

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Council encourages local input into Federal Red Meat Inquiry**

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A 'toolkit' is available to Towong Shire farmers and other concerned stakeholders which can help them to develop a submission to the Federal Government's inquiry into the red meat processing sector. The toolkit, which includes a template and information about how to lodge a submission, was developed in partnership with Indigo Shire and Wangaratta City.

"The Federal Government's inquiry into the red meat processing sector is an issue very close to the hearts of local producers as well as the wider community," explained Cr David Wortmann, Towong Shire Council Mayor. "We feel that providing support to local farmers so that they can have their voices heard through this inquiry is critical".

The Terms of Reference for the Senate Inquiry include the potential for misuse of market power through buyer collusion, existing selling structures and processes at saleyards (particularly pre- and post-sale weighing) as well as direct sales and online auctions, and the regulations covering livestock, livestock agents, buyers and meat processors.

"Agriculture, including the red meat industry, is the economic mainstay of communities around the Towong Shire," explained Cr Wortmann. "Everyone in Towong Shire benefits from having a viable and prosperous agricultural sector, so we encourage local producers and other interested stakeholders to take this opportunity to have their say".

Towong Shire Councillors recently met with Senator Bridget McKenzie who instigated the Government's Inquiry following the boycott at the Barnawartha Saleyards earlier this year.

"Senator McKenzie emphasized that this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for producers to outline their concerns about the red meat supply chain and to offer their thoughts on how these issues could be addressed," explained Cr Wortmann.

Submissions to the Inquiry are due by 30 June 2015. To access the tool-kit developed by Council, please visit [www.towong.vic.gov.au](http://www.towong.vic.gov.au) or contact Mrs Lauren Elvin, Manager Economic Development, on 02 6071 5100. The Victorian Farmers Federation is also offering assistance to their members – contact Tom Whitty ([twhitty@vff.org.au](mailto:twhitty@vff.org.au)) or Kate Phillips ([kphillips@vff.org.au](mailto:kphillips@vff.org.au)).