

Australia's proposed Iona beef facility declared prescribed project

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The Crisafulli Government has officially declared the Central Highland Iona Project a "prescribed project", clearing the way for the development of a state-of-the-art beef processing facility in Emerald that promises to reshape Queensland's agricultural future.

Designed to integrate cutting-edge technologies such as robotics, artificial intelligence, and automation, the Iona Project aims to boost beef processing capacity, strengthen regional supply chains, and cement Queensland's place as Australia's beef production powerhouse.

Beyond its processing facility, the proposed development includes a feedlot, rendering plant, cogeneration and biogas infrastructure, bio-nutrient processing, and a water treatment plant, positioning it as a holistic agri-industrial complex with sustainability and innovation at its core.

Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning, Jarrod Bleijie, said the prescribed project status would empower the Coordinator-General to fast-track approvals and facilitate a smooth delivery in collaboration with local authorities.

"After a decade of neglect by Labour, the Crisafulli Government is determined to streamline regional project approvals to deliver more job-creating investment and expand Queensland's primary industries," Bleijie said. "The Iona Project has the potential to enhance Queensland's beef processing capabilities while creating economic development opportunities across regional Queensland."

The project is expected to create 188 construction jobs and 427 operational roles, delivering a substantial boost to the Central Highlands economy. It will also support feedlot R&D, presenting wider benefits to the state's agricultural innovation landscape.

Minister for Primary Industries, Tony Perrett, hailed the initiative as a game-changer for regional primary producers and a key step in developing future-ready AgTech skills.

“This project is a shining example of the potential for growth and development in Queensland's primary industries,” Perrett said. “It's an exciting opportunity for central Queensland beef producers and a testament to our government's commitment to supporting agriculture and regional jobs.”

The Iona Project reflects the Crisafulli Government's broader strategy to drive investment in regional infrastructure and empower Queenslanders with the skills and opportunities of tomorrow's agriculture sector.