

# + Prime focus



## Boots n’ all commitment to regional town kept with COVID Loan

A fourth-generation family business which has been supporting rural communities and employees since 1926 will be able to continue their legacy in Charters Towers during and after COVID-19 with a Queensland Government COVID-19 Jobs Support Loan.

The Titleys brand includes five shops in the small North Queensland town; a country department store, a footwear store, workwear, sportswear, a western clothing outlet, and employs 32 local people.

Owner Tony Titley will be able to continue supporting his staff and the community where possible with the COVID-19 Loan.

The loan scheme administered by the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA), provides finance of up to \$250,000 for businesses and non-profit organisations impacted by COVID-19 to assist with carry-on expenses such as employee wages, rent and rates and other expenditure.

Mr Titley said the business was well-known in Charters Towers and supported many community events and sports teams but COVID-19 restrictions meant they had to rethink how they operated.

“When COVID hit there were a few sleepless nights but the QRIDA loan is fantastic, it has much more favourable terms,” he said.

“With the help of the QRIDA loan and JobKeeper, things are looking pretty good. I am confident we will get through. It’s hard to predict the future at this stage but I am reasonably confident we can get through this and come out the other side in reasonable shape.



*Charters Towers business owners, Tony and Rosie Titley, have used a COVID-19 Jobs Support Loan to support their staff and fulfil their commitment to the Charters Towers’ community.*

“It’s important we do stay open to let people know we are still here and haven’t given up. If people want stuff, they know they can come and get it. Many see us as an essential service for people on the farms and rural communities. The online store has been a saviour, the online sales have been quite phenomenal.

“The QRIDA loan will keep us trading and keep people employed in our little country town. We have a very different outlook now, it’s good.”

Mr Titley said the loan allowed him to continue supporting staff where possible, which was a vital, long-standing commitment the business had to the entire Charters Towers community.

“It’s important to employ people in small country towns, you have to do it to keep our towns going.

“I am very aware jobs support the whole community, especially for young people who would normally have to move away to find work and this affects the whole community, not just economically but socially.”

**“The QRIDA loan will keep us trading and keep people employed in our little country town...”**

Mr Titley said his application was approved within days.

“It was a piece of cake really; we had our financial data at our fingertips, and our accountant was very quick in providing additional information. The application was very easy, and we were approved within a matter of days,” he said.

For more information see QRIDA’s website. QRIDA is delivering the \$1 billion COVID-19 Jobs Support Loan Scheme on behalf of the Queensland Government. Applications for the scheme have now closed.

### Inside

From the CEO’s desk	2
COVID-19 impact on clients	2
Validation for drought-stricken producers	3
Regional update	4

To update your preferences email [contact\\_us@qrida.qld.gov.au](mailto:contact_us@qrida.qld.gov.au) or Freecall 1800 623 946.

## From the CEO's desk

Queenslanders are currently facing challenges we have not met before.

Already this year, we've seen some of the most significant restrictions on industry, business and the community as a result of the unfolding COVID-19 pandemic that is impacting us and around the world.

In March, QRIDA was asked by the Queensland Government to deliver the \$1 billion COVID-19 Jobs Support Loan Scheme to businesses and non-profit organisations across the state impacted by COVID-19 to retain employees and maintain operations. As expected, demand for these loans was extremely high and the scheme has now closed to application, with funding allocated to existing applications that are in progress.

I am immensely proud of the QRIDA team and our valued scheme partners who in just a few short weeks designed, built and delivered this much needed financial assistance to support our fellow Queenslanders in these difficult times.

As at 25 May 2020, we've helped to support over 4,100 businesses in Queensland by approving over \$609 million, helping to retain more than 52,000 jobs already.

The Tittleys' story on the cover of this issue is just one example of how these loans are supporting local businesses and jobs across regional Queensland. You can read more stories on the QRIDA website.

We know these have been trying times for all Queenslanders, including our current QRIDA loan clients impacted by COVID-19.



QRIDA CEO Cameron MacMillan with beef and goat breeders, Jack and Fred Stokes from St George, before travel restrictions and social distancing measures were in place.

**“QRIDA is committed to supporting regional Queensland and we’ll continue to be on this unprecedented journey with you.”**

QRIDA is encouraging existing clients doing it tough to call or email us to discuss your individual situation including options for interest only or to modify the frequency of your repayments.

Alongside the delivery of new support programs, all other QRIDA schemes and programs keep moving forward.

It's pleasing to see the Queensland Government's additional \$30 million funding commitment for First Start and Sustainability Loans in late March on top of the \$100 million already fully committed for 2019-20, and we look forward to the next round of funding from 1 July.

The additional funding included \$10 million to assist Queensland pork producers to improve their on-farm biosecurity measures and reduce the risk of African Swine Fever (ASF).

Across the state, primary producers, small business owners and not-for-profits are still recovering from natural disasters and assistance is available following the North and Far North Queensland Monsoon Trough and the Queensland bushfires.

We're proud to see the Farm Business Analysis Assistance program through the Farm Debt Restructure Office continuing to support primary producers experiencing financial difficulties. You can read Billy Carson's story in this issue as well.

QRIDA is committed to supporting regional Queensland and we'll continue to be on this unprecedented journey with you.

- Cameron MacMillan

## Are you an existing client impacted by COVID-19?

We understand that the sudden onset of COVID-19 and the consequent government restrictions have had a negative financial impact on a lot of Queensland businesses.

If you're an existing QRIDA loan client who has been impacted by COVID-19 and would like to discuss your situation with us we encourage you to do so by getting in touch.

Talk to us about:

- converting your current principal and interest payments to interest only for a period of up to six months
- changing the frequency of your current repayments - for example, from monthly to half-yearly
- deferring your principal and interest or interest only repayment for a period of up to six months.

### Temporary suspension of annual reviews

As an additional measure, QRIDA will be suspending further requests for annual reviews for the next six months.

If you have recently received a request for a review and it is due on 31 May you may ignore this request.

## Farm business analysis validates plan for drought stricken producers

Beyond the homestead fence on Billy Carson's sheep and cotton property, the reality of the recent crippling drought in South West Queensland hit hard.

Like many producers battling the conditions across the region, a blanket of lush green grass surrounding the family home is the ideal place for his children to play and a welcome relief from 15,000 acres of dirt immediately beyond the fence.

In January 2020, the drought situation at Hooloovale, near Dirranbandi, was not unlike the family's other two properties, Ooraine and Somerset, totalling 45,000 acres, and not dissimilar to the rest of Western Queensland.

The drought has forced him and his family to make some tough decisions about the future of his family farm, which his parents started in the 70s, and consider how best to make the sheep pay for themselves.

An independent review through the Farm Business Analysis Assistance program validated what they are already doing.

The program, delivered as part of QRIDA's Farm Debt Restructure Office, aims to get producers and financiers back around the table to tackle farm debt head-on.

For Billy, the Farm Business Analysis Assistance report validated he was already doing all he could to support the family business, given the conditions.

"It gave us confidence in what we were doing, we were going in the right direction," he said.

"The report said given the season there was nothing we were doing wrong. They suggested some different crop rotations and lease options which we're always open to.



Billy Carson with QRIDA's Farm Debt Restructure Office Manager, Daniel Elder.

"You need to be open to change and especially in these current conditions."

Billy's bank manager referred him to the Farm Business Analysis Assistance program, a no-obligation, free service which uses a panel of farm debt restructuring experts with significant experience in investigation and guidance for producers in financial difficulty.

"It made me more confident to be able to see the report before anyone else. We were very happy with the support and the transparency, what we saw is what we got," he said.

"It made the bank a lot more comfortable, it's always good to have an external opinion.

**"I think it's an excellent thing to do for your business ... it's external so there's no vested interest..."**

"To have the report saying we are doing the right thing but the stuff from the sky hasn't fallen, that gives you a lot more weight when asking for more assistance.

"I think it's an excellent thing to do for your business. It looks into your business, how you do things. It's external so there is no vested interest, there is no pressure from the bank and it's up to you if you want to send it to your bank. It was another tool that didn't cost you anything."





Contact us to find out how Farm Business Analysis Assistance can help you.



To find out more about Billy's experience receiving Farm Business Analysis Assistance, watch his video story at [www.qrida.qld.gov.au/news-and-events/client-stories](http://www.qrida.qld.gov.au/news-and-events/client-stories)

## Follow us!

Follow QRIDA on social media to learn more about our programs and services.

-  /QRIDAmida
-  /QRIDAmida
-  @we.are.qrida
-  /company/QRIDA

# + Regional update

## On-farm infrastructure, crop replacement assistance for disaster-affected producers

Damage to on-farm infrastructure and crops during the North and Far North Queensland Monsoon Trough more than a year ago is still evident across much of the state's disaster-affected regions.

Thousands of primary producers in 14 local government areas experienced infrastructure and crop damage as well as stock losses during the unprecedented weather event in early 2019 but assistance is still available to help pay some of the costs of recovery.

While many producers quickly turned their attention to restocking, the damage to fences, roads, dams, equipment and other infrastructure, as well as crop damage and loss, was also widespread.

North Queensland Replanting, Restocking and On-Farm Infrastructure co-contribution grants of up to \$400,000 are available to help eligible primary producers recover long-term.

QRIDA Disaster Recovery Manager Ross Henry said the grants, funded by the Australian Government, could be used to replant lost or damaged crops or permanent planting and restore or replace lost or damaged on-farm infrastructure.

**“We encourage people not to self assess but contact QRIDA to see how a North Queensland Replanting, Restocking and On-Farm Infrastructure co-contribution grant might help them recover long-term.”**

“It's been more than a year since North West Queensland primary producers were devastated during the weather event but there is still assistance available through QRIDA,” Mr Henry said.

“Moving into the cooler and drier months, it's good to remember the co-contribution grants can also be used to replace or repair damaged on-farm infrastructure, or restore flood damaged paddocks and pastures.”

“We've already seen producers use the funding to pay fencing bills, have roads and accesses repaired, replant crops and replace damaged materials. Overall, the grants have been used to help secure the long-term viability of disaster-affected primary production enterprises and help producers recover for the future.”

Mr Henry said it was important producers got in touch with QRIDA to discuss their options.

“We encourage people not to self assess but contact QRIDA to see how a North Queensland Replanting, Restocking and On-Farm Infrastructure co-contribution grant might help them recover long-term.”

For more information see [www.qrida.qld.gov.au/400kloodgrant](http://www.qrida.qld.gov.au/400kloodgrant)

## New face in the North West and Gulf

As QRIDA farewells Regional Area Manager for the North West and Gulf, Jessica Christeson, to head on maternity leave, we welcome fellow QRIDA employee Phillipa Gilmore, or Pip, to fill her boots for the next 12 months.

Pip has been with QRIDA for almost two years as an assessment officer, based recently in one of our regional offices at Roma.

Having grown up on a cropping and cattle property near Allora on the Darling Downs, Phillipa is no stranger to both a small town or agriculture.

“I studied animal production at University of Queensland's Gatton campus for two years before finding my true calling... accounting!” she laughs.

“After a semester of accounting, I realised it wasn't my calling - however I knew I loved numbers, ag and people.

“I worked in a number of small, family-owned businesses in Toowoomba before finding the perfect combination as part of the QRIDA team.

“I've been a pig in mud ever since,” Phillipa says.

Despite the restrictions of Coronavirus and social distancing protocols, Phillipa says she's looking forward to meeting people from across the North West and Gulf, even though at first it will largely be via phone and email.

“I'm itching to get out of the office and see the north-west, learn about the region and meet some great people, and hopefully contribute back some of my skills and knowledge in return” she says.

**Phillipa Gilmore**  
**Regional Area Manager -**  
**North West and Gulf (Cloncurry office)**  
M: 0427 007 240  
E: [phillipa.gilmore@qrida.qld.gov.au](mailto:phillipa.gilmore@qrida.qld.gov.au)



**QRIDA's new Regional Area Manager for the North West & Gulf, Phillipa Gilmore.**

## We've got Queensland covered

QRIDA has a network of Regional Area Managers based throughout Queensland who provide information on QRIDA's programs to producers, small business operators, bankers, accountants and government agencies.

Disclaimer: the information provided by QRIDA is general information only and has been prepared without taking into account your individual objectives, financial situation and needs. Before applying for financial assistance or making any decision, you should obtain and read a copy of the relevant program guidelines and seek advice from your legal, business and financial advisers to determine your eligibility for, and the terms of the relevant financial assistance. You should note that past grants of financial assistance are not a reliable indicator of eligibility for future grants of financial assistance. The information provided by QRIDA has been taken from sources believed to be reliable however QRIDA does not represent that the information is accurate or complete and it should not be relied upon as such. QRIDA does not assume any common law duty of care towards you in providing the information and QRIDA will not be liable for any loss or damage however caused (including by the negligence of QRIDA), suffered or incurred by you in connection with information provided by QRIDA.