



QUEENSLAND FARMERS' FEDERATION

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Submission

5 December 2022

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
GPO Box 3090
Canberra ACT 2601

Email: lebsecretariat@agriculture.gov.au

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Re: Draft Lake Eyre Basin Strategic Plan (November 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)
- Pork Queensland Inc
- 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
- Lockyer Water Users Forum (LWUF)
- Queensland Oyster Growers Association (QOGA)

QFF welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on Draft Lake Eyre Basin Strategic Plan (November 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 represents the intensive agriculture sector, which makes a major contribution to Queensland's state and regional economies and employment. This sector, including sugarcane, cotton, horticulture, nursery and garden, which uses water to generate world leading, high quality produce servicing local and world markets. Maintaining and growing the quality and reach of this sector is dependent on these industries remaining competitive and as such, these factors are also dependent on the quality of the water that flows into the regions adjoining the Lake Eyre Basin.

As outlined in Lake Eyre Strategic Plan 'the strategic plan is intended to inform, support and encourage action and investment by basin governments, communities, industries, research groups and natural resource management organisations. The strategy has a lifespan of 10 years, with an independent, mid-term progress review scheduled for the end of year five, and final review at year 10. The outcome of the mid-term review and final review will be made public.'¹

Summary

QFF seeks to support and protect the sustainability of the different rivers systems within the floodplain region of the Lake Eyre Basin whilst also ensuring the long-term viability of the different commodities in the region. Water represents an essential element of our stakeholder group, and as such QFF has a goal of assisting and guiding stakeholders to manage the various resources utilised in the agricultural industries that are represented by QFF.

One of the key resources that forms an essential element for any agricultural venture is water. The Lake Eyre Basin represents one of the largest unregulated river catchments, largest inland terminating river catchments and the last dryland river systems in the world and resources available to the wider member base. Providing feedback and direction on how this resource is both currently utilised for commercial purposes but also applying techniques to preserve and manage this resource for future ventures is an essential element of the QFF remit.

QFF seeks to ensure that both current usage and future opportunities for our member group are identified and maximised. It is important that a coherent policy approach is established as part of the Lake Eyre Strategic Plan, to support agricultural interests in the region. It is also vital that the interests of QFF members located outside of this region that could potentially be impacted by any regulatory changes are protected.

As part of the Strategic Plan, it is vital that the latest science and economic data are essential elements to establishing policies and as such all regulatory decisions need to be underpinned by evidence-based science as per the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement.² The agreement for the Lake Eyre Basin Strategic Plan, was established in 2000, with the primary purpose to 'provide for the development or adoption, and implementation of policies and strategies concerning water and related natural resources in the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement Area, to avoid or eliminate so far as reasonably practicable adverse cross-border impacts.'³

An updated framework aims to develop and strengthen relationships for all stakeholders in the Lake Eyre Basin, however further consultation is required to integrate any pressures, drivers or impacts to

¹ Lake Eyre Strategic Plan, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (August 2022).

² See Clause 2.1 of the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement.

³ Lake Eyre Strategic Plan, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water: p.6; (August 2022);

communities and the agricultural sector that sit just outside the Lake Eyre Basin area and thus include cross-jurisdictional regions. As part of this draft, QFF suggests that specific activities that occur in the Lake Eyre Basin that could pose adverse impacts on the agricultural sector is covered in the development of the objectives and framework that formulate the strategic plan.

The Lake Eyre Strategic Plan is underpinned by the *Lake Eyre Basin Agreement Act 2001*, and as noted in “Clause 2.1 establishes that the purpose of the agreement is to develop, adopt and implement policies and strategies relating to the management of the water and related natural resources of the agreement area, particularly so as to avoid or eliminate so far as reasonably practicable adverse cross-border impacts,”⁴ it is vital that climate change is integrated in the act, as a critical factor that impacts the integrity of achieving Clause 2.1.

Climate change has the potential to impact the current usage of land and water in the basin, which needs to be incorporated into the development of the strategic plan, along with environmental, economic, social and cultural values which need to be conserved and protected.

The inconsistent and irregular recharge of the different groundwater systems if exacerbated by climate change will pose a significant threat to the regional communities that rely on the Lake Eyre Basin water for water security, and factoring in evidence-based science and modelling is necessary, to ensure the longevity and sustainability of future development and protection of the environment in the Lake Eyre Basin.

Farming within Australia supports many rural communities. However, with the growing concern surrounding the use of our natural resources, the viability of regional and remote communities is under threat. As such, transparency needs to be established and integrated as part of the strategic plan framework, and to achieve this a trusted compliance system is critical.

Policy objectives, outlining regulatory, administrative and potential legislative changes as part of the *Lake Eyre Basin Agreement Act 2001*,⁵ are crucial components, for achieving efficient, effective and considered outcomes in the Lake Eyre Basin.

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

⁴ [Lake Eyre Basin Agreement Act 2001 \(Lake Eyre Basin Agreement Act 2001 — Explanatory Note - Queensland Legislation - Queensland Government\)](#)

⁵ [Lake Eyre Basin Agreement Act 2001 \(Lake Eyre Basin Agreement Act 2001 — Explanatory Note - Queensland Legislation - Queensland Government\)](#)