

Farmer health on the agenda

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STATE Nationals MPs and delegates will be asked to back a motion that calls for a financial lifeline to be thrown to Hamilton's National Centre for Farmer Health.

The motion, to be presented at this weekend's annual Nationals State Conference in Benalla, has been placed on the agenda by the party's Lowan electorate sub-branch.

It calls on the state and federal governments to match funding for the NCFH to ensure its continuity.

The centre's future has been in limbo since the State Coalition Government cut its \$1 million in annual base funding in 2012.

The Napthine Government has since pledged \$250,000 in funding, but only if it is matched by a \$750,000 contribution from the Commonwealth.

Western District Health Service chief executive, Jim Fletcher told The Spectator in March that the centre's remaining health and well-being programs would run in drought-

affected Queensland in May, but funding for them would dry up after June.

NCFH executives have proposed a shared funding agreement, with both governments contributing \$500,000 to keep the centre operating.

Member for Lowan, Hugh Delahunty said he was pleased to see the centre being discussed at the conference and was confident the motion would be supported.

"I think it helps keep the pressure on," Mr Delahunty said.

"There's been a lot of work done by us country members (of parliament) to keep it open and we need to get the Federal Government on-side.

"It needs about a million dollars in base-funding, from both state and federal governments, and we're hoping this resolution gets that across the line."

The motion will be one of more than 40 resolutions that will be debated at the conference, ranging from examining LPG prices and strengthening labelling laws, to

management of police road blocks in fire areas and funding the state's emergency services.

Proposals from the Lowan sub-branch call for a review of state and Commonwealth privacy legislation and funding for the state's roads.

The two day conference, which will hear from Deputy Prime Minister and Federal National Leader, Warren Truss, will be Mr Delahunty's last as the Member for Lowan.

It follows his decision to retire at the next state election, due in November, after more than 15 years in parliament.

He said the conference would be an opportunity to introduce candidates contesting the November 29 poll, including his successor in Lowan, Emma Kealy, who won endorsement last month.

"The conference also provides an opportunity for branch members to have their say on topics of interest, with a number of resolutions relevant to rural and regional Victoria to be debated," Mr Delahunty said.