

## Joint Media Release

*Edward O'Donohue*  
*Member for Eastern Victoria Region*  
*Parliamentary Secretary for Families*  
*Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Resources*

*Christine Fyffe MP*  
*State Member for Evelyn*

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### **Local Growers Given a Voice on Netting**

Liberal MPs Edward O'Donohue, Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Families and Infrastructure and Resources and Christine Fyffe, State Member for Evelyn, joined forces to welcome Deputy Nationals Leader Peter Walsh, Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Country Water Resources to discuss a recent population explosion in black cockatoo and fruit bat numbers affecting grower's produce.

"The right to farm is an important right that must be protected. It is a right that ensures that our food producers are not constrained by unreasonable limitations on their ability to protect their crops," Mr O'Donohue said.

"Residents new to rural areas often don't understand farming activities and the methods that need to be employed to preserve the quality of produce for sale. In a competitive market, there is a lot of pressure on farmers to provide near to impossibly perfect produce," Mrs Fyffe said.

Apple grower Peter Burgi is a fourth generation producer of fruit in the Yarra Valley. Although battling mother nature comes with the territory, he like many of his fellow growers are growing increasingly concerned about a recent population explosion among black cockatoos and fruit bats.

"Black cockatoos and fruit bats are protected species so they cannot be shot by farmers. Instead the Department of Sustainability and Environment offers advice to growers and farmers about techniques to scare off nuisance wildlife," Mr O'Donohue said.

"While council can provide a permit for the construction of netting to keep pests from getting to the fruit, producers are only allowed to cover 60% of their crops at maximum. That leaves a significant proportion of the fruit without any protection," Mrs Fyffe said.

"DSE advised that they believe the increased numbers of black cockatoos and fruit bats is the result of a mass migration from Queensland and New South Wales due to recent heavy rains washing away their food supply," Mr O'Donohue said.

"Because black cockatoos only eat the seeds of apples, they have an enormous capacity to go through a large volume of apples in a day," Mrs Fyffe said.

"If we are to ensure our future food supply, we need to have sensible local laws that recognise the importance of the work our farmers and growers do," Mrs Fyffe said.