



QUEENSLAND
FARMERS'
FEDERATION



State Development and Public Works Organisation (Critical Minerals) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026

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Prepared for:
PIR Committee

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This submission is provided to:

Primary Industries and Resources Committee
Parliament House
George Street, Brisbane Qld 4000

Our members

- Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers
- Cotton Australia
- Canegrowers
- Greenlife Industry QLD
- eastAUSmilk
- Australian Cane Farmers Association
- Queensland United Egg Producers
- Turf Queensland
- Pork Queensland
- Australian Chicken Meat Federation
- Bundaberg Regional Irrigators Group
- Burdekin River Irrigation Area
- Central Downs Irrigators Ltd
- Fairburn Irrigation Network
- Mallowa Irrigation
- Pioneer Valley Water Co-operative Ltd
- Theodore Water Pty Ltd
- Eton Irrigation
- Lockyer Valley Water Users

About the Queensland Farmers' Federation



The Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) is the united voice of agriculture in Queensland.

Our members are agricultural peak bodies who collectively represent more than 13,000 farmers who produce food, fibre and foliage across the state.

QFF's peak body members come together to develop policy and lead projects on the key issues that are important to their farmer members and the Queensland agriculture sector.

Together, we form a strong, unified voice leveraging our effectiveness by working together to drive policy and initiatives that support a strong future for Queensland agriculture.

Submission

QFF welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission on the *State Development and Public Works Organisation (Critical Minerals) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026* (the Bill).

Queensland has set an ambitious target of growing its agricultural sector to \$30 billion by 2030, and that target depends on the strong, enduring protection of the State's productive agricultural land, water and farming businesses. QFF acknowledges the Government's economic objectives in developing the critical minerals sector and the opportunities it offers regional Queensland, and we do not regard those objectives as being in conflict with our own.

QFF maintains that a \$30 billion agricultural economy and a competitive critical minerals sector can be pursued together but only where the framework governing their coexistence keeps the agricultural base sound. QFF is concerned that the Bill, as drafted, achieves project facilitation at the expense of protections for agricultural land, water and farming landholders.

The Bill is broad and legally complex, yet the time allowed to scrutinise it has been short and consequently there is ambiguity about how the powers will operate in practice, particularly where they intersect with existing agricultural protections. Coming so soon after our submission on the *Regional Planning Interests (Condamine Alluvium) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026*, this Bill adds to growing concern that legislative reforms with material consequences for agriculture may, in combination, erode long-standing protections for agricultural land and water resources.

Two features of the Bill frame the concerns that follow:

1. First, the State strategic project (SSP) framework is industry-agnostic and geographically unrestricted: while the explanatory materials focus on critical minerals in the north-west, nothing limits an SSP declaration to that sector or region. Any project, anywhere, including within or adjacent to a Priority Agricultural Area (PAA) or Strategic Cropping Land (SCL), could trigger these powers.
2. Second, it is critical that the productive capacity of agricultural land and its water resources are maintained. Prime agricultural land, once converted, is rarely recovered,

and every loss narrows the base on which Queensland's food and fibre security depend. A framework that adds another avenue for that base to be eroded, without regard to the competing demands already bearing on it, is of great concern for QFF.

Development facilitation and agricultural protection are not mutually exclusive. A well-designed framework can advance economic opportunity across multiple sectors while preserving Queensland's agricultural base and the State's ambition of a \$30 billion agricultural economy. We are concerned that this Bill will not strike that balance, and QFF request consideration of the amendments described below.

Key concerns

1. Modification orders and Division 6D can override or absorb RIDA

QFF's key concern with the Bill is that it creates two separate mechanisms by which the protections in the *Regional Planning Interests Act 2014* (RPI Act) could be set aside or diminished for an individual project, without those protections ever being formally repealed. The Regional Interests Development Approval (RIDA) framework under that Act is a critical front-end agricultural assessment mechanism and it is the point at which the impact of a project on productive agricultural land and water is independently tested before development proceeds. Anything that allows RIDA to be bypassed or absorbed into a different process weakens a core protection for farming landholders.

First, clause 22 inserts a Henry VIII power: a 'modification order' made by regulation can override State legislation for an SSP. On our reading, the Bill shields "key authorisations", Commonwealth-State assessment and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights (ss 76RJ, 76RL), but not RIDA, and we are unconvinced that even a preserved requirement to obtain a RIDA would protect the substance of the agricultural assessment. The one substantive threshold, s 76RI(1)(d), appears to let the affected law's object be overridden where the detriment is "outweighed by benefits to the State", so we cannot rule out RIDA being displaced on a balancing test and ask the Committee to confirm whether that is so.

Separately, Clause 11 integrates RIDA into the coordinated project process through the new Division 6D. QFF supports genuine reductions in regulatory duplication. However, having reviewed the drafting, QFF is not confident that, as the Bill is currently framed, Division 6D preserves RIDA as a genuinely independent agricultural protection rather than allowing it to be absorbed into, and effectively determined by, the Coordinator-General's environmental impact statement (EIS).

The way the Division deals with public notification, the weight it gives the Coordinator-General's report, and the role it leaves for independent referral each appear capable of operating so as to reduce the independence and rigour of the agricultural assessment RIDA was designed to deliver. We cannot satisfy ourselves, on the current drafting, that this outcome is foreclosed. Where protections of this significance are at stake, that uncertainty is itself a genuine concern.

2. Circumvention of the Primary Industries and Resources Committee's recommendations

QFF submitted to the Primary Industries and Resources Committee inquiry into the *Regional Planning Interests (Condamine Alluvium) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026*, opposing the removal of key protections under the *Regional Planning Interests Act 2014*. The Committee ultimately recommended those protections be restored, including retention of the Regional Interests Development Approval (RIDA) framework, and QFF welcomed and strongly supports that outcome.

However, this Bill creates concern that the protections *retained within the Condamine Alluvium Bill* may be materially undermined. While the Government may restore the RPI Act protections through one legislative reform, this Bill may simultaneously enable individual SSPs to be exempted from the practical operation of those same protections through modification orders or the exercise of powers under Division 6D, on a project-by-project basis and with little parliamentary oversight.

In effect, protections may be retained in law yet displaced in practice. QFF considers this a very concerning prospect, as it risks undermining legislative confidence and certainty for agricultural landholders and calls into question the practical value of protections Parliament recently endorsed in the RPIOLA Bill process.

3. Compulsory acquisition powers contain no safeguards for agricultural land

Clause 39 ties compulsory acquisition to the broad SSP designation. The acquisition criteria (ss 143 and 146) address negotiation, proponent capability and State interest, but require no consideration of whether land is PAA or SCL classification, the viability of the remaining farming operation after partial acquisition, cumulative regional impacts, or impacts on groundwater and irrigation infrastructure. For farming families, losing even a small area, particularly one holding bore works, headworks or water access, can render an enterprise unviable.

The RPI Act exists to prevent permanent loss of the state's most productive cropping land; acquiring SCL or PAA land for an SSP (especially where a modification order has bypassed the trigger assessment) contradicts that intent. Section 146 must include an explicit agricultural land impact criterion, and any compensation must ensure full restoration of productive capacity, not merely acknowledge or financially offset its loss.

4. No specific protection for agriculture groundwater resources

Critical minerals extraction can significantly affect regional groundwater through dewatering, altered flow and contamination, yet the facilitation powers require no specific groundwater assessment before they are used. The modification-order environmental test (s 76RI(1)(c)) turns on Ministerial satisfaction and is no substitute for an evidence-based assessment of cumulative drawdown on a shared aquifer.

The Water Act make-good framework is reactive and does not protect system-wide volumetric availability. And if impacts prove worse than modelled, nothing beyond reactive compensation requires the State to halt or amend a project. For instance, the Infrastructure Coordination Plans coordinate enabling infrastructure but, by s 56D, do not assess a project's impacts on surrounding land, water and communities.

Recommendations

QFF requests that the Committee recommend that the Bill be amended to:

1. Protect RIDA from modification orders. Exclude the RPI Act RIDA framework and the strategic cropping area trigger and mitigation framework from the reach of modification orders, mirroring s 76RL. The exclusion must cover the substance of the assessment and its conditions, not just the requirement to obtain a RIDA, so it cannot be reached through the s 76RI(1)(d) balancing test or by modifying the process.
2. Preserve RIDA's independence within Division 6D. Restore independent notification and referral for RIDA applications, and require that for any project in or affecting a PAA or SCL, the coordinated-project EIS must be demonstrated to have satisfied (not merely be taken to have satisfied) the full agricultural productive-capacity assessment of the RIDA process, with independent verification.
3. Build agricultural safeguards into compulsory acquisition. Amend ss 143 and 146 to require consideration of PAA and SCL classification, residual viability and cumulative impacts before any acquisition, and require compensation that fully restores productive capacity rather than offsetting its loss.

Conclusion

QFF supports a strong and competitive critical minerals sector. Queensland's farmers and the critical minerals industry are not inherently in conflict, but the framework governing their coexistence must be fair, balanced and protective of both. As drafted, QFF are concerned that the Bill does not meet this objective. And because the State strategic project power is industry-agnostic and geographically unrestricted, its reach is not confined to the critical minerals projects the explanatory materials describe: the same mechanisms that remove front-end agricultural protections and allow the substance of the RPI Act to be bypassed, project by project, could be turned on prime farmland in any region.

QFF's recent advocacy to retain the RIDA framework as a critical front-end agricultural assessment mechanism for the Condamine Alluvium was directed at precisely this risk. It would be a hollow outcome if the protections the Primary Industries and Resources Committee recommended be restored could then be displaced, project by project, through powers exercised under the SDPWO Act. QFF therefore asks the Committee to confirm expressly that its restoration recommendation, and any consequent RPI Act amendments, cannot be undermined by any power under that Act.

QFF cannot accept that restoration recommendation in isolation while this Bill retains the potential means to nullify it. QFF requests that the Bill does not proceed in its current form.

QFF welcomes the opportunity to discuss these matters further.



Yours sincerely

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