



QUEENSLAND
FARMERS'
FEDERATION



State-led Designated Area Migration Agreement (DAMA) July 2026

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Prepared for:
Migration Queensland

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This submission is provided to:

Migration Queensland

Submitted via email at DAMA@migration.qld.gov.au

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

Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on Phase 2 of Migration Queensland's consultation on a State-led Designated Area Migration Agreement (DAMA) and the development of the 2026-27 Queensland Skilled Occupation List (QSOL).

Despite significant investment in domestic workforce attraction and training, many agricultural businesses continue to experience persistent labour and skills shortages across production, processing, logistics and agricultural services. These shortages are structural rather than temporary and increasingly constrain productivity, business growth, regional economies and Queensland's long-term food security.

QFF supports the establishment of a State-led DAMA that provides a consistent, streamlined framework for skilled migration while remaining sufficiently flexible to respond to regional labour market conditions and industry workforce needs. The framework should reduce administrative complexity, provide practical pathways for employers to access skilled workers, recognise demonstrated industry experience alongside formal qualifications, and incorporate formal industry participation to ensure occupation settings, concessions and workforce priorities are informed by current industry intelligence.

QFF also supports a Designated Regional Area that encompasses Queensland's regional, rural, remote, peri-urban and outer metropolitan agricultural areas, while recognising that the core metropolitan areas of South East Queensland generally have stronger domestic labour markets and different workforce dynamics. Any geographic exclusions should therefore be carefully defined to ensure agricultural businesses operating within or adjacent to metropolitan local government areas are not unintentionally excluded from accessing the DAMA.

Operational Framework

Q1. Should the Designated Regional Area (DRA) of a state-led DAMA include all of Queensland?

QFF supports a statewide DRA that covers Queensland's regional, rural, remote, peri-urban and outer metropolitan agricultural areas. Agricultural workforce challenges are not defined by geographic boundaries alone, and businesses located outside traditional regional areas can face comparable workforce constraints.

However, QFF recognises that workforce pressures are generally less acute in the core metropolitan areas of South East Queensland, which have stronger domestic labour markets. QFF therefore supports excluding these core metropolitan areas from the DRA. Any exclusion should be defined carefully so that agricultural businesses, including those located within or on the fringe of metropolitan local government areas, such as poultry hatcheries, nurseries and horticultural operations, are not inadvertently excluded.

Q2. How could a state-led DAMA address the comparative advantage of regions such as Southeast Queensland?

The comparative advantage of South East Queensland should be recognised through a combination of targeted geographic settings, occupation prioritisation and regional delivery. Excluding the core metropolitan areas, which have strong domestic labour markets and greater settlement capacity, while retaining peri-urban and outer metropolitan agricultural areas, allows the DAMA to focus on locations of genuine workforce need.

Regional differences should be addressed through industry-led intelligence, informed by workforce analysis and reflected in occupation settings, concessions and regional delivery. Occupation eligibility should again be informed by industry intelligence alongside labour market data to ensure the DAMA responds to genuine workforce shortages across Queensland while recognising the differing labour market conditions and settlement capacity of individual regions.

Q3. Which Local Government Areas (LGAs) or other regions should be excluded from the DRA of a state-led DAMA, and why?

QFF supports excluding Queensland's core metropolitan areas from the DRA, reflecting their comparatively strong domestic labour markets and greater settlement capacity. Rather than nominating whole local government areas, QFF recommends that any exclusion be limited to inner metropolitan and predominantly urban and residential areas, with precise boundaries confirmed at a sub-LGA level in consultation with industry and regional stakeholders.

This distinction matters because several South East Queensland local government areas contain a mix of urban, peri-urban and agricultural land. Areas on the metropolitan fringe include significant agricultural production and food processing alongside residential and commercial development, and excluding an entire LGA on the basis of its urban character would inadvertently capture the agricultural businesses operating within it. Poultry hatcheries and processing facilities, nurseries, horticultural enterprises and other agricultural and food-processing operations in these areas experience the same workforce shortages as their regional counterparts and should remain within the DRA. Geographic exclusions should therefore target metropolitan and residential areas, not agricultural operations, with residual regional differences recognised through occupation settings, concessions, workforce assessments and regional planning.

Q4. What is your preferred service delivery model?

QFF supports Option 2 (State-led and regional partners).

Q5. Why is this your preferred option?

A State-led and regionally delivered model provides the best balance between statewide consistency and regional responsiveness. State Government oversight should ensure consistent governance, occupation coverage, concessions and administration, while regional delivery partners use local labour market knowledge and employer networks to identify workforce shortages and emerging occupations. This model should also reduce administrative burden and provide a single, consistent point of contact for employers across the State.

Agricultural industry bodies must have a formal role in governance and advisory arrangements to provide labour market intelligence and identify changing workforce needs, with QFF well placed to represent Queensland agriculture on these arrangements. Final employer endorsement, compliance and governance should remain the responsibility of the Queensland Government.

Q6. Should the Designated Regional Area of a state-led DAMA be broken into subregions?

Yes.

QFF supports a single statewide DAMA delivered through practical subregions for labour market analysis, stakeholder consultation and service delivery. This approach provides a consistent statewide framework while ensuring workforce responses reflect regional labour market conditions and industry needs.

Q7. What subregions do you think would enable a state-led DAMA to operate more effectively, and why?

Subregions should align with established economic and workforce catchments to ensure local labour market conditions, industry composition and workforce priorities inform occupation settings and service delivery, while maintaining a consistent statewide framework. Indicative subregions include:

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- South East Queensland and peri-urban agricultural areas
- Darling Downs and South West Queensland
- Central Queensland
- Wide Bay–Burnett and Fraser Coast
- North Queensland and Far North Queensland
- Western and Remote Queensland

The final subregional structure should be developed in consultation with government, regional stakeholders and industry. Agricultural industry bodies should have a formal role in advising on subregional workforce priorities to ensure workforce settings remain aligned with genuine industry needs.

Q1. What additional concessions beyond those contained in this template might enable a state-led DAMA to more effectively meet your workforce needs?

QFF supports concessions that improve access to skilled workers for Queensland's agricultural employers, recognising that workforce shortages exist across the State and are often most acute in regional, rural and remote areas. This should include greater recognition of demonstrated industry experience, practical competency and employer verification where formal qualifications or assessment pathways do not adequately reflect workforce capability.

The DAMA should also provide flexibility in age, English language and work experience requirements for occupations experiencing ongoing workforce shortages, alongside streamlined and prioritised visa processing to enable employers to respond to critical labour needs in a timely manner. QFF further supports members' calls for flexibility in salary thresholds (including the TSMIT) where this is warranted by regional conditions, and for the DAMA to enable clear pathways to permanent residency and relief from visa-related costs where these settings would improve the attraction and retention of skilled workers in Queensland agriculture.

Q2. What should a Designated Area Representative of a state-led DAMA consider when conducting skills assessments for those occupations not on skilled occupation lists or covered by current assessing authorities?

Skills assessments should be practical, consistent and industry-informed. Where occupations are not covered by existing assessing authorities, assessments should recognise demonstrated industry experience, practical skills, employment history, employer references and competency in performing the role, with relevant experience considered where formal qualifications are unavailable or not aligned.

The Designated Area Representative should consult with relevant industry bodies, including QFF and commodity organisations where appropriate, and should draw on industry intelligence to ensure assessment processes reflect current workforce requirements.

Q3. Do you have any innovative suggestions to improve the skills recognition process?

QFF supports streamlined and responsive skills recognition processes that reduce administrative burden while maintaining integrity. This should include regular industry-informed reviews of occupations and concessions, simplified endorsement processes, timely updates to occupation settings where workforce demand is demonstrated, and a State-led administration model supported by regional input to ensure consistency across Queensland.

Industry should have a formal role in DAMA governance, workforce planning and occupation reviews through regular consultation with government and regional stakeholders to ensure the framework remains responsive to changing workforce needs.

Q4. What innovative processes might enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of a state-led DAMA?

QFF supports a responsive and efficient State-led DAMA that reduces administrative burden and improves access to workers. Practical measures raised by our members include:

- A single digital portal for endorsement, nomination and tracking, to simplify and speed up administration
- The ability to submit cohort or multiple nominations where employers have recurring, like-for-like workforce needs
- A dedicated industry liaison officer and regular industry roundtables to support employers and resolve issues quickly
- Faster, prioritised decision-making for occupations experiencing critical shortages
- Regular, industry-informed reviews that allow occupations and concessions to be updated as workforce needs evolve

More broadly, the DAMA should be supported by strategic workforce planning and formal industry representation in governance, occupation reviews and workforce planning, so that decisions are informed by current labour market conditions and employer needs. For agriculture, QFF should represent the sector by providing coordinated advice on workforce shortages, occupation demand and skills requirements across Queensland's primary industries.

Q5. What resources and supports could a state-led DAMA produce to most effectively support your organisation or industry?

QFF supports the development of practical resources that help employers understand and access the DAMA, including clear guidance and toolkits on endorsement requirements, skills assessment pathways and concession eligibility, employer fact sheets, and multilingual resources for candidates. Compliance reminders and support services would further assist employers to meet their obligations.

The DAMA should also provide regular industry engagement, regional information sessions, employer support services and workforce data to assist workforce planning. Ongoing consultation mechanisms and industry representation in governance will be essential to ensure occupations, concessions and workforce settings remain aligned with industry needs. QFF is well placed to represent Queensland agriculture in these arrangements.

Conclusion

Queensland's agricultural industries require a migration framework that reflects the diverse workforce needs of businesses operating across regional, rural, remote, peri-urban and outer metropolitan areas.

QFF supports a whole-of-Queensland DAMA, excluding only the core metropolitan areas of the South East, while retaining agricultural businesses in peri-urban and outer metropolitan areas, delivered through State Government leadership, regional implementation and formal industry participation. QFF strongly believe this approach will provide a consistent statewide framework while ensuring workforce settings remain responsive to local labour market conditions and genuine employer demand.

Regional workforce intelligence should inform DAMA settings and complement Jobs and Skills Australia data, recognising the limitations of current labour shortage methodologies in capturing genuine agricultural workforce need. The State-led DAMA should be positioned as a strategic workforce initiative that supports Queensland's long-term food security, biosecurity, regional development and the continued growth of the State's primary industries, rather than relying solely on current labour market indicators.

QFF welcomes the opportunity to continue working with Migration Queensland throughout the development and implementation of the State-led DAMA.

Kind Regards,

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