



CANEGROWERS

# State Election 2012



**The six 'Rs' for  
rebuilding the strength  
of regional Queensland**

# Actions to Rebuild REGIONAL QUEENSLAND

## A Re-awakening Economic Powerhouse

- The Queensland sugar industry is undergoing an extensive resurgence. Large international corporations are investing billions in sugar mills, and increasing land under cane. World sugar prices are at all-time highs and sugar demand is increasing with the world's rapidly growing population.
- The Queensland sugar industry is again moving to affirm its status as an economic powerhouse of regional coastal Queensland.

The Queensland Government must take this opportunity to amplify the economic and social benefits of this revival by removing the barriers to sugar industry growth and development.

## 1 Reinvest: in research & development

### CURRENT SITUATION

- State government funding for sugarcane research and development has halved (in 2011 dollars) from \$4.7 annually to \$2.8 million annually over the past 8 years.
- Funding cuts jeopardise Australia's ability to remain internationally competitive.

### ACTION NEEDED

- Double state government's funding to research and development from \$2.8 to \$5.6 million annually – to complement the industry's own \$21 million annual investment.
- Commit to maintain this level of funding (in real terms) into future years.

## 2 Remove inefficient government costs: water & electricity

### CURRENT SITUATION

- Water and electricity costs are fast becoming prohibitive; irrigation is now 25% of grower costs.
- Sunwater's management of irrigation schemes is highly inefficient; 60% of total costs are overheads in some schemes.

### ACTION NEEDED

- Cap increases in water and electricity prices for growers to the Consumer Price Index (CPI).
- Commit to remove Sunwater as the manager of irrigation schemes and implement local management of schemes by June 2015.

## 3 Reduce green tape: **accelerate innovation**

### CURRENT SITUATION

- Cane growers are spending an increasing percentage of time filling out paperwork for no environmental advantage.
- \$10 million per year of public funds is being wasted on highly inefficient reef regulatory activities.
- The current regulatory approach has limited demonstrated effectiveness in achieving real change in practice, on-farm.

### ACTION NEEDED

- Invest in and support the development of a Sugarcane Best Management Practice Framework by CANEGROWERS.
- Redirect reef regulation funding to incentivise adoption of innovative farming practices.

## 4 Reinvigorate plans for: **growth**

### CURRENT SITUATION

- Efforts to regain the loss of sugarcane lands through urban encroachment, timber managed investment schemes and alternate cropping are hindered by a lack of planning and regulatory hurdles.
- The ability of industry to expand into greenfield areas is limited by barriers such as government regulation and conflicting policy goals.

### ACTION NEEDED

- Develop strategic growth plans at regional and industry levels in partnership with the sugar industry.
- Commit to a program to identify greenfield expansion sites, taking into account environmental constraints, water availability and investment needed for infrastructure (transport, milling).

## 5 Retain and enhance: **biosecurity measures**

### CURRENT SITUATION

- The current investment by the Queensland Government into biosecurity is keeping pests and diseases at bay that would potentially devastate the industry.

### ACTION NEEDED

- Maintain current state government investment levels of \$82 million into biosecurity annually, recognising the considerable industry investment in this critical activity.
- Commit to continuing this level of funding (in real terms) into future years.

## 6 Rebuild and reskill: **workforce**

### CURRENT SITUATION

- More than 500 skilled sugar industry employees are being lost to the resource sector annually.
- The industry relies upon a workforce with a unique set of skills and abilities.
- Unemployment rates in most regional areas are above those of the state average.

### ACTION NEEDED

- Commit to the development of an industry-specific workforce attraction, retention and skilling initiative.
- Commit to a funding program of \$2 million annually for three years to fund the attraction, retention and skilling needs of the Queensland sugarcane workforce.



# CANEGROWERS

CANEGROWERS is the peak representative body for Australian sugarcane growers.

We have been advancing and protecting the interests of cane farming families in Queensland since 1926. CANEGROWERS ensures that growers' needs are represented at the highest possible levels of industry and government decision-making.

We safeguard growers' interests on all issues likely to affect their business.

## Big Industry – Big Value

- **World's third largest exporter** of sugar (80% of Australian sugar is exported)
- **\$2 billion value** to the Queensland economy (to the annual Gross State Product)
- **Second largest agricultural commodity** in Queensland
- **15,600 jobs directly, and 70,200 indirectly**, accounting for 15% of employees in coastal Queensland
- **\$7 billion in land and \$4 billion in infrastructure** assets controlled by the industry



**For further information on actions to rebuild regional Queensland, contact:**

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