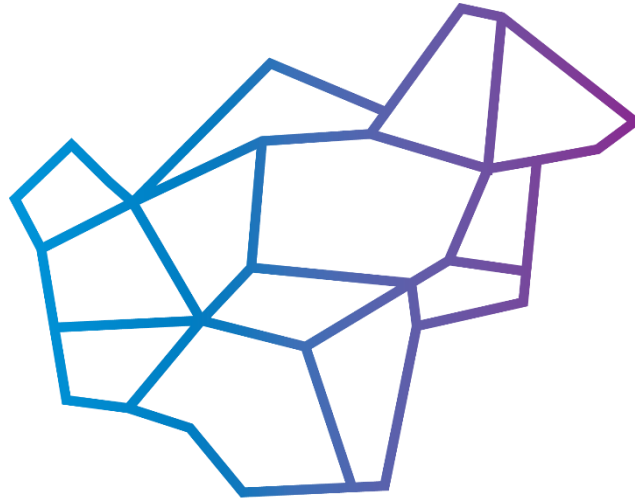




dorset
C O U N C I L

Agenda

Special Meeting of Council

Tuesday, 6 October 2026 – 9:30am

COUNCIL CHAMBERS

it's in the making

General Manager's Certification

Qualified Persons Advice – Local Government Act 1993 – Section 65

Pursuant to Section 65 of the *Local Government Act 1993* I hereby certify, with respect to the advice, information and / or recommendation provided for the guidance of Council in this Agenda, that:

1. such advice, information and / or recommendation has been given by a person who has the qualifications or experience necessary to give such advice; and
2. where any advice is given by a person who does not have the required qualifications or experience, that person has obtained and taken into account the advice from an appropriately qualified or experienced person; and
3. a copy of that advice or, if the advice was given orally, a written transcript or summary of that advice has been provided to the council.

JAYNE MILLER
Acting General Manager

Notification of Special Meeting of Council

A Special Meeting of Dorset Council will be held at the Council Chambers, 3 Ellenor Street, Scottsdale on Tuesday, 6 October 2026 commencing at 9:30 am.

Business of the Meeting:

1. Endorsement of Council Submission: House of Assembly Select Committee – Commonwealth Decisions on Agricultural Land

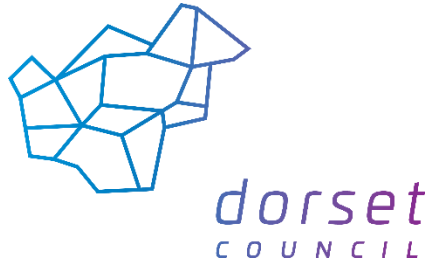
Members of the public are invited to attend in person, however, if any member of the public is feeling unwell, **please do not attend**.

The recording (both visual and audio) of the Council Meeting, except for any part held in Closed Session, will be made available to the public as soon as practicable after the meeting via Council's website and social media.

JAYNE MILLER
Acting General Manager

Ordinary Meeting of Council

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Special Meeting of Council - Agenda

Tuesday, 6 October 2026

Scheduled Meeting Time: 9:30am

Meeting Opened:

Council Meetings Procedures

In accordance with Policy No. 41: Council Meeting Procedures, this Meeting is being recorded. By attending the Meeting in person, you are consenting to personal information being recorded and published. No unauthorised filming or recording of the Meeting is permitted.

Visitors are reminded that Council Meetings are a place of work for Council Officers and Councillors.

The Council is committed to meeting its responsibilities as an employer and as host of this important public forum, by ensuring that all present meet expectations of mutually respectful and orderly conduct. It is a condition of entry to the Council Chambers that you cooperate with any directions or requests from the Chairperson or Council Officers.

The Chairperson is responsible for maintaining order at Council Meetings. The General Manager is responsible for health, wellbeing and safety of all present. The Chairperson or General Manager may require a person to leave the Council's premises following any behaviour that falls short of these expectations.

Language and conduct at a Meeting that could be perceived as offensive, defamatory or threatening to a person in attendance or listening to the recording, is not acceptable. It is an offence to hinder or disrupt a Council Meeting.

Present:

Apologies:

Acknowledgement of Country

Dorset Council acknowledges the deep history and culture of the First People who were the traditional owners of the lands and waterways where we live and work. We acknowledge the clans-people who lived here for over a thousand generations on the Country where Scottsdale is built and throughout the area we know as the north east region.

Dorset Council acknowledge the present-day Aboriginal custodians and the inclusive contribution they make to the social, cultural and economic essence of the municipality.

PROCEDURAL ITEMS

Item 195/2026 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with Section 48 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, Regulation 10(8) of the *Local Government (Meeting Procedures) Regulations 2025* and the Tasmanian Local Government Code of Conduct, Councillors are requested to indicate whether any have, or are likely to have, an interest in any item on the agenda.

INTEREST DECLARED

ITEM FOR DECISION

Item 196/2026

Endorsement of Council Submission: House of Assembly Select Committee – Commonwealth Decisions on Agricultural Land

Reporting Officer: Acting General Manager, Jayne Miller

Ref: DOC/26/13031 | Council Submission: DOC/26/14132

Purpose

The purpose of this agenda item is to present Dorset Council’s proposed submission to the House of Assembly Select Committee on Commonwealth Decisions on Agricultural Land and seek Council approval to lodge the submission with the Committee.

Recommendation

That Council:

1. endorse the attached submission to the House of Assembly Select Committee on Commonwealth Decisions on Agricultural Land;
2. authorises the Mayor and Acting General Manager to make minor administrative or editorial amendments – if required – that do not materially alter the endorsed position before lodgement; and
3. lodge the endorsed submission with the Committee by 9 October 2026.

Background

On 13 August 2026, the House of Assembly resolved to establish a Select Committee to inquire into the impact of Commonwealth funding, investment, regulatory and policy decisions on strategically significant agricultural land in Tasmania.

The Committee’s Terms of Reference address:

- the influence of Commonwealth funding, financing and policy mechanisms on the acquisition, ownership and use of strategically significant agricultural land, including Rushy Lagoon and associated properties;

- the conversion of productive agricultural land to carbon sequestration, plantation forestry or biodiversity-related uses and the resulting impacts;
- consideration of Tasmania's agricultural, economic and regional interests by the Foreign Investment Review Board and other Commonwealth decision-makers;
- the adequacy of Commonwealth assessment, consultation, approval and oversight processes; and
- potential legislative, regulatory, administrative or policy reforms.

Interested individuals and organisations may submit written submissions until 9 October. The Committee is scheduled to report by 31 March 2027.

Dorset Council has prepared a submission focused on matters relevant to the Dorset municipality.

Planning, Environment and Statutory Requirements

N/A

Strategic and Annual Plan

Aligns to the vision within the Dorset Council Strategic Plan (2023-2032) - to deliver an inclusive, thriving and connected community.

Risk Management

There may be reputational risk in this submission as some stakeholders may perceive Council as favouring one sector or interest group over another, with historically other submission opportunities on other key matters not being made for sectors such as early years education and care. Agriculture is a cornerstone of the Dorset economy, with the region supporting significant dairy, beef, cropping and mixed farming enterprises. In 2020/21, the total value of agricultural output for the Dorset Council area was \$179m, through livestock, dairy, vegetables, broadacre crops, flowers, eggs and wine. Council's submission is, where possible, evidence-based, balanced and focused on the impacts of Commonwealth decisions on Dorset's agricultural economy, community and future land use.

Financial and Asset Management Implications

N/A

Community Considerations

The inquiry concerns decisions that may affect productive agricultural land, food and fibre industries, employment, regional communities, agricultural ownership opportunities and associated infrastructure and services.

Consultation

N/A

Officer's Comments

The proposed submission provides Council with an opportunity to suggest recommendations concerning the local and regional implications of Commonwealth decisions affecting strategically significant agricultural land. The inquiry may affect productive agricultural land, food and fibre industries, employment, regional communities, land ownership opportunities and associated infrastructure and services within the municipality; therefore, it is prudent Council endorses a formal response.

Summary

Council's proposed submission:

- Addresses all five items outlined in the Terms of Reference (a-e);
- Identifies that future reforms should focus on ensuring all significant agricultural land-use changes, including plantation forestry, carbon sequestration projects, solar developments and other non-agricultural uses, are subject to a consistent and transparent assessment process.
- Considers criteria for assessment for a transparent process:
 - Agricultural land capability and productivity;
 - Property scale and cumulative regional impacts;
 - Irrigation access and water availability;
 - Food and fibre production capacity;
 - Employment and regional economic outcomes;
 - Community and service impacts;
 - Environmental benefits and risks; and
 - Long-term land management considerations.
- Draws on data and resources from State and Federal Government agencies, including the Australian Bureau of Statistics;
- Suggests improvements are made towards greater transparency and public reporting regarding Commonwealth-supported agricultural land acquisitions and alternative land use projects;
- Recommends enhanced consultation requirements with local government and regional stakeholders before decisions affecting strategically significant agricultural land are finalised.

The final submission is included in the attachments.

CLOSURE OF MEETING

Time Meeting Closed:



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SUBMISSION

House of Assembly Select Committee on Commonwealth Decisions on Agricultural Land

Submission date	[Insert date]
Council approval	[Insert Council resolution / delegation / approval details]
Authorised	[Insert name and position]
Primary contact	Mayor Rhys Beattie 0409 921 683 councillorbeattie@dorset.tas.gov.au
Publication request	Full publication

Submission closing date: Friday, 9 October 2026

Committee report due: 31 March 2027

Submission details

Submitting organisation	Dorset Council
Council postal address	3 Ellenor Street, Scottsdale TAS 7260
Council general email	gm@dorset.tas.gov.au
Council contact number	03 6352 6500
Select Committee Chair	Mr Michael Ferguson MP
Submission Committee email	agland@parliament.tas.gov.au

Contents

1. Executive summary
2. About Dorset Council and the municipal context
3. Council position and key recommendations
4. Response to the Terms of Reference
5. Cross-cutting regional impacts
6. Recommended reforms
7. Conclusion

1. Executive summary

This submission outlines Dorset Council's concerns regarding the increasing conversion of productive agricultural land to alternative land uses supported by Commonwealth funding and investment mechanisms. Council believes these programs have contributed to higher land prices, reduced opportunities for agricultural expansion, and the loss of productive land from food and fibre production.

Council is concerned that these land use changes may negatively impact agricultural output, regional employment, local supply chains and the long-term sustainability of rural communities. Council also notes the lack of consultation and transparency in Commonwealth decision making processes affecting strategically significant agricultural land.

Council supports reforms that improve transparency, community consultation and assessment of major land use changes. In particular, Council advocates for a clear and transparent assessment framework to ensure productive agricultural land is protected and that the long-term interests of Tasmania's agricultural sector and regional communities are properly considered.

2. About Dorset Council and the municipal context

Dorset Council is the local government authority for north-east Tasmania, covering approximately 3,200 square kilometres and serving a predominantly rural and agricultural municipality. Its administrative centre is in Scottsdale, with other key communities including Bridport, Derby, Ringarooma, Winnaleah and Gladstone. Located approximately 100 kilometres north-east of Launceston's CBD, the municipality is characterised by strong agricultural, forestry and tourism sectors and coastal communities. It is bounded by Bass Strait to the north, Break O'Day Council to the east and south-east, the City of Launceston to the south-west, and George Town Council to the west.

Agriculture is a cornerstone of the Dorset economy, with the region supporting significant dairy, beef, cropping and mixed farming enterprises. In 2020/21, the total value of agricultural output for the Dorset municipality was \$179 million, a contribution of 60% value to the state, through livestock, dairy, vegetables, broadacre crops, flowers, eggs and wine¹. These industries underpin local employment, support regional supply chains and contribute substantially to Tasmania's food and fibre production, with 25% (723) of the Dorset population aged 15 years and over employed in the agricultural, forestry and fishing sectors in 2021².

Council's vision is to support *"an inclusive, thriving and connected community"* through the delivery of local infrastructure, community services, economic development initiatives and strategic planning³. Council has a strong interest in matters affecting agricultural productivity, regional employment, population sustainability and the long-term economic resilience of north-east Tasmania.

Given the importance of agriculture to the municipality, Council has a significant interest in policies and decisions that influence the ownership, use and management of productive agricultural land, particularly where such decisions may affect food and fibre production, rural communities and regional economic outcomes.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) - Value of Agricultural Commodities Produce 2020-21

² Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population and Housing*, 2021 (Usual residence data)

³ Dorset Council Strategic Plan 2023-2032

3. Council position and key recommendations

No.	Recommendation	Relevant Term of Reference
1	Develop legislative and planning mechanisms requiring the assessment of significant agricultural land use changes through a transparent planning process, similar to that of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme, which considers agricultural productivity, regional economic impacts, food and fibre production, and long-term community outcomes.	1(e): Legislative, regulatory, administrative or policy reforms to improve transparency, accountability and consideration of Tasmania's interests in Commonwealth decisions affecting strategically significant agricultural land.
2	Require the Foreign Investment Review Board (FIRB), Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) and other relevant Commonwealth agencies to publicly notify proposed investments or acquisitions involving strategically significant agricultural land and provide opportunities for stakeholder and community submissions.	1(d): The adequacy of Commonwealth assessment, consultation, approval and oversight processes relating to decisions affecting strategically significant agricultural land in Tasmania.
3	Require cumulative impact assessments for large-scale land use changes affecting agricultural production and regional supply chains.	1(b): The extent to which Commonwealth programs and incentives have facilitated the conversion of productive agricultural land in Tasmania to carbon sequestration, plantation forestry or biodiversity-related land uses, and the impacts of those changes on agricultural production, food and fibre industries, employment, regional communities and opportunities for agricultural ownership.
4	Establish formal consultation requirements with local government and regional stakeholders before decisions affecting strategically significant agricultural land are finalised.	1(c): The consideration given by the Foreign Investment Review Board and other Commonwealth decision makers to Tasmania's agricultural, economic and regional interests in relation to the acquisition of Rushy Lagoon and associated properties.
5	Improve transparency and public reporting regarding Commonwealth-supported agricultural land acquisitions and alternative land use projects.	1(a): The influence of Commonwealth funding, financing and policy mechanisms, including the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC), the Australian Carbon Credit Unit (ACCU) Scheme, the Support Plantation Establishment Program and other Commonwealth initiatives, on the acquisition, ownership and use of strategically significant agricultural land in Tasmania, including the acquisition of Rushy Lagoon and associated properties.

4. Response to the Terms of Reference

4.1 Term of Reference (a)

Scope: *Influence of Commonwealth funding, financing and policy mechanisms, including the CEFC, ACCU Scheme, Support Plantation Establishment Program and other Commonwealth initiatives, on the acquisition, ownership and use of strategically significant agricultural land in Tasmania, including the acquisition of Rushy Lagoon and associated properties.*

Relevant Commonwealth mechanism or decision

Dorset Council considers that certain Commonwealth funding and investment programs may encourage the conversion of productive agricultural land to alternative land uses by improving the financial viability of non-agricultural projects relative to traditional farming enterprises.

Observed or anticipated influence on acquisition, ownership or land use

Dorset Council's view is that Commonwealth-supported investment has the potential to increase land values beyond levels achievable through conventional agricultural returns. This may reduce opportunities for farming enterprises seeking to expand production and may influence future land use decisions away from food and fibre production. The 2025 Bendigo Bank report *Australian Farmland Values*⁴, indicates that the northern Tasmanian region saw the only overall growth of Tasmania's regions in 2024, recording a 7.5 per cent increase to \$19,647/ha. High land values put pressure on expanding enterprises; moreover, the capital value of the land doesn't reflect the capacity of the land to produce, and the vast majority of farmers in Dorset are here for the long-term.

Council view and recommended response

Dorset Council recommends that Commonwealth investment programs affecting agricultural land be subject to transparent assessment criteria that consider impacts on agricultural productivity, regional economies, community sustainability and food security outcomes.

4.2 Term of Reference (b)

Scope: *Extent to which Commonwealth programs and incentives have facilitated conversion of productive agricultural land to carbon sequestration, plantation forestry or biodiversity-related uses, and impacts on agricultural production, food and fibre industries, employment, regional communities and opportunities for agricultural ownership.*

Nature and scale of land-use change

The Australian Government has committed to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This will require both reducing emissions as well as removing and sequestering carbon from the atmosphere. There is increasing interest in the conversion of agricultural land to carbon sequestration, plantation forestry and biodiversity-related projects. While noting the report, *Sequestration on agricultural land: impacts and policy trade-offs*⁵ commissioned by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing in 2025 and recognising the environmental objectives of these programs, Dorset Council remains concerned about the cumulative

⁴ Farmland Values 2025

⁵ ABARES Insights: Sequestration on Agricultural Land: Impacts and Policy Trade-offs

impact of large-scale conversions on productive agricultural land as well as unintended consequences, such as increased pressure on water resources, bushfire risks and biosecurity risks.

Impacts on agricultural output and supply chains

Dorset Council is concerned that substantial reductions in available agricultural land may adversely affect agricultural production within Dorset. Reduced production volumes may place pressure on local supply chains, transport networks, processing facilities and supporting agricultural businesses that rely on production scale to remain viable. Similar analytical prose is extensively used in recent federal evaluations of sovereign capability and food security, such as the *Food Security in Australia* parliamentary reports. These papers explicitly note that regional Australian transport and processing infrastructure are highly scale-dependent and vulnerable to volume drops⁶.

Employment, skills and contractor impacts

While establishment activities may generate short-term employment opportunities, Dorset Council is concerned that ongoing employment associated with plantation-based land uses is likely to be significantly lower than that generated through active agricultural production or other potential land uses such as sand mining and renewable energy. This may reduce long-term employment opportunities and affect the sustainability of local contracting businesses.

Effects on community viability, services and infrastructure

Reduced agricultural activity may contribute to population decline in rural areas, placing additional pressure on community services, schools, sporting organisations and local businesses that rely on stable population levels.

Effects on access to agricultural land and ownership opportunities

Dorset Council is concerned that Commonwealth-supported investment may make productive agricultural land less accessible to existing farmers, young farmers and agricultural businesses seeking expansion opportunities, potentially reducing pathways for future generations to enter the agricultural sector.

Benefits, trade-offs or unintended consequences

Dorset Council acknowledges that alternative land uses may provide environmental outcomes and create future timber resources. However, these benefits should be carefully balanced against potential reductions in agricultural output, employment and regional economic activity.

4.3 Term of Reference (c)

Scope: *Consideration given by the Foreign Investment Review Board and other Commonwealth decision makers to Tasmania's agricultural, economic and regional interests in relation to the acquisition of Rushy Lagoon and associated properties.*

⁶ Chapter 5 - The supply chain – Parliament of Australia

Council's direct knowledge or involvement

Dorset Council was not consulted by the Foreign Investment Review Board or other Commonwealth decision makers regarding the acquisition of Rushy Lagoon or associated properties. Any engagement Council undertook on this matter was once the sale was complete.

Evidence of consultation with Council or regional stakeholders

Dorset Council is unaware of any formal consultation process involving Council or other regional stakeholders prior to the decisions being made.

Tasmanian agricultural, economic and regional interests that should be considered

Decision makers should consider impacts on food and fibre production, regional employment, agricultural supply chains, processing infrastructure, rural population sustainability, investment confidence and long-term land-use planning outcomes.

Recommended decision criteria or consultation requirements

Dorset Council recommends mandatory public notification and consultation for significant transactions involving strategically important agricultural land, supported by transparent assessment criteria and opportunities for stakeholder submissions.

4.4 Term of Reference (d)

Scope: *Adequacy of Commonwealth assessment, consultation, approval and oversight processes relating to decisions affecting strategically significant agricultural land in Tasmania.*

Assessment processes relevant to the issue

Dorset Council had no formal avenue to provide views on behalf of the community or to participate in any assessment process associated with the acquisition of Rushy Lagoon.

Who was consulted and at what stage

Dorset Council was not consulted.

Transparency and availability of information

Dorset Council considers current processes lack sufficient transparency, with limited publicly available information provided prior to decisions being finalised.

Coordination with Tasmanian and local government processes

Decisions affecting strategically significant agricultural land should be better coordinated with State and local government land-use planning objectives and strategies to ensure regional impacts are adequately understood and considered.

Council's recommended process improvements

Require Commonwealth agencies and investment bodies to publicly notify proposed acquisitions or investments affecting significant agricultural land and allow sufficient time for submissions from local government, industry stakeholders and affected communities.

4.5 Term of Reference (e)

Scope: *Legislative, regulatory, administrative or policy reforms to improve transparency, accountability and consideration of Tasmania's interests in Commonwealth decisions affecting strategically significant agricultural land.*

Proposed reform

Establish a formal assessment framework for significant agricultural land use change. This could be implemented through amendments to existing agricultural land protection policies and should consider land capability, topography, irrigation availability, scale of conversion, cumulative impacts and regional economic outcomes. The framework should ensure that productive agricultural land remains available for food and fibre production while allowing appropriate alternative land uses where they can be demonstrated to deliver a net community benefit.

Responsible government or agency

Dorset Council's opinion is that this would be best done through the Tasmanian State Planning Office.

Problem addressed

The progressive loss of productive agricultural land from active food and fibre production may reduce Tasmania's long-term agricultural capacity, weaken agricultural supply chains and diminish the economic scale required to sustain regional industries and processing facilities.

How the reform would work

Land use changes involving strategically significant agricultural land would be assessed against transparent criteria through a publicly accessible process that includes stakeholder consultation and clearly articulated decision making principles.

Expected regional benefit

The proposed framework would provide greater certainty for landholders, investors, government and communities by establishing consistent expectations regarding agricultural land use changes while protecting long-term regional economic and agricultural interests.

5. Cross-cutting regional impacts

Agricultural production and food and fibre industries

Dorset Council is concerned that the ongoing conversion of productive agricultural land to alternative land uses may reduce the municipality's capacity for food and fibre production. Agriculture is a foundation industry within Dorset, supporting dairy, beef and mixed farming enterprises as well as downstream processing, transport and service industries. When agricultural baseline capacity shrinks due to extreme weather, regulatory changes, or skyrocketing operational inputs (like electricity and freight), specific downstream industries suffer parallel job contractions⁷. A sustained reduction in agricultural production could have broader implications for the viability of regional supply chains and Tasmania's agricultural competitiveness.

Employment, contractors and workforce

Dorset Council recognises that plantation establishment and other large-scale land-use change projects may generate short-term employment opportunities during development phases. However, there is concern that ongoing employment levels associated with these land uses may be significantly lower than those generated through active agricultural production. This has the potential to create cyclical employment patterns a FIFO and DIDO workforce and reduce long-term opportunities for local contractors, agricultural workers and young people seeking careers within the region. As outlined in the Tasmanian State Government Whitepaper 2020 - *Competitiveness of Tasmanian Agriculture for 2050*⁸, there is a focus on investing in people. The vision for Vocational Learning and VET in Tasmanian schools to 2030 intends that all learners will have access to high quality, customised, personalised and localised opportunities to support their career and life aspirations. The government's Primary Schools to Primary Industries initiative, overseen by the Department of Education, returned agriculture to the school curriculum and gives students a clear education pathway, as well as a foundation in the skills required for a career in agriculture.

Regional communities and community wellbeing

The long-term viability of rural communities is closely linked to the strength of the agricultural sector. Significant reductions in agricultural activity may lead to population decline, reduced economic activity and increased pressure on local services, community organisations and sporting clubs. Council is concerned that large-scale land-use changes may contribute to the gradual erosion of community resilience in more remote parts of the municipality.

Land values, ownership and opportunities for new or expanding farmers

Dorset Council is concerned that Commonwealth-supported investment and alternative land-use markets may continue to place upward pressure on agricultural land values. While increased land values may benefit some landowners, they may also create barriers for existing farming businesses seeking expansion and for younger generations attempting to enter the agricultural sector. Maintaining opportunities for agricultural ownership and investment is important to the long-term sustainability of regional communities and food production systems.

⁷ [State of Play Report - Agriculture](#)

⁸ [Competitiveness of Tasmanian Agriculture for 2050 White Paper 2020](#)

Natural values, biosecurity, weeds, fire risk and land management

Dorset Council recognises the importance of environmental outcomes, including carbon sequestration and biodiversity initiatives. However, large-scale plantation developments should be carefully assessed for potential impacts on biodiversity, biosecurity management, fire risk, weed control and long-term landscape character. Council considers that these factors should form part of any comprehensive assessment framework for significant agricultural land-use change to ensure environmental, social and economic outcomes are appropriately balanced.

6. Recommended reforms

Dorset Council considers that future reforms should focus on ensuring all significant agricultural land-use changes, including plantation forestry, carbon sequestration projects, solar developments and other non-agricultural uses, are subject to a consistent and transparent assessment process.

Productive agricultural land is a strategic and finite resource that underpins Tasmania's food and fibre industries, regional employment and economic resilience. As demand for alternative land uses continues to increase, Council believes there is a need for a legislative framework that assesses proposed land-use changes against clear and publicly available criteria.

Such criteria should consider:

- Agricultural land capability and productivity;
- Property scale and cumulative regional impacts;
- Irrigation access and water availability;
- Food and fibre production capacity;
- Employment and regional economic outcomes;
- Community and service impacts;
- Environmental benefits and risks; and
- Long-term land management considerations.

Council further recommends that significant land-use change proposals be subject to public notification and consultation requirements similar to those that apply under planning processes. This would ensure affected communities, local government and industry stakeholders have an opportunity to provide input before decisions are finalised.

The outcome sought is a transparent, consistent and evidence-based framework that balances environmental objectives with the protection of Tasmania's productive agricultural land and the long-term sustainability of rural communities.

7. Conclusion

Dorset Council is concerned that current Commonwealth funding mechanisms, incentives and decision making processes are contributing to the conversion of strategically significant agricultural land away from food and fibre production without adequate consideration of local agricultural, economic and community impacts. In Council's view, Commonwealth-backed investment has altered the agricultural land market by increasing competition for productive farmland and supporting alternative land uses that can outbid traditional farming enterprises. This has the potential to reduce agricultural output, limit opportunities for existing and future farmers, and undermine the long-term viability of critical agricultural supply chains and regional processing infrastructure.

Council is also concerned that decisions affecting significant agricultural land have occurred with limited transparency and without formal opportunities for local government, industry stakeholders and affected communities to participate in the decision making process. The absence of formal notification and engagement processes has restricted the ability of affected communities to provide input on proposals that may have significant long-term consequences for regional economies, employment, service provision and land use outcomes.

While Council acknowledges there may be future economic benefits associated with plantation forestry and other environmental investment opportunities, it considers that greater consideration must be given to the cumulative impacts of large-scale land use change on agricultural production, regional employment, community sustainability and Tasmania's food and fibre industries. Land use decisions should balance environmental objectives with the protection of productive agricultural land and the economic resilience of rural communities.

Accordingly, Council supports reforms that increase transparency, public accountability and consultation in Commonwealth decision making processes affecting agricultural land. Council further recommends the development of a clear assessment framework, led through state planning processes, to evaluate significant agricultural land use changes against criteria including land capability, irrigation access, scale of conversion, regional economic impacts and long-term food and fibre production capacity. Such a framework should provide transparent decision making, opportunities for public submissions, and greater certainty for landholders, investors, communities and government.

The outcome sought is not the prevention of land-use change, but the establishment of transparent assessment and consultation processes that ensure decisions are made with a full understanding of their agricultural, economic, environmental and community impacts.

Ultimately, Council considers productive agricultural land to be a strategic and finite resource that plays a critical role in Tasmania's economy, food and fibre production, regional employment and community wellbeing. Council supports a balanced approach to land-use change that provides transparency, accountability and community input while ensuring that long-term regional interests are appropriately considered in Commonwealth and State decision making processes.