

# CHARTER FOR WORKING ON PRIVATE FARM LAND 2019-2021



This charter outlines the expectations on utilities working on private farm land and the approach of farmers and utilities to issues of shared concern, such as biosecurity.

## Parties

The parties to the charter are the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association and the following utilities and businesses (the 'utilities'): Aurora Energy, TasNetworks, TasWater and Tasmanian Irrigation Pty Ltd.

## Background

Utilities require access to private farm land to fulfil their regulatory obligations including:

- Routine infrastructure maintenance and repair;
- Infrastructure design, planning and construction; and
- Meter reading and service verification.

Farmers are also operating a business and have the right to expect that they will not be adversely affected, financially or otherwise, by circumstances created by these utilities when entering their land, particularly in regards to the spread of pests and diseases on utility officers' vehicles, equipment, and clothing.

This Charter is a formal understanding between farmers and utilities that outlines what is expected on-farm. It establishes principles for co-operation and mutual recognition which will build relations between the parties and support

improved outcomes on private farm land, including biosecurity.

Developments in technology, like the rollout of advance meters that send reads via the communications network, may make many of the concerns associated with on-farm access redundant, where access to those networks are available.

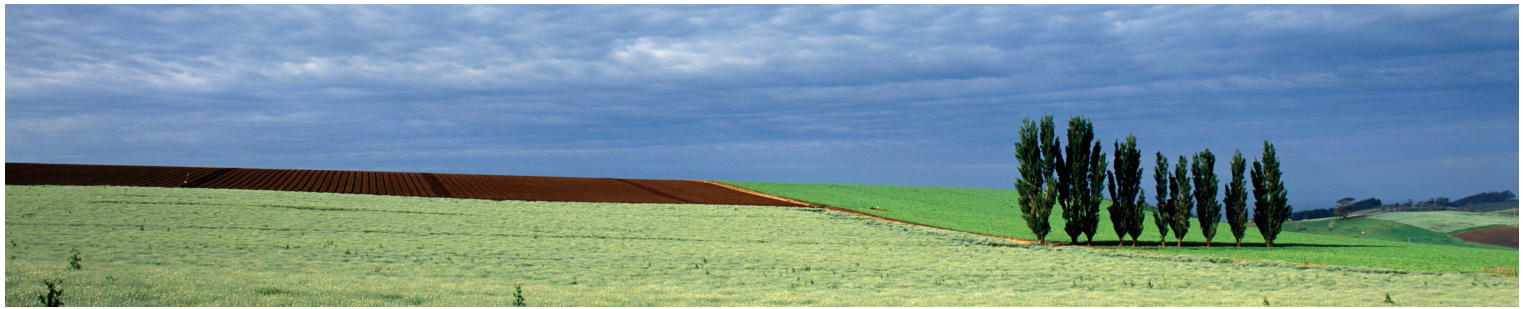
Under the Charter, the parties are required to actively maintain a register of issues associated with its implementation, including relevant policy developments, to ensure that the Charter evolves to reflect the current operating environment.

## Objectives

The objectives of the Charter are to:

- Promote greater understanding, co-operation and exchange of information between Tasmania's farmers, the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association and utilities;
- Acknowledge and respect the rights and responsibilities of farmers in regards to their property;
- Acknowledge and respect the rights and responsibilities of utilities in carrying out their legislated functions;
- Through a cooperative effort, seek to minimise the spread of pests and diseases from farm-to-farm and region-to-region;
- Improve communication between farmers and the 'utilities' employees and contractors (the 'officers') who come onto farms as part of day to day operations; and
- Outline the approach of the parties to issues of shared concern, such as biosecurity.

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## Communication

The success of the charter depends on open, transparent and respectful relationships between the parties.

The parties will actively communicate in a timely manner. Where appropriate, the parties will share information to build knowledge and understanding about the needs and sensitivities of each business.

The Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association will communicate appropriate information from the utilities to its members so that the positive impacts of this charter are maximised at the local level.

## Existing obligations

This Charter does not create legally binding relations between the parties or fetter any party in their existing obligations.

The parties shall have regard for each other's existing obligations.

## Notification of activity

The utilities will share information about land access, where it is available and appropriate, so that farmers are aware when planned works or meter reads will be taking place.

Farmers are responsible for ensuring utilities are provided with up to date contact details for notifying access.

Officers must ensure stock security is maintained when accessing the property, by keeping gates closed (or open) as the farmer has left them. Officers should always be mindful of the location and movement of nearby stock

and ensure they cannot move onto public roads. Officers will notify farmers if stock escape or move into another area.

## Safety and signage

Farms are unique workplaces, and the combination of hazards makes them potentially dangerous places to work.

Officers must observe reasonable on-farm signage, including speed restrictions and site induction requirements.

Farmers have obligations to:

- Ensure that the signage, or other information, regarding matters such as biosecurity and safety hazards (including chemicals and animals) on their property is current and visible at the point of entry; and
- Provide officers with safe and unhindered access to the utilities' infrastructure on the farmers' premises, so they are able to safely and efficiently exercise their duties.





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## Biosecurity

Farm biosecurity means a set of measures designed to protect a property from the entry and spread of pests, diseases and weeds.

Farm biosecurity is the responsibility of farmers and every person visiting or working on a farm.

It is impractical to stop all vehicle and equipment movements on and off a farm. To minimise the spread of pests and diseases, the following steps should be taken:

- Officers must observe all reasonable, signposted biosecurity protocols and precautions; and
- Where there are not documented procedures or specific biosecurity controls in place, officers should adhere to their business' standard biosecurity operating procedures.

Farmers have a responsibility to inform officers of any declared or notifiable pests already present on their farm. This will enable the officers to clean down properly or take other appropriate actions.

## Emergency response

The Charter does not apply in emergency situations or where there are immediate risks to people or property.

## Publication

The parties shall promote the Charter to staff to ensure it is understood, owned and implemented at all organisational levels.

The Charter is available on the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment's website.

## Implementation and Review

The parties will actively maintain a register of issues associated with practical implementation of the Charter, including training requirements and circulation of information amongst the parties.

The register will also be used to monitor policy changes relevant to the Charter to make sure that the Charter evolves to reflect the current operating environment and continues to meet the needs of the parties.

The parties will meet bi-annually to discuss the issues arising in the register, with the intent of reviewing the Charter every two years unless the parties identify the need for an earlier review.

## Issue resolution

If there are issues at the local level, the parties will communicate to resolve any issues at the officer level in the first instance.

## Administration

The Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment will maintain the Charter and register of issues on behalf of the parties and will convene bi-annual meetings.

