

Media Release

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State and Federal Government must pay rates on National Parks and Reserves.

Farmers are calling for changes to the Local Government Act to remove the exemption that excludes State and Federal Governments from paying rates on National Parks and Nature Reserves.

NSW Farmers' Association Business, Economics and Trade Committee Chair Susan McLeish said this exemption is having a detrimental affect on Local Government capital works projects and changes must be made.

"There is now seven percent of the State covered by National Parks alone and this obviously represents a significant area of land, and therefore lost revenue for Local Government," Mrs McLeish said.

"Not only does Local Government lose the revenue stream paid by other ratepayers, it is also burdened with the expense of road maintenance to the areas in question," Susan McLeish said.

While the NSW Farmers' Association acknowledges that grants are sometimes provided to Local Governments by State and Federal Governments, these are made on an ad-hoc basis.

"This process does not allow for Local Governments to plan and forecast for capital works improvements," Mrs McLeish said.

"Local Government need timely and reliable revenue streams to ensure infrastructure maintenance is sufficient for demand in relevant areas.

"As far as the Association and its Members are concerned, the current system does not provide for this need," Mrs McLeish said.

"While National Parks do cover costs within the parks themselves, visitors have impacts in the local government area that the Local Government has trouble collecting funds for, such as the damage caused to roads," Mrs McLeish said.

In July last year, the Association raised this issue in a submission to the Productivity Commission review into *Assessing Local Government Revenue Raising Capacity*.

The NSW Farmers' Association will now lobby the State Government and State Members of Parliament to alter the Local Government Act to remove the exemption as soon as possible.

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