

BEST OF AGFORCE POLICY 2017-18

STATE ELECTION ENGAGEMENT

AgForce engaged strongly with all the major political parties in the lead-up to and during the 2017 Queensland state election, with a comprehensive 'Thriving Farms, Thriving Queensland' policy statement. This document outlined 27 key policy issues and provided a positive and proactive agenda for growing broadacre agriculture and supporting our members to be better connected and profitable, while also protecting their natural assets and supporting their families. The major parties made commitments to implement a number of our policy initiatives, with the ALP promising to establish an Agricultural Ministerial Council, provide further funding for predator exclusion fencing and continue intergenerational farm transfer duty exemptions championed by AgForce, which has kept \$35 million in producer's pockets to date. They also promised to maintain existing drought support through 2018 and work with AgForce to develop more permanent assistance arrangements.

DROUGHT PREPAREDNESS AND RESILIENCE

The State Government has continued to fund drought assistance to the end of 2018. Since before the drought began, AgForce has advocated for the continued provision of drought assistance and the state government has continued to do so through the funding of \$34.6 million in 2017-2018. AgForce has also led the formation of the Emergency Action Drought Taskforce whose membership comprises of AgForce and 24 western QLD Mayors; this group is highlighting that drought is a real and current issue and calls for immediate action on drought issues.

MORE SUPPORT TO DEAL WITH FARM BUSINESS CHALLENGES & MANAGEMENT

AgForce's advocacy to see proactive help for producers affected by farm business debt has been successful with the establishment of the Farm Debt Restructure Office within the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA). The Farm Business Analysis Assistance program launched in 2018 which sees producers have access to experts to assist in business diagnosis where debt servicing is proving challenging. AgForce called for business skills assistance, including in succession planning, with the establishment of the Queensland Government's Farm Management Grants program in March 2017. This program provides \$2500 grants towards advice regarding farm succession. Since the inception of the scheme over 450 primary producers and their family members have accessed grants to the value of almost \$800,000. Over 60 pc of this has gone to broadacre producers with a further \$800,000 available in the 2018/19 financial year.

THE 'YOUR FOOD. OUR FUTURE' VEGETATION MANAGEMENT CAMPAIGN

AgForce developed and spearheaded the 'Your Food. Our Future' campaign to highlight that the Palaszczuk Government's ill-conceived and unnecessary vegetation management laws would threaten Queensland's status as

the number one agricultural state in the country by making it harder and more expensive for farmers to grow food. During the campaign AgForce helped almost 1000 property owners in Queensland to lock in their Property Map of Assessable Vegetation (PMAV). This meant that they escaped having further layers put on their map when the laws were introduced into Parliament on 8th March 2018. The campaign also saw AgForce staff, representatives and landholders make submissions and give evidence to numerous Parliamentary hearings. Producers got involved on social media and thousands attended several public rallies around the state.

BETTER TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

AgForce established escalation pathways for members to help resolve telecommunications issues with both Telstra and nbn. If you cannot resolve an issue, our Regional Managers can escalate it on your behalf to help get things working again. We understand how difficult telecommunications are for those in the bush so we're working with government and others to improve connectivity and to ensure you get the support you need.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

AgForce's IR consultant Warren Turner has assisted over 250 AgForce members in managing their employment and workforce issues including determining rates of pay, workplace agreements and visas. AgForce has achieved real progress in securing exemptions, or streamlining, for broadacre contractors from mandatory state labour hire licensing requirements, the costs of which would be passed directly back to members.

WATER ACCESS

AgForce continues to support the funding partnership between landholders and governments to complete the capping of uncontrolled bores and piping of drains in the Great Artesian Basin (GAB). An \$9 million 2-year Interim Infrastructure Investment Program has been secured through to mid-2019. AgForce also secured concessions in the state GAB water plan ensuring that an extended 10-year period is provided to landholders to voluntarily control flowing bores and drains, as well as enabling an extension of that deadline in response to climatic or economic conditions and ensuring incentives to complete the work are available. This will help members to finish this vital work that benefits all GAB users.

In coalition with other irrigation and farming groups, AgForce has supported the scientific work of the Murray Darling Basin Authority and proposed amendments by the Australian Government to revise down by 70 GL the volume of water to be reclaimed for the environment in the Northern Basin, in order to save vital jobs in irrigation dependent communities. These efforts will continue until the change is legislated. AgForce continues to advocate to protect stock and domestic water rights in Queensland which has seen no reduction of these rights in recent state reform and planning processes.

BIOSECURITY

Deregulation of Johnes disease and the introduction of two new modules to the Livestock Production Assurance program both required producers to implement a biosecurity plan. AgForce leapt into action and formed a partnership with Livestock Biosecurity Network, Elders, NRM groups and government to deliver 36 biosecurity planning workshops around Queensland that reached over 5,000 people within a two-month period. Developing a biosecurity plan is the start of the conversation. How you utilise it as a framework for making decisions about your business is the next step and follow-up workshops are planned to cover this and more.

BIOSECURITY FUNDING

Opportunities to raise funds for meeting industry's biosecurity needs are difficult to pin down. What will the fund cover? How much? Why? Who benefits? Isn't it government's job? What is clear is the costs to industry are growing - tick management, Johnes disease, weeds, wild dogs, etc. - the list is long. The AgForce Cattle Board has consistently pushed government to deliver on their obligations and filled the gap when they fail. We kickstarted biosecurity planning workshops in collaboration with other stakeholders that reached 5,000 producers. We will continue to investigate alternative funding options that empower industry to thrive.

FIGHTING FOR MORE WEED CONTROL & STRONG BIOSECURITY PROTECTION

AgForce improved alignment between contractor access and farm biosecurity requirements by working with Ergon Energy, Powerlink and Gas Fields Commission Queensland to develop practical checklists for powerline and coal seam gas contractors and staff. These working partnerships have also provided direct links to company hotlines to help members resolve contractor entry issues. We also joined with the Queensland Herbarium to produce and circulate the 'Reducing weed risks from fodder' booklet thanks to a grant from the National Landcare Program. The 60-page booklet contained useful information for producers and others on fodder use best practice, how to identify weeds and the 20 most common and toxic fodder weeds.

LEADING THE CHARGE IN THE JOURNEY TO STOP PIMELEA CATTLE DEATHS

Pimelea causes seasonal cattle losses across inland Australia. AgForce lead the charge in getting research started into combating the Pimelea plant toxicity to cattle. After much lobbying AgForce was able to get the research project off the ground. The original \$150,000 research project was

funded equally by MLA's Donor Company and producers but has now received \$1.5 million over three-years from MLA. The research project by UQ and DAF aims to develop a probiotic rumen drench and effective absorbency compounds to combat Pimelea toxicity.

FIGHTING FOR PRACTICAL REEF AND MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Protecting the Great Barrier Reef is one of the key policies of the Queensland and Australian Governments. AgForce maintained strong involvement in forums for science, policy and programs for grazing and grains industry management of water quality and reducing emissions. AgForce supported landholders achieving innovative water quality outcomes through the Reef Alliance project and partnerships in Grains and Grazing BMP. Strong opposition was provided against the reintroduction of further regulations, with voluntary industry led adoption of management practices promoted as producing measurable environmental and economic outcomes.

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 issues over 2,000 registrations each year, with free participation for AgForce members (price of the scheme rebated off membership). In 2018 AgForce will be looking to new GHMS receivers to ensure that you can get the concession at more delivery points. We are committed to ensuring the scheme works for you and provides the flexibility you need to transport grain.

ROAD TRAIN ACCESS INTO ROCKHAMPTON

AgForce worked with the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and the Department of Transport and Main Roads, along with the Rockhampton Regional Council and key processors to help get a trial off the ground allowing road trains into Rockhampton. This is a huge productivity saving which helps push transport costs down, saving industry members both time and money. With AgForce support this trial has recently been extended for a further 12 months.

CHAMPIONING INDUSTRY NEEDS IN COLLABORATION

AgForce, along with QLD Trucking Association, have stood strong when faced with a decision by the Mackay Regional Council to apply local laws to prohibit heavy vehicles from parking on residential or rural premises. This collaborative advocacy work proved successful and so this new provision didn't go ahead. This work highlights the added strength that comes when working with others in the industry to achieve real and tangible outcomes for members.

