



QUEENSLAND FARMERS' FEDERATION

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Submission

26 October 2022

Committee Secretary
Health and Environment Committee
PARLIAMENT HOUSE QLD 4000

Submitted via email: hec@parliament.qld.gov.au

To Whom It May Concern

Re: Environmental Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 (October 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 20 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
- Queensland Oyster Growers Association (QOGA)
- Lockyer Water Users Forum (LWUF).

QFF welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on Environmental Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 (October 2022). We provide this submission without prejudice to any additional submission from our members or individual farmers.

The united voice of intensive and irrigated agriculture



Overview

QFF understands that the principal policy objectives of the Environmental Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 (EPOLA) are to amend the *Environment Protection Act 1994* (Qld) (EP Act) and the *Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011*, the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993* and the *Land Title Act 1994* (EPOLA).

QFF notes that these changes range from amendments to the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process, increasing monetary thresholds, amending the contaminated land framework, reducing the information requirements for research and development Environmental Approval applications, including various amendments that are specific to the resources industry and other compliance and enforcement regimes.

It is a positive move in the right direction to see the environmental framework receive an update when it comes to EIS's that in the past have become outdated, but with the limited restrictions on timing, were allowed in most cases to proceed without the implementation of new data in the EIS. The changes to the EIS process will now see the community and project proponents know early on that a project will receive approvals as proposed. The Bill amends the *Environmental Protection Act 1994* (EP Act) to support industry, streamline and clarify regulatory processes, and better protect the environment and improve community input and transparency.¹

QFF notes that it has not been consulted on the Bill, and as such has been unable to raise items in the Bill fully or meaningfully with its membership., and as such this submission will be brief and based on the amendments released on the 12th of October 2022.

Summary

QFF welcomes the transparency for numerous changes that will now allow the public to be notified of major changes to environmental approvals, especially those that can have a negative impact on agricultural land and regional communities.

The draft of the Bill included amendments to the EP Act which placed a requirement on the administering authority to impose a condition on all site-specific environmental authorities regarding the scale and/or intensity of the relevant activity. Without consultation, to the farming operations of QFF members, it is with understanding the Bill amendments, do not place restrictions on farming or grazing operations, however QFF do not support amendments that do place restrictions on farming operations that impact the food, fibre and foliage sectors.

Public Register Amendments

The EPOLA Bill 2022 includes minor consequential amendments to the *Land Title Act 1994*. QFF supports the intent of the Bill, that is, to ensure that liabilities, risks, and limitations associated with land that has been subject to resource activity or rehabilitation of a resource activity are transparent and easily discoverable to landowners and prospective buyers of that land. Particularly where limitations of the rehabilitation may impact future land use such as the carrying capacity of land for irrigation infrastructure as an example.

As such the Bill contains an amendment to provide that a person may notify the administering authority that, due to their personal information being kept on a register, their personal safety is at risk. It is imperative that the administering authority, once assured that someone's personal safety would be at

¹ STATEMENT OF COMPATIBILITY Environmental Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022.

risk, must ensure personal information is not included in a part of a register that is available to the public and is not included in an extract or copy of information from the register.

The public register amendments are relevant to horticulture operators who hold an environmental authority for ERA 13A 'Commercial cropping and horticulture in the Great Barrier Reef catchment'. Under the current Bill, cropping and horticulture activities are defined in relation to sediments and nutrients on reef water quality which are in reference to the Great Barrier Reef protection measures. This amendment includes aligning application requirements for an environmental authority for cropping and horticulture activities with matters to be made publicly available. It is understood that horticulture operators holding an ERA 13A will see information requirements amended.

The amendment will see the details of the environmental authority are kept on the public register, so there is a potential for the public register to include personal information such as a person's address. It is imperative that landholder be given the opportunity to have personal information such as addresses kept on the register. Having details on the register should not be made public, as this information can lead to a variety of issues on farm, including biosecurity risks. Biosecurity risks to crop production is a critical component of farm management practices, to ensure the spread of biohazards are not introduced on farm, which destroy crops and reduce viability of farm businesses.

QFF notes that it was not consulted on the Bill or items pertaining to the public register amendments for cropping and horticultural activities; and was only made aware of the Bill two days prior to the release. As such, QFF has been unable to raise the items in the Bill fully or meaningfully with its membership.

Summary

QFF strongly supports the ability for the agricultural sector to be well informed and consulted on any changes in legislation, which could invariably impact their business or the communities in which they live. The amendments to the EPOLA Bill 2022, appear to have limited implications to the agricultural sector based on the information provided.

QFF supports transparency in legislation that encourages best management practices, and for our farmers to continue to produce world class food, fibre and foliage. However, without detailed consultation, and understanding of how these amendments may negatively affect farming practices, QFF has concerns, if farmers are unaware of changes and are penalised for actions, they are unaware of.

It is important to ensure the privacy of our agricultural sector is not made available for public use, for biosecurity risks are an important aspect that can be devastating to the food, fibre, and foliage sectors, and it is in our best interests to continue to protect our agricultural sector for the future.

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