



Victorian Agriculture and Climate Change Council

Annual Report
2023

AGRICULTURE VICTORIA

**Contact:**

*For further information about the Victorian Agriculture and Climate Change Council, please contact:
Megan Higson,
Agriculture Victoria
Melbourne, Victoria 3000
vacc@agriculture.vic.gov.au*

Accessibility

If you would like to receive this publication in an accessible format, such as large print or audio, telephone contact the Agriculture Victoria Customer Service Centre on 136 186.

Disclaimer

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication. While every effort has been made to ensure the currency, accuracy or completeness of the content we endeavour to keep the content relevant and up to date and reserve the right to make changes as require. The Victorian Government, authors and presenters do not accept any liability to any person for the information (or the use of the information) which is provided or referred to in the report.

*Authorised and published by the
Victorian Government,
1 Treasury Place, Melbourne
Printed by Finsbury Green*

*ISSN 2653-794X - Print
ISSN 2653-7958 - Online (pdf/word)*

“Through 2023, the Victorian Agriculture and Climate Change Council engaged with a range of stakeholders to understand industry perspectives on what is needed to drive further climate action and alignment across the industry and on-farm, using these to inform its advice to the Minister and Department”

Alexandra Gartmann

Victorian Agriculture and Climate Change Council
Chair

MEMBERSHIP

Alexandra Gartmann (Chair) - *Leader of rural, agriculture and community organisations. Serving on a range of boards including One Basin CRC, Nufarm, Australian Wool Testing Authority.*

Mark Wootton AO (Deputy Chair) - *A beef and wool farmer well-known as a pioneer in carbon-neutral farming.*

Fiona Conroy - *Sheep and cattle producer and partner of Nicon Rural Services with experience in carbon-neutral farming.*

Lisa Dwyer - *A dairy farmer and non-executive director of Racing Analytical Services Limited.*

Professor Richard Eckard - *Professor and Director of the Primary Industries Climate Challenges Centre at the University of Melbourne.*

Gillian Hayman - *Managing partner at Montrose Dairy and runs a consultancy business in Gippsland.*

Jack Holden - *GM of Sustainability, Global Markets at the Fonterra Group and Director of Meat & Livestock Australia.*

Professor Lauren Rickards - *Lead author with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Working Group on Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability and Professor at La Trobe University.*

Caroline Welsh - *A grain producer and Deputy Chair of GWMWater and member of the Future Drought Fund Consultative Committee.*



Members from left to right: Jack Holden, Lisa Dwyer, Gillian Hayman, Mark Wootton AO, Fiona Conroy, Alexandra Gartmann, Lauren Rickards, Caroline Welsh, and Richard Eckard.

Picture taken at Melbourne CBD, Victoria on the lands of the **Wurundjeri People, January 2023.**



The Victorian Agriculture and Climate Change Council is a ministerial advisory committee that provides advice to the Minister for Agriculture on the impacts and opportunities of climate change.

The Victorian Agriculture and Climate Change Council (the Council) is a ministerial advisory committee that provides independent and strategic advice to the Minister for Agriculture on the state-wide challenges the agriculture sector faces from climate change. The Council also works with Agriculture Victoria to identify actions for how the Victorian agriculture sector can prepare for and respond to the impacts and opportunities of climate change. Council members bring a broad cross-section of experience across Victoria's regions, agricultural industries and farm enterprises, each with their own unique skills, networks and subject matter expertise.

Under its Terms of Reference, the Council is required to prepare an annual report for the Minister for Agriculture. This annual report covers the Council's third year of operation, from January 2023 to February 2024. It is the final annual report for the first term of the Council. A new Council will be appointed in 2024.

During this period, the Council has continued to provide advice to the Victorian Government to inform the design and implementation of climate change programs and services relevant to the agriculture sector. The Council has also engaged with various stakeholders to understand different views on climate change issues, and the actions being implemented or planned. The Council met formally on fourteen occasions since 2020, five of which were held in its third year, The Council has also facilitated and attended a number of additional out-of-session workshops throughout that time.



For 2023, the Council focused on three key priorities for its advice to the Minister and the Department.

01

Research

02

**On-farm
Climate Action**

03

**Industry
Engagement**

2023 priorities



01

Research



Work with Agriculture Victoria to strengthen the current research agenda, reviewing what's underway, who the target audience is for different research programs and outcomes, and identify opportunities to increase impact on Victoria's agriculture emissions profile.

Focus

Progress in 2023

- Informed and contributed to a range of Agriculture Victoria's climate change related programs / projects through the year.
- Supported the Minister during her trip to New Zealand to review their approach and progress on climate action.
- Contributed to the design of the Innovation Fund element of the On-Farm Emissions Action.
- Hosted the Minister and Parliamentary secretary on members' farms.
- Hosted a series of bilateral discussions with representatives of key sectors.
- Met with Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry along with Agriculture Victoria.

02

On-farm climate action



Continue to look for opportunities to extend and deepen the impact of the On-farm Emissions Action Plan Pilot and other relevant on-farm programs.

03

Industry engagement



Engage with the private sector to understand their priorities, plans and actions within their business and targeting research and on-farm emissions. Explore opportunities to work together or leverage existing activities.



2023 highlights



Supported Agriculture Victoria with different programs / projects through the year

- The Council continued its ongoing contribution to different programs and projects being delivered by Agriculture Victoria, noting the need for consistent messages on climate change adaptation and mitigation across Government departments.
- Members provided advice on a wide range of matters, including stakeholder engagement opportunities, climate change research pathways to impact, adaptation projects and more to increase farmers' understanding of climate change.

Supported the Minister Gayle Tierney during her trip to New Zealand

- In April 2023, four Council members joined Minister Gayle Tierney (in her then role as Minister for Agriculture) on her visit to New Zealand to learn about how they are approaching the shared challenges in reducing agricultural emissions, accelerating technical solutions and collectively building the sector's ability to take action.
- During their visit, the delegation met with fourteen stakeholders from government and industry including farmers and advocacy groups. The delegation made valuable connections with counterparts including Biosecurity New Zealand, the Ministry for Primary Industries, the New Zealand Agricultural Greenhouse Gas Research Centre (NZAGRC), the Climate Commissioner and industry representatives.

- The Council drew on key insights from the trip to inform its advice to the Minister.

Continued input to the rollout of the government's On-Farm Emissions Action Plan Pilot (the Pilot)

- The three-year Pilot has worked with 119 farm businesses, well on the way to the 250 target. Each business is assisted to estimate their farm emissions profile and develop an action plan, with \$5 million in grant funding available to implement recommended actions to reduce on-farm emissions.
- The Council provided input through workshops and agenda items to support the roll out and communication of the Pilot and the implementation of the Innovation Fund element of the program. Members' advice helped Agriculture Victoria make changes to improve targeting, relevancy and increase uptake of the Program, plus to encourage participation and innovation.

Hosted the Minister Gayle Tierney and Parliamentary secretary Michaela Settle on members' farms.

- Individual Council members also engaged directly with the Minister Gayle Tierney and the Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture Michaela Settle on different occasions, including hosting them on-farm to discuss opportunities for climate action plus carbon neutral farm management strategies and to discuss insights from the visit to New Zealand with Minister Tierney.

2023 highlights



Strengthen relationships with key industry stakeholders

- This year, the Council held two series of bilateral discussions to hear directly from stakeholders about their existing climate change initiatives, understand how farmers are being engaged as the industry moves towards a lower emissions agriculture future, and identify opportunities for government to work with the sector.
 - a. In March 2023, the Council met with representatives from four banks and the Australian Banking Association.
 - b. In September 2023, the Council met with representatives from five supply chain companies and one supermarket.
- These meetings provided industry-based perspectives on what the banking sector and supply chains are expecting from farmers, and how they are driving and supporting climate action across the industry and on-farm. Potential opportunities include:
 - a. Government taking a more influential role in coordinating and leading efforts across, and in conjunction with, Victoria's agriculture industry.
 - b. Supporting a clearer set of reporting standards for emissions, data-collection, climate risk assessments and sustainable practices on-farm, which are aligned with requirements from international markets.
 - c. There may be opportunities for government to work with the sector to streamline compliance with relevant standards.
 - d. Leading as a credible, trusted voice on climate change, ensuring that support/clarity is provided at an appropriate pace, noting how fast international markets are moving.
- The Chair and members also spoke at various events and conferences, such as ABARES and other industry events in Victoria, sharing insights of the work being progressed by the department, plus engaged directly with key stakeholders, including the Victorian Farmers Federation and the Young Farmers Advisory Council.

Supported Agriculture Victoria hosting Secretary for the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

- In January 2023, a number of members joined Agriculture Victoria when meeting with Andrew Metcalfe AO, former Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF).
- Members had the opportunity to share key messages from Victoria's experiences and highlight the important role and benefits the Council brings to Agriculture Victoria.
- Council members also discussed the development and value of the Victorian Agriculture Sector Emissions Reduction Pledge and the importance of an equivalent at a national level.
- In 2024, the Council met with DAFF to hear a presentation from the Department on its approach to emissions targets and the development of the Agriculture and Land Sectoral Plan.



Victorian Agriculture and Climate Change Council

Annual Report
2023

AGRICULTURE VICTORIA

