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Dairy farmers call for stronger trespass penalties

For Immediate Release

DISTRESSED farmers are urging state and federal lawmakers to crack down on bullying against regional communities amid safety fears sparked by vegan protests across Australia.

Peak dairy farmer group Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF) has called for all state governments to beef up trespass laws to include imprisonment and a minimum fine equal to the cost of police intervention.

“It is critically important that each state allocates police resources to these matters and provides a directive for officers to remove and prosecute offenders,” ADF President Terry Richardson said.

“This campaign of bullying, intimidation and harassment by militant vegans must stop, and the only way we will see a deterrent is for strong and binding penalties to be put in place.”

The current penalties for trespass offences vary between states. New South Wales imposes a maximum fine of just \$550 for unlawful entry of public or private land enclosed by a fence under section 4 of the *Inclosed Lands Protections Act*, while in Western Australia, section 70A of the *Criminal Code Act Compilation Act* offers a maximum penalty of 12 months’ jail time and a \$12,000 fine.

Mr Richardson said more transparency was needed around sentencing for farm trespass related offences across jurisdictions.

“Governments need to implement rigorous reporting around the enforcement of trespass laws so that we can understand how effective the penalties are in deterring this destructive behaviour,” he said.

Protesters on Monday blocked major intersections in capital cities and organised demonstrations outside abattoirs across the country.

Mr Richardson slammed the protests as a disgraceful act of intimidation.

“Farmers are just trying to do a job, just like everyone else, and they deserve the freedom to run their businesses without harassment or intimidation,” he said.

“Australia has some of the highest animal welfare standards in the world, and our farmers care enormously for their animals.

“State and federal governments need to act now to preserve the peace and ensure regional communities are protected.”

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