



QUEENSLAND FARMERS' FEDERATION

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Submission

28 July 2016

Research Director
Finance and Administration Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Via email: fac@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Committee

Re: Rural and Regional Adjustment (Development Assistance) Amendment Bill 2016

The Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) is the united voice of intensive agriculture in Queensland. It is a federation that represents the interests of 17 of Queensland's peak rural industry organisations, which in turn collectively represent more than 13,000 primary producers across the state. QFF engages in a broad range of economic, social, environmental and regional issues of strategic importance to the profitability, sustainability and growth of the agricultural sector. QFF's mission is to secure a strong and sustainable future for Queensland primary producers by representing the common interests of our member organisations:

- CANEGROWERS
- Cotton Australia
- Growcom
- Nursery & Garden Industry Queensland
- Queensland Chicken Growers Association
- Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation
- Burdekin River Irrigation Area Committee
- Bundaberg Regional Irrigators Group
- Central Downs Irrigators Limited
- Fitzroy Basin Food & Fibre
- Flower Association of Queensland Inc.
- Pioneer Valley Water Board
- Pork Queensland Inc.
- Queensland Chicken Meat Council
- Queensland United Egg Producers
- Australian Organic
- Queensland Aquaculture Industries Federation.

The tabling of the Rural and Regional Adjustment (Development Assistance) Amendment Bill 2016 (Bill) in Parliament on 26 May 2016 has coincided with the government announcing the 'Rural Assistance Package' (Package) as part of the 2016–17 Budget on 15 June 2016. The Package has committed \$36 million over five years with the aim of reducing financial stress and improving financial sustainability within the rural community.

The united voice of intensive agriculture



As part of the Package, the Queensland Rural Assistance Authority (QRAA) will be reconstituted to become the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA) with an expanded Board charter and improved flexibility. QFF understands that this will involve amendments to increase the Primary Industry Productivity Enhancement Scheme (PIPES) loan amounts and enable more flexible loan conditions, such as altering interest only periods and greater loan security flexibility. It is also understood that post farm gate loans will be available under QRIDA's charter, new legislation for compulsory farm debt mediation will be introduced and an Office of Rural Affairs will be established.

The policy objectives of the Bill are taken from the Rural Debt and Drought Taskforce Chairman's Report recommendations. QFF was a member of this taskforce and supported most of the recommendations. The Bill aims to offer suitably tailored loans for rural business development and debt restructure, loans into the supply chain and loans for restocking and replanting. The government's Budget announcement appears to have followed the same recommendations set out of the Chairman's Report, as there are common policy objectives between the Bill and the Package. Based on details available at this time, the Package has the potential to deliver similar outcomes for rural and regional Queensland.

QFF supports the proposed changes to QRAA, compulsory farm debt mediation and an Office of Rural Affairs (in principle), and considers that the Bill needs to accommodate these changes. While the details of the government's Package are still being worked through, it appears that much of the Bill has been overtaken by events and the government's Budget Package may deliver the same policy objectives as the Bill.

Yours sincerely

Travis Tobin
Chief Executive Officer