



QFF calls for equitable irrigation water pricing

The Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) is calling on the state government to extend its election commitment of a 50 per cent reduction in irrigation water charges for horticulture growers to all irrigation customers of Sunwater, Seqwater, Local Management Authorities (LMA) and other water providers.

While QFF welcomed the government's commitment to reduce water prices for the state's irrigators by at least 15 per cent, the peak agricultural body has serious equity concerns regarding the decision to offer different discounts to different commodities and customers of different water providers.

QFF CEO Dr Georgina Davis said it was wrong to favour one agricultural commodity, or regional community, over another by selectively providing favourable pricing.

"Given that the mainstream definition of horticulture includes fruit, vegetables, nuts, flowers, turf (grass), and nursery products, all of QFF's members including sugarcane and cotton producers are categorised as horticultural producers," Dr Davis said.

"Equity is further eroded by the decision to apply the discount to bills issued by Sunwater or Seqwater, while not offering the same assistance to customers of the recently established LMA schemes, Category 2 Water Boards and co-operative irrigation water providers servicing irrigation customers."

“Additionally, providing the two level of discounts in a transparent and robust manner would be extremely difficult and expensive for the government and its corporations.”

“Water supply corporations do not keep definitive customer records regarding water usage by crop-type and it is operationally unfeasible to do so, given multiple cropping cycles in a year, crop rotation strategies, and irrigation of multiple commodities from single offtakes.”

Dr Davis said while it may have State Budget implications, extending the 50 per cent discount to all irrigation customers would provide a welcome boost to all of Queensland’s irrigated agricultural industries.

“Affordable and reliable water is a key enabler for Queensland’s agriculture sector to continue growing world class food, fibre and foliage while managing the ongoing effects of drought and COVID-19.”

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