

Media Release



The Hon Jaala Pulford MLC

Minister for Agriculture

Minister for Regional Development

Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Tuesday, 28 April, 2015

LABOR SAVES THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR FARMER HEALTH

The Andrews Labor Government today guaranteed the future of the National Centre for Farmer Health, after the previous Coalition Government nearly destroyed the Centre by cutting critical funding and refusing to provide ongoing support.

Visiting the Centre in Hamilton today, Minister for Agriculture, Jaala Pulford, announced \$4 million in funding in the upcoming *2015-16 Victorian Budget* to secure the Centre's future.

The funding fulfils a key election promise and will allow the Centre to rebuild after the Coalition's cuts saw staff numbers slashed by 75 per cent leaving the Centre with only three full time positions.

The Centre, established by the previous Labor Government in 2008, is a world-renowned facility dedicated to improving the health of farmers across not just Victoria, but the entire country.

Victorian farmers experience higher incidences of injury, illness, mental health issues and work-related fatalities than most other industries, yet they have more limited access to health services.

The Centre brings together university research, service delivery and education to address the gap in health, safety and wellbeing between farmers and city dwellers, providing essential services for farmers across Victoria.

This is important work yet the Coalition was more interested in trying to off-load funding responsibility to the Federal Government, rather than standing up for the health of our farmers and their families.

Today's announcement by the Labor Government places rural health at the forefront of the Government's plan to support Victorian farmers, and will ensure the Centre can rebuild and continue its vital work.

The funding in the Budget is not contingent on Federal Government funding.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture, Jaala Pulford

"The Nationals stood by while the Liberals ran the Centre into the ground."

"We're putting the health and wellbeing of our farmers and farming families first by saving the National Centre for Farmer Health."

"Victorian agriculture production contributes \$11.8 billion to the Victorian economy. For food and fibre production to grow, we need to give our farmers the support they deserve."

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health, Jill Hennessy

"Farmers are consistently over-represented in the number of Victorians impacted by chronic illness, injury, disease and workplace fatality."

"That's why it's so critical that we have given the National Centre for Farmer Health the support it needs to address this imbalance."

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