



QFF welcomes Labor water price announcement

The Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) and its members have welcomed Queensland Labor's commitment to reduce water prices for the state's irrigators by at least 15 per cent if elected this weekend but require more detail to confirm the potential benefits for the agriculture sector.

A re-elected Labor Government would deliver a 15 per cent cut in irrigation water charges for farmers who buy water from Queensland's 35 state-owned irrigation schemes, and a 50 per cent for horticulture growers from 1 July 2021.

QFF CEO Dr Georgina Davis said affordable and reliable water was a key enabler for Queensland's agriculture sector to continue growing world class food, fibre and foliage and unlocking new opportunities, particularly for export into the future.

"Irrigated agriculture is the quality and quantity product engine room for the sector. However, the price and the associated pumping costs of water are becoming prohibitive for farmers with flow on effects for farm productivity and profitability," Dr Davis said.

"While QFF welcomes a reduction in water prices for farmers, uncertainty exists as

to why a 50 per cent price reduction has not been applied across the whole agricultural sector in recognition of the significant economic benefit our various commodity members provide for all Queenslanders.

“Such a large differentiation in water pricing will encourage farms to re-evaluate cropping decisions and may see certain commodities prioritised over others.”

“QFF understands that these price reductions will be applied across Queensland’s Category 2 Water Boards which are taking bulk water from Sunwater and Seqwater assets, and irrigation schemes that have transferred to Local Management Arrangements.”

“QFF is seeking assurance that irrigation enterprises accessing commercial and potable water such as nurseries also receive the discount and the split billing that will need to occur for mixed commodity farms will not be onerous or administratively burdensome.”

Queensland Labor’s irrigation price announcement follows the LNP’s announcement in July that it would reduce water prices by 20 per cent if elected by transitioning SunWater from an annuity method to a regulated asset based (RAB) approach for financing asset renewals.

“QFF thanks both major political parties for recognising the importance of affordable and reliable irrigation water for the state’s farmers ahead of this weekend’s election,” Dr Davis said.

“QFF is looking forward to working with the next Queensland Parliament to ensure the future sustainability and prosperity of irrigated agriculture in Queensland.”

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