

Prime focus

Southwest graziers, Anthony and Kylee Curtis accessed a Drought Preparedness Grant from QRIDA to help drought proof their primary production enterprise.

Get ahead of the game: prepare for drought with QRIDA

For Southwest graziers, Anthony and Kylee Curtis, 2019 will be a year they will never forget – for all the wrong reasons.

As drought ravaged Queensland, paddocks became barren, animal welfare became front of mind and the emotional and financial strain of how to sustain their primary production enterprise grew.

For 15 years, Anthony and Kylee Curtis have operated their Charbray breeding business at Scotland Downs, an hour north-west of Goondiwindi.

"Our priority is in breeding. We breed Charbray cattle and we breed stud bulls that we sell, and weaners that we sell to Roma Sale Yards," said Kylee.

Kylee said the Drought Preparedness Grant from the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA), worked well with their forward planning of drought proofing their primary production enterprise.

The Curtises used the grant to help fund the construction of a commodity shed to store large quantities of feed during prolonged dry periods.

"2019 was extremely dry for everyone, not just us, and we were feeding all our cattle, all the family's cattle, and we never wanted to go through that again of buying food.

"We got the Drought Preparedness Grant to build a commodity shed. The shed was roughly \$75,000; we got the concrete floor where we put the cotton seed and we do our own hay and silage," said Anthony.

The Curtises were able to use a QRIDA Sustainability Loan as the co-contribution amount needed for the Drought Preparedness Grant.

"The Drought Preparedness Grant made up that 25% and then the Sustainability Loan made up the rest, so they went hand in hand to support us in being able to build the shed."

"It was smoother than I thought applying for both the Drought Preparedness Grant and the Sustainability Loan, they blended as one rather than two, so that made sense to us, and it was straightforward," said Kylee.

Having on-farm feed storage available has given Anthony and Kylee security for the future, knowing that when the next drought comes, they will be able to sustain their business.

"It just gives you security knowing that you'll be in a lot better position than what you were in last time."

Kylee added that being able to manage and store feed gave them better control over their business decisions.

"We can also be more cost effective in our management of commodities too with this shed. If family have feed on the ground at their place, we've got the facility now to store it and keep it in good condition until it's needed."

QRIDA's Drought Preparedness Grants offer up to \$50,000 as a co-contribution grant to assist primary producers undertaking permanent infrastructure activities that will improve the drought preparedness of their property.

A QRIDA Sustainability Loan may be used as the co-contribution to the Drought Preparedness Grant for implementation activities. To find out more visit QRIDA's website.

QRIDA is administering the Queensland Government's Drought Preparedness Grants and Sustainability Loans on behalf of the Department of Primary Industries (DPI).



Find out more

Scan the QR code to watch a video about how Anthony and Kylee used finance from QRIDA to help drought proof their business.

To update your Prime Focus subscription details call **1800 623 946** or email us at contact_us@qrda.qld.gov.au

**DELIVERING
FOR QUEENSLAND**



**Queensland
Government**

The commodity shed the Curtises built using a Drought Preparedness Grant and Sustainability Loan from QRIDA.

QRIDA news

More than \$2.4 million approved in disaster recovery grants

I'm proud to share QRIDA has approved more than \$2.4 million in disaster recovery grants for communities from North West Queensland to Wide Bay that have been impacted by cyclones and flooding since Christmas Eve last year.

These grants of up to \$75,000 for primary producers and up to \$50,000 for small businesses and non-profit organisations are helping them to transition from the early clean-up and recovery to longer-term reinstatements.



Scenic Rim dairy and cropping producers Dylan, Karen and Stewart Conochie with QRIDA CEO Brooke Irwin and QRIDA Regional Area Manager for South East Queensland and Lockyer Valley, Brian Coe.

Some changes and highlights from QRIDA's disaster financial assistance this past wet season include:

- embryo transfer procedures were made eligible under disaster recovery grants to help graziers rebuild their herds
- separate floods and cyclones were combined into a single disaster event name
- QRIDA staff have been busy helping disaster assistance applicants, hosting and attending a combined total of at least 25 Disaster Recovery Pop-up Offices and stakeholder events and several online QRIDA Connect sessions
- 45 out of 77 Queensland local government areas have been activated for this disaster event, making collaboration with these distinct communities important
- QRIDA has simultaneously supported the long-term recovery of communities impacted by the Western Queensland flooding, North Queensland Tropical Low and Tropical Cyclone Alfred events last year.

As Queensland's peak disaster season ends, I encourage primary producers interested in undertaking on-farm drought resilience projects to apply for QRIDA's \$50,000 Drought Preparedness Grants soon, with almost all of the 2025-26 funding fully committed.

While the 2026-27 round of funding will open at that start of the new financial year, we expect a continued high demand from primary producers as meteorologists forecast a warm and dry winter.

It's been great to have been out across rural and regional Queensland recently, visiting producers like the Conochie family who are getting ready for drought with QRIDA, and various stakeholders on the Darling Downs ahead of Toowoomba's biggest agricultural event, FarmFest, next month. The QRIDA team will see you there at stand ASI29 inside the AgSmart Connect Pavilion.

Brooke Irwin
QRIDA Chief Executive Officer

QRIDA's Farm Business Analysis Assistance helps North QLD producers secure their future

Operating a mixed farming enterprise on the outskirts of Proserpine, William and Sharron Pratt engaged in the Farm Business Analysis Assistance program, administered by QRIDA, to help set their business up for success.

"The last couple of years, I thought I'd come in and bring William's admin side into the 21st century," Sharron said.

"The previous Business Manager exposed us to QRIDA, and I saw all of the opportunities to better your farm across succession planning, the Sustainability Loans, and drought preparedness.

"It's a long process, but with using QRIDA's Farm Business Analysis Assistance, we can get things done a little bit quicker."

The free, no-obligation report provided through the program has given the Pratts a bird's-eye view of their operation, allowing them to explore different pathways to improve the overall financial health of their business.

The Pratts worked with independent provider, BDO, to forecast their business' performance and set short-term and long-term goals.

"He [BDO provider] helped us with forecasting for up to 2035. It [the plan] sets different goals, so you'll have short-term, extremely long-term, and medium-term goals. It gives you a bit of peace of mind because you know where you are at," Sharron said.



Having their information documented by an independent party gave the Pratt's Bank Manager valuable insights into their cattle and cane business and how they intended to achieve their goals.

The couple's children are part of their farm's future, and will eventually return to the family farm to take over the operation when William and Sharron are ready to hand over the reins.

Aquaculture producers save \$20k on power bill with QRIDA

Pond Perch Farming owners Steven and Lisa Volz saved more than \$20,000 on their yearly power bill after using a QRIDA Sustainability Loan to install a 30kw solar panel system.

"We have been able to reduce our power bills by about 30%," Lisa said.

Regional Area Manager for Wide Bay and Fraser Coast, Mark Barrett, helped the silver and jade perch producers from Childers complete their QRIDA Sustainability Loan application.

"Mark Barrett was excellent to work with and helped us through all the paperwork for the application," Lisa said.

"The lower interest rate is a huge bonus, and we needed to jump through some hoops but it's worth the reward."

QRIDA Economist, John Gillespie, said primary producers who are interested in improving their on-farm energy efficiency should begin by getting an energy audit.



Steven Volz has more money to spend on fish food after using a QRIDA Sustainability Loan to purchase a solar panel system, saving him more than \$20,000 on his annual power bill.

"Conducting an energy audit is a crucial first step to improving your farm's cost savings and environmental benefits," John said.

"Energy audits help you first understand how much energy your farm uses, what consumes the most power, and when your energy usage is at its highest.

"Once you have a full picture of your farm's energy consumption, you can identify targeted on-farm investments you can make to improve your farm's energy efficiency."

Visit qrda.qld.gov.au or call **1800 623 946** to find out how you can power more and spend less with QRIDA.

Power more. Spend less. Farm smarter.



With a QRIDA Sustainability Loan, Queensland primary producers can invest in energy-efficient on-farm upgrades that help reduce power use, costs and emissions to create a more sustainable farming operation.

Eligible projects may include:



Investing in renewable energy options such as solar panels



Boosting irrigation with correctly sized pumps and motors



Modernising refrigeration and heating systems



Improving shed insulation, ventilation and machinery



Upgrading older processing and packing equipment

To find out more scan the QR code or contact your local Regional Area Manager on **1800 623 946**.



"Failing to plan is planning to fail. It makes you self-aware of where you sit, that your kids will be alright if something does happen to you, or even if you want to sell it. They have everything there that can be put on the market."

- Sharron Pratt

"We've got adult children, they're not ready to come back to the farm, but they eventually will. And we've included them in these talks and our planning so they can also see a future on the farm," Sharron said.

QRIDA's Farm Debt Restructure Officer, Daniel Elder, encourages producers to consider the Farm Business Analysis Assistance program for their future planning.

"The Farm Business Analysis Assistance program is an eight-week process by which we review your historical financial position and look at your prospects going forward," he said.

The program is for producers who have lost a bit of confidence in their operation but are also looking for alternative paths forward.

Producers will receive guidance from an independent provider who will assess your business and finances, then provide an impartial report with recommendations to resolve debt issues.

"Eligible producers can either be existing primary producers, past primary producers who have lost capacity, or new primary producers who are trying to get to capacity. Examples for producers can be the investigation of existing strategies, but also potentially alternative ones that can be in the way of succession or diversification," Daniel said.



The Pratts analysing their farm with QRIDA's Farm Debt Restructure Office Manager, Daniel Elder.

For more information visit QRIDA's Farm Business Analysis Assistance program webpage.

Scan the QR code to watch a video about the Pratt's story and find out further details about QRIDA's support.



Regional update

Our team in regional Queensland, helping you

QRIDA has a network of 11 Regional Area Managers (RAMs) based throughout Queensland who can provide you with the latest local knowledge and expertise on our programs and services.

With offices located in Brisbane, Bundaberg, Emerald, Hughenden, Innisfail, Kingaroy, Mackay, Rockhampton, Roma, Toowoomba and Townsville, we've got Queensland covered.

In each newsletter we feature an update from three of our RAMs. To find details of your local RAM, contact us on **1800 623 946** or visit the 'your region' page on our website where you can search by region or postcode.



Terry Pulsford
Maranoa & South West

With less than average rainfall predicted over spring and summer, I encourage producers to take advantage of the Drought Preparedness Grants to assist with projects that will help sustain your business through prolonged dry periods.

Now is the time to get your Farm Business Resilience Plan (FBRP) together. Visit QRIDA's Drought Preparedness Grant webpage for a list of FBRP referral contacts.

Primary producers can apply for a grant of up to 25%, to a total of \$50,000, for the cost of purchasing, upgrading and installing permanent capital infrastructure. A Sustainability Loan can be used as a co-contribution to these grants.

In case you missed it, primary producers now have until 2 October 2026 to apply for disaster recovery grants for the Western Queensland Surface Trough and Associated Rainfall and Flooding, 21 March – 19 May 2025 disaster event. If you were affected, please take advantage of this support while it's available.

I encourage you to get in touch with me to discuss your plans and explore the best options for your operation.

Talk with Terry

☎ 0427 029 141
✉ terry.pulsford@qrída.qld.gov.au



Kate Dunk
Darling Downs

In early May, I had the privilege of hosting the QRIDA Board during their visit to the Toowoomba region. It was a valuable opportunity to connect with our rural and regional industry partners, share insights, and have meaningful conversations about the challenges and opportunities facing our communities. These discussions are essential to ensuring we continue to deliver support that is both effective and sustainable for Queensland's agricultural sector.

Looking ahead, I'm excited for the upcoming FarmFest Field Days from 2–4 June, located at Kingsthorpe Park. As a key event on the Queensland agricultural calendar, it brings together the latest innovations, products, and services, along with the people who drive our industry forward.

Whether you're interested in finding out more about QRIDA's concessional loans and grants, need help with determining your eligibility or assistance with completing your QRIDA application, I encourage you to stop by QRIDA's site for a chat with myself or one of our team members at stand ASI29 inside the AgSmart Connect Pavilion.

Talk with Kate

☎ 0427 690 448
✉ kate.dunk@qrída.qld.gov.au



Brian Coe
South East & Lockyer Valley

One of my recent on-farm visits was a little different as I filmed a story with a Scenic Rim dairy farmer who has saved tens of thousands of dollars using QRIDA's financial assistance to prepare for drought. I highly recommend looking at this story on QRIDA's social media and website to find out how QRIDA could similarly help your operation, especially with current forecasts of a dry and warm winter.

With all the news about fuel shortages and rising costs and interest rates, it's important to check in with yourself and each other. Reach out for help if you need it - there's a range of mental health resources available on QRIDA's website.

If you need a hand applying for QRIDA's financial assistance, I can come to you or suggest free services that can help you complete your paperwork, such as the Rural Financial Counselling Service. Please get in touch with me and let's arrange a time to meet.

Talk with Brian

☎ 0427 763 787
✉ brian.coe@qrída.qld.gov.au

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.