

Rural and Regional Adjustment (Feral Pest Exclusion Fencing Grants Scheme and Other Matters) Amendment Regulation 2025

Explanatory Notes for SL 2025 No. 120

made under the

Rural and Regional Adjustment Act 1994

General Outline

Short title

Rural and Regional Adjustment (Feral Pest Exclusion Fencing Grants Scheme and Other Matters) Amendment Regulation 2025

Authorising law

Sections 10, 11 and 44 of the *Rural and Regional Adjustment Act 1994* (the Act)

Policy objectives and the reasons for them

This regulatory amendment has the following policy objectives:

1. The introduction of the Feral Pest Exclusion Fencing Grants Scheme in Schedule 63 of the *Rural and Regional Adjustment Regulation 2011*;
2. The amendment of a definition in 'appropriate minister' in various disaster schemes to align with machinery of government changes;
3. The amendment of the concessional loan amount in the Disaster Assistance (Primary Producers) Loans Scheme in Schedule 2 in response to the disaster event in Western Queensland of 2025;
4. The amendment of the definition of primary producer and primary production enterprise in several disaster assistance schemes; and
5. The amendment of one of the eligibility criteria in the Regional Drought Resilience Planning Scheme in Schedule 61.

Introduction of the Feral Pest Exclusion Fencing Grants Scheme new Schedule 63 of the Rural and Regional Adjustment Regulation 2011

The Queensland Feral Pest Initiative (QFPI) is a long-standing Queensland Government program that provides targeted support to manage invasive species

management that operates in funding rounds. Predation by wild dogs has a significant negative impact on livestock production in Queensland. One means of managing this impact is the construction of exclusion fencing.

To encourage the installation of exclusion fencing, as part of the QFPI, \$3 million has been allocated to assist primary producers that are susceptible to wild dog predation with the installation of exclusion fencing on their property. As a long-standing administrator of schemes of financial assistance to agriculture, Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA) has been asked to deliver this program on behalf of the Queensland Government.

In summary, the scheme offers grants of up to \$5,000 per kilometre, capped at 50 kilometres, to eligible landholders in the identified areas of regional Queensland for exclusion fencing projects. Applicants must operate a primary production enterprise involving goat, sheep, or cattle grazing and be impacted by wild dog predation.

Applications will be assessed against their benefit on reducing wild dog predation. The application will require the application to demonstrate they have been impacted by predation and demonstrate that their proposal will reduce the impact of that predation on their enterprise. Those with the highest assessed benefit on reducing wild dog predation will be ranked higher than other applicants to the limit of available funding (Section 13 of Schedule 63).

Applicants with projects assessed as eligible will be required to complete a project agreement with QRIDA that identifies the fencing project to be undertaken. Activities undertaken prior to QRIDA agreeing to a funding agreement will be ineligible (Section 14 of Schedule 63).

The scheme is fully funded by the Queensland Government.

Amendment to the maximum size of disaster concessional loans for the western flooding event of 2025: amendment to Disaster Assistance (Primary Producers) Loans Scheme (Schedule 2)

Due to the severity of the western flooding event of March-April 2025, the Australian Government approved an increase in the size of the concessional loans available under the joint Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) to primary producers from \$250,000 to \$5 million. This increase in the maximum loan size is to apply for this event only. The DRFA concessional loans in Queensland are delivered by QRIDA and the regulatory provisions are contained in Schedule 2 of the *Rural and Regional Adjustment Regulation 2011*. As the maximum size of the concessional loan is set in the Regulation, the increase requires regulatory amendment (see Section 6 of Schedule 2).

Amendment of definition of 'appropriate minister' in various DRFA schemes: Disaster Assistance (Primary Producers) Loans Scheme (Schedule 2); Disaster Assistance (Small Business) Loans Scheme (Schedule 3); Disaster Assistance (Essential Working Capital) Loans Scheme (Schedule 7); Disaster Assistance (Non-profit Organisations) Loans Scheme (Schedule 21), Special Disaster Assistance Recovery Loans Scheme (Schedule 23); and amendment of 'defined disaster area' in Rural Landholder Recovery Grants Scheme (Schedule 47)

To be eligible for DRFA assistance these assistance schemes have as an eligibility criteria that the applicant needs to be located in an area activated for this assistance: a defined disaster area. Notification of the defined disaster areas is done via DRFA activation notices published by the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. The Queensland Reconstruction Authority is established by *Queensland Reconstruction Authority Act 2011*. Regulatory amendment is required to these schemes to define the 'appropriate Minister' as the Minister with responsibility for this Act. Currently these provisions define the 'appropriate minister' as the minister responsible for the *Disaster Management Act 2003*. Accordingly, the definition of 'appropriate minister' is to be changed to be the minister responsible for the *Queensland Reconstruction Authority Act 2011* noting that in the Rural Landholder Recovery Grants Scheme the description of appropriate minister is contained within the definition of 'defined disaster area.'

Amendment of definition of primary producer: Disaster Assistance (Primary Producers) Loans Scheme (Schedule 2) and Disaster Assistance (Small Business) Loans Scheme (Schedule 3)

The definition of primary producer in these two schemes is to be amended to align with the definition contained in Schedule 23 (Special Disaster Assistance Recovery Grants Scheme) to the effect that an applicant is to be considered as a primary producer if in the 'opinion of the authority' ie QRIDA, 'based on the demonstrated production potential of the primary production enterprise, (the applicant) will, within a reasonable time, derive the majority of his or her income from the primary production enterprise' The previous provision in these two schemes only allowed an applicant to be eligible for assistance as a primary producer if they currently derived the majority of their income from the primary production enterprise.'

Amendment of definition of primary production enterprise in Disaster Assistance (Primary Producers) Loans Scheme (Schedule 2); Disaster Assistance (Essential Working Capital) Loans Scheme (Schedule 7) and Special Disaster Assistance Recovery Grants Scheme (Schedule 23)

These disaster assistance schemes are being amended to modify the definition of primary production enterprise to include applicants that are businesses that support primary production. Such businesses include, for example: shearing business, mustering business, silage baling business, farm irrigation services, and timber plantation maintenance services. Previously such support businesses were considered to be small businesses for the purposes of DRFA assistance in Queensland. This change in the classification of such applicants from small business to primary producer will align Queensland's application of the DRFA guidelines to guidance provided to it by the National Emergency Management Agency of the Australian Government.

The Australian Government's DRFA Guidelines provide that the business classifications within Division A-Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing within the Australian New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) are to be considered primary production enterprises for the purposes of DRFA assistance. Division A includes Subdivision 05 Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing Support Services which covers business such as shearing, mustering etc. Accordingly, the wording in these Schedules for the definition of primary production enterprise is being amended so that it includes businesses that fall within subdivision 05 of the ANZSIC code (ie businesses that support primary production).

The revised definition of primary production enterprise will be applied by QRIDA to all applications for assistance from 2025 onwards. Several disasters have occurred in the first half of 2025. Where an applicant has already received assistance for one of these disaster events and the change to the definition of primary production enterprise has an impact on how they are assessed such applicants will be identified by QRIDA and informed they can apply for assistance as a primary production enterprise. Thus, for example an applicant who is a shearing business (previously assessed as a small business) applied for a grant under Schedule 23: Special Disaster Assistance Recovery Grants Scheme for the 2025 western Queensland flooding event. The maximum size for a grant for a small business is \$50,000 whereas the maximum size for a grant for that event for a primary production enterprise is \$75,000. Where such an applicant reached \$50,000 they will be informed that due to the revision of the definition of primary production enterprise they are classified as a primary production enterprise and they could apply for up to \$75,000.

Amendment of an eligibility criteria in the Regional Drought Resilience Planning Scheme (Schedule 61)

In order to give eligible applicants more time to complete activities approved under the Scheme, Section 6 (d) of the scheme is being removed. This provision provided that eligible activities have to be completed no later than 3 months before the scheme closes (currently 30 June 2026). The removal of this provision will mean that applicants will have until the closing date of the scheme to complete eligible activities.

Achievement of policy objectives

The *Rural and Regional Adjustment (Feral Pest Exclusion Fencing Grants Scheme and Other Matters) Amendment Regulation 2025* (the amendment regulation) via the introduction of the QFPI scheme will achieve the policy objective of improving the sustainability of Queensland's regions and the growth of Queensland's agricultural sector by assisting producers reduce the impact of wild dog predation which has a major negative impact on livestock production in rural Queensland.

The amendment regulation will also achieve the objective of ensuring that Queensland's administration of DRFA programs closely aligns with the policy of the DRFA established by the Australian Government.

Consistency with policy objectives of authorising law

The amendment regulation is consistent with the policy objectives of the Act. The Act establishes QRIDA primarily to administer assistance schemes that foster the development of a more productive and sustainable rural and regional sector in Queensland including schemes offered by the Australian Government.

QRIDA may also administer approved assistance schemes to assist primary producers, small business and other sectors during periods of temporary difficulty, or to otherwise benefit the Queensland economy.

The new scheme is consistent with the objectives of the Act as it provides assistance to reduce wild dog predation which should make eligible applicants more productive.

The amendments to the disaster assistance schemes and the Regional Drought Resilience Planning scheme are also consistent with the objectives of the Act as they will assist eligible applicants obtain assistance under these schemes which will assist economic recovery in areas impacted by disaster and regional Queensland more generally.

Inconsistency with policy objectives of other legislation

This amendment regulation is not inconsistent with the policy objectives of any other legislation.

Benefits and costs of implementation

The Feral Pest Exclusion Fencing Grants Scheme is funded by the Queensland Government under the QFPI. \$3 million has been made available by the Queensland Government for QRIDA to provide in assistance under the Scheme.

Schedule 2 which is being amended to increase the size of the concessional loan for the western flooding event is a disaster scheme funded through the DRFA. It is unknown what the level of demand for the enhanced concessional loans will be. DRFA measures are cost shared between the Queensland and Australian Government.

None of the other amendments will have a financial impact. The change to Schedule 47 will allow eligible applicants additional time in order to complete eligible drought preparedness activities which should be supportive of drought preparedness in Queensland's regions. This program is fully funded by the Queensland Government and Australian Government's Future Drought Fund and no additional expenditure will be required as a consequence of this change.

Consistency with fundamental legislative principles

The amendment regulation has been drafted with regard to, and is consistent with, the fundamental legislative principles as defined in section 4 of the *Legislative Standards Act 1992*.

Consultation

The Queensland Government consulted with the livestock industry with regards to the introduction of the new scheme. The Queensland Government consulted with the Australian Government's National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) with regards to the amendments to the DRFA schemes. NEMA supports the amendments to the definitions and it approved Queensland's request to increase the size of the concessional loans. The Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development completed an Impact Analysis Statement (IAS) of this regulatory amendment. This IAS concluded that the proposal does not increase costs or regulatory burden on business or the community and accordingly no further regulatory impact analysis is required under the Queensland Government Better Regulation Policy.

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