

Prime Focus

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Interest rate cut a plus for Queensland producers



Interest rates for the Queensland Government's First Start and Sustainability Loans have dropped for the second time in 2015, providing greater incentive for Queensland primary producers to expand or enhance their operations.

The new fixed interest rate for Productivity Loans drawn down from 1 July 2015 is 3.23 per cent for one year, 3.26 per cent for three years and 3.45 per cent for five years.

QRAA Chief Executive Officer, Cameron MacMillan, said agriculture played an integral role in the Queensland economy and the interest rate drop will help primary producers take proactive steps to build the capacity of their enterprise.

"Sustainability Loans allow producers to invest in projects such as property expansion, improved water infrastructure, predator fencing, efficient irrigation systems and energy saving equipment," he said.

"These loans can also be accessed to assist producers wanting to protect their farms from biosecurity risks or to fund infrastructure improvements," Mr MacMillan said.

New Interest Rates (Productivity Loans)

1 year fixed	3.23%
3 years fixed	3.26%
5 years fixed	3.45%

Current for loans drawn down from 1 July 2015
and subject to change 1 January 2016.

Mr MacMillan also encouraged anyone looking to start their own farm business to take advantage of the lower interest rates.

"QRAA is proud to support aspiring Queensland farmers who are looking to acquire their first farm or become part of the family farm through First Start Loans," he said.

Primary producers can access loans of up to \$650,000 with no fees or charges and repayment terms of up to 20 years.

Farm businesses also have the option of using joint lending with commercial banks if they need additional finance beyond the \$650,000.

During the 2014-15 financial year, QRAA approved over 160 First Start and Sustainability Loans, worth more than \$51 million to Queenslanders.

"I strongly urge any producer who is looking to apply for a Sustainability or First Start Loan not to self-assess," Mr MacMillan said.

"QRAA's Client Liaison Officers are available to meet on-farm to discuss loan criteria, terms and conditions. They can also provide expert advice on the best way to prepare your application."

For further information visit www.qraa.qld.gov.au or contact QRAA on Freecall 1800 623 946.

Sustainability Loans and First Start Loans are an initiative of the Queensland Government's Primary Industry Productivity Enhancement Scheme administered by QRAA.

New look QRAA

This edition of *Prime Focus* showcases QRAA's refreshed look which is in line with the new *Queensland Government Corporate Identity Guidelines*.

QRAA's new look will be showcased across a wide range of promotional activities in coming months.

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QRAA farewells long-standing CEO

Colin Holden retired as QRAA's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) on Friday 14 August 2015, following 15 years as CEO and 28 years of service at QRAA.

QRAA's Chairman, Wayne Carlson, described Mr Holden as a highly respected leader who led the organisation through numerous legislative and strategic changes and enhanced QRAA's reputation.

Under Mr Holden's 15 year leadership, QRAA approved 125,000 applications, and distributed \$2.4 billion in financial assistance across all financial assistance programs.

"QRAA is very fortunate to have had the benefit of Colin's skills and knowledge and on behalf of the QRAA Board and all staff, I wish him the very best in retirement," Mr Carlson said.

In announcing his retirement, Mr Holden thanked industry organisations, bankers, the Queensland Government, QRAA's Board of Directors and those who have worked under him during his time as CEO.

"I would also like to thank QRAA's clients who, over the years, have welcomed me to their properties for tours and shared their stories of success and also their struggles and hardship," he said.



Colin Holden, QRAA's CEO from 2000-2015

"It has been my absolute privilege to lead QRAA and to work with a team of people who have always shown compassion, especially in times of disaster, to the many thousands of applicants," Mr Holden said.

Cameron MacMillan appointed as new CEO



Cameron MacMillan, QRAA's new CEO

QRAA welcomed Cameron MacMillan as Chief Executive Officer on Monday 10 August 2015, following the retirement of Colin Holden.

Mr MacMillan has come to the role from BDO Queensland where he was the Executive Director of International Business and Agribusiness.

He has brought with him extensive experience in international agribusiness, including export and investment strategies and government engagement.

Originally from Longreach, Mr MacMillan said he has a strong empathy and commitment to Queensland agriculture and ensuring the sustainability of Queensland's rural and regional businesses and communities.

"I started my career in stock and station agencies living and travelling in Western Queensland, which has given me an excellent understanding about the challenges facing farm businesses," Mr MacMillan said.

"The needs of rural and regional Queensland farm businesses and communities resonates very strongly with me.

"The needs of rural and regional Queensland farm businesses and communities resonates very strongly with me."

"I'm looking forward to leading QRAA in supporting Queensland primary producers, small business and non-profit organisations by providing access to financial assistance when they need it most," Mr MacMillan said.

Mr MacMillan's career includes 15 years as a Trade Commissioner and State Manager with the Australian Government's trade facilitation agency, Austrade.

Disaster grants close 11 September

Applications for Category C Natural Disaster Assistance Grants for Severe Tropical Cyclone Marcia will close on 11 September 2015.

Primary producers, small businesses and non-profit organisations that were affected by this natural disaster event are encouraged to review the guidelines and application forms

on QRAA's website and submit an application before the closing date.

Applicants must be located in an eligible Local Government Area.

For more information about the grants, including details of the declared areas, visit www.qraa.qld.gov.au or Freecall 1800 623 946.



First Start Loans support succession

Productivity Loans available through QRAA provide the ideal starting point for farming businesses considering succession.

These loans can support the viability of a farm business which is one of the biggest factors in ensuring that a farm will be available for the next generation.

“QRAA can assist with succession in a number of different ways...”

QRAA’s First Start Loans offer concessional finance that can help the next generation move into farming.

Low interest rates combined with no fees and charges enhance an enterprise’s ability to establish a solid platform from which succession can occur.

Over the past five years QRAA has approved over \$157 million to 396 individuals or partnerships who are entering primary production or aiming to become full-time viable primary producers through staged progression.

QRAA’s Customer Relations Manager, Craig Turner, said he believed these loans were instrumental in helping the next generation.

“When it comes time for the next generation to become involved in the farm, QRAA can assist with succession in a number of different ways,” he said.

“There are options to finance the next generation into the existing farming partnership, providing funds to buy their first property with a view to a more viable operation upon succession occurring. This can also be done by financing applicants into a newly established family partnership,” Mr Turner said.

To arrange an appointment or on-farm visit to discuss succession planning with one of QRAA’s Client Liaison Officers, contact QRAA on **Freecall 1800 623 946**.

Scheme guidelines and application forms are available for download from **www.qraa.qld.gov.au**.

First Start Loans are an initiative of the Queensland Government’s Primary Industry Productivity Enhancement Scheme administered by QRAA.



A practical example

A next generation beef producer from Roma, who has built up his own herd of 200 cattle, accessed a First Start Loan of \$300,000 to purchase a portion of his parent’s property at a discounted purchase price.

His plan over the next five to 10 years is to continue to increase his cattle numbers and to build equity, whilst working off-farm for wages. In time, he will seek a further First Start Loan to purchase the remainder of his parent’s property, stock and plant.

He will end up with a viable primary production enterprise and his parents can retire comfortably, knowing the farm is in good hands.

Top marks for QRAA’s customer service

QRAA’s customers continue to rate the organisation’s customer service highly with independent market research indicating that 87 per cent of approved and declined clients are satisfied or very satisfied with QRAA’s service.

The biennial research also found that more than 85 per cent of QRAA’s customers see QRAA as being professional, responsive, good to deal with, trustworthy, making a positive contribution to regional economies, reliable, accessible, fair and efficient.

QRAA’s Chief Executive Officer, Cameron MacMillan, said the results were indicative of the important role QRAA has played during difficult times for rural and regional industries.

“The findings reinforce that QRAA is a trusted organisation that is making a positive contribution to rural communities.

“87 per cent of approved and declined clients are satisfied or very satisfied with QRAA’s service...”

“Results also suggest that client satisfaction is influenced by how quickly applications and funds are processed.

“Funds can be delivered quickly when eligible applicants submit a fully complete application form. We have Client Liaison Officers available throughout Queensland to ensure program guidelines and application processes are understood.”

Despite excellent results, Mr MacMillan expressed his desire to use the results to better QRAA’s customer service.

“I would like to thank everyone who completed the Client Satisfaction Survey as it gives QRAA an opportunity to keep improving service delivery and setting a benchmark for how we deliver our services,” Mr MacMillan said.

87% of QRAA clients are satisfied or very satisfied with QRAA’s service.

96% of QRAA clients feel the funding they received from QRAA will be very beneficial to their business or organisation.

9 out of 10 QRAA clients would recommend QRAA to a friend.

Capricornia welcomes Terry Snow

Terry Snow has joined the QRAA team as the new Client Liaison Officer for the Capricornia region, based in Rockhampton.

With over 25 years of agribusiness experience, Terry said he is excited to be working with QRAA and sharing his knowledge with clients.

“I’m really enjoying the diversity of my role at QRAA and being able to work with clients from various industries who have different business needs,” Terry said.

“I’m particularly excited about the prospect of getting out on-farm to provide more assistance to QRAA clients in the region, see their farming enterprises in operation and work closely with them to help achieve their business goals,” he said.

The challenges faced by farm businesses is familiar to Terry after working in the banking sector in various locations including Caboolture, Mackay and Rockhampton.

“I appreciate the seasonality of agriculture and how the long term needs of farming businesses need to be at the forefront of a financial lender’s mind when considering the best financial options for these farming businesses,” he said.

“I also understand the importance of family and personal relationships in farming enterprises – often the financial decisions that are made for farming

businesses are done with the future of the children and grandchildren in mind.

“These decisions are not purely business decisions but also impact the business owner’s livelihood and their family’s future,” Terry said.

Terry is an involved member of the Rockhampton community, having lived in the area since 2000. During this time he has been involved in a number of community events and organisations, most recently volunteering at the Beef Australia 2015 event in Rockhampton.



Terry Snow, QRAA's new Client Liaison Officer for Capricornia

If you are based in the Capricornia region and would like to meet with Terry please contact QRAA on Freecall 1800 623 946 to arrange an appointment.

Brendan's new challenge

After eight years of service to the Capricornia region, Brendan Hamilton (pictured) has returned to QRAA's Brisbane office as Team Leader for Account Management.

During his time as Client Liaison Officer for Capricornia, Brendan was responsible for the establishment of the QRAA office in Rockhampton and played an integral role in connecting farm businesses in the region with QRAA.

Brendan said that while he was excited by the challenge of his new role, he greatly enjoyed his time as a Client Liaison Officer.



“It’s been a privilege to serve the Capricornia region and meet QRAA clients to discuss the range of assistance available to them. During my time in Rockhampton, there’s been five natural disasters, so it has also been rewarding to help affected businesses get back on track by accessing QRAA assistance,” he said.

Contact your local Client Liaison Officer today...

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Regions covered by QRAA's Client Liaison Officers based in Bundaberg, Innisfail, Kingaroy, Emerald, Mackay, Rockhampton, Roma and Toowoomba.

September Events

1	Energy Savers Plus Workshop - Mareeba	8	Energy Savers Plus Workshop - Ayr
2	Energy Savers Plus Workshop - Innisfail	9	Energy Savers Plus Workshop - Bowen
3-5	QRRRW 2015 Conference - Biloela	10	Energy Savers Plus Workshop - Mackay

QRAA also holds temporary offices in regional areas throughout the year.

For more details view QRAA's event calendar on our website www.qraa.qld.gov.au or Freecall 1800 623 946.

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