

# BEST OF AGFORCE POLICY 2016-17

## 'FAIR LAWS FOR FARMERS' CAMPAIGN

AgForce developed and spearheaded the 'Fair Laws for Farmers' campaign that ultimately saw the Queensland Parliament vote down the Palaszczuk Government's ill-conceived and unnecessary vegetation management laws in August 2016.

The campaign saw AgForce staff, representatives and hundreds of landholders make submissions and give evidence to numerous Parliamentary hearings, dozens of producers' stories told via the media and on social media, while more than 1000 people attended seven public rallies from Cape York right down to Brisbane.

## STOPPED THE DEFENCE LAND GRAB

Along with the National Farmers Federation, local landholders, politicians and local communities, AgForce drove the 'Defend Our Farms' campaign that ensured about 60 farming families would not endure the forced sale of their land to the Department of Defence.

## BETTER TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

In November 2016, AgForce was an initiator of the Rural Regional and Remote Telecommunications Coalition, an alliance that brings together nineteen organisations representing members across Australia to champion the need for better phone and internet services in the bush.

The RRRTC met with fifty-five politicians in Canberra in March 2017 to highlight key priorities including a Universal Service Obligation that is technology neutral and provides access to both voice and data, and increased investment in telecommunications infrastructure through the mobile black spot program.

AgForce is leading the development of a national program with the Federal and State Governments to deal with the challenges of improving digital ability and enabling innovation in agriculture through improved telecommunications services.

## TRANSPORT WINS

AgForce fought to have the Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal (RSRT) abolished because of the massive impact it would have had on small transport businesses and primary producers' transport costs. The abolition of the RSRT was great news for farmers and rural businesses in Queensland who can now get on with moving grain and stock at reasonable prices.

AgForce has been championing Rockhampton Road train access for many years, and the Federal and State government have finally come to the

table with funding and a plan of action. Road works were well underway until Cyclone Debbie stalled progress, but by the end of 2017, Type one Road trains will be able to travel through Rocky to the meatworks.

AgForce collaborated with trucking organisations to raise the importance of maintaining the volumetric livestock loading concessional scheme. Trucks weighed during the review of the guideline proved the concessional scheme was meeting safety requirements and livestock were loaded within acceptable weight parameters. The united voice persuaded government to keep the scheme – a win for producers and gain for transport efficiency.

GrainCorp and Queensland Rail (QR) are working together, at the request of AgForce members, to upgrade signage to allow type two road trains access to GrainCorp's Roma West site. This will increase productivity and help drive down transport costs.

## DROUGHT ASSISTANCE FOR THOSE IN NEED

With the drought in Queensland reaching record levels in 2016/17, AgForce was successful in advocating for continued and expanded drought support including \$42 million in assistance measures and a commitment to continue the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme until 2018.

Along with the Isolated Children's Parents' Association, AgForce sought emergency education assistance for rural school students in drought affected communities, with a \$3.7 million supplement for the Living Away From Home Allowance provided by the State Government.

AgForce also developed a proactive new business cycle approach to national drought policy to empower producers throughout the drought cycle which we presented to both State and Federal Government representatives.

## SAVING YOU MONEY WHEN PASSING DOWN THE FAMILY FARM

AgForce made strong representations to both the former and current State Governments for the removal of stamp duty barriers within Queensland on intergenerational farm transfers to enable family succession and bring Queensland in line with other jurisdictions.

Following advocacy through the Rural Debt and Drought Taskforce, the 2016/17 budget included \$7 million over 4 years for the removal of transfer duty on land assets. A farming family on property valued at \$2.5 million now saves over \$120,000 in duty – avoiding a cash drawdown or increased debt.

With Queensland Farmers Federation, AgForce also advocated for the inclusion of water and other assets, which occurred in October 2016. To finalise the reforms, AgForce is currently seeking a further extension of the exemption to include family trusts and companies.

## FIGHTING FOR MORE WEED CONTROL AND STRONG BIOSECURITY PROTECTION

Throughout 2016/17, AgForce has worked to advance weed management solutions by raising weed awareness, facilitating action at operational levels, and securing funding through various levels of government. This has included elevating giant rats tail grass as a major biosecurity issue, developing a fodder weed guide and advancing research solutions to Pimelea cattle poisoning.

AgForce also was successful in having a Biosecurity Queensland Officer seconded to the organisation to liaise with, inform and educate primary producers about what changes to biosecurity laws mean for them.

## REDUCING RED TAPE AND AGVET CHEMICALS' COSTS

AgForce successfully lobbied State Ministers and Safe Work Australia to grant a class exemption for agvet chemical products manufactured before 1 January 2017 from being relabelled with hazard pictograms as now required for Globally Harmonised System labelling of hazardous chemicals. Lobbying for this class exemption saved \$58M in costs being borne by producers and other end-users.

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SUPPORT FOR FARMERS

AgForce advocated for business assessment grants and better QRAA loans, with the announcement of \$2500 rebates for succession planning under the Queensland Government's Farm Management Grants program, as well as an increase in the size of First Start and Sustainability Loans for primary producers.

We also sought better support for non-viable and financially distressed producers, with the establishment of a Farm Debt Restructure Office and the re-establishment of a regular debt survey.

## PROTECTING OUR VALUABLE WATER

Over the past financial year, AgForce has secured significant changes to environmental laws to minimise the resources sector's impact on producers' water resources. AgForce was also part of #MoreThanFlow campaign which sought to keep more irrigation water in production in the Murray Darling Basin, which will help reduce the social and economic costs on affected communities.

## FIGHTING FOR PRACTICAL REEF & MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

AgForce maintained strong involvement in forums for science, policy and programs for grazing and grains industry management of water quality. Achieving water quality outcomes by reducing sediment and nutrient entering the reef lagoon is the largest natural resource programme in Australia. AgForce supports landholders through the Reef Alliance project and partnerships in Grains and Grazing BMP.

## SAVING GRAIN GROWERS TIME AND MONEY

The Grain Harvest Management Scheme (GHMS) continues to offer huge benefit to Queensland grain producers by allowing flexibility when carting grain. AgForce issued 2518 registrations in 2016/17 with members registering 523 vehicles resulting in a cost saving of over \$70,000.

## CONTINUING THE WAR ON WILD DOGS

AgForce continued to lobby State and Federal Governments for more financial support to help manage wild dogs, equating to a further \$10.7M toward exclusion fence cluster projects, on-ground control and coordination activities. In addition, AgForce successfully secured government funding to roll out 50 free landholder chemical accreditation and pest management workshops to train 500 landholders across the State, ensuring improved landholder access to the latest toxins and tools to combat wild dogs.

