

Rural and Regional Adjustment (Commonwealth Schemes) Amendment Regulation 2020

Human Rights Certificate

Prepared in accordance with Part 3 of the *Human Rights Act 2019*

In accordance with section 41 of the *Human Rights Act 2019*, I, Mark Furner MP, Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities, provide this human rights certificate with respect to the *Rural and Regional Adjustment (Commonwealth Schemes) Amendment Regulation 2020* made under the *Rural and Regional Adjustment Act 1994* (the Act).

In my opinion, the *Rural and Regional Adjustment (Commonwealth Schemes) Amendment Regulation 2020*, as tabled in the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with the human rights protected by the *Human Rights Act 2019*. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview of the Subordinate Legislation

The Act establishes the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA) to administer approved assistance schemes to assist primary producers, small business and other sectors during periods of temporary difficulty, or to otherwise benefit the Queensland economy. Section 10 of the Act provides that QRIDA may give financial assistance only under an approved scheme. Accordingly, this regulatory amendment is intended to allow QRIDA to administer three new assistance schemes to support disaster recovery from the monsoonal flooding of 2019.

This severe natural disaster occurred in northern Queensland during January to February 2019, heavily impacting on graziers in North West Queensland with hundreds of thousands of livestock deaths and extensive infrastructure damage. Damage was also significant in coastal regions including the local government areas of Douglas, Townsville, Hinchinbrook and Burdekin.

After consultation with regional communities impacted by the natural disaster, the Australian Government identified areas where targeted assistance could support the social, economic and community recovery of the region and it developed assistance schemes to deliver support to meet that need. Of the five schemes proposed by the Australian Government to address these needs, three are to be administered by QRIDA.

QRIDA has, or is, already delivering a range of assistance programs for this event, including recovery grants and concessional loans under the joint Commonwealth State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) and the North Queensland Restocking, Replanting & On-Farm Infrastructure Grant which is a program which provides grants to primary producers severely impacted by the event.

The key features of the three new Australian Government schemes to be administered by QRIDA that are the subject of this regulatory amendment are:

North Queensland Economic Diversification Grants (North & Far North Queensland Monsoon Trough, 25 January–14 February 2019)

- A \$9 million Economic Diversification Program that will provide grants of between \$10,000 and \$500,000 with a matching contribution from the applicant to support activities that increase the economic diversification of the flood-affected region either through support for emerging industries, expansion of small scale industries, or through intensification and value adding of existing industries and their supply chains. Applicants will be assessed competitively on the criteria of capacity to create jobs, value for money, economic and public benefit to the area and prospects of success and long term viability.

North Queensland Resilient Kids Grants Program (North & Far North Queensland Monsoon Trough, 25 January–14 February 2019)

- A Resilient Kids Program providing \$500,000 per annum for 4 years from 2020-21 for grants of up to \$1 million per eligible applicant (either Western Queensland Primary Health Network or Northern Queensland Primary Health Network) for the development and delivery of a program to support preventative mental health measures for children in flood-affected areas. This would equip children with the skills to identify the early signs of mental health stress, normalise the discussion around mental wellbeing, and increase knowledge about where to turn for help.

North Queensland Telecommunications and Energy Improvement Grants (North & Far North Queensland Monsoon Trough, 25 January–14 February 2019)

- The North Queensland Telecommunications and Energy Improvement Grants will fund projects that trial and adapt new technologies that resolve telecommunication and electricity issues, reducing reliance on ageing and expensive infrastructure. The scheme will operate over two rounds in 2021 with the opening and closing dates to be published on the QRIDA website. Proposals for funding under this program will be assessed on a competitive basis against their ability to meet the eligibility criteria, namely that the project to be funded will lead to an increase in employment, improved connectivity and improved access to reliable, affordable services. The grants will be not less than \$10,000 and up to \$1 million, with applicants required to provide a financial or in kind contribution.

Human Rights Issues

Human rights relevant to the subordinate legislation (Part 2, Division 2 and 3 *Human Rights Act 2019*)

The potential impact of the *Rural and Regional Adjustment (Commonwealth Schemes) Amendment Regulation 2020* on the human rights in sections 15 to 37 of the *Human Rights Act 2019* was considered and no potential impact was identified.

Conclusion

I consider that the *Rural and Regional Adjustment (Commonwealth Schemes) Amendment Regulation 2020* is compatible with the *Human Rights Act 2019* because it does not raise a human rights issue.

MARK FURNER MP
MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES
AND MINISTER FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

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