



QUEENSLAND
FARMERS'
FEDERATION



Review of the Warrego, Paroo, Bulloo and Nebine Water Plan **September 2026**

Prepared by
Kylie Porter, CEO, QFF
E: qfarmers@qff.org.au

Prepared for:
Department of Local Government, Water and
Volunteers

Contents page

About the Queensland Farmers' Federation	2
Submission	2
Introduction	2
Recognising the diversity of the plan area.....	2
Overland flow and practical water management	3
Regional economic development and access to water	3
Ongoing engagement	4

This submission is provided to:

Department of Local Government, Water & Volunteers
Water Planning South Region (MDB)
Attention: Manager Water Planning

Submitted via email WPBNWaterPlan@dlgww.qld.gov.au

Our members

- Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers
- Cotton Australia
- CANEGROWERS
- Greenlife Industry QLD
- eastAUSmilk
- Timber Queensland
- 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

Introduction

The Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) welcomes the opportunity to provide preliminary feedback on the review of the Warrego, Paroo, Bulloo and Nebine Water Plan. We provide this submission without prejudice to any additional submission from our members or individual farmers.

Agriculture remains an important economic and social contributor across Southwest Queensland, with enterprises particularly dependent on practical and reliable access to water in a highly variable climate. The review of the plan provides an opportunity to ensure water management arrangements remain fit for purpose, support agricultural resilience and productivity, and appropriately reflect the distinctive characteristics of the four catchments.

As the review progresses, QFF encourages a strong focus on local experience and the practical needs of agricultural water users. Ongoing engagement with local producers, councils and industry, supported by robust hydrological evidence will be important in shaping water planning settings that are appropriate for this catchment area.

Recognising the diversity of the plan area

The replacement plan should continue to recognise the significant differences in hydrology, water use and development across the Warrego, Paroo, Bulloo and Nebine catchments.

The Bulloo is a terminal inland catchment separate from the Murray–Darling Basin, while the Paroo forms part of the Basin but remains a highly unregulated river system with significant floodplain and environmental values. These unique characteristics should be appropriately recognised without assuming that identical management settings are required across the entire plan area.

QFF supports catchment-specific settings that respond to demonstrated hydrological and environmental risks while maintaining practical opportunities for agriculture and regional communities.

Agricultural water security and drought resilience

Reliable access to water for stock, domestic and agricultural purposes is fundamental to the resilience of pastoral enterprises across the region.

QFF encourages the review to consider whether existing arrangements remain appropriate during prolonged dry periods and provide sufficient flexibility for producers to prepare for and respond to drought.

This should include recognition of the importance of on-farm water infrastructure and practical access to opportunistic flows where this can occur without materially compromising environmental or downstream water requirements.

Overland flow and practical water management

Overland flow can play an important role in supporting agricultural production and drought preparedness in western Queensland.

Existing arrangements should be reviewed to ensure they remain practical and proportionate to the risks being managed. Any proposed changes should recognise established agricultural infrastructure and investment and avoid unnecessary regulatory barriers for producers seeking to improve the resilience of their businesses.

Importantly, local knowledge should inform this assessment. Producers with long-term experience of flood behaviour, flow paths and water availability can provide valuable information to test whether modelling and regulatory settings accurately reflect conditions on the ground.

Regional economic development and access to water

QFF considers the review should examine whether opportunities exist to make modest volumes of water available to support regional economic development and agricultural diversification, where this can be demonstrated to be hydrologically and environmentally sustainable.

There is some historical precedent for retaining modest volumes of water to support future regional development within the plan area. Previous planning associated with the Cunnamulla Weir identified water to be retained for future Council use and smaller water users, while regional economic development initiatives continue to identify irrigation and agricultural diversification as potential opportunities in the Paroo Shire. This reinforces the value of maintaining some flexibility within water planning arrangements to respond to future local development opportunities.

In relatively undeveloped catchments, even comparatively small volumes of water may support new agricultural enterprises, value-adding activities or local economic development without requiring development at a scale inconsistent with the environmental values of the river system.

The review should therefore avoid assuming that maintaining existing low levels of water development necessarily requires the permanent exclusion of future productive use. Water planning should retain sufficient flexibility to respond to future regional economic opportunities where these can be accommodated sustainably.

QFF encourages the Department to work directly with local governments, landholders and agricultural industries to identify whether small, strategically targeted water development

opportunities exist within individual catchments. Any such opportunities should be assessed on their individual merits and against the hydrological characteristics of the relevant catchment rather than through a uniform approach across the entire plan area.

Ongoing engagement

QFF supports continued engagement with local producers, councils and water users as the review progresses. Local knowledge will be particularly important in testing whether existing rules accurately reflect how water moves through these catchments and how agricultural enterprises access and manage water in practice.

QFF would welcome the opportunity to participate in any stakeholder reference groups, technical working groups or other consultation processes established to progress the review.

As the review progresses, we look forward to considering the draft policy provisions alongside the outcomes of the forthcoming Murray Darling Basin Plan Review, particularly where these have implications for the Warrego, Paroo and Nebine catchments. This will be important to ensure the replacement plan delivers practical, productive and locally appropriate water management outcomes while maintaining the important environmental values of these unique river systems.

Yours sincerely

Kylie Porter
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

