

# Chief Executive Officer's report

QRIDA is dedicated to supporting rural and regional Queensland communities to overcome challenges and thrive with new opportunities.

Three major disasters impacting communities from Cairns to Coolangatta to Quilpie made the past financial year one of great resilience for Queensland's agricultural and small business sectors. QRIDA is proud to have approved more than \$267.2 million in financial assistance to over 12,000 Queenslanders in 2024-2025.

An important part of this financial assistance included disaster recovery grants and loans to help rural and regional communities clean up and recover from the North and Far North Tropical Low, Western Queensland Surface Trough and Associated Rainfall and Flooding, and Tropical Cyclone Alfred and Associated Severe Weather events.

Meanwhile, our flagship First Start and Sustainability Loans helped up-and-coming producers break into the agricultural industry, improve the profitability and productivity of their operations, and prepare for on-farm risks including drought.

These loans also helped primary producers with a range of contemporary issues including entering the rural property market, making investments in emerging agricultural technologies and overcoming biosecurity threats impacting industries from bees to bananas.

Every dollar QRIDA delivered during this financial year made an impact, including to a Darling Downs beef producer who purchased his first rural property, Fraser Coast family egg producers who invested in new infrastructure and diversified into rotational grazing, and Cassowary Coast fruit growers who replaced damaged crops following flooding.

During this busy financial year, QRIDA marked 30 years of supporting rural and regional Queensland on 1 October 2024. Our long-standing reputation as Queensland's trusted administrator of government grants and loans continues to help QRIDA deliver a wide range of financial services beyond our core programs for primary producers and disaster recovery.

This financial year, we helped reduce the impact of inflation on essential goods like bread and milk by \$17.2 million for families in the Far North under the Remote Communities Freight Assistance Scheme. We're also proud to have delivered \$45.8 million to help over 560 Queenslanders in flood-affected areas improve the disaster preparedness of their houses under the Resilient Homes Fund.

QRIDA would not have been able to administer such meaningful assistance over the past financial year without the extraordinary efforts of our passionate and hard-working team. Located right across Queensland, QRIDA's people had values of quality, resilience, integrity, dedication and adaptability at the heart of their decision-making as they worked together with the shared goal of supporting rural and regional Queensland.

QRIDA continued to invest in our people, through support for learning and development, and our processes, including the adoption of automation to improve productivity and robust fraud measures to ensure good governance. Together, these investments in our people, processes and technology have ensured QRIDA remained future-ready and resilient.

### Supporting Queenslanders impacted by disasters and droughts

Due to continued rainfall across the state, Queensland remained completely drought-free over the past financial year. The weather conditions gave primary producers the opportunity to foster greater drought preparedness and resilience in their operations.

Over the 2024-2025 financial year, QRIDA approved more than \$7.5 million in Drought Preparedness Grants to help Queensland primary producers improve their water and feed infrastructure and get ready for when the next drought inevitably hits.

Meanwhile, QRIDA continued to help Queenslanders recover from disasters, delivering a total of more than \$30.8 million in disaster grants and \$6.7 million in concessional loans approved for primary producers, small businesses and non-profit organisations for these events.

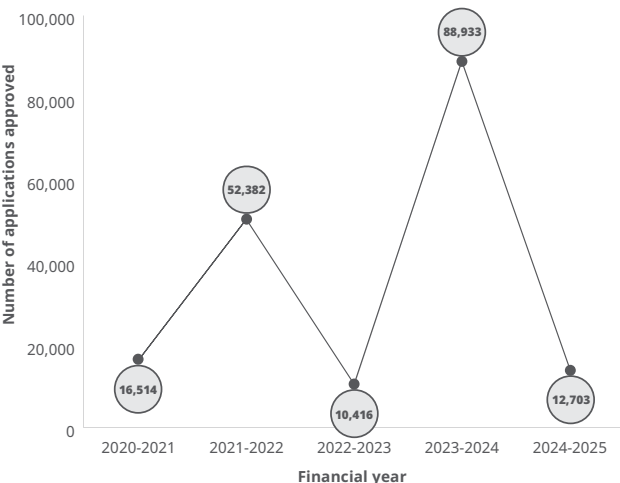
It's thanks to these concessional loans and grants that a Eumundi plant nursery is now back on their feet following the 2022 floods, and Upper Dawson beef producers have rebuilt their herd after the 2023 bushfires.

### Helping primary producers get started and improve their sustainability

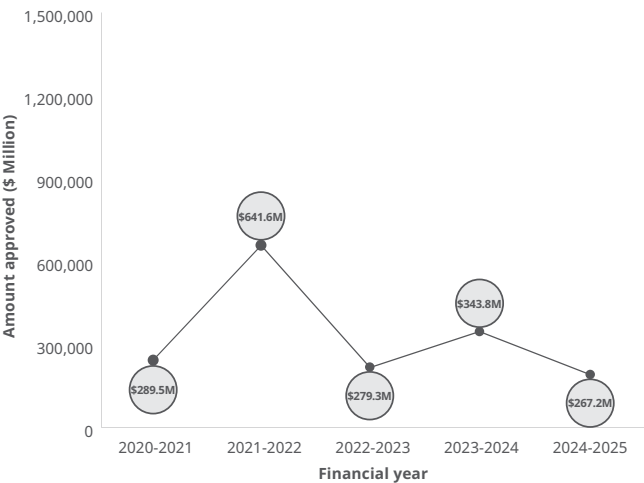
This financial year, 128 applications worth \$98.9 million were approved for our concessional First Start and Sustainability Loans.

## QRIDA highlights

Five year snapshot - # applications approved



Five year snapshot - \$ amount approved





High rural land prices and interest rate fluctuations are making it difficult for up-and-coming producers to enter the agricultural property market, but our First Start Loans have helped the next generation find additional pathways to land ownership. Lease and share farming arrangements helped agricultural industry entrants establish their operations while they built equity for property purchases. Our First Start Loans also helped family farms carry out succession plans, including a Charters Towers beef operation with a multi-generational legacy spanning over a century.

Meanwhile, our Sustainability Loans have helped primary producers improve efficiency through innovative ag-tech solutions, boost profitability by diversifying into additional agricultural markets, and overcome challenges like workforce shortages by constructing on-farm accommodation.

Queensland's broader agricultural sector also received a \$3.7 million boost under a seventh round of the successful Rural Economic Development Grants program which supported 20 projects and created approximately 128 long-term jobs. The program supported Queensland businesses like a Toowoomba saddlery manufacturer and supplier that received the grant to invest in technology to compete with imported agricultural products and create local jobs.

In delivering a wide range of financial assistance programs in 2024-2025, what has been especially pleasing is that 84 per cent of applicants from our annual client survey were satisfied overall with the service received from QRIDA. Further, 91 per cent of program owners we delivered financial assistance schemes for in 2024-2025 were satisfied with our services and their interactions with QRIDA.

### New leadership strengthening Queensland's rural and industry sectors

This financial year, QRIDA welcomed five new appointments to QRIDA's Board including Caitlin McConnel as the new Chair, and Bruce Vandersee, Danica Olsen, Jason Kidd and Ari McCamley as Directors. I would like to thank them for their support since their appointments. We look forward to continuing to work with them to explore new opportunities to develop and support Queensland's rural and industry sectors.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recognise QRIDA's outgoing Board Chair John Corbett and Directors Belinda Turner, Paul Walmsley and Elizabeth Woods for their valued contributions, as well as continuing members Drew Ellem and Scott Spencer for their ongoing support.

For the first time in QRIDA's 30-year-history, this financial year we changed portfolio departments from the Department of Primary Industries to the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development as a result of Machinery of Government changes. The change recognised QRIDA's proven ability as an effective administrator of not only financial assistance for agriculture, but for the wider industries that underpin rural and regional Queensland economies. We remain dedicated to working with all QRIDA's long-term program owners and other government agencies in continuing to provide our expert financial administration services.

I would also like to especially recognise and thank QRIDA's outgoing Chief Executive Officer, Cameron MacMillan, who, after a decade of service with the organisation, has recently retired from this position. We are deeply grateful to Cameron for his dedication and commitment in leading the QRIDA team during not only this momentous financial year but all those spanning back to 2015.

### Doing even more for rural and regional Queenslanders in 2025-2026 and beyond

As we embark on a new financial year, we remain fiercely committed to delivering meaningful financial assistance to help rural and regional communities thrive.

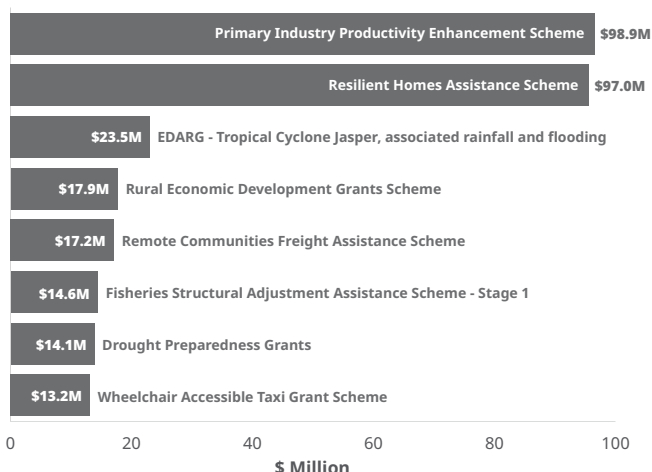
Queensland's agricultural industry is experiencing an exciting, yet challenging period of change characterised by advancements in new technologies, global economic uncertainty and increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. While we don't know exactly what the new financial year will hold, Queensland primary producers can count on QRIDA for financial assistance when challenges and opportunities emerge in 2025-2026. As Queensland's expert administrator of government financial assistance, QRIDA is also focused on expanding our services to support Queensland Government agencies to deliver even more for rural and regional communities.

As we reflect on QRIDA's achievements in 2024-2025, I would like to thank and recognise our employees located across the state; our program owners and allies; the QRIDA Board of Directors; and the Honourable Dale Last, Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, Minister for Manufacturing and Minister for Regional and Rural Development.

We look forward to working with our stakeholders to continue to create stronger rural and regional Queensland communities in the financial year to come.

Brooke Irwin  
Acting Chief Executive Officer

### Highest approved amounts by scheme



Note: This graph displays only the top eight schemes' approvals by cumulative dollar amount. The schemes not shown in this graph make up the remainder of the total approved by QRIDA in 2024-2025.

### Count of new schemes by program owner

