



QUEENSLAND FARMERS' FEDERATION

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Submission

27 September 2022

Attention: Manager Water Services
Chief Executive Water Services North Region
Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water
PO Box 1762
ROCKHAMPTON QLD 4700

Submitted via email: waterplanning.fitzroy@rdmw.qld.gov.au

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Re: Preliminary public consultation notice - Proposed postponement of expiry and replacement of the Water Plan (Fitzroy Basin) 2011 - s and s55 of the *Water Act 2000* (September 2022)

The Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) is the united voice of intensive and irrigated agriculture in Queensland. It is a federation that represents the interests of 21 peak state and national agriculture industry organisations and 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)
- EastAUSmilk (formerly QDO)
- Australian Cane Farmers Association (ACFA)
- Turf Queensland
- 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
- Eton Irrigation Scheme Ltd
- Pork Queensland Inc
- Tropical Carbon Farming Innovation Hub
- Queensland Oyster Growers Association (QOGA)
- Lockyer Water Users Forum (LWUF).

The united voice of intensive and irrigated agriculture



QFF welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on Preliminary public consultation notice - Proposed postponement of expiry and replacement of the Water Plan (Fitzroy Basin) 2011 - s and s55 of the *Water Act 2000* (September 2022). We provide this submission without prejudice to any additional submission from our members or individual farmers.

Overview

QFF welcomes Government support through infrastructure and non-infrastructure water options, to further develop our agricultural sector and secure water and water reliability for future development as part of the Fitzroy Basin Plan when it expires in August 2025.

The Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) as part of the preliminary consultation period, wish to ensure all current allocations in the Fitzroy Water Plan area are protected and any proposed changes that would impact the agricultural sector are consulted prior to any proposed changes in the upcoming draft plan.

Summary

Water reliability and security are key factors for the agricultural sector, and as the climate changes become vital components of interest in the water planning process. QFF supports the development of infrastructure to ensure the continued reliability and security of water, if there are no adverse implications that may limit the supply or access of new water, including affordability. The recent amendments to the Fitzroy Basin Plan were conducted in 2020 to allow for the Rookwood Weir Project, which related to surface water and the facilitation of water allocations and management framework throughout the construction and operation of the Rookwood Weir.

One thing to note from the amendment in 2020, is the implementation of trading between allocation holders, locations and products that will allow farmers to adjust their farming needs to secure a reliable water supply. This was a positive alteration to the amendments, supported by QFF and as such QFF would seek to see the Fitzroy Water Plan, when it expires in 2025, to allow for these options be available for further consultation.

QFF also seeks to have environmental flow objectives, which incorporates long-term growth in the region, including high-water demand crops and high value crops, addressed in its allocation process. Certain areas within the Fitzroy Basin require high reliability water, and as such require high value crops to afford the water with high reliability, to ensure a high chance of seasonal allocation is afforded to the entitlement holders. QFF supports the needs of high-water demand crop varieties to be included in the allocation process when the Fitzroy Basin Plan expires in 2025.

QFF supports water trading to address reliability, however, the associated impacts of climate change on long-term water security and alternative crops relative to a change in market demand have not yet been identified. The possible restrictions on future water allocations for water intensive crops need to be thoroughly measured, through the inclusion of best available science, and hydrologic models, which consider the effect of climate change on water availability.

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. 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 trading position.

QFF is looking forward to further consultation as the Fitzroy Basin Plan is released for comment, to ensure that agricultural sector plays a major role in the contribution to sustainable management of water resources, whilst also ensuring the long-term economic viability and growth of the food, fibre, and foliage sectors.

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

Yours sincerely

Ms Jo Sheppard
Chief Executive Officer

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