm, and advocating for climate solutions beyond the farm gate.



'Over the Fence', Farmers for Climate Action's own podcast, shared conversations with rural and political leaders.



Ahead of the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference (COP 26) in Glasgow, we launched a [TV and social media ad campaign](#) to highlight the importance of Australian leadership on climate policy.

Our '[Farmers in Focus](#)' series shared the knowledge of farmers and graziers taking steps to build their farm's productivity and profitability through climate-smart ag tools and practice.







## Reports

### Opportunities for agriculture in a low emissions future



In September 2021 we launched a new report authored by economic consultants Ernst & Young, which laid out how Australia's agriculture sector can capitalise on opportunities in a low emissions future.

The economic consultants modelled an easily achievable pathway to zero emissions without shrinking Australian agriculture nor the cattle or sheep herd, and this landed on the year 2040.

We launched the report via a public online event that received 970 RSVPs. The event included Fiona Simson, president of the National Farmers Federation, and Peter Walsh, leader of the Victorian Nationals, as our guest speakers and Ed Gannon, former editor of the Weekly Times, as MC.

The report lays out many opportunities for Australian farmers to increase productivity whilst also making deep emissions cuts this decade.

It outlines the benefits of good climate policy for farming families including income diversification,

productivity benefits, foreign market access and long term resilience. It includes several methods of reducing net emissions, including improved pasture management, selective breeding, feed supplements which reduce methane output in stock and of course, carbon and biodiversity crops as climate action nudges other industries to purchase carbon credits.

Much of what needs to be happening - planting trees and ground cover on non-productive land and within productive systems, adopting best-practice grazing management - is already underway. We just need to scale it up.

This report was a foundational piece of work which we have used in our farmer engagement efforts and in our work engaging political and agricultural industry leaders in the conversation about the opportunities for agriculture that come with strong climate policy.

[Read the report in full here on our website.](#)

### Fork in the Road - impacts of climate change on our food supply

In March 2022 we released a new report titled 'Fork in the Road' following two major disruptions - floods and COVID - which converged to break down our supply chains, leading to empty supermarket shelves.

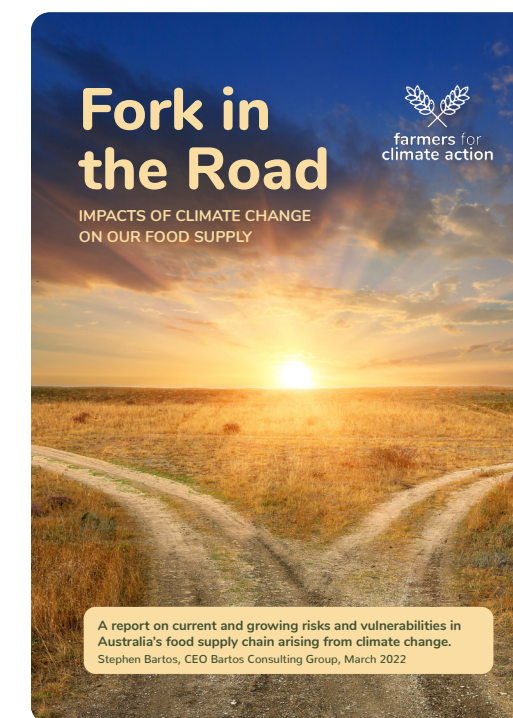
The report showed that climate change is driving up the price of food and making farming more difficult and unpredictable.

It also highlighted that we still have the opportunity to act to reduce emissions this decade to minimise large-scale disruptions in the future.

Farmers can adapt and we will continue to, but adaptation can only go so far in the face of flood, fire and drought. We need strong emissions reduction policies this decade to protect farmers.

The report says that climate change is disrupting food production, cutting key transport routes for weeks at a time and increasing pests and diseases, making life even more uncertain for farmers. Bank loans and insurance are becoming harder to get, and more expensive. All of this makes climate change a serious food security issue.

[Read the report in full here on our website.](#)



Climate change driving up food prices with warning bare shelves to become more common, new report warns

**The rural network**  
**Farmers' report warns climate crisis puts Australia's food supply at increasing risk**

**Global heating 'amplifies risks all the way through the supply chain, from farm to warehouse to supermarket shelves'**

**CLIMATE CHANGE HURTING SUPPLY CHAINS**

**MATT JOHNSTON**  
Bartos, examines the impact of lost food, less water, and fewer days to transport livestock as will be times when supply chain risk management plans will be overwhelmed and fail, and

**Aussies paying more for groceries as climate change disrupts supply chains: Farmers for Climate Action report**





On the road

## Farmers for Climate Action roadshows



Our farmer outreach team took the opportunity when travel restrictions eased to get out and chat to local farmers in key regions, visiting NSW's Northern Rivers in December 2021 and Victoria's Goulburn Valley in April 2022.

Strong climate policy creates a raft of opportunities for regional Australia and we want farmers in their farming communities to be leading the conversation to ensure we get the best opportunities for their region.

We held local meet-ups that created opportunities to meet like-minded farmers in the area. These events allowed farmers to get together and have a frank discussion about what climate change means for their region and livelihoods, and plan how we can take action locally to secure strong climate action from all levels of government.

We had great conversations with local farmers on the ground, about opportunities for their region and for their farm businesses, if we have strong climate policies in place to protect their farming future.



Farmers are on the front lines of climate change, with many of them living through droughts, floods and bushfires. Strong climate policy will benefit our communities on every level, protecting our farming futures and growing our local economies.



## Farmer flood stories



In late 2021 we held a five-day roadshow in Northern NSW, connecting with farmers across the region through events and farm visits. Soon after, much of this area was then hit with devastating flood events in 2022.

In the aftermath of the floods, our farmer outreach team undertook welfare calls to the farmers in the region, checking in on how they were doing and offering support where possible.

Through our post-flood engagement, we learnt just how many farmers wanted to share their stories, how healing this was for them personally, and how powerful these stories would be in articulating how climate change is affecting frontline Australian communities right now.

The floods had impacted many of our farmers deeply, and we knew we needed to take the time to hear their experiences and harness their voices as a powerful tool to push for political change at a local, state and federal level.

We interviewed 43 farmers in the Farmers for Climate Action network who were affected by the floods, and we plan to select a set of these stories to showcase in a booklet and online.



Our farmers shared information about where they are from, their connection to the land, what they farm, how they were affected by the recent extreme weather and how they felt about the way our government leaders are addressing climate change in Australia.

*We need recognition of climate change from the government. The rains that brought these historic floods were completely unprecedented - things are changing now, and we really need to start planning ahead and acting now.*

– **Susan Somerville, Toonumbar**

*I'm 77 and supposed to be retired but I'm looking after the farm and cattle for my daughter and son-and-law who run cattle and have had to shift all their stock to my place since their property went under. I'd like to see politicians stick to their promises of support for farmers, we've been made ineligible for assistance for off farm work that was done several years ago in order to pay to restock after the drought. I'd want to see them be fair-dinkum about it and listen to the science on climate change.*

– **John Redmayne, Kyogle**





## Advocacy

### Growing climate leadership in politics

Since our inception, Farmers for Climate Action has been influential in shifting the conversation about climate change and farming, and putting a spotlight on the climate leadership that farmers are showing on-farm as well as beyond the farm gate.

During this year, Farmers for Climate Action's CEO and farmers met with representatives across the political spectrum to talk about opportunities for strong climate policy to protect Australian farming.

We encouraged rural MPs to speak publicly about the opportunities for rural and regional Australia from strong climate policy.

In late 2021, ahead of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 26) in Glasgow, the National Party supported an economy-wide net zero emissions target by 2050, signalling federal bipartisan support for the first time for such a target. Our work meeting with and briefing MPs helped make this happen, by elevating farmer voices and influencing agriculture sector policy, including the National Farmers' Federation's 2020

climate policy which supported a 2050 economy-wide net zero goal.

Ahead of the 2022 federal election, we worked with our Australia-wide farmer network to elevate their voices and advocate to all candidates for strong economy-wide climate policies. We shared [our policy priorities](#) and activated farmers to raise issues in their local area, through letters to the editor, farm gate signs, and appearances in local and national media.

The election result showed the country, suburbs, and the city all voted for the opportunities they saw in setting strong climate policies.

We worked hard to ensure this message landed. Our [polling](#) released immediately following the election showed that across the three electorates of Gilmore, Page and Eden Monaro, more than 70% of voters said "effective climate change policies" were important to their vote. Associated media around this polling was widespread and included the home page of the Australian newspaper.



Victorian Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas visits Morningswood Farm berry growers near Daylesford, Victoria, in July 2021.



Our CEO Fiona Davis meets Sam Birrell, Nationals MP for Nicholls



Farmers for Climate Action Board Directors meeting Agriculture Minister David Littleproud MP and Shadow Minister Julie Collins MP at the National Farmers Federation conference in April 2022

**The days of a city-rural divide on human-induced climate change are over**

# A vote for clean energy



Analysis of federal seats by Farmers for Climate Action shows strong rural support for a new approach on climate, writes **FIONA DAVIS**

COUNTRY, suburbs and city have all seen the opportunities in deep emissions reduction this decade, and they voted for it.

The numbers don't lie: the so-called country-city divide on climate is now over and the climate wedge no longer wins votes.

The country Coalition MPs who

other factor, with 24 per cent. Economy was named by 16 per cent of voters as their key factor.

A similar story played out in Gippsland, where Nationals MP Darren Chester, who has spoken up for sensible climate policy, increased his margin by 4 per cent.

In the bushfire-affected seat of







Our 2021-22 impact by the numbers



7,037

Farmers in our network  
Australia-wide



35,615

Supporters who back  
Farmers for Climate Action



652

Volunteers in our  
network



2,445

Media items featuring  
Farmers for Climate Action

154

Farmers trained as  
spokespeople,  
regularly engaging with the media  
and sharing their experiences on the  
frontline of climate change impacts



4,017

RSVPs to our events



6,410

Signatures on our open  
letters and petitions

100

Farmers participated in  
our Climate-Smart Ag  
Fellowships

Social media followers



19,349

Facebook



12,702

Twitter



4,112

Instagram



214

YouTube



1,288

LinkedIn







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