



QUEENSLAND
FARMERS'
FEDERATION



Shifting Minds Review **November 2025**

Prepared by
Jo Sheppard, CEO, QFF
E: qfarmers@qff.org.au

Prepared for
The Queensland Mental Health Commission

Contents page

About the Queensland Farmers' Federation.....	2
Submission	2
Introduction	2
Feedback and input on updated priority actions.....	3
Extent to which the proposed actions will contribute to achieving the strategic directions.....	4
Conclusion.....	5

This submission is provided to:

The Queensland Mental Health Commission

Submitted via email: shiftingminds@qmhc.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
- Mallawa 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 input on the second draft of the *Shifting Minds* priority actions. We provide this submission without prejudice to any additional submission from our members or individual farmers.

Introduction

QFF has long recognised the critical importance of mental health and wellbeing to the resilience, productivity, and sustainability of farming families, workers, and communities in rural, regional, and remote (RRR) Queensland.

Farmers are slowly becoming more willing to speak openly about mental health challenges and are showing greater confidence in seeking help. This positive shift reflects the growing recognition that mental wellbeing is a vital component of business continuity, family stability, and community strength across rural Queensland.

Still, persistent barriers, such as limited service access in RRR areas, social isolation, stigma, and the cumulative stress of climate variability, natural disasters, workforce shortages, and market volatility, continue to place significant strain on primary producers and their families. It also continues to be difficult for individuals to understand which service is best suited to their need and available for them to access with a lack of visibility and clarity over what can sometimes seem like a very busy space, when it comes to mental health and wellbeing services.

QFF therefore strongly supports the draft's holistic approach and its focus on prevention, lived experience, and systems integration. These directions are essential to achieving lasting change. Yet, for this strategy to deliver meaningful impact

in RRR settings, the actions must be explicitly designed and resourced for the realities of primary production. This means:

- Targeted communication and delivery: using trusted agricultural networks, rural media, and peer voices to engage farming men and women, seasonal workers, and culturally diverse workforces.
- Embedding psychosocial supports within broader policy frameworks: ensuring that mental wellbeing initiatives continue to be integrated into climate adaptation planning, disaster recovery funding, workforce programs, and agricultural business support services.
- RRR capability and partnerships: building capacity through locally embedded service models, peer support networks, and partnerships between mental health agencies, agricultural organisations, and rural financial counselling and wellness services.

Tailored design and consistent investment will be key to translating policy intent into tangible benefits for Queensland's primary producers. With appropriate recognition of the agricultural context, the *Shifting Minds* priority actions can play a transformative role in supporting early intervention, strengthening resilience, and reducing the long-term impacts of stress and crisis in farming communities.

Feedback and input on updated priority actions

Action 1 (promote awareness; reduce stigma)

Supportive in principle but must explicitly identify RRR farming communities as priority audiences and require tailored delivery through trusted agricultural channels (e.g. rural radio and agricultural organisations), peer messengers (farmers, farm partners, rural vets, extension officers) and materials tailored for male audiences, seasonal workers and culturally diverse farmworkers. Campaigns should be co-designed with agricultural peak bodies and rural lived-experience representatives. An effective service mapping exercise has long been talked about, but still not done. This would go a long way in improving visibility of services and helping clarify what is currently available.

Action 7 (integrate mental wellbeing into climate adaptation & disaster management)

This is essential for Queensland's primary producers. The Action must be strengthened to require that climate adaptation programs and disaster recovery funding include long term funded psychosocial response packages (preparation, on-event communication, immediate crisis support and funded post-event outreach including financial counselling and peer support). Local Disaster Management Groups should be resourced to include mental health/peer representatives and to coordinate outreach to farming households.

Other inclusions

- Explicit recognition of farm workplaces, seasonal labour arrangements and farm family businesses within Action 4 (workplace psychosocial hazards).
- Investment in rural-tailored service models (Actions 20-26 and 24 in particular): after-hours telehealth, mobile outreach, place-based peer programs and strengthened digital capability for remote producers.
- Growth of a rural peer workforce and co-designed programs with agricultural peak bodies (Actions 51-53).
- Flexible pooled funding that allows rapid deployment to rural communities following adverse events (Action 54).
- Improved data collection disaggregated by RRR areas to monitor impact (Action 59).
- Ensure PCBUs' mental health is considered during unannounced visits by authorised officers or WorkSafe, with guidance or mechanisms to manage these interactions sensitively (Action 62).

Extent to which the proposed actions will contribute to achieving the strategic directions

QFF believe the proposed updated priority actions have strong potential to contribute to the strategic directions, particularly if they are operationalised with explicit rural/primary-production settings and delivery commitments. The actions align well with the strategic directions of strengthening community mental wellbeing and expanding prevention across the life course. However, their impact in the agricultural context will depend on three enabling factors:

1. Targeted delivery: campaigns and services must be tailored to farming communities (channels, messengers, formats).
2. Resourcing and funding levers: disaster adaptation and recovery programs must include funded psychosocial components, and pooled funds should be able to deploy quickly to RRR areas.
3. Partnerships and co-design: success requires formal partnerships with agricultural peak bodies, rural financial counselling, primary health networks and community organisations (including First Nations organisations where relevant).

Conclusion

If these modifications are incorporated, the refreshed actions will significantly advance access, early intervention, and resilience for people in Queensland's agricultural communities and better safeguard mental wellbeing during climate-related and economic stressors. Thank you for considering these sector-specific recommendations. We would welcome the opportunity to assist with co-design of materials and RRR delivery models.

Yours sincerely

Jo Sheppard
Chief Executive Officer



This submission is provided by the Queensland Farmers' Federation

PO Box 12009 George Street, Brisbane Qld 4003
Level 8, 183 North Quay, Brisbane Qld 4000
ABN 44 055 764 488

Contact QFF

E: qfarmers@qff.org.au
P: 07 3837 4720
W: www.qff.org.au

