



OAKESHOTT

INDEPENDENT

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Higher attendances and entries at shows across the Mid-North Coast this year are good signs of a revival in agriculture that's happening right now on the Mid-North Coast. I want to push the Commonwealth to get more involved in supporting this growth and so do Faye and Ross Neil, who are seeking funding for the Comboyne Showground's 2010-2015 Management Plan.



Organic Cheesemakers David Marks and Heidi Fallding are an example of the growing emphasis on "fresh and local" and the diversity of produce being grown on the Mid-North Coast. During a recent visit to David's 'Marrook Farm' at Elands, we made a 4kg wheel using organic milk supplied by Hastings farmer Chris Eggert as part of Polities in Small Business Week.



Cattle farmers at the Townhead Saleyards in Taree were part of a successful campaign last year to overturn a Government plan to allow beef imports from countries affected by 'mad cow disease.'

A statement by Rob Oakeshott, Federal MP for Lyne

"The revival of local agriculture through food security planning and the reform of Local Government to address local road network failures are two key policy platforms I want to pursue for our region in the next Australian Parliament.

These are two new policy areas for the Federal Parliament and, although not the 'hot-button' issues of the moment, they are vitally important to life in our region and the future viability of our nation.

I am excited about the revival of agriculture that is happening on the Mid-North Coast. Farmers Markets, the concept of 'fresh and local,' and the diversity of produce now grown, are all complementing some of the traditional industries of beef cattle and dairy. I want the next Parliament to now look at its role in helping agriculture far more effectively than it currently does.

A big part of this is how we view food and land-use necessary for food. The Federal Government needs to get more involved in protecting farming land in the context of national issues such as foreign investment rules, population policy, population health issues, childhood obesity concerns, food labelling, rights-to-farm, and the longer term issue of food security.

In my view, these national policy failures are because the Federal Parliament has not traditionally been involved in land-use planning law, leaving it to the states and local government. It is therefore high time the Commonwealth did get involved in land-use planning for important national outcomes on food and agriculture generally.

As well, I believe the next Federal Parliament should complement those in Local Government who are looking for reform. Local road networks will continue to fail if left to local Councils alone, and it is time the Federal Parliament and Local Government worked on a combined solution to this problem.

On the Mid-North Coast, we already now have bold reform underway in health services and in education services. We are ready to pick off opportunities from reform in the energy sector and we now have an employment plan that is being implemented on the ground and assisting in our record low local unemployment figures.

What we now need is to maximise outcomes from each of these, while starting to get the Commonwealth engaged like never before in two new areas of public policy - and they are better food security through agriculture policy, and better local roads infrastructure through local government reform.

It is time for the Australian Parliament to step up.