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Farmers hail Inland Rail, award a solid B+ for overall Budget

The National Farmers' Federation (NFF) has given tonight's Federal Budget an overall grade of 'B+' with wins on Inland Rail and small business taxation.

The NFF issued a [Budget Report Card](#) grading the Government's performance across five key areas measuring success against the peak body's '[Budget wishlist](#)'.

Inland Rail

NFF President Fiona Simson highlighted the significant allocation to make tracks on Inland Rail.

"\$8.4 billion for the Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Rail is the real crown jewel of tonight's budget for the farm sector.

"The Government says coupled with private sector participation, this funding will see the project through to completion in 2024-25.

"This is a significant investment in the efficiency of our industry, better connecting our farms with new markets here and overseas," Ms Simson said.

Accelerated Depreciation

The \$20,000 immediate asset write-off provisions for small businesses have been retained for another year.

"The NFF has put the case strongly for continuation of accelerated depreciation, with a community campaign generating hundreds of messages to the Treasurer.

"Accelerated depreciation is helping our farmers invest for the future, and we're thrilled the Government has sided with industry on this for another year."

Natural Resource Management

Tonight's Budget confirms the Government's commitment to funding Landcare and natural resource management for the long term.

“The \$1.1 billion commitment to the next 7 years of the National Landcare Programme, while falling considerably short of current funding levels, provides a clear commitment to support natural resource management initiatives.

“We look forward to working with the Government to design the next program to ensure that sustainable agriculture initiatives are well supported,” Ms Simson said.

The Government has also committed \$86.3 million over four years to improve gas regulation and supply.

“The Government has responded to NFF’s long standing ask to expand investment in groundwater science.

“This science is critical to ensure that farmer’s land and water resources are protected during unconventional gas development,” Ms Simson said.

Mobile Blackspots

Ms Simson said the NFF had marked the Government down for allowing uncertainty to cloud the future of the Mobile Blackspot Program.

“Reliable telecommunications is one of the biggest challenges before the farm sector and regional Australia as a whole.

“The NFF implores the Government to ensure the roll-out of the Blackspot Program continues to be prioritised.”

Regional Growth Fund

Regional communities will also be pleased to hear a Regional Growth Fund will be established to support strategic projects in local communities.

"Laying the groundwork through major projects and community infrastructure will help our regions get ahead," Ms Simson said.

Conclusion

Ms Simson noted the date for an anticipated surplus had been pushed out to 2020-21.

“We hope the Treasurer’s plans to return the budget to surplus by 2020-21 are realistic and achievable, to avoid damaging business confidence.

"As an export-dependent industry, we can’t afford unnecessary upward pressure on the currency, and a healthy budget is crucial to maintain our farm sector’s international competitiveness.”

“Tonight’s Budget has earned a solid B+ grade for its deliverables to the agriculture sector.

“We will no doubt reap the rewards of this budget’s investments for generations to come,” Ms Simson concluded.

[Click here to view the NFF's full 2017-18 Budget Report Card](#)



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