



QUEENSLAND FARMERS' FEDERATION

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Submission

12 June 2020

Manager
Attn: Fitzroy Water Plan Coordinator
Water services
PO Box 1762
ROCKHAMPTON QLD 4700

Via email: FitzroyWaterPlan@dnrme.qld.gov.au

To Whom It May Concern

Re: Amendment to the Water Plan (Fitzroy Basin) 2011 for the Rookwood Weir project (April 2020)

The Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) is the united voice of intensive, semi-intensive and irrigated 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:

- CANEGROWERS
- Cotton Australia
- Growcom
- Nursery & Garden Industry Queensland (NGIQ)
- Queensland Chicken Growers Association (QCGA)
- Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation (QDO)
- Australian Cane Farmers Association (ACFA)
- Queensland United Egg Producers (QUEP)
- Queensland Chicken Meat Council (QCMC)
- Bundaberg Regional Irrigators Group (BRIG)
- Burdekin River Irrigation Area Irrigators Ltd (BRIA)
- Central Downs Irrigators Ltd (CDIL)
- Fairbairn Irrigation Network Ltd
- Mallowa Irrigation Ltd
- Pioneer Valley Water Cooperative Ltd (PV Water)
- Theodore Water Pty Ltd.
- Pork Queensland Inc.
- Tropical Carbon Farming Innovation Hub.

The united voice of intensive, semi-intensive and irrigated agriculture



QFF welcomes the opportunity to provide comment for the Amendment to the Water Plan (Fitzroy Basin) 2011 for the Rookwood Weir project (April 2020). We provide this submission without prejudice to any additional submission from our members or individual farmers.

Amendments to the Rookwood Weir

The Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) understands that the current amendments to the Water Plan (Fitzroy Basin) 2011, is to accommodate the Rookwood Weir Project in the planning framework, including:

Water Act 2000 sections 44 and 51

1. Notice is given under section 44 of the Water Act 2000 that the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy is proposing to amend the Water Plan (Fitzroy Basin) 2011.
2. The proposed amendments relate to surface water under the Water Plan (Fitzroy Basin) 2011.
3. The proposed amendments are required to facilitate a water allocation and management framework associated with the construction and operation of the Rookwood Weir.

QFF welcomes the Government support of new water infrastructure to further develop our agricultural sector and secure water and water reliability for future development. One thing to note from the amendment is the implementation of trading between allocation holder, locations and products that will allow farmers to adjust their farming needs to secure a reliable water supply. This is a positive alteration to the amendments, supported by QFF.

As noted in the proposal, water product options were provided based on hydrologic modelling, and current market demand for water from the new weir. The impact on environmental flow objectives, and long-term water demand to allow for growth in the region may have been included, however, this proposal does not include the needs of high-water demand crop varieties in its current allocation process.

This proposal has not addressed the increase in water demand for tree crops and the water security required to ensure long-term economic growth for farmers wishing to invest this region and change crop production. A change in water trading is a positive response to address reliability, however, the hydrological modelling utilised in this process does not include the associated impacts of climate change on long-term water security and alternative crops relative to a change in market demand, and the possible restrictions on future water allocations for water intensive crops.

With the level of investment from the Federal Government for this project under the National Water Infrastructure Development Fund, it is imperative that under a changing climate and longer drought periods, the long term viability of investment by farmers can be sustained by providing long-term, higher reliability water.

QFF supports the development and infrastructure that the Rookwood Weir project will bring to the regions water planning framework. The ability to allow farmers the benefits of new water allocations and trading opportunities, will ensure a reliable water source for economic sustainability and development in the region.

Water Quality

QFF notes that the water quality of the Rookwood Weir may be impacted during times of inundation and also as a result of necessary vegetation clearing for construction. As such, ongoing remediation and revegetation has been recommended under project approval conditions and is necessary to ensure sediment run-off, erosion and change in water flow does not negatively impact the reliability of water for agricultural purposes.

To manage the risk of any runoff of prescribed water contaminants into the Weir, QFF supports the introduction of offsets as per Sunwater's Offsets Strategy and Offset Management Plan (amongst other

management strategies). These opportunities must be made available to farmers to alleviate localised impacts from land management practices into the Fitzroy Basin as per Queensland and Australian Government requirements to meet Great Barrier Reef water quality targets.

QFF supports the environmental management objectives outlined in this proposal, that will ensure all water allocations and water trading as set out in this amendment remain a high value economic resource. It is noted that the amendments focus on water allocations and management issues as a result of the commissioning of the Rookwood Weir. It is also vital that the long-term future viability of agriculture is fully encompassed when assessing water allocations and making allowances for changes in crops and agricultural practices under a changing climate.

Queensland's agricultural sector requires a long-term approach to address the issues of water availability, water security and climate change. Building infrastructure such as weirs is a positive move towards protecting existing agricultural enterprises and securing new investment. Without new funding to ensure the delivery of irrigation water, Queensland will continue to experience a dramatic decline across the irrigated agricultural sector. The latest data confirmed that Queensland saw the largest decrease in irrigation area across Australia, with a fall of 22 per cent to only 414,000 hectares¹. Such losses pose a real and direct risk to food security as well as Queensland's fortunate trading position. As such, QFF supports the proposed Amendment to the Water Plan (Fitzroy Basin) 2011 for the Rookwood Weir project.

If you have any queries about this submission, please do not hesitate to contact Ms Sharon McIntosh at sharon@qff.org.au.

Yours sincerely

Dr Georgina Davis
Chief Executive Officer

¹ ABS. Water Use on Australian Farms, Report 4618.0. Released 28 May 2020.