



AgForce Applauds New Lease and Tenure Framework – Awaits Costing Detail

AGFORCE Queensland has today applauded the Newman Government on its announcement of the most substantial land reform measures in a generation with yesterday's announcement of the *Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014*.

Introduced to Parliament yesterday by Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, Andrew Cripps, the Bill puts in place a framework for pastoral lease renewals and a pathway to the freeholding of leasehold land as recommended to Government by AgForce. However, uncertainty remains as to what the cost to primary producers will be.

AgForce General President, Ian Burnett, said the changes substantially improved lease security and had the potential to drive growth in the Queensland agriculture sector.

"The reforms announced by Minister Cripps are changes which AgForce has been tirelessly advocating for on behalf of its members for years," Mr Burnett said.

"They are common sense and fair changes that primary producers have been crying out for and have potential to make significant changes to thousands of rural businesses.

"The changes include all term leases becoming rolling leases which provides security to primary producers on leasehold land. Importantly this will include agriculture, grazing and pastoral land leases including state forests and timber reserves.

"Additionally, and importantly, the Bill also puts in place a framework for conversion from leasehold to freehold.

"However what we now await is clarification as to how much rent lessees will be required to pay annually and what the cost of freeholding will be – these figures will prove to be the true test of how effective the reforms ultimately are."

Key Changes within the *Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014* include:

Rolling leases

- All term leases (including agriculture, grazing and pastoral land leases including state forests and timber reserves) will be given rolling leases. This means that rural leases exceeding 100ha will not be required to enter into Land Management Agreements at the time of lease rollover. Instead, these leases will be extended (rolled over) for their original term of that lease – for example, a 30-year lease will be rolled over for 30 years and there will be no limit as to the number of times a lease can be rolled over in this way. Additionally, there will be amendments to allow lessees in the last 20 years of their lease to

be able to roll the lease over. This will allow for the longest possible lease term without impinging on native title rights.

Tenure Conversion/Freehold

- Importantly the Bill puts in place a framework for conversion to make it simpler to move from term and perpetual leases to freehold by:
 - Removing the need for term leases to become perpetual prior to being converted to freehold;
 - Allowing for amalgamating of separate term and perpetual leases where they are adjacent;
 - Allowing the state government to retain interest in commercial timber interests in land being freeholded through forest consent areas and forest consent agreements. The forest consent agreement will be registered as a profit a prendre.
 - Removing current restrictions on corporations owning and individuals aggregating pastoral holdings.

Mr Burnett said the Minister also foreshadowed these regulations would provide greater flexibility for government to deal with rents during times of hardship such as the current drought. This will be achieved through removing the need for interest to be paid on deferred rents and automatically deferring rents on drought declared areas from 1 July.

“In what is the worst drought in Queensland on record AgForce also welcomes these changes and looks forward to hearing greater detail of the Bill,” he said.

Ends

For media enquiries, contact

**AgForce media and communications: Stacey Milner 0418 733 102 or milners@agforceqld.org.au
Nadine Long 0427 626 853 or longn@agforceqld.org.au**

Who is AgForce? AgForce represents thousands of Queensland broadacre producers who recognise the value in having a strong voice. AgForce leads the way to ensure agriculture’s social, economic and environmental contribution is recognised by all levels of government. AgForce works alongside landholders, encourages and supports the next generation, builds industry partnerships and skills and promotes agriculture - for secure, sustainable, progressive and profitable food and fibre into the future.