



GOOD NEIGHBOUR CHARTER

for the Wollondilly Poultry Industry

Preamble

The poultry industry has operated in the Wollondilly Shire since the 1930's when the Estonian community established farms at Thirlmere. By the 1960's Wollondilly was the largest egg producing district in Australia. Wollondilly currently has 59 poultry farms and is the largest producer of Turkey meat in the country. Chicken, egg and duck production also rank highly compared to other regions in the Sydney basin and New South Wales. It is estimated that the poultry industry generates 300-400 local jobs and contributes in the order of \$11.7 million to the Wollondilly economy annually.

The family owned and operated poultry farm is part of the fabric of Wollondilly. Their resilience and hard work has contributed to the success of the local industry.

A number of Sydney based processing companies and two national companies also contribute significantly to the local industry. The ability of family owned and operated farms to expand and service the processing companies is critical to the industries ongoing viability. It is estimated that for every \$1 million of investment lost within the shire, the loss in value add is in the order of \$1.6 million.

In rural areas, Council support the rights of farmers to undertake and pursue agricultural activities which incorporate reasonable and practical measures to avoid environmental harm and minimise impact upon adjoining land. Proactive initiatives introduced by Council include establishment of the Rural Industry Liaison Committee, publication of Agricultural Production Fact Sheets and the Rural Living Handbook. Purchasers of rural land are also notified on zoning certificates of the type of activities that can be expected in the area.

Challenges facing the local Poultry Industry

The rural landscape at Wollondilly has changed considerably since the poultry industry was first established. The Shire has experienced robust population increase in recent times with an annual growth of 2.0%. The population of Wollondilly Shire currently stands at 47,997 but is expected to grow to over 125,000 by 2046.

Whilst much of the area is zoned for rural purposes, Wollondilly is a peri-urban area with lot sizes typically between 2 and 40 hectares. Fragmented land holdings and rural lifestyle aspirations are challenges that need to be addressed if the industry is to remain sustainable in the future.

In March 2016, the local industry through NSW Farmer's Federation, raised concern about enforcement action commenced by Council and the impact of night time curfews upon farming operations. The initial meeting resulted in a Council led initiative to consult with the wider community regarding co-existence issues between farming operations and their rural residential neighbours.

Feedback from Community Consultation

The community consultation work undertaken by Council in mid-2016 suggests the key challenges facing the industry relate to odour generation, noise impact and vehicle movements. The industry through the consultation process has expressed a right to farm on land zoned for rural purposes. The need for sound strategic planning and workable approvals from Council is critically important to the industry. The challenge for Council is to strike a balance between competing priorities and promote co-existence based upon reasonable amenity and mitigation requirements.

Why is a Good Neighbour Charter required?

The benefits of regular engagement are widely recognised. Ongoing contact between poultry growers and neighbours can be helpful in building goodwill and managing concerns at the first opportunity before those concerns escalate into major issues.

Open lines of communication help to identify problems and apply relevant remedies to minimise impacts upon residents. Routine engagement with neighbours will ensure residents know what is happening avoiding speculation. Key issues that need to be discussed with neighbours on an ongoing basis include odour management, noise minimisation and vehicle movements.

Subject to biosecurity considerations, engagement initiatives such as farm tours can be helpful for residents to gain a better understanding of the practical operation of a poultry farm and the best practice initiatives being implemented.

The demand for poultry produce is forecast to grow between 3% and 4% per annum in the medium term. To meet the growing demand the industry will need to supply an additional 70 million birds by 2021. Based upon these projections the poultry industry is likely to make a significant contribution to the local economy well into the future.

From a social and economic perspective it is important for Council to have a charter concerning good neighbour procedures and practices.

What is the Good Neighbour Charter seeking to achieve?

The Good Neighbour Charter has been developed to promote a collaborative approach to mitigate the impact caused by farming operations. This approach requires a commitment from Council, poultry growers and processing companies, to achieve continuous improvement in terms of farm activities and community engagement.

This approach is supported by NSW Department of Primary Industries and NSW Farmer's Federation who have nominated Wollondilly for a pilot program involving the development and implementation of Environmental Management Plans for poultry farms.

Commitment by Council to the Good Neighbour initiative

- Continue to notify purchases of rural land through zoning certificates of the types of activity that may have implications upon rural living.
- Continue to publish material, such as the Rural Living Handbook and the 'How to be a Good Neighbour in Wollondilly Shire' Fact Sheets, to promote co-existence between agricultural industry and residents.
- Continue to assess applications to establish / modify poultry farms on a case by case basis and if approved, impose workable conditions that reflect the nature of the proposal, features of the site, proximity to residents etc.
- Seek funding from the State Government to undertake a Rural Lands Study to identify poultry clusters and investigate strategic planning outcomes to reduce land use conflicts.
- The concept of 'rural living – room to grow' be workshopped with the community and further defined to recognise the significant contribution by rural industries to the fabric of Wollondilly Shire.
- Participate in any Environmental Management System pilot program initiated by NSW Farmer's Federation in collaboration with NSW Department of Primary Industry.
- Based upon a risk management approach, program poultry farms for periodic inspection, compliance audits and neighbour engagement. The findings of these audits carried out in conjunction with field staff from the relevant processing company shall be made available to relevant parties.
- Develop a multi layered approach to address concerns raised by residents in relation to farm operations.
- Convene an annual forum to specifically discuss issues relating to the local poultry industry.
- Continue to be involved in forums and networks to keep up to date with best practice governance and engagement initiatives.

Commitment sought by NSW Farmer's Federation and local poultry growers to the Good Neighbour initiative

- Commit to a continuous improvement approach to farm management including active participation in any Environmental Management System pilot program and best practice training.
- Conduct farming operations in accordance with approval requirements and best practice management practices to mitigate impacts.
- Communicate and consult with neighbours.
- Seek opportunities to explain and interpret management practices.

- Provide detailed information about proposed activities or works in progress.
- Be responsive to neighbour concerns and proactively conciliate any issues.
- Cooperate with Council, poultry processing companies and neighbours to resolve concerns.

Commitment sought by the Poultry Processing Industry to the Good Neighbour initiative

- Incorporate best practice management initiatives into processing operations particularly in relation to the activities surrounding the night time pick-ups of birds to mitigate amenity impacts.
- Commit to a continuous improvement approach to farm management including active participation in any Environmental Management System pilot program.
- By way of contractual agreement with the poultry growers and transport contractors promote a continuous improvement approach to farming operations which is linked to individual Environmental Management Plans.
- Provide Council with an up to date list of field staff who can be contacted in relation to substantiated concerns raised by neighbours.

Commitment sought by the community to the Good Neighbour initiative

- When purchasing your rural property, take into consideration the surrounding poultry farms and how this may affect your decision and ability to live in the environment.
- Be aware of what living in a rural environment means in terms of the activities associated with the poultry industry (e.g. the night time pick-up of birds) and how that may influence your ability to live in such an environment.
- Have regard to the fact that poultry farms are subject to change and need to expand in order to remain viable and response to the increasing demand for poultry produce.
- Get to know the poultry farmers in your area and work cooperatively to resolve concerns.

Signatories to Good Neighbour Charter


Wollondilly Shire Council


NSW Farmers Association, Contract Poultry Group


Inghams Enterprises P/L


Cordina Farms P/L


Red Lea Chickens P/L