

2 May 2024



Committee Secretary
Clean Economy Jobs, Resources and Transport Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

QUEENSLAND
FARMERS'
FEDERATION

PO Box 12009 George Street, Brisbane Qld 4003
Level 8, 183 North Quay, Brisbane Qld 4000
qfarmers@qff.org.au | (07) 3837 4720
ABN 44 055 764 488

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

Dear Committee,

Re: Mineral and Energy Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Due to the short timeframe allowed for consultation on this proposed Bill, Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) provides the following brief submission and requests the opportunity to appear before the committee, alongside our peak body member, Cotton Australia, to provide further comment.

QFF acknowledges that much of the detail contained within the Bill has been developed off the back of consultation conducted during 2023 and specifically pertaining to the Regional Planning Interest Act, the co-existence institutions, and the proposed subsidence management framework. QFF participated in this consultation process and points to the submissions which were provided by QFF throughout.

Notwithstanding these previous opportunities for QFF and our members to be involved in consultation on these matters, this proposed Bill, and explanatory notes are detailed and lengthy requiring significant time and the opportunity for discussion to appropriately understand in order for meaningful comment to be made.

QFF expresses its disappointment that consultation timeframes for this proposed Bill have been too short to allow industry the proper opportunity to understand the content within and provide a thorough submission on a piece of legislation that is so important to farmers and the agricultural industry more broadly.

Irrespective, QFF would like to provide the following comments for consideration by the committee:

- As stated in previous submissions, QFF submits that the existing Section 22 of the Regional Planning Interest Act must be maintained to ensure the continuation of the rights of landholders provided under this section are preserved. QFF considers the MEROLA Bill in the context that Section 22 of the RPI Act will be maintained and subsequently seeks confirmation from the Queensland government that this is the case.
- Coexistence Queensland: QFF is broadly supportive of the expanded remit of the GasFields Commission Queensland (GFCQ) and continues to support the important role this organisation has in relation to the provision of information, education and awareness which can assist landholders and communities to make informed decisions when it comes to coexistence. QFF submits however, that for the expanded remit to work effectively, adequate resources and skills must be applied within the organisation to ensure all industries and aspects of coexistence are appropriately serviced. It is also important to note that whilst education, information and best practice can assist in achieving positive coexistence outcomes, critical and effective legislation is ultimately required

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to ensure appropriate protections are maintained over the long term. QFF seeks clarification in relation to the specifics relating to Coexistence Queensland's reduced regulatory role and what this means in practical terms on the ground.

- **Arbitration:** QFF maintains its previous position in relation to any policy that oversees the issue of arbitration, in that it is appropriate that the resource developer is responsible for the landholders' costs of arbitration.
- **Entry to Private Land:** the rights of landholders need to be acknowledged and reasonably protected in relation to entry to private land. QFF requests that the committee ensure this provision is fully considered and reasonable rights of landholders be protected, noting also that many farm enterprises are also the location of family homes.
- **Regional Risk Assessment:** It is important that the importance of landscape wide modelling, measuring, monitoring and reporting is recognised and committed to, as well as individual farm modelling. Landscape wide work must include analysis of impacts to overland flow. Clarity is also required as to the process and protections for landholders, should a regional risk assessment turn out to be incorrect with more impact than expected occurring over time.
- **Subsidence Management Plans:** QFF supports the need for subsidence management plans but would like to see more clarity in relation to what will be included in the plans. The cost of the development of these plans must be the responsibility of the resource developer, and it is critical that the landholder is able to have confidence in the plan. Therefore, it is important that appropriately skilled expertise (eg. agronomy, agricultural, agronomic, agro-economic, water and land management skills etc) are involved in the development of the plans and expected that the Department of Agriculture will play a central role.
- It is important that compensation is underpinned by the guiding principle that the productive capacity of agricultural land should be maintained or restored. QFF seeks clarification on the enduring nature of compensation. It is likely that subsidence impacts incurred have the potential to occur for years to come. QFF seeks clarification on how compensation remains enduring in the case of changed future circumstances, for example impacts occur beyond the life of a resource development tenure.
- **Critical Consequences:** the ability to cease CSG development should critical impacts be identified is a welcome step forward. Further work is needed to clarify what constitutes a critical consequence and who decides. It is important that landholders have confidence in the definition of a critical consequence and the process in which it is identified. QFF requests clarification on how the critical consequence provisions will apply for those farmers already experiencing impacts.

QFF's continues to advocate for policy that ensures the protection of high value agricultural land and water aquifers that support the future of agricultural production and rural communities. QFF continues to call for policy that supports enhanced landholder rights and an environment that does not enable power imbalances between developers and farmers but rather ensures agreements, protections and rights are fair and equitable.

QFF believes that many aspects of this Bill are a step in the right direction when considered in the context of the existing Section 22 of the Regional Planning Interest Act being maintained. However, as previously stated, the tight timeframes have not allowed adequate time to fully understand each aspect of the Bill and as such, QFF is unable to provide comprehensive feedback on some of the details contained within the Bill.

QFF encourages the committee to understand the diversity of views that exists across the agricultural sector in relation to CSG extraction ranging from farmers who welcome coexistence opportunities right through to farmers who are extremely concerned about the environmental risks associated, potential future impacts on their natural resources and business enterprises and are strongly opposed to CSG on their farms and in their district.

It is now clear that subsidence is occurring and will occur from the extraction of CSG, and whilst the extent of the impact on the productive capacity of the land of this subsidence is not yet fully understood, there is no doubt that the potential impacts do not stop at farm boundaries. Consequently, QFF submits that the opportunity for a resource company and an individual farmer to coexistence, with appropriate landholder protections and supports, is feasible and achievable. However, mandating coexistence across an industry as a whole, is not.

QFF would welcome the opportunity to appear before the committee to further discuss this Bill and important considerations for the agricultural sector, individual farmers and the future of food and fibre production in Queensland.

Yours sincerely

Jo Sheppard
Chief Executive Officer