



The **united voice** of intensive  
agriculture in Queensland



**ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17**

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**STUART ARMITAGE**  
PRESIDENT

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The 2016-17 year has been another of building and strengthening the organisation, both internally and externally. The QFF team, led by CEO Travis Tobin, has continued to deliver upon the organisation's reputation of producing a high standard of policy advocacy and project delivery on behalf of the intensive agricultural sector.

The majority of the credit must be given to Travis for his leadership in continuing to improve QFF's internal operational capabilities while progressing the organisation's agenda to bring the state's agricultural representative groups closer together. There is still work to do, but QFF's internal model has been strengthened and rationalized, and discussions with other commodity groups to date have been constructive and positive.

The board continues to have full confidence in Travis' leadership for articulating our vision to deliver practical advocacy wins and provide credible representation, while continuing to unite Queensland's agricultural representative bodies.

This year sadly QFF mourned the passing of Gary Sansom AM. Instrumental in the foundation of QFF in 1992, Gary

served as President between 2001 and 2011. He had been actively involved with QFF since its inception and became the organisation's first life member. Queensland agriculture has lost one of its most passionate and dedicated advocates. On behalf of the QFF family and the broader Queensland agricultural sector, vale Gary and a very sincere thank you.

With the state election looming, I am confident QFF has done the ground work to properly and effectively carry the policy areas important to intensive agriculture forward on behalf of our members. QFF and industry members are looking forward to further the cause of a consistent and united front of key election issues for our sector.

QFF continues to rely on the contribution of the farmers serving on its committees, council and board in conjunction with the support of staff from their respective industry member organisations. QFF would not exist without the service, dedication and collective vision of individual farmers aspiring for a better deal for the agricultural sector.



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**TRAVIS TOBIN**  
CEO

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## CEO'S REPORT

The 2016-17 year saw new records for Queensland agriculture, good and bad. The sector's value at the farm gate and first-stage processing reached a record \$20 billion, and in March 2017, over 87 per cent of the state was drought declared for the first time. The dichotomy of these numbers again highlights the uniqueness of our sector. But more importantly, it demonstrates the resilience, passion and drive of all those who dedicate themselves to providing high quality food, fibre and foliage to the people of Queensland, the nation and the world.

For the Queensland Farmers' Federation, it was a positive year of achievement and organisational evolution. QFF continued to drive improvements to the operating environment for Queensland farmers by successfully advocating solutions-focused policy positions. Issues were managed across more than a dozen areas including: energy, water, planning and transport, biosecurity, climate and disasters, reef and natural resource management, education and training, telecommunications, rural adjustment, mining and land access, waste, and work health safety. Energy policy and the cost of electricity again stood out as the biggest common issue across the QFF group.

QFF also continued to deliver a wide range of projects on behalf of members and the sector more broadly. Projects in energy, education and training, Reef, water, resilience and agricultural insurance are helping to address challenges faced in those areas to the benefit of industry and government. The collaboration and network the QFF group offers, and its ability to efficiently achieve desired outcomes is increasingly being acknowledged by governments as a logical vehicle for sector-wide project delivery.



The highest level of representation was maintained, with QFF part of more than 30 government and industry stakeholder advisory/consultancy committees throughout the year. Members again helped cover some of this huge time commitment so the QFF group could be effectively represented in these key influencing forums.

It was also a busy year for inward facing activities. A membership restructure was completed, realising a more transparent and contemporary membership model. The new platform provides a greater opportunity to bring other industry organisations into the QFF group, and move to a more sustainable funding model for the organisation. Investigations into the merits of forming strategic corporate partnerships were completed, and groundwork was undertaken to identify a few select partners.

Growcom co-location synergies were progressed and two shared services arrangements were put in place. A 'finance hub' was set up and is now providing accounting services for six organisations. A 'comms hub' followed and is now providing media and communications services for five member organisations. These initiatives are delivering a better service, but more importantly, have maintained and enhanced capacity within the QFF group in these core business function areas. I thank the Growcom leadership for sharing this vision.

Cotton Australia again operated part of its Queensland functions from our offices and QFF continued to provide administrative and clerical services for three chicken meat industry organisations. Besides the operational efficiencies that have

been realised through co-location, collaboration on issues and projects has also increased.

Three factors continue to underpin the ongoing achievement of this proud organisation. The QFF member organisations that provide financial support, expertise and a commitment to a unity of purpose. The farmers who serve on QFF's board and council to provide the organisation with strong and relevant leadership. And the small, committed QFF team whose efforts convince those outside the organisation that QFF is bigger than it really is. I thank them all for their contribution, particularly President Stuart Armitage for his enthusiastic and selfless leadership throughout the year.

Lastly, a couple of personal tributes. QFF lost a founding father, former president, life member, passionate and dedicated advocate, and a genuinely good bloke with the passing of Gary Sansom AM. The 'Gary Sansom Prize in Agribusiness' will be offered through the University of Queensland next year to honour Gary's tireless efforts. I also acknowledge and thank my predecessor Ruth Wade. Ruth has long been a mentor of mine and the organisation was fortunate to have her experienced and balanced hand to steady a rocky ship during 2015-16.

2017-18 promises to be another big year with a state election looming and officially marking the 25th anniversary of the organisation. There are exciting and prosperous opportunities ahead for the sector, but realising them will require deliberate and strategic action. QFF will continue to strive for the right policy settings and effective collaboration between industry, government and the community to make this happen.

# 2016 - 17 SNAPSHOT OF ACHIEVEMENTS



## BACKPACKER TAX

Partner in successful 'Backpacker Tax' campaign that reduced the proposed 32.5% tax rate on working holiday makers to a more internationally competitive rate of 15%.



## REEF RESULTS

Released robust regulatory economic assessment of the Great Barrier Reef to bring new thinking to the appropriate level of government investment in Reef programs.



## STAMP DUTY CONCESSION

Successfully lobbied the Queensland Government to include water assets in stamp duty exemptions for family succession (effective 12 October 2016).



## VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Successfully lobbied the cross benches to defeat the Queensland Government's controversial Vegetation Management Bill.



## MURRAY DARLING BASIN PLAN

Partner in successful 'More than Flow' campaign that reduced the water recovery target in the Northern Murray-Darling Basin from 390 GL to 320 GL and convinced government to recognise complementary measures.



## WATER ACT CHANGES

Successfully lobbied the Queensland Government to change the Water Act 2000 to address unlimited groundwater take by extractive resource industries.





### BIOSECURITY ACCREDITATION

Successfully lobbied the Queensland Government to amend the Biosecurity Act 2015 to enable third party biosecurity accreditation systems as an alternative to government accreditation of certifiers.



### SOLAR PLANNING GUIDELINE

Successfully lobbied the Queensland Government to develop a Solar Planning Guideline for large-scale solar projects to provide greater consistency in development approvals and protections for prime agricultural land.



### CYCLONE MARCIA RECOVERY

Successfully completed the Cyclone Marica Agricultural Recovery Project with NDRRA Category D funding acting through the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.



### FARM DEBT SOLUTIONS

Successfully lobbied the Queensland Government to implement improvements to farm debt mediation and increase loan limits for QRAA concessional lending products.



### AGRICULTURE TARIFF TRIAL

Successfully lobbied the Queensland Government to deliver an Agricultural Tariff Trial and a Large Customer Adjustment Trial (LCAT) to help farm businesses better understand electricity needs and demands in regional Queensland.



### NATIONAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROJECT

Successfully completed the National Emergency Management Project – Disaster resilience Planning for Australian Agriculture, through the Australian Government Attorney General's Department.





# ABOUT QFF

The Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) is the united voice of intensive agriculture in Queensland. It is a federation that represents the interests of peak state and national agriculture industry organisations, which in turn collectively represent more than 13,000 farmers across the state. QFF engages in a broad range of economic, social, environmental and regional issues of strategic importance to the productivity, sustainability and growth of the agricultural sector. QFF's mission is to secure a strong and sustainable future for Queensland farmers by representing the common interests of our member organisations.

Through QFF, agricultural industry resources are pooled to ensure powerful representation and effective strategy development. QFF unites its membership through a Council of members that determines policy positions, with this forum acting as the primary mechanism for member participation. The Council selects the Board of Directors, which is responsible for corporate governance.

Since 1992, QFF has earned a formidable reputation as a leader in sectoral policy development and driving change to improve the operating environment for Queensland's farmers. QFF is recognised as a non-partisan organisation that works effectively with all levels and sides of government.



# ADVOCACY

## ENERGY

Throughout 2016-17, QFF made numerous submissions on energy policy impacting Queensland's primary producers and processors from renewable energy to the energy trilemma (security, affordability and environment/carbon). QFF continues to work with stakeholders including members, Queensland Treasury, the Department of Energy and Water Supply, and Energy Queensland to develop a range of strategies and policy opportunities to assist the agricultural sector manage increasing and unsustainable energy costs.

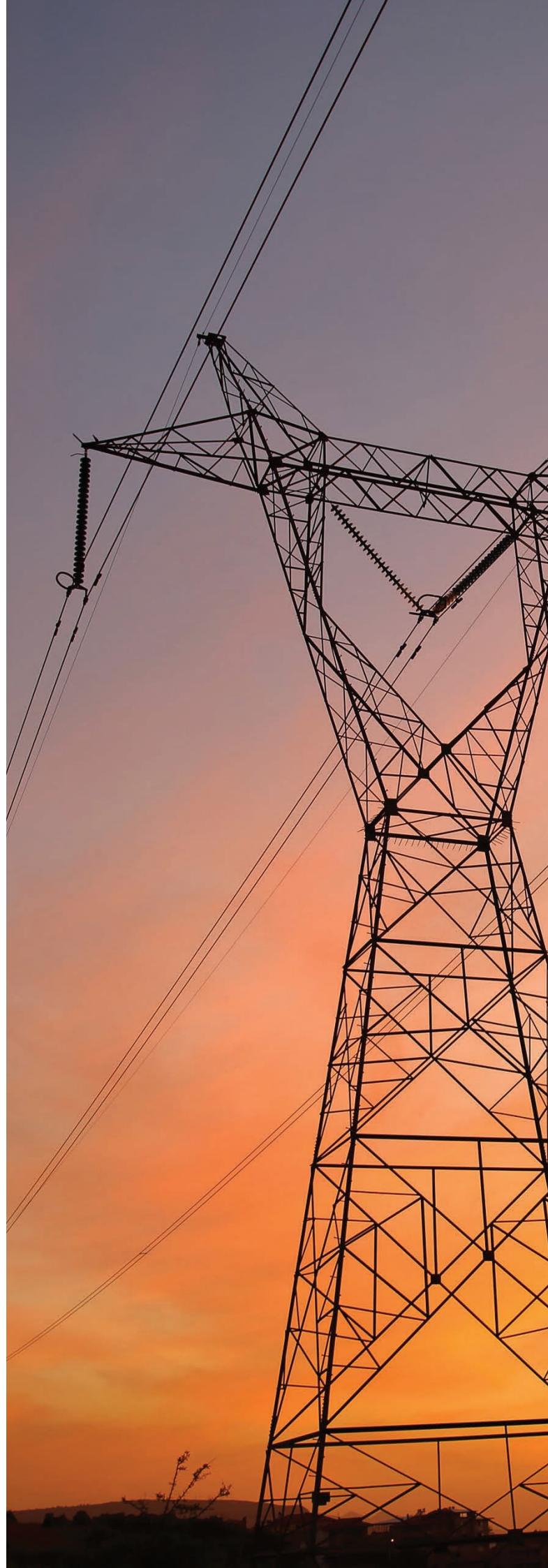
Programs such as the Agricultural Tariff Trial and the Large Customer Adjustment Trial (LCAT) supported under the \$10 million Queensland Government's Regional Business Support Package remain ongoing with the potential to act as a catalyst for future change.

Nearly 200 farm meters are participating in the Agricultural Tariff Trial which is an initiative in response to requests from QFF and its members. The trial will assist Energy Queensland in better understanding the potential to offer controlled load and seasonal demand tariffs as an alternative to the current transitional agricultural tariffs due to expire in 2020.

Ten large customers are participating in LCAT, which aims to reduce the economic impact of the transition in 2020. The aim will be boost productivity, energy efficiency and modernise operations and/or equipment under new tariff regimes post 2020.

QFF will continue to advocate for affordable, reliable energy and suitable tariffs for the sector. As part of this advocacy, QFF has developed an election manifesto with over 20 recommendations to State and Federal Governments to address electricity pricing inefficiencies through a range of mechanisms including efficient tariff design.

QFF successfully raised awareness amongst critical stakeholders of the growing land-use contention associated with the siting of large-scale solar facilities on high-quality agricultural land. In response, the Queensland Government is currently developing a Solar Planning Guideline (to be completed November 2017), which will direct project proponents away from siting facilities on prime agricultural land. QFF continues to educate the solar industry in the importance of maintaining high quality agricultural land and preserving the efficiency of farm infrastructure and irrigation schemes, and to advocate for a Solar Planning Code.





# WATER

## REGULATORY AMENDMENTS

Changes to a number of provisions in the Water Act 2000 commenced on 6 December 2016, including the rights and obligations of mining lease (ML) and mineral development license (MDL) holders when dealing with underground water.

MDL and ML holders are now required to measure and report the volume of associated water taken and to immediately advise the chief executive when the holder's underground water rights start being exercised. For MDLs and MLs in existence as at 6 December 2016, holders had until 6 March 2017 to advise the chief executive of the exercise of the holder's underground water rights. The exercise of these underground water rights is also subject to the holder complying with the underground water obligations in the amended Chapter 3 of the Water Act 2000 – this previously only applied to petroleum tenure holders.

Water reform legislation also contained amendments to the Environmental Protection Act 1994 to (among other matters) include additional application requirements for site-specific environmental authority applications (and amendment applications) involving the exercise of underground water rights for resource projects or resource activities that include, or for which the relevant tenure is, an MDL, ML or petroleum lease.

Under the Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2014, water resource plans and resource operations plans have been replaced by new planning instruments.

Further amendments to the Water Act 2000 are proposed in line with the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. Climate change has the potential to affect water flows and levels, flood risk, water demand and usage behaviours, and water security. The amendments seek to clarify the way Queensland's water planning framework considers the effects of climate change by requiring the minister to consider the effects of climate change on water availability and water use practices.

Further amendments seek to provide a mechanism for temporary access to water that has been reserved for strategic water projects while those projects are in their approvals or planning phase, or are not being progressed – something QFF has been strongly advocating for. The amendments support the productive use of unutilised allocations by releasing them for up to three years for other economic opportunities.

Proposals are also made to develop Queensland's water market

by allowing water allocations to be traded multiple times per water year, empowering market participants wanting to make the best use of short-term flow events. The collection and publication of price data for seasonal water trades, which is important for meeting Queensland's national commitment to increasing the efficiency of water use, will be required to facilitate trade and ensure transparency, and should lead to greater certainty for investment and productivity.

## WATER PLANS

Several Queensland water plans are currently under review or development. Cape York is the last region to commence a water planning process. A statutory water plan for Cape York will cover the 15 basins – Archer, Coleman, Ducie, Embley, Endeavour, Holroyd, Jacky Jacky, Jardine River, Jeannie, Lockhart, Normanby, Olive-Pascoe, Stewart, Watson and the Wenlock – but will not deal with underground water that is managed under the Water Plan (Great Artesian Basin) 2006, as this water is subject to a separate water resource planning review process already underway. A new water management protocol will come into effect at the same time as the new water plan.

The Queensland Murray-Darling Basin comprises the Border Rivers, Moonie, Condamine and Balonne, Nebine, Warrego, and Paroo catchments. The Warrego, Paroo, Bulloo and Nebine state water plan commenced on 12 February 2016 and the resource operations plan commenced on 13 May 2016. The Warrego-Paroo-Nebine water resource plan for the surface water and groundwater resources was accredited by the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources as being consistent with the Basin Plan on 15 June 2017.

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority finalised its review of the Northern Basin in November 2016 and recommended reducing the water recovery target from 390 gigalitres to 320 gigalitres, and work is progressing to agree on a range of 'toolkit measures' to provide non-flow environmental benefits.

The Minister for Natural Resources and Mines published a notice of his intention to postpone expiry of the Water Plan (Burdakin Basin) 2007 to 1 September 2019 – the plan was due to expire 1 September 2017.

QFF also signed a 5-year agreement with the Department of Natural Resources and Mines to continue the water policy project, which has and continues to deliver a long list of mutually beneficial outcomes.

## BIOSECURITY

This year saw the implementation of the Queensland Biosecurity Act 2014 that came into force on 1 July 2016. The new legislation imposes a general biosecurity obligation on all persons to take reasonable and practical measures to prevent or minimize biosecurity risks, and introduces the concept of shared responsibility for biosecurity outcomes. These changes will have regulatory impacts on QFF members including opportunities for greater co-regulation of biosecurity activities.

To communicate these changes, a Biosecurity Liaison Project in conjunction with the Queensland Government commenced in February 2017. Department of Agriculture and Fisheries officer Frank Fox took up a position working within QFF and its industry members. The partnership was established to explain the new legislation, discuss its impacts, and look for collaborative options for future biosecurity management.

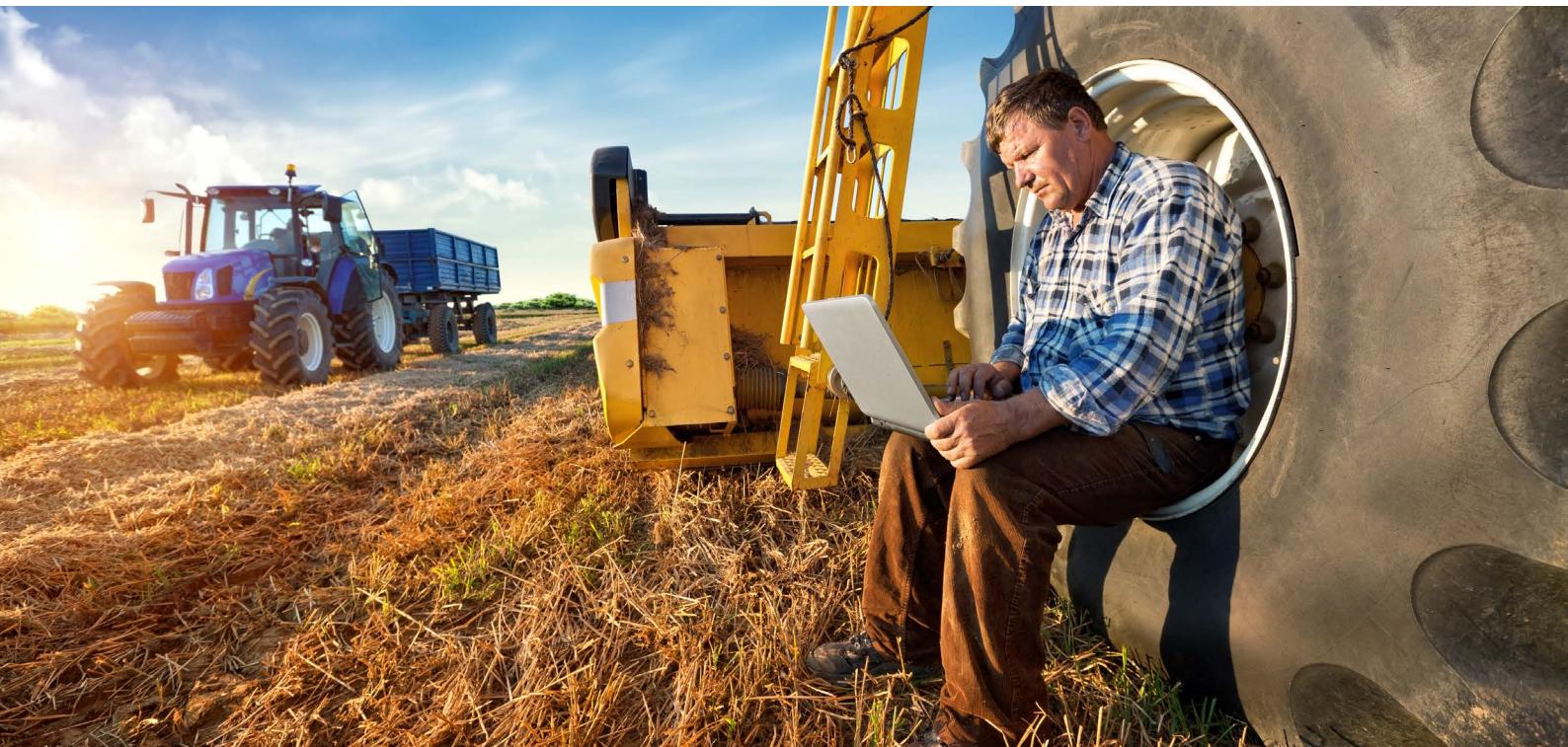
To date the project has successfully engaged with the membership through:

- industry newsletter articles explaining the features of the new legislation
- meetings with members to assist in identifying opportunities for enhanced collaborative outcomes on biosecurity matters
- a biosecurity awareness survey to gain a broad understanding across the membership of the new legislation and biosecurity generally
- industry specific biosecurity action plans to prioritise projects to deliver improved collaborative outcomes on biosecurity matters in 2017-18.

Ongoing pest and disease incursions continued to highlight the need for strong biosecurity management. This year farmers were affected by confirmed cases of Cucumber Green Mottle Mosaic Virus and White Spot Disease (WSD), as well as the ongoing challenges presented by Fire Ants, Panama Disease Tropical Race 4 and other incursions. The impact of these incidents were felt beyond the agricultural sector, particularly the high profile WSD outbreak in prawns, again highlighting that greater government investment and proactivity is required.

In the spirit of shared responsibility, it is critical that government continues to support the biosecurity framework in this state. Given the initial success and progress of the project in bridging the gap of understanding between government and industry in relation to the new Biosecurity Regulations, QFF recommended the government continue the liaison officer project.





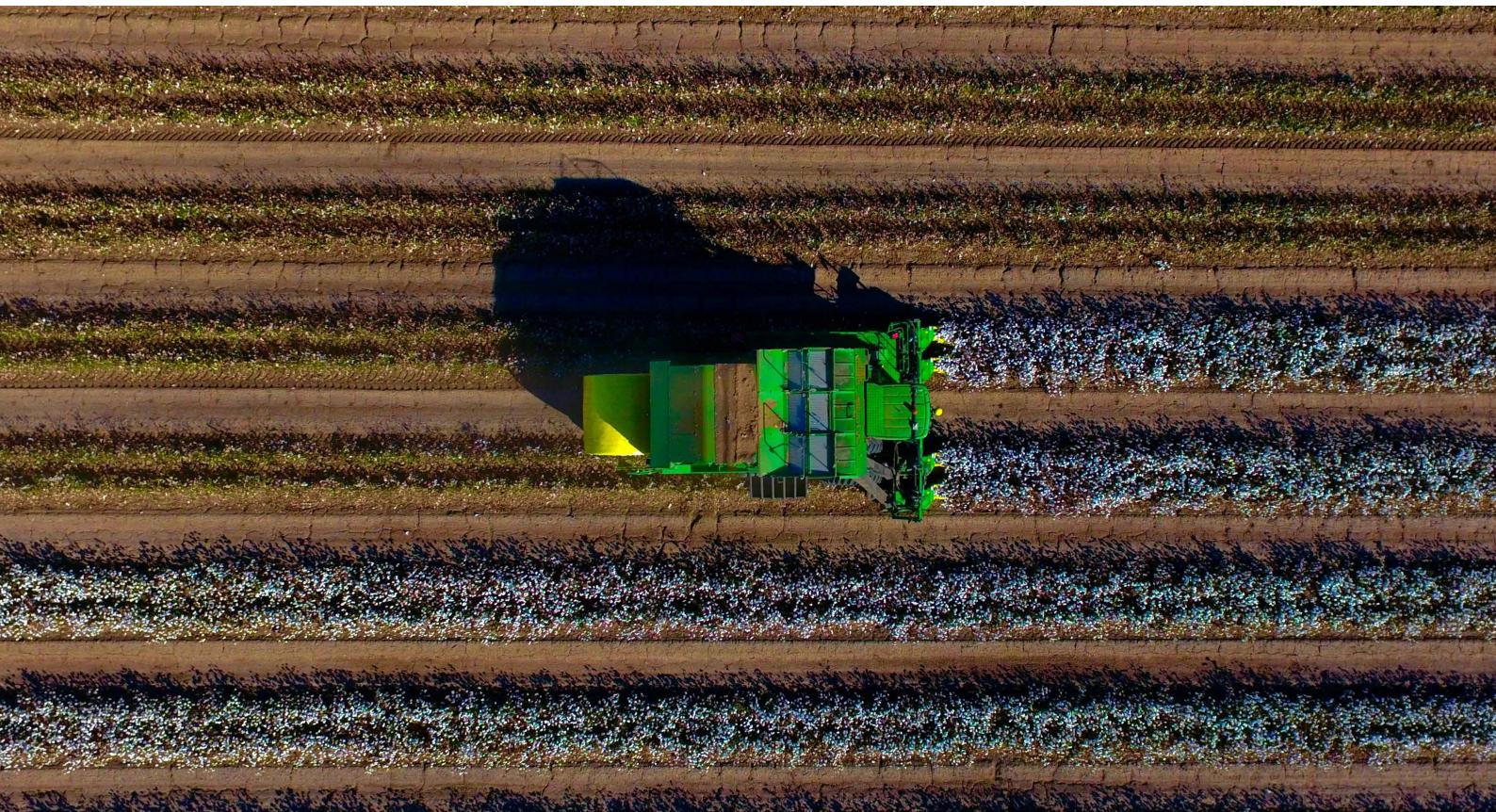
## RISK MANAGEMENT

During 2016-17, QFF actively promoted agricultural insurance as a risk management tool and advocated for further investment in developing the agricultural insurance market in Queensland. Funding was secured for project work that has targeted some of the identifiable road blocks hindering Queensland's agricultural insurance market. More information is available in 'Major Projects'.

QFF and some industry members continued to pressure the Queensland Government to abolish stamp duty on agricultural insurance. Removing this inefficient tax would increase product affordability and increase take-up, and align Queensland with Victoria and NSW. QFF estimates abolishing stamp duty on agricultural insurance would cost the state government about \$4 million per year in revenue forgone – a very modest investment for the outcomes that would be derived. 2017-18 could be the year that this sensible policy outcome is realised.

Severe Tropical Cyclone Debbie crossed the north Queensland coast on 28 March 2017. STC Debbie and the associated flooding events impacted farmers from Bowen in Central Queensland down to the New South Wales border. Total estimated damage was \$2.4 billion. QFF again helped with the natural disaster recovery effort and was an integral member of the Agricultural Coordination Group and the broader Economic Recovery Group.

The current natural disaster recovery processes are missing an opportunity for the agricultural sector to recover stronger and more resilient. QFF is working with the Queensland Reconstruction Authority and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries to improve the processes, review the types of support available through the NDRRA system, and develop a 'shovel ready' approach to disaster recovery and resilience.



## RURAL PLANNING

Planning is increasingly becoming a problematic issue for Queensland agriculture. Issues faced during the year included urban encroachment, systematic and unjustifiable rate increases, defense land acquisitions, the SEQ Regional Plan (ShapingSEQ), and a wave of large-scale solar facilities on prime agricultural land.

It is clear that the current planning framework is not working effectively for our sector. The incremental nature of policy development and issue resolution within government has resulted in three separate approaches for the protection of agricultural land for productive purposes. There is now an uncoordinated and inconsistent approach to the protection of agricultural resources and very different outcomes are possible in the assessment of development proposals depending on whether the proposal is for a resource activity or urban development.

QFF worked across government and formed working groups to address the large-scale solar issue (details in 'Energy') and to review and streamline the existing planning framework as it applies to agriculture. Greater transparency and accountability of local government actions is being pursued through QFF's election commitments.

### INLAND RAIL

As part of the 2017-18 Budget, the Australian Government announced its commitment to the full delivery of Inland Rail

with an additional \$8.4 billion equity investment. Inland Rail will provide a high-capacity freight link between Melbourne and Brisbane through regional Australia to better connect our cities, farms, and mines via ports to domestic and international markets. Inland Rail has been dubbed a 'once in 100-year' project, so we must get it right.

QFF provided comment to the Coordinator General regarding the draft terms of references (ToRs) for the environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Gowrie to Helidon and Helidon to Calvert routes. The ToRs failed to adequately address the impacts to agriculture and the surrounding economies, despite the extent of the agricultural activity in this area and its financial and community contribution. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries' Environmental Impact Assessment Companion Guide requires all projects to provide information about matters that should be addressed through the environmental impact assessment process as they relate to the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors, and biosecurity.

The NSW Border to Gowrie section has been particularly concerning for some QFF members and agriculture more broadly, as one of the possible designated corridors will need to cross 16km of the Condamine Floodplain. QFF represented agriculture on the Yelarbon to Gowrie Project Reference Group (Y2GPRG) looking at the four routes proposed for this section, and continues to hold the Federal Government and the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) to account. A decision on the route alignment is pending.



# ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (NRM)

## REEF REGULATIONS

In August 2016, the Queensland Government agreed to implement all 10 recommendations from the Water Science Taskforce Report (2016). Recommendation 5 of the Taskforce Report proposed the implementation of staged regulations to reduce water pollution throughout the Reef regions.

In April 2017, QFF submitted comments to the government in response to the 'Enhancing regulations to ensure clean water for a healthy Great Barrier Reef and a prosperous Queensland' discussion paper. QFF also provided a submission in June 2017 to the 'Regulatory proposals for enhancing Great Barrier Reef protection measures across agricultural activities' consultation paper.

QFF continues to advise government that industry is principally opposed to increasing regulation in the Reef catchments, as it is not considered to be the best way to achieve the desired outcome. The government's Regulatory Impact Statement for increasing regulation is pending and is required prior to a Bill being put before Parliament.

## VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Vegetation management was once again a very public issue in late 2016, with the Labor Government putting a poorly constructed Bill that would have been detrimental to agriculture before the Parliament. QFF held constructive meetings with the cross benchers to win their support to defeat the Bill.

QFF continues to advocate for a more objective approach to this important issue in place of the political wedge it has become. Greater leadership from government and industry is required if we are to realise a long-term, stable and workable framework capable of delivering a sustainable social, environmental and economic future for Queensland.

## NEW THINKING ON GREAT BARRIER REEF INVESTMENT

QFF partnered with the Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) and WWF for the first time to commission a robust regulatory economic assessment of the Reef to determine an appropriate level of government investment.

The 'Jacobs Report' found:

- a conservative asset value for the Reef of \$21 billion, based on tourism alone
- if the Reef was treated like a productive piece of infrastructure of similar value – like a dam or a road – it would receive \$547 million a year for operations and maintenance, or \$830 million a year if a depreciation allowance was also included.

Importantly, the report provided some new thinking to challenge current government investment levels, which are hundreds of millions of dollars per year below what is required to reach the ambitious water quality targets they have set. QFF, QTIC and WFF jointly presented the report to state and federal ministers in December 2016.

## CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY

With funding from the Queensland Government, QFF partnered with industry member Growcom and AgForce to develop the Queensland Climate Adaptation Strategy. The Agriculture Sector Adaptation Plan (Ag SAP) provided an opportunity to take stock of current adaptation activities and resources in Queensland's agricultural sector.

The Ag SAP identified critical barriers, gaps and industry needs, and recommended future actions to assist in building a stronger and more sustainable sector. For our sector, climate adaptation means continuous improvement in the capacity of farmers to deal with a changing climate by ensuring they have access to the required tools. An increased understanding of climate change results in more resilient farmers businesses, and better climate modelling and management will deliver a more resilient sector.

# MINING & RESOURCES

QFF provided several submissions to the Queensland Government over the year; from the further development of the gas industry through to the operation of the GasFields Commission.

The GasFields Commission Queensland Review of 2016 (the 'Scott Review'), concluded the Commission had contributed substantially to the improved coexistence of landholders, regional communities and the onshore gas industry, and proposed 18 recommendations for improvement including:

- establishing a Land Access Ombudsman to deal with disputes between landholders and resource companies in relation to conduct and compensation agreements
- structural and operational changes to the Commission that will enable it to work more effectively
- a renewed focus by the Commission on extension and communication activities to improve the availability of information on the coal seam gas industry particularly for landholders
- developing, in consultation with stakeholders, improved approaches to negotiation and alternative ways to resolve land access disputes.

The Scott Review also resulted in amendments to the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004 and the Water Act 2000 to require that costs associated with negotiation and alternative dispute resolution (ADR) be paid by the authority holder.

The Queensland Government also proposed to establish the Office of the Land Access Ombudsman (LAO) to assist landholders and resource companies resolve disputes about alleged breaches of conduct and compensation agreements (CCA) or make good agreements (MGAs). While the Scott Review focused on the petroleum and gas sector, it is proposed that the LAO will apply to all extractive resource activities. The LAO will provide a no-cost alternative to the dispute resolution mechanisms in a CCA or MGA, and to suing for breach of contract in a court of competent jurisdiction.

QFF principally supported the appointment of an Ombudsman and the LAO. An Ombudsman and support office is another positive step forward and enhances the framework to address some of the issues that arise from the interface between agriculture and the resources sector. However, the lack of statutory timeframes within the process and the inability of the LAO to assist landholders during CCA negotiations remain unresolved.

A Gas Supply and Demand Action Plan for Queensland is also being developed. QFF is engaged in this process and has highlighted that the risks and impacts associated with the current CSG industry must be fully addressed before any future developments associated with other gas deposits are permitted. Gas is one of the cleanest fossil fuels and will be a critical component in supporting the necessary increase in renewable energy production and the overall decarbonizing of the economy, but protections for quality agricultural land across Queensland are currently inadequate.





## **WASTE MANAGEMENT & RECYCLING REFORM**

The Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (DEHP) has been undertaking reviews of the regulated waste classification and waste-related Environmentally Relevant Activity (ERA) frameworks. QFF has been working with DEHP over the past 18 months on earlier drafts of this document to retain exemptions where they apply to farm activities and to ensure that future regulation does not impact the sector. Work also progressed on determining waste feedstocks under the Liquid Fuel Supply Regulation 2016, which includes guidance on identifying which feedstocks are considered wastes under the biofuels mandate sustainability criteria prescribed in the regulation. QFF continues to seek further support for recycling and material efficiency opportunities across the sector.

## **WORKPLACE HEALTH & SAFETY (WHS)**

Agriculture continued to receive a lot of focus for WHS issues, and perhaps justifiably so – 3% of Queenslanders work on farm, yet the sector accounts for nearly 30% of workplace deaths (approx. 15 deaths) and around 1,700 general workplace injuries per year. The most frequent causes of death and injury being attributable to tractors and mobile plant/machinery, and quad bikes. The sector paid out around \$22m in annual workers' compensation claim payments with this figure rising annually.

Machinery operators and drivers have been identified most at risk for WHS incidents. A quarter of all injuries affect workers aged 25-34 years old, and incidents involving electricity assets and overseas workers have been on the rise.

During the year, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland reviewed the Queensland 2014-17 Horticulture and Livestock Industry Action Plans to inform new industry strategic plans for 2018. QFF continued to work with many stakeholders to increase the awareness of WHS, particularly electrical safety on-farm.

## **FARM FINANCE & DEBT**

The Queensland Government made several commitments in 2016-17 in response to the 'Rural Debt and Drought Taskforce Chairman's Report' – QFF was a key member of the taskforce. Notably, the establishment of an Office of Rural Affairs (ORA), structural changes to QRAA, mandatory farm debt mediation, and reinstating the biennial Rural Debt Survey.

The ORA was to work across government to break down departmental silos, ensuring relevant rural and regional information was available for government policy decision making, but has not yet been put in place.

QRAA had its board charter expanded and was rebadged the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA). QRIDA's expanded functions included increasing the Primary Industry Productivity Enhancement Scheme (PIPES) loan limits (Sustainability Loans to \$1.3 million and First Start Loans to \$2 million), the development of post farm gate loans, new policy responsibilities, and the oversight and accreditation of mediators for a new mandatory Farm Business Debt Mediation scheme.

The Farm Business Debt Mediation Act 2017 (Qld) passed the Parliament (effective 1 July 2017), underpinning the mandatory Farm Business Debt Mediation scheme and replacing the voluntary mediation scheme that was part of the Queensland Farm Finance Strategy (QFFS). As such, QFF closed the QFFS it had operated pro-bono for many years.

QFF continues to advocate for a more nationally consistent approach to farm debt issues and highlighted the need for this shift through a submission to the Australia Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) Agricultural Lending Data Collection discussion paper.

# AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY

## REGULATION

QFF was involved with yet another inquiry into the regulation of agriculture during the year – the Australian Government Productivity Commission's 9-month public inquiry into the regulatory burden on farm businesses. The final report was released in March 2017 and confirmed (again) much of what QFF has advocated for many years. Findings included that:

- farm businesses are subject to a vast and complex array of regulations that are in place at every stage of the supply chain and are applied by all levels of government
- the number and complexity of regulations affecting farm businesses means that the cumulative burden of regulation on farmers is substantial
- some regulations lack a sound policy justification and should be removed
- regulation is sometimes the wrong policy tool
- inconsistent regulatory requirements across and within jurisdictions make it difficult for farmers to understand their obligations and add to the cost of doing business
- governments could reduce the regulatory burden on farm businesses by improving their consultation and engagement practices.

## TELECOMMUNICATIONS

QFF joined the Regional, Rural and Remote Communications Coalition (RRRCC) as a part of its ongoing role advocating for better telecommunication services in rural and regional Queensland. The Coalition of 21 member organisations is currently seeking bi-partisan support for initiatives that will ensure regional Australians can connect to the 21st century economy and society.

Core **POLICY** outcomes sought by the Coalition are:

- A universal service obligation that is technologically neutral and provides access to both voice and data
- Customer service guarantees and reliability measures to underpin the provision of voice and data services, to deliver more accountability from providers and the nbn
- Long term public funding for open access mobile network expansion in rural and regional Australia
- Fair and equitable access to Sky Muster for those with a genuine need for the service, and access which reflects the residential, educational and business needs of rural and regional Australia
- Fully resourced capacity building programs that build digital ability, and the development of effective problem-solving support for regional, rural and remote businesses and consumers.



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# 2016-17 SUBMISSIONS

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## AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY

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Submission to the ACCC - [Domestic mobile roaming declaration inquiry - draft decision \(May 2017\)](#) - June 2017

Submission to the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection - [Regulatory proposals for enhancing Great Barrier Reef protection measures across agricultural activities consultation paper](#) - June 2017

Submission to the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection - [Enhancing regulations to ensure clean water for a healthy Great Barrier Reef and a prosperous Queensland discussion paper](#) - April 2017

Submission to the Land Court of Queensland - [draft Practice Directions: 'Court Supervised Mediation' and 'Guidelines for the Use of Concurrent Evidence'](#) - February 2017

Submission to the Australian Government - [Working Holiday Maker Visa Review \('Backpacker Tax'\)](#) - September 2016

Submission to the Finance and Administration Committee - [Farm Business Debt Mediation Bill 2016](#) - September 2016

Submission to the Australian Productivity Commission - [Draft Report into the Regulation of Australian Agriculture](#) - August 2016 ([attachment 1](#))

Submission to the Department of Natural Resources and Mines - [Mineral and Energy Resources \(Common Provisions\) Regulation 2016 and accompanying Land Access Code](#) - August 2016

Submission to Finance and Administration Committee - [Rural and Regional Adjustment \(Development Assistance\) Amendment Bill 2016](#) - July 2016

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## BIOSECURITY

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Submission to the Agriculture and Environment Committee - [Inquiry into the impacts of invasive plants \(weeds\) and their control in Queensland](#) - January 2017

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## EDUCATION & TRAINING

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Submission to the Department of Education and Training - [Advancing Skills for the Future](#) - April 2017

Submission to the Department of Education and Training - [Response to the Positive Futures: Apprenticeships and Traineeships in Queensland Discussion Paper](#) - December 2016

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## ENERGY

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Agriculture Industries Energy Taskforce submission - [House of Representative's inquiry into modernising Australia's electricity grid](#) - May 2017

Submission to the Department of Environment and Energy - [Response to the Independent Review into the Future Security of the National Electricity Market: Preliminary Report](#) - March 2017

Agriculture Electricity Taskforce submission to Independent Review into the Future Security of the National Electricity Markets - [Finkel Review](#) - February 2017

Submission to the Australian Energy Regulator - [Demand Management Incentive Scheme and Innovation Allowance Mechanism, Consultation Paper \(January 2017\)](#) - February 2017

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Submission to the Department of Infrastructure Local Government and Planning - [Review of the Planning Regulation, State Planning Policy and State Development Assessment Provisions - Solar PV](#) - January 2017

Submission to Powerlink Queensland - [Revised Revenue Proposal for the 2017/18 - 2021/22 Regulatory Period \(as resubmitted by Powerlink on 1 December 2016\)](#) - December 2016

Submission to the Queensland Competition Authority - [Interim Consultation Paper - Regulated retail electricity prices for 2017-18](#) - December 2016

Submission to the Queensland Renewable Energy Expert Panel - [Draft Report: Credible Pathways to a 50% Renewable Energy Target for Queensland \(October 2016\)](#) - November 2016

Submission to the Australian Energy Regulator - [Draft Decision on Powerlink's Revenue Proposal for the 2017/18 - 2021/22 Regulatory Period](#) - November 2016

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## ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (NRM) & WASTE

Submission to the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection - [Regulatory proposals for enhancing Great Barrier Reef protection measures across agricultural activities consultation paper](#) - June 2017

Submission to the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection - [Draft Guideline - Waste Feedstocks under the Liquid Fuel Supply Regulation 2016](#) - May 2017

Submission to the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection - [Response to draft Queensland Climate Adaptation Strategy \(Q-CAS\)](#) - April 2017

Submission to the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection - [End of Waste Code: Manures Generated from Agricultural Activities](#) - March 2017

Submission to the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection - [Queensland Climate Adaptation Directions Statement](#) - January 2017

Submission to the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection - [Draft General Beneficial Use Approval \(ENBU06949016\) for the use of Biosolids](#) - October 2016

Response to Queensland Government's platform document - ['Advancing Climate Action in Queensland - Making the transition to a low carbon future'](#) - September 2016 ([attachment A](#)).

Submission to the Department of Natural Resources and Mines - [Draft self-assessable code \(SAC\) for managing thickened vegetation](#) - August 2016

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## FARM FINANCE & DEBT

Submission to the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority - [Agricultural Lending Data Collection Discussion Paper](#) - May 2017

Submission to the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee - [Parliamentary Inquiry into Long-term Financial Sustainability of Local Government](#) - May 2017

Submission to the Finance and Administration Committee - [Farm Business Debt Mediation Bill 2016](#) - September 2016

Submission to the Finance and Administration Committee - [Rural and Regional Adjustment \(Development Assistance\) Amendment Bill 2016](#) - July 2016

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## MINING & AGRICULTURE

Submission to the Queensland Treasury - [Better Mine Rehabilitation for Queensland: Discussion Paper \(Part of the Financial Assurance Framework Reform Package\)](#) - June 2017

Submission to the Department of Natural Resources and Mines - [Land Access Ombudsman Bill 2017 - consultation draft \(the Bill\)](#) - May 2017

Submission to the Department of Natural Resources and Mines - [Queensland's Gas Supply and Demand Action Plan: Discussion Paper \(November 2016\)](#) - December 2016

Submission to the Department of Natural Resources and Mines - [Consultation on the Mineral and Energy Resources \(Common Provisions\) Regulation 2016 and accompanying Land Access Code](#) - August 2016

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## RURAL PLANNING

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Submission to the Department of State Development - [Draft Terms of Reference for an Environmental Impact Statement. Inland Rail - Gowrie to Helidon Project \(May 2017\)](#) - June 2017

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Submission to the Department of State Development - [Draft Terms of Reference for an Environmental Impact Statement. Inland Rail - Helidon to Calvert Project \(May 2017\)](#) - June 2017

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Submission to the Department of Infrastructure Local Government and Planning - [South East Queensland Regional Plan: Agriculture Interests and Issues](#) - March 2017

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Submission to the Department of Environment and Energy - [Proposed Approval EPBC 2009/5173](#) - February 2017

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Submission to the Department of Infrastructure Local Government and Planning - [Review of the Planning Regulation, State Planning Policy and State Development Assessment Provisions](#) - February 2017

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Submission to the Department of Infrastructure Local Government and Planning - [Planning requirements for the establishment of large packing sheds in rural areas on agricultural land](#) - August 2016

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Submission to the Department of Infrastructure Local Government and Planning - [South East Queensland Regional Plan: Agriculture Interests and Issues](#) - July 2016

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## WATER

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Submission to the Productivity Commission - [National Water Reform Issues Paper](#) - May 2017

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Submission to the Department of Natural Resources and Mines - [Draft Water Plan \(Great Artesian Basin and Other Regional Aquifers\) 2017 and accompanying Draft Water Management Protocol](#) - April 2017

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Submission to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Water Resources - [Committee inquiry into and report on water use efficiency in Australian agriculture](#) - March 2017

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Submission to the Murray-Darling Basin Authority - [Proposed Basin Plan Amendments for the Northern Basin](#) - February 2017

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Submission to the State Transportation and Utilities Committee on the [Water Legislation \(Dam Safety\) Amendment Bill 2016](#) - January 2017

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Submission to the Agriculture and Environment Committee on the [Environmental Protection \(Underground Water Management\) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 \(EPOLA Bill\)](#) - October 2016

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Submission to [Cape York Statement of Proposals: Commencing a water resource planning process](#) - July 2016

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# MAJOR PROJECTS

## ENERGY SAVERS

QFF continued to work with industry members to deliver practical on-farm energy efficiency and renewable energy advice to farmers through the Energy Savers Plus Program (ESPP). The program has worked closely with over 130 farms, undertaking Type 2 energy audits and supporting farmers implement the audit findings.

Key achievements of the program to date:

- providing post-audit advice to assist with the implementation of cost-effective audit recommendations
- over 45 case studies on the new Energy Savers website, and a fact sheet on financing energy efficiency and renewable energy
- 5 new video case studies from various industries to highlight energy efficiencies
- over 7,500+ MWh per year in energy savings, with cost savings of over \$3 million from audit recommended actions with a payback period of better than five years
- 22 farm field days across the state including Monto, Applethorpe, Boomi, Atherton, Gympie, Herbert, Mareeba, Emerald, the Gold Coast and Brisbane
- bi-monthly e-newsletters highlighting new case studies and energy efficiency events.

Most audits have been completed. The program will continue until December 2017 to assist farmers with implementation, conduct measurement and verification of implemented outcomes, develop case studies and participate in more industry events to provide energy efficiency advice to farmers.



## REEF ALLIANCE: GROWING A GREAT BARRIER REEF

The Reef Alliance: Growing a Great Barrier Reef Project is a collaboration involving 12 partners. The project commenced in May 2016 and invests \$45.6 million to support 1,196 farmers and graziers improve their practices over 1,841,480ha across 33 GBR catchments by June 30, 2019. The project targets the sugarcane, grazing, horticulture, broad acre cropping and dairy industries. QFF manages the head agreement on behalf of project partners.

With the first year of the project completed, the project is progressing well and the implementation of on-ground actions are underway. Partners have completed the planning stage and new staff have been up-skilled.

Over the last 12 months, the project achieved the following outputs:

- 500+ farmers representing 695,820ha engaged one-on-one
- 800+ farmers attended reef water quality related workshops
- 7,654ha adopted improved land management practice across 6 properties
- 107 farmers contracted to complete works over 65,563ha
- 1,423 one-on-one extension visits with farmers
- 4,179 hours of one-on-one extension provided to farmers.

The 12 project partners are: AgForce, Australian Banana Growers' Council, Burnett Mary Regional Group, CANEGROWERS, Cape York NRM, Fitzroy Basin Association, Growcom, NQ Dry Tropics, Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation, Queensland Farmers' Federation, Regional Groups Collective and Terrain NRM.

# RURAL JOBS & SKILLS ALLIANCE (RJSA)

The RJSA continued to provide advice to government, service providers and other stakeholders about employment, skills, industry training and workforce planning on behalf of Queensland's agriculture and related industries.

Positive outputs over the last 12 months include:

- analyzing data and network market intelligence to make informed responses to consultation workshops, departmental discussion papers, and formal submissions to state and federal enquiries.
- providing advice and feedback in the delivery of the following state-funded initiatives:
  - » Queensland Agricultural Workforce Network: 7 regional QAWN field officers assisted industry employers connect to government initiatives and programs by engaging with 2,925 stakeholders, 1,931 potential employee contacts and 1,600 farm business contacts making a direct contribution to positive local employment and training outcomes.
  - » Schools Industry Partnership Program (AgForce): reached 7,000 students, teachers and parents, and hosted the highly effective Food + Fibre Education Conference.
  - » Gateway Schools to Agribusiness initiative (DAF): 43 active schools involving local agriculture as part of the schools' curriculum.
  - » Pilot Agriculture Capacity Building Program: signed agreement for a new project that aims to improve the skills of new and existing extension officers across the Great Barrier Reef catchments. Six host organisations and trainees were appointed/selected.
- increasing engagement with pre-qualified supplier trainers delivering to our sector (~50 RTOs, rate of engagement 66%).
- working alongside Jobs Queensland on the Future Skills Modelling project to assist in forecasting skill needs for regions and industries.
- reviewing skills and knowledge gaps identified by the Best Management Practice (BMP) programs.

The 8 Alliance members are: QFF, CANEGROWERS, Cotton Australia, Growcom, Queensland Chicken Growers Association, AgForce, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) and the Timber and Building Materials Association (TABMA).

# NU WATER

QFF, in partnership with industry member Cotton Australia, successfully secured funding under the Australian Government's National Water Infrastructure Development Fund (NWIDF) to undertake a feasibility study to test the viability of using recycled water from south-east Queensland for agricultural and industrial purposes.

GHD Pty Ltd has been engaged to undertake this work and will deliver a draft preliminary business case in November 2017. The final feasibility report for this visionary project that may realise south-east Queensland's treated waste water being diverted for agricultural and industrial is due in March 2018.

QFF manages the NuWater Project on behalf of an unofficial consortium including its industry members Cotton Australia, Central Downs Irrigators Limited, Growcom and the Queensland Chicken Meat Council, AgForce, Lockyer Valley Growers, Toowoomba and Surat Basin Enterprise, and Queensland Urban Utilities.



# ENHANCED INSURANCE SYSTEMS

Funded through the Queensland Government's Drought and Climate Adaptation Program (DCAP), the project has been designed to enable clear recommendations to be provided to agricultural industries, the insurance industry, and governments on how a more liquid and viable market for agricultural insurance products can be established and maintained for Australian rural industries.

Some early outputs of the project include:

- surveying 32 sugarcane growers and 23 cotton growers to understand farm level risk, risk management practices, production history and general farm information
- identifying 3 potential sugarcane and 2 potential cotton insurance products, and progressing these to market ready products
- developing a project proposal to continue work for a further 4 years and include other crops.

# INSURANCE DATA

Developed in consultation with Growcom and AgForce and funded through the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, the project will work with industry partners to compile farm level and regional data needed by the insurance industry to develop insurance products.

QFF has been working with Letevo, Allianz, Insurance Australia Group (IAG), Willis Towers Watson, Celsius Pro, Sureseason, Rural Affinity, Arthur J Gallagher, JLT Reinsurance Brokers and the Insurance Council of Australia to develop questionnaires, better define the data needed and discuss ideas for potential insurance products.

The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM), Grains Research Development Corporation (GRDC), Conservation Farming Inc. and Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) are assisting to compile the broader level data. Growcom, AgForce, Australian Pineapples and Summer Fruits Australia are providing the direct linkages with farmers to help with farm level data collection.



# QFF MEMBERS

## MAJOR COMMODITY MEMBERS



CANEGROWERS

CANEGROWERS

COTTON  
AUSTRALIA

COTTON AUSTRALIA



growcom

GROWCOM

Nursery & Garden Industry  
QueenslandNURSERY & GARDEN INDUSTRY  
QUEENSLAND (NGIQ)QUEENSLAND CHICKEN GROWERS  
ASSOCIATION (QCGA)Queensland  
Dairyfarmers'  
OrganisationQUEENSLAND DAIRYFARMERS  
ORGANISATION (QDO)

## ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

BUNDABERG REGIONAL IRRIGATORS  
GROUP (BRIG)BURDEKIN RIVER IRRIGATION AREA  
IRRIGATORS LTD (BRIA)CENTRAL DOWNS IRRIGATORS LIMITED  
(CDIL)PIONEER VALLEY WATER CO-OPERATIVE  
LIMITED (PVWATER)QUEENSLAND CHICKEN MEAT COUNCIL  
(QCMC)

QUEENSLAND UNITED EGG PRODUCERS



FLOWER ASSOCIATION



PORK QUEENSLAND



QUEENSLAND  
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