



Australian Government
**Department of Agriculture,
Water and the Environment**

Ref: MC20-002517

Mr Gary Northover
Executive Director
Tractor and Machinery Association of Australia
442 Auburn Road
Hawthorne Vic 3122

Via email: gary@tma.asn.au

Dear Mr Northover

Thank you for your correspondence of 24 March 2020, to the Hon. David Littleproud MP, Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management, requesting that the distribution, supply, service and provision of equipment and parts for and of agricultural machinery be considered an essential good and continue to be available without disruption during the COVID-19 pandemic. Minister Littleproud has asked me to reply on his behalf.

The Australian Government recognises the important roles Australia's agriculture industries, and significant support services such as Tractor and Machinery Association of Australia, play in food security and in responding to this unprecedented global situation.

The government also recognises the need to ensure a strong partnership between government and industry stakeholders in responding to COVID-19. As the Senior Agriculture Industry Engagement Officer on COVID-19, I am meeting regularly with a wide range of stakeholders to discuss current and emerging issues and ways in which these can be addressed. These issues include maintaining production, access to workers, supply lines, transportation and logistics.

You will have seen Minister Littleproud's recent statements recognising the importance of agriculture and agricultural supply chains in responding to this pandemic. Minister Littleproud has described agricultural inputs as essential services. Minister Littleproud is also meeting regularly with state and territory agriculture ministers across the country to manage the impact of measures implemented to address COVID-19 on the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors. This includes consideration of the potential impact of further restrictions to facilities and services, such as labour supply and people movement as a result of border closures, and how these can be managed. Services that feed into agriculture, such as agricultural machinery, will be exempt from border restrictions imposed by states and territories for the purposes of servicing agricultural producers.

However, individuals or businesses concerned or unsure about local restrictions, should contact state and territory health and agriculture authorities to confirm arrangements in their jurisdiction.

Australian governments are focused on reducing the spread of COVID-19, to flatten the curve and to save the lives of fellow Australians. As you would be aware, the National Cabinet has made a number of decisions on social distancing requirements that must be applied. These have been agreed to protect the Australian community from the spread of COVID-19 while supporting the economy. The National Cabinet may consider that further restrictions are required as the situation evolves.

As of 31 March 2020, facilities such as farms, food markets, food processing, saleyards, wool auctions; freight and logistics supply businesses; and ancillary and associated services such as agricultural machinery providers are considered essential. Like all operating businesses, they must follow the advice provided by the Department of Health and the relevant state and territory government in respect to measures necessary to slow the virus. Businesses must ensure that the minimum distance of 1.5 metres between people can be maintained, and provide hand hygiene products and suitable rubbish bins, with frequent cleaning and waste disposal. Additional requirements are in place for essential indoor gatherings and essential outdoor gatherings, which impose a limit on the number of people permitted in these settings.

The government is committed to supporting the agricultural sector and will continue to engage with industry on next steps.

Thank you for bringing Tractor and Machinery Australia's concerns to the government's attention. Please feel free to contact me at coronavirus.industry@agriculture.gov.au if you would like to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Tucker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mark Tucker
Senior Agriculture Industry Engagement Officer
6 April 2020