



ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16



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Queensland Farmers' Federation, PO Box 12009 BRISBANE QLD 4003 or qfarmers@qff.org.au.

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Since coming to the role in October 2015 I remain impressed with the quality and quantity of output the QFF team delivers on behalf of industry and its members. The organisation continues to punch well above its weight by effectively representing intensive agriculture in negotiations with government and to the public more broadly. Throughout the year, the Board has taken actions and steps to ensure the organisation continues to head in the right direction and fulfils its obligations to industry, members and government partnerships.



It has been a year of readjustment for the organisation with new leadership and several staff changes. I firstly want to acknowledge the years of commitment and dedication to the organisation by my predecessor Joanne Grainger. The organisation is stronger and has benefited from her service and time as President. In October 2015, Ruth Wade took up the role of Interim CEO with a clear charter from the Board to stabilise internal working relationships with staff and member organisations, build strong networks and linkages with government and other external stakeholders, and recruit a permanent CEO.

I want to thank Ruth on behalf of the Board for providing a measured and sensible approach to the management of QFF through the transition period for the organisation. Her guidance and experience were critical in maintaining QFF's high standing with its key stakeholders and the community, as well as her role in assisting with the recruitment of her replacement, Travis Tobin.

I am excited about the future prospects of the organisation under the management and experience Travis brings to the role. The board has full confidence in Travis and I personally look forward to working with him to bring about the changes and continuation the organisation needs to maintain and improve its reputation as the chief advocacy group for intensively farmed land in Queensland.

After 15 years of service to QFF, Ian Johnson retired. I want to thank him both professionally and personally for his dedication and commitment to Queensland's irrigators during his time at QFF, the Queensland Irrigators Council and with the Department of Natural Resources and Mines. QFF will be well served in his wake with Dr Georgina Davis joining the team to undertake the critical resources and water policy area. I commend the Department of Natural Resources and Mines for continuing to provide funding towards this integral position in QFF. Long standing collaborative arrangements such as this realise better and mutually beneficial outcomes for industry and government.

QFF continues to play a key role for our members and Queensland agriculture more broadly, by striving for policy outcomes that improve the profitability, productivity, sustainability and well-being of the state's farmers. Our collaborative policy effort with members and partners ensures that we meet members' needs and support their existing policy priorities. Our projects are a result of a demonstrable clear need, identified by QFF and our members, but which cannot be filled by government or industry alone or through any existing avenues.

The organisation continues to rely on the contribution of the producers who serve on committees, Council and Board together with the support of staff from members. I thank them for their service and dedication.

Stuart Armitage
President

CEO'S REPORT

The 2015 - 16 year was a transitional year for the Queensland Farmers' Federation. It was also another important year in the organisation's history, with many positive achievements for our members despite challenging circumstances both internal and external.



At this time of economic change and a move away from reliance on the mining and resources sector, the role of agriculture is increasingly important and benefits gained for our sector must demonstrate subsidiary benefits for the Queensland economy.

The year commenced with the departure of the CEO, and President Joanne Grainger working with QFF staff to maintain operations. By the end of the year, it was very pleasing to report that QFF has strong and respectful relationships with both internal and external stakeholders, the government recognises QFF as an effective and cohesive voice for intensive agriculture and incoming CEO, Travis Tobin, will bring new skills and talents to the QFF team.

The 2015 Annual General Meeting saw changes at Board level with Director Stuart Armitage being elected President. After four years of dedicated service, Joanne Grainger stepped down as President but remained a Director to assist the transition. QFF greatly appreciates Joanne's enormous contribution to building a strong and effective voice for the sector in Queensland.

The QFF also relocated offices this year. We were very pleased to negotiate a co-location arrangement with Growcom and both organisations relocated to Level 3 in 183 North Quay over the Christmas period. Co-location and sharing of resources had been discussed throughout our membership for some time and it was exciting to see this finally become a reality. The synergies that have been achieved are obvious with much greater communication and cooperation between the organisations already apparent. Further sharing opportunities such as financial services are already being developed and both organisations are committed to maintaining their separate identities while finding savings and efficiencies at an operational level.

Critical to the work that QFF does is maintaining credibility with government, industry and external stakeholders. Meet and greets and introductory briefings were a major focus for the Interim CEO and the incoming President. Many hours were spent preparing for these meetings to ensure we had a strong, clear message about the role of QFF, our aspirations to represent our sector, and our determination to work with our members to identify, elevate and escalate their issues with key stakeholders.

Measuring and quantifying success in advocacy is difficult, but it is always important for our organisation to maintain the highest possible standard of representation. To achieve this, we focus on evidence and information-based advocacy, to achieve solutions to problems that deliver efficiently on the priorities of our members. At this time of economic change and a move away from reliance on the mining and resources sector, the role of agriculture is increasingly important and benefits gained for our sector must demonstrate subsidiary benefits for the Queensland economy.

Major work for the organisation over the 12 months has included issues such as electricity prices; water prices; local management of SunWater irrigation schemes; Reef Trust programs and reef policy; sustainable agriculture; management of farm debt and finance; workforce development and training; disaster response and recovery; communications; coal seam gas; and land access. As in previous years the themes are familiar but the balance of effort and strategies change dramatically each year.

This year energy policy and electricity prices for irrigation farmers became a major priority for the QFF. Our sugar and cotton industry members have invested enormous effort in addressing energy prices at a national level and the QFF Council have identified electricity prices as the most important issue affecting the future viability of their members. It will be a perverse outcome if the efforts of irrigated industries to invest in new equipment and technologies through water use efficiency programs is countered by rising power prices that

make these investments unusable. QFF recruited a Resources Policy Adviser to build capacity in this area and we welcomed Dr Georgina Davis to that role in February.

Another major focus for QFF is the Great Barrier Reef and the role that agricultural industries play in improving water quality in the Reef lagoons and minimising impacts from our land based activities. The Reef Alliance (Natural Resource Management groups, industry groups and WWF), chaired by QFF, reaffirmed its commitment to working together to deliver outcomes for the Reef by signing a MoU and applying directly for funds. The Reef Alliance appointed QFF lead agency for an integrated bid for funding from the Commonwealth Government under Reef Trust Phase 3, which was successful and this \$46 million project will be implemented over the next three years.

Our committees for natural resource management, water and energy, workplace health and safety, biosecurity and quarantine, and skills and training also met regularly throughout the year and continue to develop cross-sectoral policy and advocacy positions to support our members in these crucial areas.

There were a number of staff changes over the year. Mark Neville took over the communications portfolio and Rebecca Donohoe joined the team as Office Manager and Executive Assistant. Funding for the rural planning project that was supported by the Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry was not renewed, so Mick Capelin's position was discontinued. Recognising Mick's expertise in this area, QFF will continue to engage him as a consultant on planning issues. Finally, Ian Johnson retired from full time work at the end of June. Ian has been QFF's advisor on water reform issues for more than 15 years. His tireless dedication and commitment to getting a better deal for irrigators across Queensland will be sorely missed. QFF continues to contract Ian on a part time basis.

Adam Knapp, Policy Adviser on Environment and NRM issues (and the key QFF contact for Reef); Andrew Chamberlin, Project Manager Energy Savers Plus (ESPP) Program; Mark Neville, Communications Officer; Peter Perkins, Project Manager, Education and Training; Ross Henry, Project Manager, Natural Disasters; and QFF life member Gary Sansom and Bec Tkall from the chicken industry, all continue to perform their roles in an exceptional manner and regularly deliver much more than their job descriptions indicate. The power of a team working together to deliver much more than a group of individuals is on clear display every day at the QFF!

QFF continues to host a Brisbane office for Cotton Australia and also provides clerical duties for the Queensland Chicken Growers Association (QCGA), Queensland Chicken Meat Council (QCMC), the Queensland Chicken Meat Industry Committee and the Poultry Industry Expo (PIX) which is held every two years. QFF also provides contracted communications support to the Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation (QDO).

While the staff at QFF provide the engine room it is the leadership provided by a relatively small number of very professional farmers that keeps the organisation operational. I would like to thank President Stuart Armitage for his enthusiasm and leadership. Stuart has a clear vision for QFF and together with CEO Travis Tobin, will build on the legacy of past President Joanne Grainer and the QFF Board.

Finally, I would like to conclude by thanking everyone who welcomed me to the QFF. It is due to the support and enthusiasm of our members that QFF continues to be the success that it is and without these contributions from our members and staff, QFF simply would not be what it is. It was a privilege for me to serve as Interim CEO and I wish you well for the future.

Ruth Wade
Interim CEO, 2015/2016



COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

QFF continues engaging in communications that support its advocacy, promote its project work, and pro-actively manage issues that impact the Queensland agriculture sector. By continually growing the organisation's reach, QFF increases its ability to be an effective advocate and representative to government and the Queensland public, on behalf of intensive agriculture.

This financial year saw a new communications strategy initiated by Henry Pike that continued to grow under the direction of Mark Neville. A renewed focus on digital media was embraced with a renewed focus on engagement through e-news campaigns and social media. The QFF '10 Things to know' was launched with positive feedback from both internal and external stakeholders. 10 things to know now reaches thousands of key stakeholders every Monday morning.

In social media, the QFF Twitter account grew substantially over the year. A QFF Facebook page was launched to grow the organisation's reach. The renewed approach to digital media has showed dividends with increased interactions with the media, the agricultural sector, government and the public as a whole. QFF's increased profile in digital media has continued to translate to a larger share of traditional media.

Notable communications campaigns included: the well-publicised 'backpacker tax' campaign where QFF initiated the online petition that attracted 49,000 signatories; developing and launching the 'farmerdisastersupport.org.au' website; promotion of the Reef Alliance;

and the commentary around the 2016 federal election. In the service QFF provides to industry member Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation (QDO), the '1 buy branded milk' campaign was also launched.

QFF communications will continue to be enhanced in 2016 - 17 with the construction of a new website platform. The new platform will greatly enhance QFF's advocacy ability and will allow farmers and other interested stakeholders to better engage with important project work. The modern interface will be at the heart of QFF's capabilities to communicate with its agricultural constituency, the government and the public as a whole. Next year is set to be another exciting year for QFF communications.





farmerdisastersupport.org.au

I buy branded milk



NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (NRM) AND RESOURCE PLANNING

QFF engages in this policy area as a matter of priority to secure a sustainable and profitable future for our member industries so that they remain an essential and dynamic sector of the economy. The QFF NRM and resource planning agenda in 2015 - 16 continued to be both proactive (in terms of promoting best practices) and reactive (in responding to government and community concerns). Throughout the year, QFF worked with government to balance its approach with an increased emphasis on long-term policies, and set out practical initiatives that will help government arrive at better policy settings.



FMS/BMP UPDATE

QFF's approach has continued to be a strategic high level push for government to recognise that Farm Management System (FMS) / Best Management Practice (BMP) programs are the most effective mechanism to achieve positive outcomes. QFF consider that there needs to be inter-agency support for BMP programs, logically led and coordinated by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. Farm businesses face significant reform agendas which often create a great deal of uncertainty for farmers and industry investors. They want to be certain that their management practices are both profitable and sustainable. This might include certainty of access to water, stable energy pricing, access to markets or the ability to keep farming in areas close to towns or environmental areas of significance such as the Great Barrier Reef (GBR).

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT REEF PROGRAMME

QFF undertakes important coordination and communication activities under the Australian Government Reef Programme project. The Reef Programme (formerly known as Reef Rescue) is a five year, \$200 million investment by the Australian Government under its Reef 2050 Plan. With extended funding for a further five years (until 2018), the initiative continues a coordinated approach to restoring the health of Australia's environment and building on improved land management practices. QFF continued communication activities to promote the outcomes of the Reef Programme to industry and the community more broadly. The Reef Programme Awards were held at the Landcare and Australian Government Reef Programme Awards dinner in Caloundra on 1 September 2015.



REEF ALLIANCE — GROWING A GREAT BARRIER REEF PROGRAMME

In late December 2015, the Australian Government called for applicants to deliver the \$56 million ReefTrust Phase 3 programme. To be delivered by June 2019, the Programme has three components:

Improving grazing land management to reduce erosion losses to the Reef

Supporting Cane farmers to move beyond industry best practice for nutrient, irrigation, pesticide and soil management

Maintaining water quality improvement momentum in Reef catchment grains, dairy and horticulture industries.

QFF coordinated the Reef Alliance project proposal under Phase 3 of ReefTrusts. In April 2016, the QFF-led proposal was announced successful. The project seeks to improve water quality across the GBR by enabling landholders to change practices in cane, grazing, dairy, horticulture, bananas, grains and cropping. Delivered for the first time by an integrated GBR-wide consortium of farmers, graziers, NRMs and industry groups, this project will redefine delivery of the Reef 2050 Plan.

The project will transform links between Reef programs, regions and industry BMP programs by transcending geographic and administrative boundaries. Eliminating duplication, sharing and providing common consistent project support systems, the project will maximise Reef outcomes while ensuring profitable productive agricultural landscapes.

The Reef Alliance Project partners are:

- Queensland Farmers' Federation
- CANEGROWERS
- Growcom
- Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation
- AgForce Queensland
- Australian Banana Growers Council
- Regional Groups' Collective
- Terrain Natural Resource Management Ltd
- Fitzroy Basin Association
- North Queensland Dry Tropics
- Burnett Mary Regional Group
- Cape York Natural Resource Management
- World Wildlife Fund for Nature

QFF RESOURCE PLANNING AND NRM COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

The Resource Planning and NRM Committee consists of environmental policy officers from QFF member organisations. The Committee is chaired by Growcom's Chief Advocate, Rachel Mackenzie. Key priorities identified and addressed by the Committee this year included:

- FMS/BMP development and implementation
- Energy Policy
- Reef Policy
- Irrigation and Water issues
- Climate Change and Carbon Farming
- Vegetation Management reforms implementation
- Regional and land use planning
- Disaster resilience.

ENERGY REGULATORY REFORM

During 2015-16, QFF made submissions to the Queensland Competition Authority (QCA) and the Queensland Productivity Commission (QPC) on various issues including electricity pricing. Based on these submissions, QFF continues to work with its members, Queensland Treasury, the Department of Energy and Water Supply and Ergon Energy (now Energy Queensland) to develop a range of strategies and policy opportunities to assist the agricultural sector manage increasing and unsustainable energy costs.

QFF also provided a submission to the Queensland Renewable Energy Expert Panel – Issues Paper, which is investigating the feasibility of a 50 per cent renewable energy target for Queensland by 2030. QFF's submission articulated the opportunities for the agricultural sector to lead renewable energy development, provide excess generation capacity to the network outside periods of high on-farm demand, as well as providing siting opportunities. The submission also raised concerns over the continued barriers (technological and administrative) pertaining to the export of additional energy to the network.



¹ A detailed energy audit defined by AS3598 <http://eex.gov.au/2014/10/new-energy-audit-standards-to-assist-businesses/>



ENERGY EFFICIENCY - ENERGY SAVERS

QFF is working with its member organisations to deliver the Energy Savers Plus Program (ESPP) to their farmer members, with practical on-farm energy efficiency solutions. The program works closely with over 130 farms (34 under irrigation programs and 100 under energy savers plus) to undertake Type 2 energy audits and support farmers to implement the audit findings.

Key aspects of the program to date are:

- Recruiting farms to the Energy Savers Plus Program, including up to 100 audits of irrigation and on-farm processing systems.
- Creating an Energy Savers Plus website as an information portal for the program on the QFF website.
- Circulating an e-news bi-monthly for case studies.
- Publishing 17 case studies from the audits conducted under the previous Irrigators Energy Savers program with additional case studies to be published in 2016/17.
- Significant media engagement to highlight case studies and the benefits of energy efficiency with numerous radio interviews and print media articles including the Rural Weekly and member publications.
- Working to assist farmers that have had audits under the program to identify suitable technology and financial arrangements to assist in implementing audit findings.
- Assisting QFF members to deliver workshops, exhibitions and field days including:
 - o delivering an initial series of 11 workshops across Queensland with Ergon Energy in August and September 2015
 - o presenting at Grower evenings, field days, meetings and workshops in Applethorpe Gatton, Mondure, Atherton, Mareeba, Brisbane, Bonshaw and Bowen on various dates throughout the year
 - o hosting an exhibition and delivering presentations at the Poultry Industry Exchange Conference in May 2016.

Many of the Energy Savers Plus audits are being delivered and it is anticipated that these will be completed by January 2017. Following the completion of the audits, the program will continue until October 2017 to assist farmers with implementation, conduct measurement and verification of implemented outcomes, develop case studies and participate in more industry events to provide energy efficiency advice to farmers.

QFF has also been contributing to the development of an Energy Productivity Roadmap for Agriculture through the industry-led Alliance to Save Energy (A2SE), which aims to double energy productivity by 2030. The roadmap proposes a number of strategies to achieve this target, including information and grant programs, and is due to be released in the second half of 2016. This is a more ambitious target than the COAG target of a 40% target by 2030. A2SE is developing sector.



WASTE MANAGEMENT AND RECYCLING REFORM

Queensland's Waste Avoidance and Resource Productivity Strategy (2014-2024) identifies a range of wastes which require action ('Priority Wastes'). 'Action Plans' are to be developed by all significant industry sectors in Queensland, including agriculture. These plans must present options to improve the management of all wastes, including those identified as priority wastes. Priority wastes are defined under legislation as those with either high disposal impacts (such as toxicity or greenhouse gas emissions), social impacts (such as community concern or amenity), and/or whose recovery would present resource savings or business opportunities. Priority wastes include agricultural plastics and organic wastes.

Over the year, QFF members participated in a range of innovative recycling and material recovery activities. For example, CANEGROWERS participated in the 'Sugar Cane Fertiliser Bag Recovery Trial', which commenced in September 2015 and successfully collected and reprocessed over 217 tonnes (or over 72,000 bags). This trial is now being commercialised.

QFF continues to seek further support for recycling and material efficiencies across the sector.



WATER REFORM

A number of water reforms were either commenced or ongoing during 2015 - 16.



WATER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2015

The Water Legislation Amendment Bill was introduced to State Parliament in late 2015 and the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee submitted its report on the Bill on 1 March 2016. QFF made submissions on the development of the Bill and to the Parliamentary Committee investigation. The Bill has yet to be submitted for the approval of the Parliament.

MURRAY-DARLING BASIN PLAN

QFF continues to work with farmers in the Queensland Murray-Darling catchments regarding the significant issues involved in the implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. The Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) has now concluded the environmental science, social and economic assessments and the Aboriginal socio-cultural survey work. The MDBA has been presenting its proposed decision-making framework to all stakeholders. Information presented to QFF and its members indicated that the number of environmental indicators realised from increased water recovery in the Northern Basin are limited, but the social and economic impacts across many Queensland communities are significant.

The project seeks to investigate the feasibility of utilising treated effluent for agricultural production.

NATIONAL WATER INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT FUND

QFF, in partnership with member organisation Cotton Australia, successfully secured funding under the Australian Government's National Water Infrastructure Development Fund (NWDIF). The Commonwealth Department of Agriculture and Water Resources announced funding for 14 Queensland feasibility studies, with Queensland's Department of Energy and Water Supply (DEWS) facilitating the funding arrangements. The project seeks to investigate the feasibility of utilising treated effluent for agricultural production.

State-wide catchment based water planning:

QFF has maintained contact with farmers in the Central Locker Scheme regarding issues that need consideration to define groundwater entitlements and water trading. An Advisory Panel has now been established and is meeting regularly. In addition, QFF continues to support the Lockyer Water Users Forum to address the dual objective of responding to the Department of Natural Resources and Mines (DNRM) water planning process and ongoing work with DEWS and the Commonwealth regarding funding for Downs and Lockyer Council investigations.

The Condamine Balonne and the Moonie-Border Rivers Water Plans are currently under review, with QFF making comment on the respective Statement of Proposals. At this stage, DNRM does not expect that a draft plan would be available before January 2018 with the completed plans finalised for implementation by June 2019.

Stanthorpe groundwater plan will be undertaken in conjunction of the review of the Border Rivers Plan. However, this area will be subject to specific investigation in regard to overuse of the resource with a moratorium on any development backed by detailed satellite monitoring.

The Burdekin Basin has been subject to a targeted amendment of the Plan to allow for trading of entitlements in the upper catchments of the Basin. The draft amendment is expected to be released in September 2016 for submissions, with DNRM hoping to finalise by April 2017.

The Great Artesian Basin Plan review is ongoing, with the Draft Plan to be released in November 2016 for finalisation by February 2017. QFF maintains its representation on Great Artesian Basin Advisory Committee (GABAC) which is advising on the preparation of the Plan. The GABAC last met 18-19 August 2016.

QFF provided a submission on Statement of Proposals for the Cape York Water Plan, but there are no dates for release of draft Plan.

DEPARTMENTAL SUPPORT

The Department of Natural Resources and Mines continues to provide financial support to QFF to help with the development and implementation of water reforms. QFF thanks the Department for its continued support.

A resilient farm is likely one that is profitable, sustainable, and can effectively manage variations in environment, financial and economic aspects of its business, such as commodity prices and input costs.

CLIMATE CHANGE

There has been a renewed focus on climate change under the Palaszczuk Government. QFF's vision of climate adaptation in Queensland agriculture is to continually improve the capacity of agriculture and agribusiness to manage climate variability and climate extremes. QFF promotes that Queensland farmers focus on embedding climate variability as a normal business 'risk' decision, while maintaining a focus on productivity and profitability in the short to medium term. A resilient farm is likely one that is profitable, sustainable, and can effectively manage variations in environment, financial and economic aspects of its business, such as commodity prices and input costs.

Appropriate Australian and Queensland Government policies need to be established to deal with the future challenges of climate variability within agriculture and beyond. As part of the May 2016 Budget, the Queensland Government committed \$15 million for managing the impacts of climate change. This

includes \$3 million to support the development of a Queensland Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (Q-CAS). QFF is a member of the Partners Group, which brings together high level oversight, governance and stakeholder engagement in the development of Q-CAS.

QFF will continue working with all levels of government on policies that help farmers prepare for and recover from climatic shock events and variability.





CYCLONE MARCIA — INDUSTRY RECOVERY OFFICER PROJECT

Tropical Cyclone Marcia was a Category 5 severe cyclone that made landfall over central Queensland near Shoalwater Bay on 20 February 2015. At its peak there were sustained wind gusts of over 150 km/h and a very well-defined (35 km) eye. The cyclone reached Yeppoon as a Category 4 system, then moved over Rockhampton as a Category 3 system and continued south decreasing to an intense low pressure system around Monto.

The main agricultural industries affected were dairy, grazing, cropping, horticulture and nursery production. The worst hit areas were around Yeppoon and Byfield (north of Rockhampton) where there was widespread damage to farms, and the associated flooding to the south around Biloela and Monto.

QFF is leading the Cyclone Marcia project, with Growcom, Nursery Garden Industry of Queensland, Queensland Dairyfarmers Organisation and Agforce. These organisations are subcontracted to delivery industry specific outcomes.

This project delivers services to affected businesses to:

- Access the full range of government and other assistance available.
- Access additional support where required from financial advisors, technical advisors and health professionals
- Undertake recovery planning to improve resilience. This work is supported by the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements, jointly funded by the Australian and Queensland Governments.





DISASTER RESILIENCE PLANNING FOR AUSTRALIAN AGRICULTURE

Resilience in agriculture is the ability to recover and attain full business functionality after a disruption. Building resilience is about changing industry attitudes toward risk and development capacity to adapt to change.

QFF has previously recognised this, and recently completed the 'Disaster Resilience Planning for Agriculture in Queensland' project funded by the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. The work completed in this project has fed in to the national project, 'Disaster Resilience Planning for Australian Agriculture', funded out of the National Emergency Management Project (NEMP).

This project includes pilot studies that apply the framework to three regions across Australia (Far-North Queensland, Northern Victoria and Southern Western Australia). The pilot studies also tested the resilience template to ensure it was appropriately targeted for landholders. The project's 'adoption strategy' sets out the process for these future stages, delivering resilience planning through a national programme and leveraging existing programme structures and funding.



The project's 'adoption strategy' sets out the process for these future stages, delivering resilience planning through a national programme and leveraging existing programme structures and funding.



QUEENSLAND FARM FINANCE STRATEGY (QFFS)

QFF is the custodian of the Queensland Farm Finance Strategy (QFFS); the voluntary code for those using debt finance to operate their farm businesses. All major Queensland farming organisations, all principle banks and QRAA are signatories to the QFFS, with the collective aim of ensuring best practices in debt management.

Under the Abbott/Turnbull Coalition Governments, there has been moves to nationally standardise some farm finance arrangements, including farm debt mediation processes. State and territory jurisdictions are yet to agree on this issue, which created the environment for the 2015 Queensland Rural Debt and Drought Taskforce that concluded in April 2016 with the Chairman's Report and Recommendations.

In response to the Chairman's Report, the Queensland Government partly incorporated some of the report's recommendations in the 2016 Budget. The \$36 million Rural Assistance Package was announced and it aims to broaden QRAA's charter and create an Office for Rural Affairs. It has also resulted in two Bills in the Queensland Parliament which include legislated farm debt mediation

requirements that might not align with future national approaches. These issues will be negotiated over coming months and QFF will seek to ensure that any transition arrangements for farm debt mediation are appropriate and in the long term interests of farmers and agribusinesses operating in this state.



The work program began with a foundation industry survey, the results of which have been disaggregated to assist industries and regional participants identify how training may be used to help rural industries and agribusiness enterprises achieve more from their operations and commercial activities.



RURAL SKILLS AND JOBS ALLIANCE (RJSA)

QFF, our members and AgForce have been working together for a number of years to improve our industries' engagement with the education and training sectors. From July 2015, with ministerial approval, stakeholders negotiated a Collaborative Agreement with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries to fund a three-year work program that will support rural industries' efforts to attract and retain suitably skilled workers for the wide range of jobs that must be filled to support industry growth.

The work program began with a foundation industry survey, the results of which have been disaggregated to assist industries and regional participants identify how training may be used to help rural industries and agribusiness enterprises achieve more from their operations and commercial activities. Survey results are published on the QFF website and more detailed assessments of the data are ongoing.

Members of RJSA are generally pleased with this structured approach to researching rural work force issues, but it is taking time to integrate and provide ready intelligence and data about what is happening in the various rural jobs markets. To expedite this work, QFF completed a recruitment drive and now have a full time Policy Officer (Dr Diana Saunders) and casual consultant (Jim Collings) boosting our analytic efforts. Results will be provided as briefing notes and fact sheets over the coming months. The team encourages industry feedback on the worth or otherwise of these reports as they become available.

One of the aims of RJSA is to pull together various government and industry initiatives and make sure they are industry-led and serving the needs of industry employers in rural and related industries. This is working well and we can report improving performances for the Gateway Schools for Agribusiness and the new Queensland Agricultural Workforce Network (QAWN). This latter initiative commenced in January 2016 and now involves seven regional field officers helping industry employers connect to programs that can help them and their businesses. The Department reports that 43 schools are now receiving Gateway grants and this program is becoming a sound basis for some local rural industries to connect to their high schools. Similarly,

the Agriculture-in-Context program is providing good reach across a range of local school activities focused on farming.

Also, the AgForce-led Schools Industry Partnership Program (SIPP) is reaching far and wide with engagement figures for 2015 - 16 an impressive 5,750 students and over 440 teachers, including some targeted professional development work. Some of these events involve conferences and agricultural shows so the reach to the general public is also very positive.

Currently, QFF provides interim industry advice to the industry engagement section of the Department of Education and Training (DET) and we expect further changes to these arrangements as DET focuses more on annual vocational education and training (VET) investment processes and training industry responses to them. It is also likely that once Jobs Queensland becomes fully operational there will be a need for rural industries to be involved, especially in the development of regional workforce initiatives.

Our greatest challenge remains at the national level where new service arrangements started roll-out in April 2016. We have engaged with our new Skills Service Organisation, Skills Impact and are working out how Queensland might best engage with the new VET product development processes and the pivotal roles of Industry Reference Committees (IRCs). There is also a process for developing 4-Year Work Plans for these IRCs which is mandated by the Australian Industry Skills Committee and this raises serious issues about appropriate resourcing for the professional tasks required to make them effective for the quality training and job outcomes we all seek.

INDUSTRY MEMBER UPDATES



CANE GROWERS

Queensland sugar growers delivered a crop of 32.65 million tonnes in 2015 with a commercial cane sugar reading of 13.97 which is higher than average. A united front of grower organisations, led by CANEGROWERS, won a victory for competition and fairness by amending the Sugar Industry Act.

Smartcane BMP gathered momentum driving productivity, profitability and environmental stewardship across all districts. At July 2016 60 per cent of the sugarcane area in Queensland was registered in the program and 123 farming businesses had been independently audited and accredited.



GROWCOM

The proposed backpacker tax was and continues to be a huge concern for labour-scarce horticulture industry. Growcom has lobbied on behalf of its members against the Federal Government's decision to scrap the tax-free threshold for Working Holiday Makers (backpackers) and impose a 32.5% tax rate.

Growcom has reviewed its membership benefits and now offers two hours of free Workplace Relations advice a year, a new online Growcom Shop, a digital magazine and a user-friendly membership portal for no increase in membership fees.



COTTON AUSTRALIA

Cotton Australia's efforts in Queensland continued to focus on water, electricity and transport, and ensured:

- the voice of growers is heard by regulators, including the Murray-Darling Basin Authority as it continues its Northern Basin review
- electricity prices were held at 2014-15 levels during 2015-16
- local water management was progressed in Queensland
- the transport of cotton and harvesting equipment was carried out safely and efficiently.



QUEENSLAND DAIRYFARMERS' ORGANISATION (QDO)

QDO continued to represent the interest of its members through campaigns addressing farmgate price issues and abuses of market power by major retailers. Successful lobbying efforts committing the federal government to introduce the 'Effects Test' into the Competition Consumer Act and the ongoing 'I buy branded milk' campaign have and continue to be QDO's priorities. Biosecurity and natural disaster recovery also featured substantially in 2015 - 16.



NURSERY & GARDEN INDUSTRY QUEENSLAND (NGIQ)

NGIQ is the association representing production nurseries, garden retail centres and allied trades. NGIQ continued to engage with the Queensland Government to inform the industry on the new Biosecurity Act. NGIQ relaunched the campaign, 'Discover your Local Nursery', at the 2016 Ekka and was instrumental in developing and planning the Ekka Flower & Garden Precinct to promote the industry to general public.



QUEENSLAND CHICKEN GROWERS ASSOCIATION (QCGA)

The past year has seen QCGA work closely with growers to ensure that their interests are represented at both a state and national level. QCGA has empowered its members to form strong negotiating groups to ensure that the growers businesses remain robustly profitable and viable. QCGA continues its work through the Poultry Industry Taskforce along with QCMC, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Department of Local Government Planning to ensure the industry's continued growth.



QUEENSLAND CHICKEN MEAT COUNCIL (QCMC)

QCMC continued to work closely with companies and growers to ensure their interests are represented. Through the Poultry Industry Taskforce, the QCMC continued to engage with the relevant state government departments and local governments to ensure the industry continues to grow in Queensland.



PORK QUEENSLAND INC.

Pork Qld Inc. worked closely with the Queensland Government to ensure awareness of the impacts to the pork industry on a wide range of issues including: gas safety plans for biogas recovery; review of licensing fees for piggeries and the development of the new Queensland biosecurity legislation. Pork Qld Inc. continues its close working relationship with Australian Pork Ltd. and works cooperatively with QFF on Energy and Water resources.



CENTRAL DOWNS IRRIGATORS LTD (CDIL)

CDIL continues to represent and improve the rights of our irrigators to developing resources in priority agricultural land in the Central Downs.

CDIL has again had a successful year working on behalf of irrigator members. Our continued advocacy and has resulted in further testing of connectivity within the Condamine Alluvium which is overseen by the Office of Groundwater impact Assessment providing encouraging results.



BUNDABERG REGIONAL IRRIGATORS GROUP (BRIG)

BRIG represents irrigators in the Bundaberg district across commodity groups including sugarcane, grain and horticulture. Proudly irrigator biased and needs focussed, BRIG has been involved with the 'Arc-up' campaign to address the rapidly rising electricity prices impacting members. BRIG continues calling for specific electricity tariffs for 'food and fibre' production and has already been involved in tariff trials.



BURDEKIN RIVER IRRIGATION AREA IRRIGATORS LTD (BRIA IRRIGATORS)

BRIA has promoted irrigation tail water recycling combined with efficient irrigation application practices, which has resulted in approximately 70% of irrigation run-off in the Burdekin Haughton Water Supply Scheme (BHWSS) being retained on farm.

The facilitating an irrigator driven project (BCAG Project) will reduce nutrient and agricultural chemical losses from farms in the Barratta Creek catchment through the adoption of sustainable farming and irrigation practices.



PIONEER VALLEY WATER (PV WATER)

PV Water converted from a statutory authority to a dual co-operative business structure, placing scheme assets and operation under local management - a process that commenced in 2004. With Ergon Energy, PV Water finalised a joint study (conducted by SMEC) into energy and water use efficiency for Septimus Irrigation scheme. The study looked at existing efficiencies and possible options in the light of increasing unaffordable energy costs.



FLOWER ASSOCIATION OF QUEENSLAND INC. (FAQI)

FAQI has had a productive year by initiating and driving the inaugural Australian Flowers Week (September 17-25), which is a national celebration of cut flowers and foliage to coincide with the spring flush when growers tend to have excess product. The industry has also improved engaged with government on national issues such as biosecurity. FAQI is now a represented on the Imported Cut Flowers Regulation Working Group.



QUEENSLAND UNITED EGG PRODUCERS (QUEP)

QUEP was involved in successful defining of 'Free Range Definition' for egg farmers. The commonsense and practical definition to the farming practice, egg farmers now have now confidence to invest in the industry. QUEP was involved in the creation of the National Egg Industry advocacy body, Egg Farmers of Australia Ltd., which was formed to conduct an agricultural lobbying and advocacy role.



AUSTRALIAN ORGANIC (ACO)

ACO testing in the spotlight: ACO conducts sampling of both soil and certified products during onsite inspections and from the marketplace to deliver third party verification for the consumer that the products are indeed certified organic. ACO undertook over 19,000 compliance checks in 2015 - 16.

Launch of Non-GMO Certification: There has been a shift in consumer behaviours due to an increase in awareness through the media of GMOs. The new Non-GMO Certification allows ACO to satisfy market demands.



Queensland Farmers' Federation
Level 3, 183 North Quay, Brisbane QLD 4000, Australia
P: +61 7 3837 4720
qfarmers@qff.org.au

www.qff.org.au