



## No Surprises in State Budget for Agriculture

TODAY'S State Budget from Treasurer Tim Nicholls has delivered few surprises to Queensland agriculture with both minimal cuts and minimal further investment in the sector announced.

AgForce chief executive, Charles Burke, said given the current financial challenges before state government to return Queensland to a surplus, he was pleased to see key funding promises maintained.

"Under today's announcements there were few large investments in the industry, however there were commitments to the continuation of previously announced initiatives," Mr Burke said.

"For example, the additional \$321.25 million over five years for the Toowoomba second range crossing is of critical importance to our industry.

"The combination of reduced travel times, increased reliability and improved freight efficiency will result in increased productivity for agricultural industries particularly given approximately 20 per cent of the 20,000 vehicles which use that route each day are heavy vehicles."

Mr Burke said further commitment to drought funding in light of the horrific dry conditions which continue to grip just under 75 per cent of the state were also warmly welcomed.

"For example, the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme (DRAS) will be continued with a further \$15.75 million for fodder and water freight, water licence waiver fees, land rent rebates, emergency water infrastructure and mental health workshops," he said.

"Given so many of our primary producers are trying to navigate their way through this drought the continuation of these measures is crucial.

"We were also heartened to see confirmation of \$5 million over five years to be used to supercharge extension services within the Grazing Best Management (BMP) programs.

"This work contributes substantially towards the Reef Water Quality Program and only last week the Grazing BMP program was recognised as a recipient of one of the Premier's Sustainability Awards."

Other positive outcomes from today's budget included:

- Additional \$2.1 million for weed and pest management in Queensland;



- \$6 million for the Abandoned Mines Land program in 2014/2015;
- Funding commitments for the Bruce Highway (\$188 million in 2014/15) as well as for upgrading the Warrego Highway between Toowoomba and Miles.

However, small changes to transfer duty rules failed to deliver sufficient amendment for Queensland's farming families. Under today's announcements a family primary production concession will be extended to allow non-lineal descendants, such as nieces and nephews, to be provided a transfer concession but only if a property is gifted.

"Unfortunately these small changes fall short of what is required and the budget papers acknowledge that the amendment will not result in a reduction in duty payable," Mr Burke said.

"AgForce has made significant representation to Treasury over the past two years that Queensland should be brought in line with other jurisdictions to provide concessions on transfer duty to be made on intergenerational transfers even where a financial consideration is involved in order to assist new entrants to move into agriculture.

"Unfortunately, Treasury has not listened and today's announcement leaves Queensland out of step with other states."

Mr Burke said AgForce would now seek to consult with members on the cost and service implications of privatisation measures the government will take to the next State Election.

"A number of measures have been outlined including leasing of Townsville Port, including the Mount Isa rail line, leasing of Gladstone Port and the sale of CS Energy and Stanwell Power Station," he said.

"Our next step is to gauge what impact these moves would have on primary producers and the agriculture supply chain and relay this important information to Government accordingly."

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**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.