

24 April 2025

Mr Colin Bettles
Chief Executive Officer
Grain Producers Australia
Via email: colin.bettles@grainproducers.com.au

Colin,
Dear Mr Bettles,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the Coalition's views on the important issues facing your members. A response to your questions is attached.

Under Labor, Australia's economy is weak, inflation and interest rates have stayed too high for too long, housing is unaffordable, and our country is less safe.

Under Labor, Australians are paying on average 13% more for food, 18% more for rent, and over 30% more for power and gas and young Australians have seen their dream of home ownership slip away.

The Coalition will get Australia back on track by delivering:

1. **Strong economy with low inflation.** We will rein in wasteful spending and reduce tax, red-tape and union control over small businesses.
2. **Cheaper energy.** We will ensure a balanced mix, including more renewables, more gas, and (in seven locations) replace retired coal plants with zero-emissions nuclear energy.
3. **Affordable homes.** We will fund critical infrastructure required for housing, assist first home buyers, restrict foreign investors, and rebalance Labor's record migration intake.
4. **Safer communities.** We will get tough on violent crime by non-citizens, boost our defence and border security, and improve online safety for children.
5. **Quality healthcare.** We will fund more GPs to address current shortages and increase bulk billing and the number of Medicare-subsidised mental health sessions.

Thank you for communicating our response to your members. Further information about the Coalition's election policies can be found at www.liberal.org.au/our-plan.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Hirst
Federal Director

The Coalition's Response to Grain Producers Australia

2025 Federal Election Questionnaire

Lower Farm Input Costs - Improve Local Supply/Manufacturing

The Coalition will halve the fuel excise for 12 months - delivering a saving of 25.4 cents per litre on petrol and diesel. Farmers will benefit from this like other motorists with lower up-front cost when purchasing fuel.

A Coalition Government will retain the diesel fuel rebate used by farmers, miners and the road transport industry.

Access to Agricultural Pesticides (APVMA Reforms)

The Coalition supports access to pesticides and veterinary medicines for Australian farmers.

The Coalition also supports the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) as a scientific independent regulatory authority on the approval of agricultural and veterinary chemical products for use in Australia. There are a number of consultative processes underway in the APVMA including:

- A draft strategic plan 2025-2030, including priorities and performance measures.
- A new cost-recovery implementation statement that will begin on 1 July 2025.
- A process enhancement initiative to help shape the future of the Agency and drive operational efficiency closing on 27 March 2026.

In government, the Coalition will consider the outcomes of the reviews.

Grains Industry Red & Green Tape – Regulatory Burden/Costs

The Coalition is committed to removing unnecessary red and green tape which is interrupting agricultural productivity.

We will immediately fix the fundamentals and get rid of the Labor Government's anti-farming policies. For example, the Coalition called for giving the agricultural industry an exemption from climate related financial disclosure requirements, we will make the PALM scheme and working holiday maker requirements viable for farmers again, stop the truckie tax and introduce a container levy so that our own farmers don't have to pay for the biosecurity risk created by international competitors.

Improve Digital Connectivity and Reliability

The Coalition will always deliver more for regional communications than Labor. We are focused on improving access to telecommunications and high speed internet in our regions.

This is why as part of our plans we are supporting a \$3 billion investment in the NBN which will upgrade connections for over 600,000 homes, with more than half of these in our regions.

In contrast, under Labor we have seen this weak government watch over families forced into an up to 14 per cent increase for the NBN, with two price hikes in a period of just eight months.

They have also completely botched the closure of the 3G network, which left many in our regional communities stranded without telecommunications access for some time.

Only a Coalition Government can be trusted to deliver improved telecommunications for regional Australia.

Grains Supply Chain – Reduced Freight Costs and Grain Market Access & Trade and Optimise Grain Market Competition - Pricing & Transparency

The Coalition understands that Australia is an exporting nation. We produce more than we consume. Our prosperity is contingent on growing the productive parts of our economy, trading more and having the regulatory environment at home which attracts foreign investment.

All these things will require growing our trading relationships and nurturing our international partnerships. It was the Coalition, between 2013 and 2022, that finalised 11 free trade agreements and lifted the share of Australia's trade covered by free trade agreements from 27 per cent under Labor in 2013 to almost 80 per cent.

We have a strong history of diversifying and expanding our markets and will continue that strong record through reinvigorating negotiations for a high-quality Free Trade Agreement with the European Union, revitalising discussions on a Free Trade Agreement with our trusted partner, Israel and seek to expand opportunities for trade and investment with Canada and other like-minded countries.

We will also utilise our role as chair of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, which includes Southeast Asian countries, to seek to improve market access within the agreement.

Grain Producer Levies – Current Rates & Spending Priorities, Taxation System Reforms/Opportunities and Stronger Biosecurity Protections & Capacity

- **Support for current and future projects relevant to GPA's legislated responsibilities**
- **Reduce impact of free riders boosting efficiencies in the provision of core industry good services**
- **Dedicated funding for GPA's independent oversight of grains levy-spending**
- **Advance grains industry biosecurity plan**
- **Advocate for policies and projects to improve the implementation and recognition of shared responsibility across industry and communities**
- **Continue collaborative biosecurity research by the Centre of Excellence for biosecurity risk analysis program to investigate ways to strengthen grain market access protections.**

The Coalition is committed to improving the structure, efficiency and operation of Australia's agricultural levy system.

When in government, the Coalition kick-started a comprehensive review into the levies framework that was aimed at streamlining, modernising and deregulating the system.

Keeping Australia as a reliable food and fibre producer and being able to trade overseas is reliant on a strong biosecurity system.

A strong biosecurity system relies on a sustainable biosecurity funding model, which the Coalition committed to in 2021 in Commonwealth Biosecurity 2030.

An elected Coalition Government will legislate a sustainable biosecurity funding model.

The legislation will include a minimum level of biosecurity funding, based on the Craik review (2017) recommendation that the Australia Governments' appropriations funding for biosecurity should be maintained at 2016-17 levels (in real terms).

The Sustainable Biosecurity Funding Model will include 'risk creators' and will not put a tax on Australian farmers. Labor's biosecurity funding model thought it was fair to tax Australian farmers \$50 million a year to pay for the biosecurity risks created by their competitors.

The Coalition will introduce an import container levy for sea and air containers as recommended by the Craik review. The levy funds will be directed to a special account and hypothecated to biosecurity.

OTHER PRIORITIES (Identified in 2025 Grower Survey)

Right to Repair – Farm Machinery & Technology

The Coalition will consider a legislated 'Right to Repair' applying to agricultural machinery when in government.

Social License – Grain Production Integrity/Consumer Education/Land Use Conflicts

The Coalition acknowledges that social licence is important for the agricultural industry to continue to produce. The Coalition supports farmers in their efforts to retain and boost social licence.

Farm Labour Supply - Skilled Workers on Grain Farms

Without the right workforce, farmers are either forced to plant less or pass the increased cost of labour onto the consumer. Labour costs represent the largest cost unit in fresh produce businesses, accounting for up to 60 per cent of the total cost of production in some instances.

Australia's food supply chain is facing a shortage of 172,000 workers. This is threatening stable supply, prices, and food security.

In line with Industry concerns about shortages, the Coalition will bring back the dedicated Australian Agriculture Visa, which was scrapped by Labor.

We will also review the operation of the Pacific Australian Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme and the Pacific Engagement Visa (PEV) to ensure that they meet the needs of employers, workers and Pacific nations.

The Labor Government is also creating uncertainty about retaining the 88-day rule for backpackers. The Coalition will maintain the second and third year extension for the Working Holiday Maker visa by requiring 88 days of work in specific areas and occupations.

We will continue to support Designated Area Migration Agreements to attract foreign workers to regional Australia where the local community can determine the skills required in the region.

There will also be a review of the Skilled Occupation List to ensure that it has the flexibility to assist in addressing the labour force shortages in our regions and in specific sectors.

Grains Sustainability Schemes & Programs: Supports Agforce position opposing scope 1, 2 or 3 emissions reporting not until the appropriate frameworks, tools and assistance are fit for purpose.

Labor's mandatory disclosure laws impose an unacceptable compliance burden on the Australian economy.

These new climate reporting requirements also put Australia out of line with international peers. The United States, Canada, Japan, and most of Australia's trading partners do not require the reporting of Scope 3 emissions.

The inclusion of Scope 3 emissions reporting means big companies will pass risk and costs down their supply chain to their small business customers.

In a cost of living and doing business crisis, more red and green tape is the last thing the Australian economy needs. The Coalition will repeal mandatory Scope 3 reporting.

Renewable Energy – Biofuels & Sustainable Aviation Fuels

The Coalition recognises that a broad suite of emerging products can support a low carbon environment - including low carbon liquid fuels.

Improve Farm Safety and Community Resilience, Farmer Wellbeing and Mental Health

The Coalition is committing \$7.9 million specifically to provide mental health assistance for farmers. This builds on the Coalition's substantial commitment to address mental health across Australia.

A mental health specialist will be placed in each state and territory (except for the ACT which will be covered by NSW) to specifically address mental health concerns for farmers. Specialists will be based in Medicare Mental Health Centres in regional locations so they are closer to the people they will be helping.

Agriculture remains the most dangerous industry to work in Australia. Tragically, in 2024, 72 farmers lost their lives and 133 were seriously injured on the job.

The Coalition is committing \$2.5 million over three years for farm safety. FarmSafe Australia will continue to deliver on the five National Farm Safety Education Strategy priorities.

Supports the Government's national food security strategy commitment.

As a priority, the Coalition will develop a comprehensive *National Food Security Plan* with an interim report in the first six months of a Coalition Government.

The Minister will establish an Industry Advisory Committee to advise on the Plan.

The Department of Agriculture will be responsible for the development of the Plan.

Labor took nearly 18 months to announce they were going to develop a National Food Security Strategy after it was recommended by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture in *Australian Food Story: Feeding the Nation and Beyond* in November 2023.

The Coalition's Plan is to develop an end-to-end food security strategy and we will take 'first actions' across 8 areas:

- Protecting food producing land and water
- Biosecurity
- Getting the workers Australia needs
- Cheaper, cleaner and consistent energy
- Advancing sovereign manufacturing capability
- Logistics
- Slashing the regulatory burden on farmers and across the supply chain
- Fairness for farmers at the farmgate and families at the checkout