

## **Advancing Rural Queensland**

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## Grab for green votes begins with Wild Rivers declarations

Today's Queensland Government decision to declare the Coopers Creek, Georgina and Diamantina Rivers as "Wild Rivers" is a clear sign of a government in election mode.

AgForce policy director Drew Wagner said the announcement, coming just 10 days after public submissions closed on the Georgina/Diamantina proposals, smacks of a government desperate to win green votes in the leadup to an early 2012 election.

"The government was supposed to 'properly consider' all public submissions to the proposed listings before making a declaration, and yet just days after the closing date Environment Minister Vicky Darling has rushed out a declaration," said Mr Wagner.

AgForce has long argued Wild Rivers declarations place an unnecessary layer of regulation over primary producers and fail to recognise the good land management practices of both traditional owners and rural landholders.

"We reject claims from Minister Darling that today's declarations won't affect grazing activities. Landholders in the Lake Eyre basin are now locked into a production time warp, with their ability to expand, intensify or diversify their operations now severely limited."

Mr Wagner said property owners who have a high proportion of their country classified as a 'High Preservation Area' (HPA) will be unable to adapt their enterprises in response to changing markets or climate.

"Practically speaking, Wild Rivers' declarations can limit the construction of fences and dams, the management of erosion and weed control efforts. Even more concerning is the potential for property values to be eroded which can harm the economic and social future of entire regional communities," said Mr Wagner.

AgForce is disappointed the announcement makes no mention of a support package for landholders to control pests and weeds in areas that will be locked up under this declaration (or HPAs), and there is no commitment to a public 10-year review of the efficacy of Wild Rivers legislation.

"When will this government realise that the best environmental outcomes for all Queenslanders are achieved by incentive-based policies that encourage good land management, rather than blunt regulatory instruments that restrict development?"

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Who is AgForce? AgForce represents thousands of Queensland broadacre producers who recognise the value in having a strong voice. AgForce leads the way to ensure agriculture's social, economic and environmental contribution is recognised by all levels of government. AgForce works alongside landholders, encourages and supports the next generation, builds industry partnerships and skills and promotes agriculture - for secure, sustainable, progressive and profitable food and fibre into the future.