



AgForce Queensland Farmers Limited detailed policy platform for the ‘Back the Bush: our people, our future’ 2024 Queensland Election Campaign

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AgForce Queensland Farmers’ detailed policy platform for the 2024 Queensland Election

‘Back the Bush: our people, our future’

Behind every meal the consumer enjoys, there are countless dedicated farmers working tirelessly. These farmers support all of our communities three times a day, 365 days a year.

All Queensland’s Food and Fibre Producers and industry sector asks for in return, is the opportunity to continue producing the food and fibre that sustains us all, with minimum constraints.

Help AgForce ensure food security by considering these three essential pillars: **Produce, Provide, Prosper.**

Together, we can create a future where Queensland’s Food and Fibre Producers thrive, ensuring a stable and prosperous supply chain for everyone.

A broad commitment on these pillars is required to advance the wellbeing of farming families, achieve sustainable and profitable farming enterprises, and secure the liveability and prosperity of our rural communities and the state.

AgForce seek a commitment of support from all political parties and candidates in the 2024 Queensland Election to:

- *Keep Queensland Producing - continued production of high-quality food and fibre*
- *Keep Queensland Providing - strong supply chains, delivering our products efficiently*
- *Keep Queensland Prospering - thriving rural and regional communities*

It is critical for Food and Fibre Producers that the next State Government delivers strong policies to ensure regional Queensland is the outstanding investment destination and an attractive place to live and work.

THEME 1: “Keep Queensland Producing”

Broadacre beef, sheep, goat, grains and sugarcane farmers and their families are essential to the strength and prosperity of Queensland’s regions and the wellbeing of our communities, across the length and breadth of Queensland.

As part of Queensland’s primary industries and food supply chain which supports over 300,000 jobs, AgForce Member commodities generate around \$9.6 billion¹ in farm products annually and steward approximately 86% of the state’s land², a resource that needs active management.

AgForce is keen for all Queenslanders to better understand agriculture, the everyday management that is required to sustainably maintain the environment and production, and the contribution of the agriculture sector to society.

BIOSECURITY

Vision:

Community confidence in an effective Queensland biosecurity system that protects our community, environment and agriculture from the risk of new biosecurity incursions and effectively manages existing established pests, weeds and diseases that affect animals and plants. Best practice in biosecurity, including research, collaborative risk management and rapid response to maintain our state’s reputation and capacity to supply and trade safe, clean food and fibre products.

Background into the issue:

Biosecurity is a shared high priority for all tiers of government, industry and the broader community. Globalisation, along with the increasing ease of international trade and travel, continuously increases the risk of new pest and disease incursions. With increasing activity even in remote regions of Queensland due to the expansion of resources, renewables and utilities, we all must practice good biosecurity measures to prevent new outbreaks and stop existing issues from getting worse. Primary producers invest heavily in on-farm management of weeds, pests and diseases; and industry has robust quality assurance and certification programs, as well as funding research, development and extension. Government and co-existing land users need to fulfill their own general biosecurity obligation by recognising and consulting with the agricultural industry in formulating biosecurity policies and practices.

Biosecurity issues such as weeds, pest animals (including invertebrate pests) and diseases do not exist in isolation from broader land and sea management considerations. For this reason, biosecurity activities need to be highly coordinated across all stakeholder groups, and good neighbour policies and community control programs are often required. Good neighbour policies includes managers of Queensland’s 1,000 protected areas and other state lands which cover over 14.5 million hectares³.

¹ <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/news-media/campaigns/data-farm/primary-industries>

² Queensland Agricultural Snapshot 2018 chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/138392/8/State-of-Agriculture-Report.pdf

³ [Land-based protected areas in Queensland: your ultimate guide | Department of Environment, Science and Innovation \(DESI\), Queensland](#)

For livestock producers, biosecurity is continuously being enhanced through the improvement of livestock traceability, such as the implementation of electronic identification (eID) for sheep and goats. While producers continue to play their part in protecting Australian agriculture from biosecurity threats, the financial burden of enhancing traceability systems remains on their shoulders. Currently, Queensland is the lowest funded state for eID support and there remains a need for a genuine partnership between government and industry to implement eID in a smooth transition, not just for the benefit of sheep and goat producers but for the entire supply chain.

Solutions:

- Retention and increase in a skilled front-line biosecurity workforce across Queensland is essential for preparedness, rapid response and increased community awareness.
- Long term funding for biosecurity research into new and established pests, weeds and diseases to ensure effective, best management options are always available.
- Targeted biosecurity awareness campaigns to build an ethos that “biosecurity is everyone’s business”. Awareness campaigns include early education of the next generation of Queenslanders.
- Government must continue to provide effective, rapid diagnostic services, innovative surveillance methods and a unified, integrated mapping platform for detections.
- Increased funding and resources to control established vertebrate pests and invasive weeds across all state managed lands and the protected area estate.
- State government to fully fund the Wild Dog Barrier Fence and Darling Downs Moreton Rabbit Board Fence as a biosecurity barrier that protects local communities from threats; and continue co-investment into private exclusion fencing to protect small livestock from wild dogs and feral pigs.
- Ensure Good Neighbour Policy⁴ is functioning adequately between the protected area estate and neighbouring landholders to not only prevent biosecurity threats, but for improved preparation for bush fire disaster response, including adequate levels of resourcing.
- Implement the agreed actions within Queensland’s Biosecurity Strategy 2024 to 2029⁵ and the final Queensland Invasive Plants and Animals Strategy 2025 to 2030⁶.
- Restore and expand the network of machinery and vehicle wash down facilities (including effluent disposal for livestock transport waste) to enable compliance with the General Biosecurity Obligation and the Effluent Code of Practice⁷.
- Amend the *Biosecurity Regulation 2014 Sections 94G and 94H* to reduce confusion and close loopholes for companies refusing compliance with farm biosecurity plans.

Submissions / Supporting Documents:

AgForce submission into the Agriculture and Fisheries and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023

[Agriculture and Fisheries and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 - AgForce - Advancing Rural Queensland \(agforceqld.org.au\)](https://agforceqld.org.au)

⁴ Queensland Department of Environment, Science and Innovation Operational Policy - “Good Neighbour policy”, <https://parks.desi.qld.gov.au/management/resources/policies>

⁵ <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/biosecurity/enhancing-capability-capacity/qld-biosecurity-strategy>

⁶ <https://daf.engagementhub.com.au/invasive-plants-animals-consultation>

⁷ <chrome-extension://efaidnbnmnibpcjpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.nhvr.gov.au/files/media/document/83/202212-1326-managing-effluent-in-the-livestock-supply-chain-ricp.pdf>

AgForce joint submission into the consultation on the Queensland Invasive Plants and Animals Strategy 2025 – 2030 [Draft Qld Invasive Plants and Animals Strategy \(QIPAS\) 2025–2030 · AgForce · Advancing Rural Queensland \(agforceqld.org.au\)](#)

AgForce submission into the Senate Standing Committee Inquiry into Red Imported Fire Ants in Australia [Red Imported Fire Ants in Australia · AgForce · Advancing Rural Queensland \(agforceqld.org.au\)](#)

Survey Question:

- 1) Will your Party commit to increasing the number of trained and qualified biosecurity staff in Full-time Equivalent (FTE) positions within government agencies by no less than 100, with a focus on: a) reversing the loss of permanent research and extension staff in roles protecting broadacre agriculture from weeds, pests and disease, and b) creating at least 10 new positions for livestock inspector personnel located within rural and remote Queensland?
- 2) Critical to front-line defence infrastructure against diseases, pests and weeds, will your Party protect agriculture by ensuring Queensland’s network of wash down facilities are fit-for-purpose and fully operational?
- 3) Will your Party commit to being a model environmental citizen and respect general biosecurity obligations, by adequately resourcing protected areas and implementing best practice fire management under a ‘good neighbour’ policy?
- 4) Will your Party amend the *Biosecurity Regulation 2016* Sections 94G and 94H to reduce confusion and close loopholes for those refusing to be compliant with individual farm biosecurity plans?
- 5) Will your Party commit to a per annum, equitable cost-sharing arrangement with Queensland’s sheep and goat producers toward the cost of individual electronic identification ear-tags/devices, for a period no less than 5 years?

SUSTAINABILITY

Vision:

To produce food, fibre, plant or terrestrial animal products⁸ while improving the environment, conserving natural resources, maintaining profitability and increasing farm business resilience through making the most of additional sources of capital. Queensland’s producers will have the certainty and confidence that the State government will invest in their future and give a “hand-up” towards business continuity when all reasonable preparation is exhausted in times of extreme impact.

Background into the issue:

The Australian Bureau of Statistics confirms that agriculture is one of Australia’s most volatile sectors in the nation’s economy. Despite this, Australian farmers are among the most self-sufficient in the world, with government support representing just 2.5% of farming income (OECD); and where Queensland agriculture is supporting the government to deliver on commitments of a net zero emissions economy by 2050, through programs such as the Queensland Low Emissions Agriculture Roadmap 2022-2032⁹.

⁸ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations <https://www.fao.org/policy-support/tools-and-publications/resources-details/en/c/1637931/>

⁹ <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/news-media/campaigns/low-emissions-roadmap>

Additionally, nationally-led industry initiatives such as the Sustainability Frameworks that have been developed for each of agriculture's major sectors, demonstrates Australia's and Queensland's commitment to systems of production which prioritise the health of the environment, the welfare of animals and safe and nutritious food.

In return, Queensland's producers require certainty of what support will be available to them in times of extreme external influences, as well as the ability to strategically and efficiently invest in their enterprises to prepare and mitigate the effects of such events.

Queensland's leaders must recognise the outstanding work of the agricultural sector in meeting sustainability targets across environmental, social, and governance criteria; rather than increasing the legislative or reporting burden on our highly regulated sector. AgForce encourages Queensland's aspiring leaders to consider adopting AgForce Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) policy principles ¹⁰.

Furthermore, AgForce have launched AgCarE, an initiative designed to audit sustainable production, carbon, and biodiversity assets in agriculture.

Solutions:

- Improve opportunities for Queensland primary producers to generate capital from sustainability.
- Ensure decisions and regulation are backed by good science.
- Improve access to finance.
- Ensure good decision-making processes regarding assessment of competing land, i.e. between agriculture and renewables.
- Regular review of the Queensland State Disaster Management Plan¹¹ to include broadacre landholders and their representatives, including AgForce.
- Financial support to assist farmers implement new regulatory requirements, such as the cost of electronic identification tags for sheep and goats.

Submissions / Supporting Documents:

AgForce Environmental, Social and Governance policy principles

<https://www.agforceqld.org.au/knowledgebase/article/AGF-02043/>

AgForce submission to the Queensland Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

<https://www.agforceqld.org.au/knowledgebase/article/AGF-02026/>

Australian Beef Sustainability Framework (ABSF) <https://www.sustainableaustralianbeef.com.au/>

Australian Sheep Sustainability Framework (SSF) <https://www.sheepsustainabilityframework.com.au/>

Trust In Australian Wool (TIAW) <https://trustinaustralianwool.com.au/>

Grains Sustainability Framework (GSF) <https://www.graingrowers.com.au/news/australian-grains-industry-sustainability-framework>

Australian Agricultural Sustainability Framework (AASF) <https://aasf.org.au/>

Survey Question:

- 6) Will your Party commit to supporting agriculture-led progress towards climate and other Environmental, Social, and Governance goals, favouring a policy of voluntary tools over mandatory requirements?

¹⁰ <https://www.agcare.org.au/>

¹¹ Queensland State Disaster Management Plan, <https://www.disaster.qld.gov.au/plans>

- 7) With increasing expectations around energy planning, climate and nature conservation, will your Party ensure that Food and Fibre Producers are not expected to “shoulder the financial responsibility” for the rest of society?

LAND MANAGEMENT AND SECURITY

Vision:

Confidence that Queensland landscapes and waterways are well managed, with security of agricultural land and water to ensure sound investment, healthy ecosystems in State and private lands; with systems that keep landholders well informed, supported and rewarded for management practices that protect environmental assets. Effective custodianship of good quality agricultural land for current and future generations, with society benefiting from healthy landscapes.

Background into the issue/problem:

It is vital that rural landholders’ rights and role as a landscape manager are protected. Landholders need to be well supported and informed in understanding and responding to the complex issues associated with the use of land and water by multiple competing users. This includes resource extraction, renewable power generation (including solar and wind), and conservation, carbon and biodiversity purposes.

The existing vegetation management regulatory framework in Queensland is politically motivated and targets reduction in broadacre tree clearing but does not support the effective management of vegetation or natural ecosystems. The regulatory framework is crippling the ability of landholders to manage in an environmentally sustainable manner, minimise wildfire risk and actively retain a viable tree-grass balance across natural rangelands.

Furthermore, the jurisdiction of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth) (EPBC Act) has caused mass concern among Queensland producers wishing to manage their land. It is imperative that the Federal legislation does not undermine the State contractual agreement of Property Maps of Assessable Vegetation (PMAV) and the certainty that they provide landholders, especially regarding Category X.

Landholder’s rights must be protected with regards to competing land uses, such as renewable energy projects, CSG and traditional mining. AgForce has developed a set of ‘Land Use Protection Principles’ that can be used as a decision-making template for the co-existence of agriculture with other competing land uses. These form a practical view for governments and other stakeholders on the interests of landholders in negotiating with other proposed land uses and for respecting the role agricultural land has in food production. The principles also include recognition of the interests of landholders including biosecurity, the value of natural capital and human health, preserving future agricultural opportunities, transparent monitoring and enforcement and avoiding perverse legacy effects on natural resources.

Instigation of a Natural Capital approach to managing landscapes, in which landowners are rewarded for good management of ecosystem services, including carbon sequestration and co-benefits, is necessary for broadening and stabilising income streams.

Solutions:

- Continued development of a Natural Capital marketplace to increase income streams for agriculture through payment for ecosystem services.
- Rewarding landowners for improving and preserving healthy landscapes.
- Review the Queensland *Vegetation Management Act 1999* and, by association, the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and other linked legislation.
- Certainty that Category X and Property Maps of Assessable Vegetation (PMAV) are recognised across all State and Federal Legislation for consistent management of natural assets and production systems.
- A *Regional Planning Interests Act 2014* that provides clear priorities and protections for Priority Agricultural Areas and Strategic Cropping Areas.
- Agreed pathways between all interested stakeholders to allow the ability to convert all Term Leases, such as Pastoral Holdings, to Freehold title.
- Delivering water security to agriculture, and rural and regional towns such as Bundaberg region's Paradise Dam.
- Advocate to protect the Great Artesian Basin as a strategic water source for rural and remote communities.

Submissions / Supporting Documents:

AgForce Natural Capital. <https://www.agcare.org.au/>

AgForce Land Use Protection Principles <https://www.agforceqld.org.au/knowledgebase/article/AGF-01250/>

AgForce submission to the Australian Senate Inquiry into Carbon Capture and Storage <https://www.agforceqld.org.au/knowledgebase/article/AGF-02010/>

AgForce submission into the Mineral and Energy Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 [Mineral and Energy Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 · AgForce · Advancing Rural Queensland \(agforceqld.org.au\)](#)

AgForce submission into the Energy Renewable Transformation and Jobs Bill 2023 [Energy Renewable Transformation and Jobs Bill 2023 · AgForce · Advancing Rural Queensland \(agforceqld.org.au\)](#)

AgForce submission into the Australian government's Agriculture and Land Sector Plan [Agriculture and Land Sector Plan · AgForce · Advancing Rural Queensland \(agforceqld.org.au\)](#)

AgForce submission into the Proposed Amendments to the Regional Planning Interests Act (RPI Act) [Proposed Amendments to the Regional Planning Interests Act \(RPI Act\) · AgForce · Advancing Rural Queensland \(agforceqld.org.au\)](#)

Survey Question:

- 8) Will your Party acknowledge Queensland Food and Fibre Producers' stewardship of our primary production areas?
- 9) Will your Party defend Queensland's Food and Fibre Producers in delivering good land management outcomes?
- 10) Will your Party commit to reviewing the Vegetation Management Act 1999 in pursuit of improving agricultural productivity?
- 11) Will your Party commit to maintaining the Property Map of Assessable Vegetation (PMAV) structure and legacy of Category X allowable clearing?

MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

Vision:

Strong regions need strong farm businesses. By investing to strengthen farming businesses and supporting farmers to capitalise on market opportunities, Queensland invests in the strength of its regions.

Background into the issue:

Agriculture is a major exporting industry, with changes in access to overseas markets affecting the capacity and profitability of primary producers and industry's supply chain partners. The total value of Queensland's primary industries for 2023-24 is forecast to be \$22.1 billion, an increase of \$3 billion from financial year 2020¹². In 2022-23, the value of Queensland rural exports was \$12.5 billion, 17% greater than the 2021-22 period, and 25% greater than the average of 5 years to 2022-23¹³.

With export markets playing a critical role in the viability of Australia's agriculture industry, heavy reliance is placed on governments to defend existing rights of access to livestock, meat, fibre, grains and sugar markets, and where possible, to secure new market opportunities and improvements to existing export conditions. Promoting Queensland's Agriculture industry and telling its positive story is such a critical need from government.

Additionally, adequate supply chain access to domestic farm inputs is vital for Agriculture's ongoing profitability and resilience.

Closer economic partnerships promote stronger trade and commercial ties between participating countries, and provide opportunities for Australian exporters and investors to expand their business into key markets.

Negotiating Free Trade Agreements, with our trading nations, such as the European Union (EU), the Indo-Pacific, the United Arab Emirates and China, are important to industry, and it is vital that government and industry trade negotiators continue to pursue the best deal possible for Australia's primary producers; with a strong focus on resolving technical and other Non-tariff barriers (NTB), while establishing a consistent approach to delivering on economic, social and environmental balance on both sides of trade agreements.

Solutions:

- Working closely with Trade & Investment Queensland, the government maintains and grows domestic and international market access.
- Continue to promote and champion Australia's robust food safety standards and traceability records of Australian high-quality beef, sheep and goat meats, wool, grain and sugar over and above all other world supplies.
- Support industry's efforts on additional value-adding within Queensland, to enhance processing and packaging, and identify and build manufacturing opportunities.
- Queensland, without its vibrant and viable live export trade, would lose cattle sales and support for many northern jobs in remote areas, including indigenous employment. Government,

¹² <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/news-media/campaigns/data-farm/primary-industries>

¹³ <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/news-media/campaigns/data-farm/export-trade#:~:text=In%202022%E2%80%9323%2C%20Queensland%20exported,greater%20than%20in%202021%E2%80%9322>

therefore, must support live export while ensuring excellent animal welfare, without overwhelming red tape.

- Work in partnership with the Federal Government to defend Australian Food and Fibre production systems from restrictions placed on trade by the European Union Deforestation Regulation¹⁴ (EUDR)?
- Secure long-term, priority arrangements to support Queensland’s vital “inputs” supply chain businesses.

Submissions / Supporting Documents:

AgForce submission into the Australian government’s Export Control Amendment (Ending Live Sheep Exports by Sea) Bill 2024 [Export Control Amendment \(Ending Live Sheep Exports by Sea\) Bill 2024 · AgForce · Advancing Rural Queensland \(agforceqld.org.au\)](#)

AgForce joint submission into the Grain Trade Australia Standards Review [Grain Trade Australia Standards Review – Potential Changes for the 2024/25 season. · AgForce · Advancing Rural Queensland \(agforceqld.org.au\)](#)

Survey Question:

- 12) Will your Party sponsor Queensland Food and Fibre Producers’ positive story, by promoting our premium, clean, green and sustainable produce domestically and internationally?
- 13) Will your Party work collaboratively with the Federal Government to defend Australian Food and Fibre Producers against unjust regulatory change of foreign trading partners, such as the restrictions from the European Union Deforestation Regulation?
- 14) Will your Party defend, maintain and invest in the growth of Queensland’s Live Export trade?
- 15) Will your Party commit to secure long-term priority arrangements of vital supply chain farm inputs for Queensland Food and Fibre Producers?

NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Vision:

Production of a range of quality crops that meets the demands of domestic and international consumers, including the livestock industry. An appropriate planning and decision-making platform, informed by reliable science and implementation of the latest technologies, setting the region and the nation in good stead to continue growing a sustainable and profitable economy in the north.

Background into the issue:

Over half of Queensland is situated above the Tropic of Capricorn and around 6% of this land area is considered potentially suitable for cropping systems¹⁵. For example, the North Queensland Irrigated Agricultural Study¹⁶ identified eight million hectares of potentially suitable agricultural land in the Flinders River Catchment and two million hectares in the Gilbert River Catchment, with up to 50,000 hectares of potential irrigated agriculture across the two.

There is the potential to build the Northern Australia economy through long-term holistic policy development, increased crop production/production systems, regional and coastal renewable fuels refineries, fuel hubs and manufacturing plants leveraging renewable fuel (feedstock source

¹⁴ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/forests/deforestation/regulation-deforestation-free-products_en

¹⁵ Queensland Agricultural Land Audit - <https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/farms-fishing-forestry/agriculture/agribusiness/agricultural-land-audit>

¹⁶ <https://www.csiro.au/en/research/natural-environment/water/water-resource-assessment/fgara/overview>

locations¹⁷), enabling greater crop and livestock productivity and new export opportunities. The full potential is yet to be realised as the elements necessary for agricultural development have been largely considered in isolation rather than together. These include access to skilled labour, relevant RD&E, infrastructure provisions, governance arrangements, land tenure complexities, water availability, and a need for pragmatic natural resource management frameworks. There is a need to overcome regulatory impediments.

The government's net zero and renewable energy ambitions means that while agriculture remains reliant on fossil diesel, it will remain a hard to abate sector into the foreseeable future. AgForce requests the State Government advocate for, support and participate in a "National Feedstock Strategy".

If these policy challenges can be addressed the flow on effects will be significant, and will include long-term investment security; growth of viable, resilient and sustainable domestic and export supply chains; increased employment and demand for skilled workers; resulting in confidence and economic gains for Food and Fibre Producers and regional communities.

Solutions:

- Establish broad bipartisan consensus on northern development including amendments to legislation to enable confidence in investment and well managed, sustainable development.
- Facilitate the development of new and diversified agricultural industries in the north. This will increase economic prosperity and provide new jobs in northern Queensland.
- Facilitate the development of renewable fuel refineries along regional coastal areas at source feedstock locations (agricultural crop production locations), aligning to the CSIRO Sustainable aviation fuel opportunities for Australia report and Grain Growers: National Grain Freight Strategy¹⁸.
- Continue to fund the implementation of the Northern Australia Agenda¹⁹, working to remove regulatory barriers.

Submissions / Supporting Documents:

AgForce Northern Development Report 2023 <https://www.agforceqld.org.au/knowledgebase/article/AGF-02064/>

Survey Question:

- 16) Will your Party commit to ensuring the sustainable development of Northern Queensland by undertaking a complete review of regulatory barriers relating to land clearing and water security?
- 17) Will your Party advocate, support and participate in a "National Feedstock Strategy", to ensure adequate feedstock supplies are available in our State to optimise renewable fuel production?
- 18) Will your Party facilitate the development of renewable fuel refineries at source feedstock locations (agricultural crop production locations) of our State?
- 19) Will your Party commit to ensuring equitable access to water for food and fibre production, particularly in Northern Queensland?

¹⁷ [CSIRO Sustainable aviation fuel opportunities for Australia](#)

¹⁸ <https://www.graingrowers.com.au/graingrowers-national-grain-freight-strategy>

¹⁹ <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/territories-regions-cities/regional-australia/office-northern-australia/northern-australia-agenda>

THEME 2: “Keep Queensland Providing”

Queensland has some of the highest transport costs in Australia, with freight costs for grain at 30%²⁰ of the price of grain at port, and cattle transport comprising up to 35%²¹ of the market price of livestock.

As the most decentralised state, infrastructure in regional Queensland is vital to help connect people and produce from the bush to the city. Queensland needs investment to build and maintain these vital connections to help our regional communities thrive.

ROADS

Vision:

Greater funding for road maintenance improves productivity for agriculture, and liveability in regional areas leading to greater economic output for Queensland.

Background into the Issue:

Agriculture is a significant contributor to Queensland productivity; however, logistics costs are a key handbrake on productivity for agriculture in Queensland.

Many factors contribute to increases in logistics costs, including climate, fuel and labour. However, a key lever for state government is investment in road infrastructure and maintenance. Lack of funding for key infrastructure increases logistics costs for producers. Poor road condition leads to serious safety concerns, increased fuel costs and vehicle wear and tear, while the condition of assets such as bridges is often a factor in decisions to restrict access on freight routes - restricted access itself being a key contributor to transport costs.

AgForce has identified priorities regarding infrastructure bottlenecks that impact market access and transport corridors from operating efficiently and at highest productivity and seeks to collaborate with the Queensland government’s own mapped network planning, to prioritise short-long-term achievable projects.

Solutions:

- Sustained investment in regional and rural roads.
- To sustain productivity, programs such as the Roads and Transport Alliance²² need ongoing funding.
- Ensure funding to key strategic regional freight routes, such as those identified in the Inland Queensland Roads Action Project, to guarantee long-term productivity benefits.
- Infrastructure funding upgrades that aim to improve road networks and access, including “first-mile last-mile” investment to ensure there is connectivity between main transport routes and farms and processors, depots etc.

Submissions / Supporting Documents:

AgForce submission to the [Heavy Vehicle National Law \(HVNL\) Reform – Consultation Regulation Impact Statement 2023](#)

²⁰ <https://www.graingrowers.com.au/policy/grain-freight-and-supply-chains>

²¹ <https://www.csiro.au/en/research/animals/livestock/livestock-logistics>

²² <https://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/business-industry/Business-with-us/Alliances/The-Roads-and-Transport-Alliance>

Survey Question:

- 20) Will your Party commit a significant increase in funding for maintenance of roads and highways across the State, building road and bridge infrastructure in rural and remote regions that will stand the test of time and allow for increased capacity to meet our growing population's Food and Fibre demands?
- 21) Will your Party commit to reviewing and relieving road restrictions to address identified "Last Mile" access issues across the State?

RAIL / PORTS

Vision:

Improved viability of rail freight and port development leads to increased productivity for industry, reduced carbon emissions and road congestion and improved road safety outcomes.

Background into the issue:

Rail freight in Queensland is underutilised within the Agricultural sector due to inequitable access and direct competition with the resource sector. Rail tariffs on most lines running through agricultural production districts are too expensive and obtaining contracted slots is not conducive to the agile and often variable conditions Queensland Food and Fibre Producers farm in.

An increase in the use of rail, however, has significant benefits to industry, community and government: it causes less damage to underlying infrastructure, reduces congestion on roads, is more cost-effective over long distance for bulk haulage, and has better safety and environmental outcomes than moving freight by road.

Rail is currently the dominant mode of transport for sugarcane; however, its use by livestock and grain industries has been steadily decreasing for years. Rail could increase its share of the non-coal freight market by as much as 10 to 15%, however, capacity limitations are reducing viability, resulting in certain bulk commodities being transferred to road freight²³.

Addressing low axle limits, restricted tunnel heights, insufficiently long sidings/passing loops and the generally poor condition of much of the existing track will support the cost-competitiveness of rail with road.

Solutions:

- Ensuring collaboration between industry and government to improve planning and scheduling to optimise all sector needs on the existing rail network.
- Appropriate funding for continued maintenance and upgrade of the rail network.
- The Port of Brisbane is the only Queensland port that has container export facilities. Other ports, i.e. Gladstone, Mackay could be expanded to offer these facilities.

²³ Queensland Transport and Logistics Council <https://www.qtlc.com.au/freight-sectors/rail-transport-industry/>

- Improved port access - the Australian sea and airports network (particularly on the Eastern Seaboard) requires transformational reform – domestic shipping is an underutilised resource.
- Investment in ports and port facilities such as Weipa as a live export location.

Submissions/Supporting Documents:

Queensland Transport and Logistics Council, Industry Supply Chain Perspectives, <https://www.gtlc.com.au/publications/>

Queensland Transport, Housing and Local Government Parliamentary Committee, 2014, “Rail Freight Use by the Agriculture and Livestock Industries”, Queensland Parliament, <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/tableOffice/TabledPapers/2014/5414T5368.pdf>

Survey Question:

- 22) Will your Party maintain, repair and expand the rail freight network in rural and remote Queensland to service Queensland’s Food and Fibre Producers and industry sector?
- 23) Will your Party commit to new port developments in Northern Australia, and expand existing ports to ensure equitable market access and healthy competition?

THEME 3: “Keep Queensland Prospering”

Issues like lack of public services and decreasing population have left rural communities more vulnerable than ever. Investment in people and services is vital to help our communities thrive.

AgForce requires the next State Government to implement sustainable policies that transform regional Queensland into the premier investment destination, making it an exceptional place to live and work.

HEALTH, EDUCATION AND TELECOMMUNICATION

Vision:

Improved health and education outcomes strengthen rural communities. It is vital that regional people get effective and affordable access to good quality health, housing, education and connectivity services - increasing liveability, productivity, employment, social cohesion and quality of life in the regions.

Background into the issue:

Queensland's rural communities face distinct challenges in accessing government services, with health, education, telecommunications, and social connectivity being critical areas of concern.

Health services in these areas are often limited, with a shortage of medical professionals and facilities resulting in significant travel for residents to receive care; while education in rural Queensland presents challenges due to fewer school resources, limited access to early child-care and the need for many secondary students to live away from home at boarding school.

Telecommunications infrastructure lags behind urban areas, with patchy mobile and internet coverage; and social connectivity in these communities impacted by isolation and limited access to recreational activities.

Despite ongoing efforts, the disparity between rural and urban areas remains a significant issue in Queensland.

Solutions:

- Funding support for local delivery of health care services, including for mental health, such as expanded specialist outreach and Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) services.
- Funding assistance for travel and housing for critical care patients and seniors that require medical treatment away from their homes.
- Ongoing increases to the Living Away from Home Allowances Scheme (LAFHAS) to offset the rising cost of boarding school tuition fees for rural and remote students.
- Increased student discounts on regular passenger air and bus services for geographically isolated students to access educational institutions.
- Reliable, fast, affordable broadband services for increased use of telehealth services and for rural and remote schools to facilitate ‘virtual’ learning opportunities with tailored content.
- Government, partners and industry participants to ensure the shutdown of the 3G network, the ongoing role of 4G network, and the rollout of 5G network, lead to positive connectivity outcomes.
- Ongoing public funding of investment programs toward innovative, place-based solutions, to ensure delivery of expanded connectivity services and quality improvements in hard-to-reach, remote areas.
- Funding to undertake an investigation and audit of mobile coverage and performance across rural and remote Queensland.

Submissions / Supporting Documents:

ICPA Qld Inc Financial Assistance Policy - <https://icpa.com.au/qld/icpa-qld-portfolio-policies>

Australian government Mobile Black Spot Program <https://www.communications.gov.au/what-we-do/phone/mobile-services-and-coverage/mobile-black-spot-program>

Survey Question:

- 24) Will your Party commit to ensure all rural and remote hospitals are adequately funded to service nearby rural communities, and not cut any services, such as midwifery?
- 25) Will your Party commit to yearly increases in line with the Education Sub-index of the Consumer Price Index to the Living Away from Home Allowances Scheme (LAFHAS) to offset the rising cost of independent schools’ tuition fees for rural and remote students?
- 26) Will your Party commit to supporting the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association to strengthen rural and remote communities through education, with particular focus on expanding Country University Centres and Regional Study Hubs?
- 27) Will your Party commit funding to undertake an audit of mobile coverage and performance across rural and remote Queensland?

WORKFORCE

Vision:

Encouraging people into careers in agriculture will not only improve output for agribusinesses but will also provide stable, rewarding careers for workers and help strengthen regional and rural communities.

Background into the issue:

Sixty percent of agricultural employers in Queensland report difficulties with workforce shortages²⁴.

The reasons for workforce shortages in broadacre agriculture are many, complex and varied such as the effects of depopulation of rural and regional Queensland; issues with retention; a lack of understanding of the job opportunities in agriculture; and a requirement for skilled employees that cannot always be filled with unskilled migrants.

There is a lack of understanding of the job opportunities in agriculture, particularly amongst people originating in cities who are not exposed to agriculture.

Solutions:

- Industry-School Engagement Program: AgForce's Schools to Industry Partnership Program (SIPP) is a successful model of industry engagement with schools.
- Vocational Agricultural Colleges: Support for a sustainable, flexible, long-term model for vocational agricultural education based regionally, predicated on strong engagement with industry and local communities.

Submissions / Supporting Documents:

AgForce Queensland Farmers, "Education and Schools Programs", <https://agforceqld.org.au/sipp-gateway-schools>

Survey Question:

- 28) Will your Party commit to using input from industry-based experts to expand the Food and Fibre production curriculum in Queensland schools to build the knowledge base of children on where their food and fibre comes from?
- 29) Will your Party commit to increased promotion of career opportunities to help the Food and Fibre Industry Sector build our future workforce?
- 30) Will your Party commit to supporting Queensland's Wool industry by funding practical courses to develop the next generation of wool handlers and shearers?

²⁴ Rural Economics Centre of Excellence, [Queensland Rural/Regional Workforce Policy Analysis](#), June 2019