Prime focus



North West graziers, Luke and Jake Anning both accessed First Start Loans from QRIDA to begin building their own cattle enterprises.

Brothers forge their own path on the family station

For North West Queensland brothers Luke and Jake Anning, Wongalee Station is both home and the foundation for their future in agriculture.

Located 40 kilometres north of Hughenden, the property has been home to the Anning family for the past 30 years.

Today, the sixth-generation graziers are building their own futures in agriculture while continuing the family's long-standing legacy.

Growing up on Wongalee Station, the brothers were immersed in the cattle industry from a young age, raising cattle for market alongside their family.

"I was given the opportunity by my parents to run a few cows in a paddock here," Luke said.

Keen to take the next step in their agricultural careers, both Luke and Jake began exploring options to establish their own independent businesses while remaining part of the family operation.

Luke first heard about the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA) through a friend and reached out to learn more about the support available for aspiring producers.

"I heard about QRIDA through a friend, so I contacted them and they got me started on the First Start Loan to purchase a few cows," Luke said.

Through QRIDA's First Start Loan, Luke and Jake were both able to access the support they needed to begin building their own cattle enterprises.

Jake said the loan helped overcome one of the biggest challenges for young producers starting out.

"I was asset poor and they were taking the existing cattle I had as security," he said.

Their local QRIDA Regional Area Manager worked closely with the brothers throughout the First Start Loan application process, visiting Wongalee Station to go through their applications, review cashflow projections and discuss the brothers' business plans.

Luke said having access to QRIDA's support has helped them confidently take the next step in their agricultural careers.

"I would definitely recommend QRIDA. You can approach them, you can talk to them," he said.

"They're at a lot of the events that are around, so you can always go up to them and pick their brains about what the interest rates are and what the process is like."

Luke added that QRIDA's support goes beyond simply providing finance.

"QRIDA seem to be very encouraging to not just pay back their loans. They want you to grow, they want you to prosper in this industry that we love," he said.

Designed to help the next generation of producers establish themselves in the industry, QRIDA's First Start Loans offer up to $2 million to help aspiring producers in the initial years of establishing their primary production business. For more information, visit the QRIDA website and search for "First Start Loans".



Find out more

Scan the QR code to watch a video about how Luke and Jake used finance from QRIDA to help establish their own agribusinesses.

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

DELIVERING FOR QUEENSLAND | Queensland Government

QRIDA news

QRIDA approves more than $100m in primary producer loans in 2025-2026

Reflecting on the past 12 months, I'm proud of what QRIDA has achieved in pursuit of our vision of rural and regional communities and industries that are adapting and contributing to a thriving and resilient Queensland economy.

During 2025-2026 QRIDA approved more than $101.8 million in concessional First Start Loans and Sustainability Loans to help Queensland primary producers and commercial fishers get started, grow and expand their operations.

Just some of those we have proudly assisted include backing a Moreton Bay commercial fisher to get started and grow his lobster and crab operation; a Whitsunday mango family farm to expand and get ready for drought; and a Central Queensland beef operation to invest in an agricultural drone for more precise and efficient weed spraying and pasture seeding.

QRIDA also continued to oversee Farm Debt Mediation in Queensland and, as fuel, fertiliser and feed costs rose due to overseas conflicts, the free and independent advice offered to primary producers facing financial difficulties through QRIDA's Farm Business Assistance Analysis program was a weight off farmers' shoulders.

These challenges coincided with Queensland's past wet season, which was particularly challenging even for Australia's most disaster-prone state, with 65 out of 77 local government areas activated for disaster assistance.

We are proud to have approved more than $63.5 million in disaster grants and $2.9 million in concessional disaster loans for primary producers, small businesses and non-profits to get back up and running and recover long-term.

This year also saw the re-establishment of the Queensland Government's Drought Preparedness Grant in December 2025. Strong demand from primary producers to invest on farm to improve drought resilience saw the allocated 2025-2026 funding of $5 million approved in just six months.

These co-contribution grants, combined with concessional Sustainability Loans, have helped primary producers purchase and upgrade permanent capital infrastructure to get ready for the next drought.

In the financial year to come, the QRIDA team looks forward to doing even more through our independent, timely and accessible government financial assistance and service delivery to foster a thriving and resilient Queensland economy.

Brooke Irwin
QRIDA Chief Executive Officer



QRIDA Chief Executive Officer, Brooke Irwin, said QRIDA is dedicated to supporting productive and sustainable rural and regional communities.

QRIDA loans delivering major economic benefits for regional Queensland

An independent economic impact report has confirmed the Queensland Government's productivity loans for primary producers supports substantial economic benefits to regional communities across Queensland.

Every $1 million in loan funding provided to a primary producer through the Queensland Government's Primary Industry Productivity Enhancement Scheme (PIPES) generates $6.7 million in regional economic activity over the life of a typical loan.

This is according to the PIPES Regional Economic Impact Report 2024-2025, conducted by independent advisory firm, BDO, and commissioned by QRIDA.

Over the 30-year lifetime of the PIPES program, QRIDA has delivered $1.2 billion in concessional loans to Queensland primary producers. This 2024-2025 economic impact analysis is based on the 1,368 open loan accounts worth $772.5 million.

QRIDA Chief Executive Officer, Brooke Irwin, said the independent report measures both direct and flow-on economic impacts of on-farm investments funded under PIPES, including the concessional First Start Loans and Sustainability Loans administered by QRIDA.

"When QRIDA funds a farmer on the land, we also help support rural and regional towns as farmers invest in necessities like machinery, fuel and freight and create jobs locally," Brooke said.

"This direct spending and employment multiply all the way through to schools, hospitals and local businesses."

QRIDA Rural and Industry Economist, John Gillespie, said the inaugural publication of the PIPES Regional Economic Impact Report is a significant milestone for rural and regional Queenslanders.

"This independent report highlights the economic impact of our First Start Loans and Sustainability Loans in supporting not just individual farmers, but the broader rural and regional Queensland communities in which they live and operate," John said.

The next PIPES Regional Economic Impact Report is scheduled for 2028.

For more information visit QRIDA's website and search for 'Regional Economic Impact'.

Dairy farm's cost-savvy hack makes cow comfort 'Cono-key'

Scenic Rim third and fourth generation family farmers, Stewart and Dylan Conochie, are keeping their Jersey cows cool and producing 600 tonnes of extra silage thanks to their drought preparedness project through QRIDA.

As winter draws to a close in Queensland and warm, dry conditions continue, a father-son dairy farming duo hasn't let high fuel, fertiliser and feed costs sour their drought preparedness after cleverly combining a free program, grant and concessional loan to save money.

Stewart and Dylan Conochie's family operation, 'Brookland Stud Farms', located at Kalbar, 80 kilometres southwest of Brisbane, has saved tens of thousands of dollars in grant funding and interest on a loan for drought resilient on-farm infrastructure through QRIDA.



"Anybody who's thinking about getting ready for drought – look at QRIDA. They have amazing assistance and amazing people there to help you with any application and progress your business to be better prepared."

- Stewart Conochie

The cost-saving combination requires producers to first create a free Farm Business Resilience Plan (FBRP). Then, producers can stack a Drought Preparedness Grant with a concessional Sustainability Loan through QRIDA to fund the on-farm infrastructure improvements identified in their FBRP.

"We used a QRIDA Drought Preparedness Grant to install a centre pivot irrigator," Stewart said.

QRIDA Regional Area Manager for South East Queensland and the Lockyer Valley, Brian Coe, said the irrigator has increased the family farm's cropping area and improved the quality of their sorghum and lucerne.

"The Conochie family can now more efficiently water approximately 20 acres of double cropping which means about an extra 600 tonnes of silage for their livestock," Brian said.

The Conochie family then used a concessional QRIDA Sustainability Loan as the co-contribution for their Drought Preparedness Grant to fund a compost feed shed.

"The shed has added comfort for the cows with the soft bedding, along with being able to bring feed directly to them and it being cooler for the cows, especially on hotter days," Dylan said.

The co-contribution Drought Preparedness Grants of up to $50,000 are available to Queensland primary producers subject to the availability of funds.

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 the Conochie's used finance from QRIDA to help prepare their dairy for drought.

Key findings

The report* revealed that for every $1 million provided in PIPES loans...

$6.7m
in economic impact Gross State Product (GSP) over the life of a loan

$1.3m
in on-farm investment

$0.4m
in Queensland's annual economic impact

$0.4m
in additional annual farm sales

Top 4 industry results

Beef
$162.7m GSP
1,359 FTE jobs

Sugar Cane
$66.2m GSP
574 FTE jobs

Grain & Livestock
$27.3m GSP
238 FTE jobs

Horticulture
$14.4m GSP
170 FTE jobs

**These key findings and industry results are according to the independent PIPES Regional Economic Impact Report 2024-2025.*

Drought news

$5 million funding reset for Drought Preparedness Grants Scheme

From 1 July, primary producers can apply for the 2026-2027 round of Drought Preparedness Grants, designed to help farmers build resilience and prepare for future drought conditions. Applications will remain open until funding is exhausted.

New drought loans announced

On 28 July, the Minister for Primary Industries announced the reinstatement of the Drought Carry-on Finance Loan and the Emergency Drought Assistance Loan for eligible Queensland primary producers. Full details of these loans will be made available once administrative arrangements are finalised. Please monitor QRIDA's website and social media channels for updates on when applications will open and how to apply.

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, Charters Towers, Emerald, 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.



Sam Spina
Far North

I'd like to take the opportunity to remind primary producers, small businesses and non-profit organisations to start thinking about their disaster preparedness plans and the practical steps they can take now to protect their operations. It is important to stay up to date with the latest announcements from QRIDA about disaster assistance availability, eligibility requirements, and the types of activities QRIDA's disaster support may be used for. Having a clear understanding of the assistance available can help businesses and organisations respond more quickly and confidently when disaster events occur.

I'd also encourage anyone looking to start or grow a primary production business to explore QRIDA's First Start and Sustainabiity Loans, which can provide support to help turn those plans into reality, whether you're taking the first step into the industry or looking to build on an existing operation.

To find out more about the support available, visit QRIDA's website, or contact me directly and we can even arrange a time to meet to go through your application(s).

Talk with Sam

0429 497 757
sam.spina@qrida.qld.gov.au



Tegan McBride
Central Coast & Whitsundays

Cane crushing season is well underway in my region, with the Wilmar Plane and Mackay Sugar Mills having processed more than six million tonnes of sugar so far this season.

Recently, I visited Bowen with QRIDA's Marketing and Communications team to film our next client story, which will be released in September. This story highlights how young producers are getting onto the land and investing in protected cropping infrastructure to boost their farm productivity. Stay tuned to watch the story soon!

With dry weather persisting across the region, I encourage producers to consider applying for a Drought Preparedness Grant through QRIDA to support permanent infrastructure projects that improve your property's drought resilience.

A Farm Business Resilience Plan (FBRP) is required for this grant application. You'll find a list of industry contacts on QRIDA's website who can help you complete your FBRP.

If you'd like more information or have questions about any of QRIDA's financial assistance programs, please get in touch.

Talk with Tegan

0427 770 147
tegan.mcbride@qrida.qld.gov.au



Mark Barrett
Wide Bay & Fraser Coast

To kick off the new financial year, I'd like to remind everyone that the Drought Preparedness Grants renewed on 1 July. These grants provide up to $50,000, which can be used as a 25% co-contribution. A QRIDA Sustainability Loan may cover the remaining 75%, helping you invest in permanent on-farm infrastructure such as water tanks, bores or irrigation systems to strengthen resilience before the next dry spell.

I'll also be representing QRIDA at several industry events in September and October. If you're in Bundaberg on Friday 11 September, come and say hello at the QRIDA stand at AgroTrend. From Tuesday 20 to Thursday 22 October, I'll be at the Brisbane Showgrounds for AusMac 2026, bringing together macadamia growers, researchers and investors. I'll then be in Toowoomba from Thursday 22 to Friday 23 October for the Future Hort Leaders Forum, a valuable event for young people working or studying in horticulture.

If you'd like to discuss financial assistance for your next on-farm project, please get in touch with me.

Talk with Mark

0417 775 547
mark.barrett@qrida.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.