

## Dairy Industry Policy Statement

We need to keep agricultural and manufacturing jobs in our region. As Mayor of the Indigo Shire Council I fought off a move to rip 150 jobs out of Kiewa/Tangambalanga. I worked to keep the Kiewa/Tangambalanga factory open, and to keep 60 of those 150 dairy processing jobs in our region. The fight for our dairy industry is not over. Securing the long-term future of the Kiewa/Tangambalanga plant and Benambra's dairy farming, and dairy processing industry, is one of my top priorities. We have some of the best dairy valleys, and dairy communities, in Victoria and we need to ensure a profitable and successful future for our family farms.

Benambra's valleys support some of the best dairy farms in Australia. They have fertile soils, high rainfall and excellent farmers. It is one of the strongest and most overlooked assets in our region. The destabilisation of the industry through the sell-off of the Murray Goulburn Cooperative, and the attempted closure of the Kiewa/Tangambalanga processing plant, has put this asset under pressure. My policy is aimed at stabilising the industry and supporting efforts to increase milk production in Benambra's valleys. A strong dairy industry is vital to the health of our valley economies and will bring valuable jobs to the region.

### My Policy

#### **A Fight for a Fair Price**

The large supermarkets still sell milk for \$1 a litre, and dairy farmers aren't getting a fair deal. Trust and confidence has been burnt by processors and supermarkets. We need to turn this around. We need to restore farmer's trust, so that they have the confidence they need to invest and grow.

*I will lead our local dairy farmers in the fight for a fair price. This includes supporting the introduction of a mandatory code of conduct which ensures dairy farmers are not subject to unfair decisions by processors. I will also argue for transparent pricing for our supermarkets so that consumers know that farmers are getting a fair price for their milk.*

#### **Rebuilding Dairy Processing**

The sell-off of the Murray Goulburn Cooperative, and the downsizing of the Kiewa/Tangambalanga processing plant, has left a large hole in our dairy processing industry. We are now forced to find new markets, and new pathways to market for our dairy farmers. These must include increased dairy processing capacity in Benambra. I worked with Saputo to prevent the closure of the Kiewa/Tangambalanga plant, and now I want to work to bring that factory back into full production. New dairy processing opportunities for Benambra must also be pursued.

*I will work with local farmers and processors to create a business prospectus for our dairy industry, with identifies key priorities for government and private investment. I will work to ensure that there is government funding to support the implementation of the prospectus, so that we have the funding to rebuild our local dairy processing industry. I have a strong relationship with Saputo, and will continue to work with them to increase local dairy processing capacity, and I will work with other industry participants to develop identified commercial opportunities to value add to our dairy farming community locally.*

# JENNY O'CONNOR

## **A Dairy Workforce Strategy**

Benambra dairy is driven by family farms, and there is a high proportion of older dairy owners/managers in the region. We need a plan to transition family farms to the next generation, so that they stay family farms, and to bring new farmers into the industry. We need a plan for dairy farmers so they get the targeted extension services they need, and we need to ensure that there are clear pathways into dairy farming through good jobs and training.

*I will work with existing dairy networks to ensure that our local plan for a sustainable dairy industry, the North East Dairy Growth Plan, has the funding it needs for full implementation. I will fight to increase the amount of Victorian Government spending on extension officers so that our dairy industry has the strategic support it needs to sustain existing farms, and young farmers have the resources they need develop their own businesses. I will work to ensure that the local dairy industry is supported by local education and training opportunities, to ensure that our young people have clear pathways into the dairy industry.*