

GARETH WARD MP
Independent Member for Kiama



AGAINST UNREGULATED AGRITOURISM REFORM IN THE SHOALHAVEN

16 March 2023

As the State Election looms, I want to make clear my position with respect to agritourism changes that were proposed to commence on 1 December last year.

My position remains that agritourism activities should be managed and regulated by local councils in order to strike the right balance between protecting our local environment and supporting local farmers.

Should I be re-elected as your local MP, I will draft a Private Members Bill to reverse the agritourism changes that were unilaterally mandated by Minister Roberts in October last year without parliamentary oversight.

These changes were poorly thought out, ill-considered and don't reflect the views of our local community. They revoked previous assurances given to councils by the Department of Planning, including the fundamental requirement that agritourism "must be ancillary to agricultural use of the land."

The new laws mean that landholders will now be allowed to earn more income from their agritourism business than from primary production. This change will result in the reduction and fragmentation of agricultural land in NSW that the NSW Farmers' Association is campaigning against.

My Private Members Bill will give councils a choice to 'opt in' to the proposed agritourism changes but I won't allow them to be imposed on local communities without consultation. My bill will also allow councils to map appropriate locations for agritourism which will help support this industry in the right locations and with the right conditions of consent.

NSW Labor has shown no interest in reversing the Minister's changes that favour developers over genuine farmers, however, I would welcome other candidates indicating what their position is and whether they are prepared to back my bill.

Actions speak louder than words and I want to make my intentions absolutely clear on this important matter.

Having been in a major political party, I am very well aware of the constraints on members of those parties. As an independent, I am no longer constrained by party lines.

Should you re-elect me, I will table the bill in the first session on Parliament following the State Election.

Should I be re-elected, this matter will be part of broader reforms I will be seeking to push in an effort to fix our State's broken planning system.

My very strong view is that local people have lost a say in the future of our urban environment. We need a planning system that provides confidence and certainty for all involved.

The current planning system is complex and confusing. I want to work hard to deliver a system that protects our environment whilst delivering infrastructure alongside growth in those areas where growth is needed and appropriate.

Most importantly, I want to put the voices of local people back at the heart of our planning system.

I have the energy, skills and experience to deliver on this promise and I ask for your support.

Kind regards,
Gareth

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