20 November 2026

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

QUEENSLAND FARMERS' FEDERATION

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Dear Committee Members,

Re: Rural and Regional Adjustment Amendment Bill 2026

The Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Primary Industries and Resources Committee on the *Rural and Regional Adjustment Amendment Bill 2026*.

QFF supports the Bill and the proposed amendments arising from the review of the *Rural and Regional Adjustment Act 1994*. In particular, the measures to streamline scheme approvals, clarify the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority's (QRIDA) powers and modernise its governance arrangements are positive steps towards improving the efficiency and responsiveness of financial assistance delivery in Queensland.

QRIDA plays an important role in supporting Queensland's primary industries, particularly during periods of drought, natural disaster and other financial pressures. Between 2020-21 and 2024-25, QRIDA approved more than 180,000 applications for financial assistance, totalling over $1.8 billion. This includes concessional loans, disaster recovery assistance and drought preparedness grants. The legislative framework governing QRIDA must therefore support timely, flexible and accessible assistance that responds to the changing needs of primary producers.

QFF has a direct interest in ensuring these reforms translate into practical improvements for producers. While we broadly support the proposed amendments, we have identified several areas where further consideration is warranted to ensure the changes strengthen QRIDA's capacity to deliver effective, customer-focused assistance without compromising service delivery to Queensland primary producers.

Summary of recommendations

1. Support the introduction of Ministerial Notices for scheme approval, with retention of parliamentary oversight through tabling and disallowance.
2. Ensure that administration of 'parts' of Queensland schemes, and of Commonwealth and other States' schemes, does not diminish resources or staffing allocated to Queensland primary producer schemes and customer services.
3. Require that QRIDA makes timely, direct contact with customers to resolve errors before issuing a recovery notice, and that recovery of funds paid in error does not penalise the customer.
4. Routinely consider customer service provisions, including pre-approvals, flexible repayment options and direct payments to suppliers, in all scheme guidelines.
5. Extend the CEO's discretion for internal review timeframes to explicitly account for seasonal production pressures, in addition to disasters and emergencies.

Detailed response

1. Ministerial Notice for scheme approval

QFF encourages systems that streamline processes and reduce the time and resources involved in establishing and amending financial assistance schemes. The introduction of Ministerial Notices for scheme approval appears to be a method that will ensure responsiveness and timeliness in preparing, adjusting and providing financial assistance schemes.

The Explanatory Notes identify that the current process to establish or amend a scheme through regulation can take several months, and that the Rural and Regional Adjustment Regulation 2011 now exceeds 700 pages. This new process should reduce the frustration experienced by primary producers and agricultural industries at the slowness by which new schemes are developed and help resolve gaps and omissions in existing schemes in a timely manner.

It is the expectation of primary producers across Queensland that assistance schemes are made available to them as soon as is reasonably possible in order to provide the support for which they are intended. For this amendment to achieve its intended outcome, it is expected that QRIDA also puts in place internal checks to ensure that there are not any extended delays in the opening of schemes as a result of internal administrative inefficiencies.

QFF notes that Ministerial Notices will be declared subordinate legislation and remain subject to tabling and potential disallowance. QFF supports this retention of parliamentary oversight as an appropriate balance between responsiveness and accountability.

2. 'Parts' of schemes in Queensland

QFF supports the provision to allow QRIDA to administer 'parts' of schemes for another department, statutory authority or government owned corporation within Queensland. QRIDA has well-established expertise in processing and assessing applications, and it is sensible for the Queensland Government to leverage this capability.

However, QFF cautions that provision of this service (and that of administration of Commonwealth and other States' schemes), while adding revenue to QRIDA, should not diminish resources or reduce staffing allocation to Queensland primary producer schemes and customer services. Primary producers must continue to receive timely assessment of applications and responsive customer service, particularly during disaster recovery periods, including drought, when demand on QRIDA is at its highest.

3. Recovery of financial assistance

QFF supports QRIDA being able to recover financial assistance when that assistance is paid out in error by QRIDA. Responsible management of public funds is important to maintaining the integrity of, and confidence in, financial assistance schemes.

QFF notes, however, that the Bill allows recovery where QRIDA becomes aware of a mistake in giving financial assistance, even if the person has not contributed to the mistake. In these circumstances the customer has acted in good faith and may have already committed or spent the funds on their business in line with the purpose of the scheme.

QFF therefore cautions that all efforts to make direct contact with the customer to resolve the error must be made in a timely manner that does not penalise the customer. This should include direct contact with the customer before a recovery notice is issued, a reasonable repayment period, access to instalment arrangements, and consideration of the customer's financial circumstances.

QFF welcomes the Explanatory Notes' statement that QRIDA will not be mandated to recover funds in every case and will weigh up the nature of the error.

4. Modernise governance and administrative provisions and improve customer service and the operations of QRIDA

QFF supports and expects the highest level of governance practices at QRIDA, and supports the updated provisions for the appointment, disqualification and vacancy of directors and the chief executive officer.

Continuous improvement of customer service and operations must be embedded within QRIDA practices, culture and governance.

Customer service provisions

QFF encourages the inclusion of customer service provisions in scheme guidelines, for example, pre-approvals, flexible repayment options or payments direct to a supplier, to provide flexibility. While the Bill provides that guidelines *may* include customer service provisions, QFF encourages these to be routinely considered for every scheme.

Introduction of a pre-approval process can provide some surety to primary producers that applications for financial assistance will be successful. This should encourage primary producers to proceed with a greater level of confidence to undertake lengthy, complex and detailed grant and/or loan applications. For example, primary producers are required to complete a QRIDA approved Farm Business Resilience Plan as a precursor to the Drought Preparedness Grant application and financial declaration. A pre-approval step would give producers greater confidence that the additional investment of time and resources to develop their plan to QRIDA's standard will be worthwhile.

Internal review timeframes

QFF agrees with the extension of the time period for making an application for internal review from 20 business days to 30 business days.

QFF encourages the use of CEO discretion to further extend this time period when accounting for disasters and emergencies that may cause delay. However, QFF requests that this discretion also considers seasonal production forces that inhibit primary producers from making an application for internal review. Periods such as harvest, planting, crushing season and peak livestock management place significant demands on primary producers, and should be recognised as legitimate grounds for an extension.

Conclusion

QFF supports the *Rural and Regional Adjustment Amendment Bill 2026* as a positive step towards modernising the legislative framework governing QRIDA and improving the efficiency, flexibility and responsiveness of financial assistance delivery in Queensland.

The proposed amendments provide an opportunity to strengthen QRIDA's capacity to administer assistance schemes and respond to the needs of primary producers, particularly during periods of drought, disaster and financial hardship. However, it is important that these reforms translate into tangible improvements in service delivery, maintain appropriate accountability and ensure that Queensland primary producers continue to receive timely and accessible support.

QFF encourages the Committee to consider the recommendations outlined in this submission and looks forward to working constructively with the Committee, the Department and QRIDA to support the effective implementation of the reforms.

Yours sincerely

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Chief Executive Officer