



CANEGROWERS

# ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19



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## Vision

To ensure a secure and profitable future for cane growers.

## Mission

CANEGROWERS provides representation, leadership and services, and promotes unity in the interests of its members.

## Values

- Accountability to our members
- A focus on issues relevant to our members
- Credibility, integrity and professionalism
- Open and effective communication between growers, organisation units and external publics
- Community consciousness

## Goals

- Assist in maximising grower efficiency and profitability
- Contribute to long-term industry efficiency
- Enhance organisation effectiveness
- Develop a positive external environment for cane growers
- Recognise and manage diverse grower needs while maintaining organisation unity
- Provide a foundation and structure for future industry development and planning

# Chairman's Report

## Meeting the challenges together

There is no doubt that we are working through some of the most difficult times in the history of the Australian sugarcane industry. A convergence of issues at an international and domestic level has placed our cane farming families and businesses under enormous pressure.



**Paul Schembri**  
CANEGROWERS Chairman

In difficult times the need for advocacy is never more important and the CANEGROWERS organisation is responding to the challenges we face. In tough times the need for growers to remain united and stand together cannot be understated. That is why we at CANEGROWERS place such a strong focus on representation for you, the members.

World sugar prices have been low for the past twelve months, so low that they are below the average Australian cost of production for sugar, and it is expected that this situation will continue.

The low world sugar price is due in large part to India's sugar production and export subsidies which the industry in Australia contends are a breach of World Trade Organisation rules. CANEGROWERS, working with the Australian Sugar Milling Council, has impressed upon the Commonwealth Government the importance and dire effects of this issue.

Australia, Brazil and Guatemala have now launched a joint action urging the WTO to establish a Dispute Panel to rule on the status of the Indian subsidies. WTO processes are relatively slow but Australia has enjoyed great

success in the past – most notably in 2004 with an application that successfully resulted in around six million tonnes of European exports being withdrawn from the world market. The journey is long but hopefully the benefit will be worth the wait.

Environmental issues have also been centre stage for CANEGROWERS this year. We are proud of the enormous changes growers have made to farming and cultural practices over the past 30 years. We accept we have an important responsibility to manage our environmental footprint, a responsibility shared with all land-use activities in Queensland.

However, the approach of the Queensland Government to use legislation and regulation as a vehicle to improve the water quality of the water leaving the land and moving towards the Great Barrier Reef is being challenged as inappropriate and risking economic impact.

CANEGROWERS and its members do not shy away from the need to manage any risks our activities pose to the wider environment but we believe that regulation gets in the way of innovation and technology – two cornerstones of our industry

movement to environmental sustainability.

Without a strong membership, there would be little basis upon which to build the CANEGROWERS advocacy message so membership retention continues to be an important focus for the organisation.

To that end, a new position has been created within our team and long-standing senior staff member, Matt Kealley, is working to give us clearly defined approaches to retaining members and encouraging a return of former members. We value membership and don't take for granted membership support.

I want to thank CEO Dan Galligan for his stewardship of the team at CANEGROWERS and his strategic approach to making for a better industry.

I also thank all the regional offices, the regional boards and their staff. Without regional support the CANEGROWERS organisation would not be as effective.

I also thank the members of the CANEGROWERS Board and Policy Council for their capacity to lead and make decisions in often challenging circumstances.





# CEO's Report

## Investing in our future while learning from our past

Reading through this annual report I hope our members, industry partners and all growers get a sense of the hugely diverse work of CANEGROWERS. The report has taken on a new style and layout this year in the hope that we better articulate the issues and actions the CANEGROWERS group has taken on to deliver on our mission of representation, leadership and promotion of unity in the pursuit of a profitable future for growers.



**Dan Galligan**  
CANEGROWERS CEO

Being focused on delivery comes with challenges, although none as great as those faced by growers who have navigated another difficult season from almost every angle. In the midst of it all, the organisation that I am proud to lead continues to be true to its DNA.

Our leadership is focused on farmers as the voice of your industry. The greatest demonstration of this this year was the election of a new group of district leaders. It was particularly motivating for representatives and staff to meet in Cairns to learn about the duties of being a director and, just as importantly, to get to know each other - to share and learn from each other and to build what will be for many lifelong friendships.

With the opportunity that is presented by bringing new directors into the group (25% of the CANEGROWERS Policy Council are first time appointments) comes the necessity and great privilege to farewell some of our most experienced and valued representatives. It has been wonderful to hear their stories - both the successes and the

challenges. Departing leaders talk mostly, though, about the camaraderie and sense of belonging they have enjoyed by being part of the CANEGROWERS community. This type of grower-to-grower interaction is behind many of our past successes and will be key to our future.

For this past year, we have looked to build a renewed focus around the delivery of practical, valuable and tangible outcomes for growers. These outcomes can only be achieved because we have a strong membership and robust financial due diligence. Co-investing with the Federal Government in our Australian Rural Leadership Program and rolling out our new marketing information education service have been highlights. Both programs have gained strong positive feedback.

We are now leveraging the excellent environmental management credentials of growers to build a case for a sustainably sourced Australian sugar supply chain. While this work is in its early stages, I am confident that with cooperation within the Australian industry

we will be in a strong position to meet the demands that exists for sustainable sugar across the globe and along the way the efforts of growers will be recognised.

Accountability to our members remains at the core of CANEGROWERS. In previous years we have worked to build the status and focus of the Policy Council in the critical role of leading and setting industry policy. Building upon this, you will see in this report the structure and commitment we are now putting behind membership engagement.

While CANEGROWERS has a focus on the future of the industry, our capacity to deliver services and leadership only exists because of the commitment of our members. So, it follows that members should hold a pivotal place via a dedicated strategy, a strategy that during this year has started to take flight. Our membership is strong, but that is all the more reason that now is the time to not take any member for granted and to ensure that we have a structure that allows members to both be involved and see benefits from their involvement.



Like any membership commitment we make in our lives, involvement in CANEGROWERS is a two-way street. We strive to build an organisation that responds to the needs of growers both now and into the future. In return it cannot be overstated just how much we value the feedback from growers. Commonly this comes directly to us from our ever-resilient district companies - these are the gateway for all growers to the organisation. More and more we want to encourage all growers to be proactive in communicating with CANEGROWERS at all levels and because our future is reliant on listening and evolving to your needs, we will continue to be innovative in the ways in which growers can communicate directly with us.

I hope this report is informative and also rewarding to read. The efforts described within are owned by all growers in the industry. Activities, outcomes and positions are described in some detail. Any success is a credit to the grower

leadership in the CANEGROWERS Board, Policy Council and the District Boards and from the high level of skill and dedication displayed by our staff in all locations. Seeing changes in government policy, or the delivery of more targeted investment programs can only be achieved through relevant, pragmatic and effective advocacy. It has been my pleasure to work with all of you again this year.

At the beginning of 2019 the Policy Council voted in a new CANEGROWERS Board and working with this group has been a rewarding experience. The growers involved have worked together as a team to further improve our corporate governance and financial resilience to a level that will benefit the whole industry.

Our team of staff in Brisbane and across our districts have remained focused on identifying and responding to growers' issues. Working with these committed people, growers and staff alike is what makes a role in agriculture a rewarding career and it inspires us

all to rise above any of our current challenges.

Clearly the market, world sugar prices and the weather have been working against us and for this reason we must rely on each other. Our capacity to work together to support each other and have a view to what can be a positive future will see us through these difficult times. I am confident that over the past twelve months we have made decisions to position the organisation well to support the industry into the future and that together we can succeed, because when we succeed, we shall do so together.

I would like to thank our members and the industry for their support over the past twelve months. I am often inspired, challenged, rewarded, and supported by the CANEGROWERS community and I remain appreciative of the opportunity to work for this great organisation. I look forward to working with you to meet the challenges and embrace the opportunities of the year ahead.



# About the Industry

The Australian sugarcane industry stretches along 2,100km of the country's east coast. The industry underpins the prosperity and economic stability of communities from Mossman in far north Queensland to Grafton in northern New South Wales.

Cane farming businesses range in size from 40 to 250 hectares (ha) with the vast majority of them being family-owned. An average sized 110 ha property harvests almost 10,000 tonnes of sugarcane each year.

During the 2018 season, from late May until mid-December, Australian sugarcane growers supplied 32,493,135 tonnes of sugarcane from 378,532 hectares to the 24 sugar mills.

The result was more than 850,800 tonnes lower than the 2017 result

because of warm and dry weather, which bordered on drought conditions in some Queensland growing districts, and the impact on crop growth of a significant rain event which flooded half of the cane between Townsville and Cairns.

The lower tonnage in Queensland was partly offset by a lift in the sugar content of the cane which returned the best result since 2009 at an average commercial cane sugar reading of 14.51.

The Queensland sugarcane harvest generally begins in May and ends by mid-December.

Once harvested, cane is collected and transferred either to trucks for road transport or bins for rail transport to mills. To minimise sugarcane deterioration and juice evaporation,

sugarcane must be transported to a sugar mill within 16 hours of harvest. The mills crush an average of 10,000 tonnes of sugarcane per day and employ an average of 150 people each during the season.

Together, millers, growers and harvesters determine harvesting and transportation schedules that ensure that the cane is crushed as soon after harvesting as possible.

In Australia, there are no subsidies and no domestic price supports.

Under the terms of a cane supply agreement with a mill, a growers' income is determined by the amount of cane supplied to the mill, the sugar content (CCS) of that cane and the final price the raw sugar in which the grower has an economic interest achieves on the world market.

TABLE 1

Australian production of cane and sugar in the 2017 and 2018 seasons

	Tonnes of cane crushed		Tonnes of sugar IPS		CCS		Hectares harvested	
Mill area	2017	2018	2017	2018	2017	2018	2017	2018
Mossman	1,178,600	1,110,058	114,006	154,413	13.24	14.44	12,762	12,366
Tableland	405,935	402,033	99,904	58,635	14.00	14.43	4,375	4,152
Mulgrave	1,020,656	976,449	170,210	164,879	12.16	14.29	12,077	11,877
Innisfail	1,801,902	1,602,948	184,038	194,322	12.02	13.68	22,891	22,205
Tully	2,496,485	2,575,142	330,454	380,040	12.93	14.44	29,844	29,698
Herbert River	5,033,396	4,718,178	628,043	665,197	12.96	14.19	57,079	57,043
<b>North Qld</b>	<b>11,936,974</b>	<b>11,384,808</b>	<b>1,526,655</b>	<b>1,617,486</b>	<b>12.81</b>	<b>14.22</b>	<b>139,028</b>	<b>137,341</b>
Burdekin	8,120,703	8,023,631	1,166,726	1,243,162	14.00	15.00	68,686	68,865
Proserpine	1,434,068	1,561,592	198,667	237,991	13.67	14.94	21,721	21,254
Mackay	4,973,781	4,671,801	646,549	661,219	13.43	14.33	66,969	69,436
Plane Creek	1,171,547	1,142,588	163,691	167,960	13.99	14.69	17,510	17,311
<b>Central Qld</b>	<b>7,579,397</b>	<b>7,375,981</b>	<b>1,008,908</b>	<b>1,067,170</b>	<b>13.56</b>	<b>14.51</b>	<b>106,200</b>	<b>108,001</b>
Bundaberg	1,656,572	1,315,907	227,734	196,101	13.81	14.80	19,261	18,050
Isis	1,191,029	1,202,300	173,575	185,331	13.82	14.65	14,150	14,657
Maryborough	598,942	795,354	82,248	108,316	13.67	13.49	9,423	11,701
Rocky Point	388,484	391,765		53,754	12.97	13.63	3,380	3,890
<b>South Qld</b>	<b>3,835,028</b>	<b>3,705,326</b>	<b>483,557</b>	<b>543,502</b>	<b>13.71</b>	<b>14.35</b>	<b>46,213</b>	<b>48,298</b>
<b>Queensland</b>	<b>31,472,101</b>	<b>30,489,746</b>	<b>4,185,845</b>	<b>4,471,320</b>	<b>13.41</b>	<b>14.51</b>	<b>360,127</b>	<b>362,505</b>
Condong	522,813	530,167	63,509	63,588	11.93	11.73	4,455	4,513
Broadwater	683,760	767,245	82,149	94,973	11.89	12.13	6,066	6,372
Harwood	665,340	705,977	80,658	87,143	11.88	12.02	5,035	5,143
<b>New South Wales</b>	<b>1,871,913</b>	<b>2,003,389</b>	<b>226,316</b>	<b>245,674</b>	<b>11.90</b>	<b>11.99</b>	<b>15,557</b>	<b>16,027</b>
<b>Australia</b>	<b>33,344,014</b>	<b>32,493,135</b>	<b>4,412,162</b>	<b>4,716,994</b>	<b>13.32</b>	<b>14.35</b>	<b>375,684</b>	<b>378,532</b>



*Raw sugar is one of Australia's largest and most important rural exports, worth up to \$2.5 billion each year.*





Since the introduction of competition in the provision of marketing services, growers have been able to take a more hands on role in managing their price risk individually. With the ability to forward price, some growers have

been able to moderate the impact of the recent downturn in world sugar prices.

Around 80% of Australia's raw sugar production is destined for the international market.

Most of Australia's export sales are to Asian customers, the largest of which continued to be South Korea, Japan and Indonesia. The remaining 20% of Australia's sugar production is sold on the domestic market.

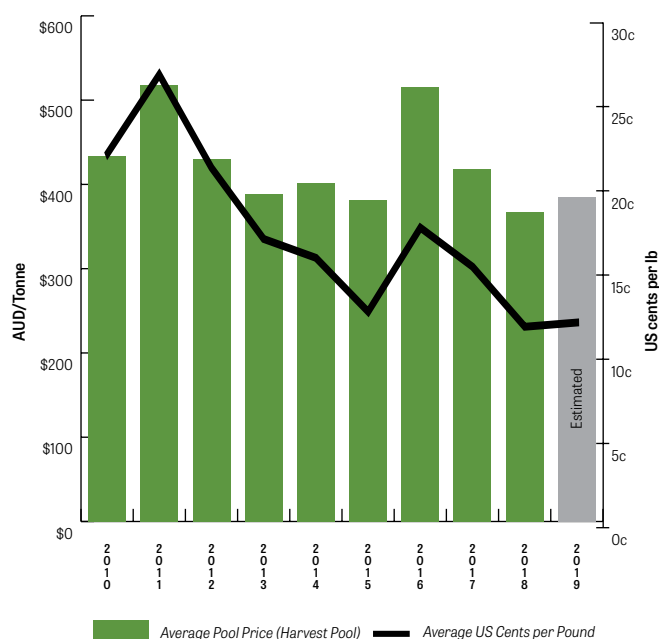


*An aerial view of harvesting at a sugarcane farm in the Burdekin.*



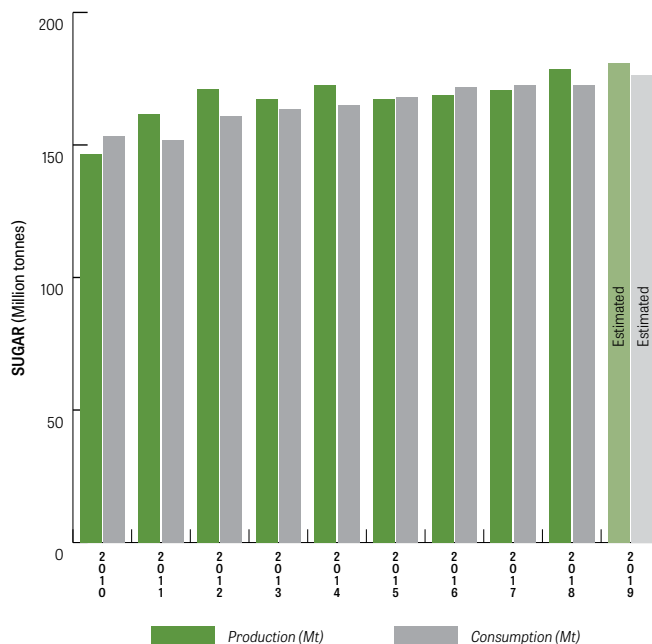
### GRAPH 1

World sugar price



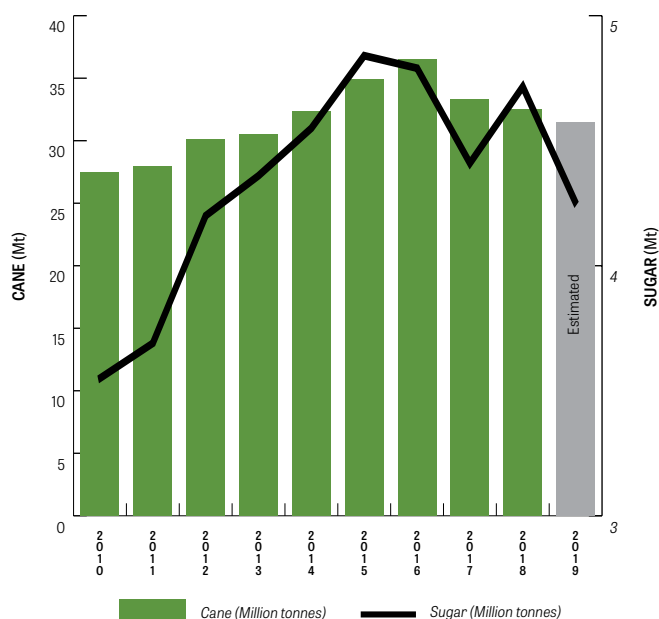
### GRAPH 2

World sugar production and consumption



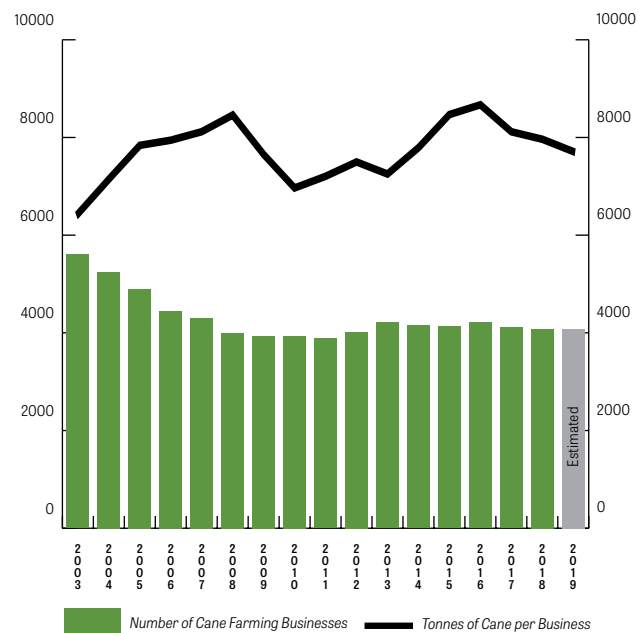
### GRAPH 3

Australian sugar production



### GRAPH 4

Industry trends



Statistics compiled sourcing data from the International Sugar Organisation, United States Department of Agriculture, CANEGROWERS Australia and the Australian Sugar Milling Council.

# About CANEGROWERS

CANEGROWERS Queensland is a not-for-profit public company with the sole purpose of promoting the interests of sugarcane growers.

It comprises the state company (Queensland Cane Growers Organisation Ltd) and 13 regional, or district, companies.

CANEGROWERS members are represented by 86 elected directors and almost 100 professional and dedicated staff.

**2019 Elections:** Every three years, CANEGROWERS holds elections. Every eligible member can nominate for the Board of their local organisation and every member can vote. Following a successful call for nominations in February 2019, and ballots in five districts, new boards and committees took office from 1 May 2019. All elected representatives were invited to a Directors Induction meeting in Cairns in May.

**Board:** The CANEGROWERS Queensland Board is comprised of eight Directors elected from the Policy Council with at least one director from each of the four cane growing regions.

The Board performs the role of corporate governance, audit, compliance and financial management.

It sets strategic direction and policy and delegates responsibility for management to the Chief Executive Officer.

The Board is required to meet at least quarterly or at such other times as required to fulfil its obligations to the company and its grower members.

**Policy Council:** The CANEGROWERS Policy Council is made up of 21 growers nominated by the district companies. It sets industry strategic direction and policy. The size ensures industry-wide views and issues are considered.

The Policy Council meets three times a year with frequent and ongoing communication on key issues throughout the year. CANEGROWERS district managers also meet at this time.

**Policy Committees:** CANEGROWERS convenes three Policy Committees made up of members of the Policy Council covering the areas of Economics and Trade, Environment and Sustainability and Farm Inputs and Research.

The role of the committees is to investigate emerging issues and take recommendations to the Policy Council. The committees meet three times each year.

## Membership

As a grower-led organisation, the CANEGROWERS membership base is its strength. At more than 71% of the available sugarcane tonnes, the overall level of voluntary membership support from the growers of Queensland is strong.

The Board, Policy Council and staff recognise that continual development of membership strategy is important to support CANEGROWERS voluntary membership foundations.

Membership policy has developed around a number of principles:

- Membership is voluntary.
- Membership is conditional on the applicant meeting eligibility criteria.
- Membership relates to financial contributions being made in each season on all tonnes of cane supplied by the member's farm or farms irrespective of mill area.
- The membership fee is struck at a rate per tonne of cane supplied to the relevant mill and is for the aggregate of the state and local companies. The levy can be made up of the company component, crop insurance and cane testing.

## Financial HIGHLIGHTS

### NET ASSET POSITION

**\$31.9** million

### TOTAL ASSETS

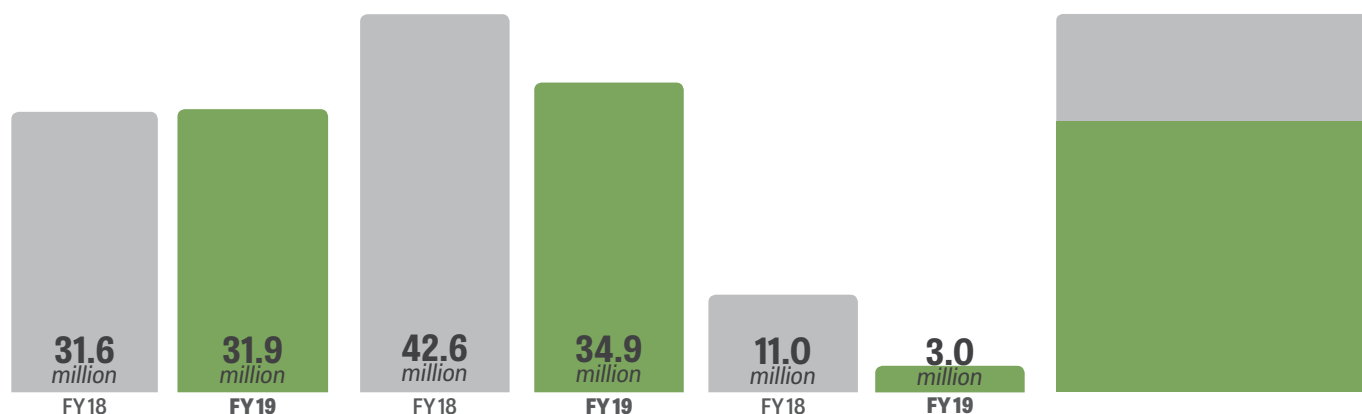
**\$34.9** million

### TOTAL LIABILITIES

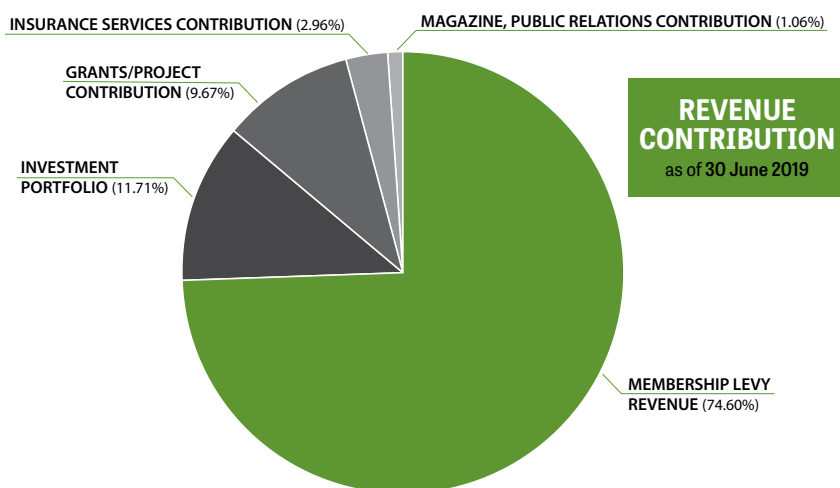
**\$3.0** million

### MEMBERSHIP

**71.5%** of cane production







providing skilled CANEGROWERS senior staff to attend key international trade and market access meetings, and participation in social license project work towards coordinated messages and industry representation in discussions on health and nutrition.

## Affiliations

CANEGROWERS maintains affiliations at state, national and international levels through shared common values. These affiliations include:

### Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF)

Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) provides a united voice for 13,000 producers in intensive, semi-intensive and irrigated agriculture through 16 member organisations of which CANEGROWERS is one.

QFF assists CANEGROWERS on key industry issues such as water pricing and efficiency, electricity pricing, improving available insurance products and workplace health and safety.

The CANEGROWERS' representative on the Board of QFF, Allan Dingle, is its Vice President.

### National Farmers' Federation (NFF)

The National Farmers' Federation (NFF) is the peak national representative and lobby group for 130,000 farmers through 33 member organisations including CANEGROWERS. NFF provides a vital forum for cane growers to influence national policy.

CANEGROWERS Chairman Paul Schembri is a Members Council representative of the NFF. NFF membership is through ACGC.

### World Association of Beet & Cane Growers (WABCG)

CANEGROWERS is a member of the World Association of Beet and Cane Growers (WABCG), the international group representing 30 sugarcane and sugar beet associations from 33 countries uniting more than five million growers.

CANEGROWERS Chairman Paul Schembri is a Vice President of WABCG.

The company has a cap on levy fees at the state level, currently set at the maximum number of tonnes of 50,000 per membership. The membership fee schedule is published in the *Australian Canegrower* magazine each year in May.

## Partnerships

### Australian Cane Growers' Council (ACGC)

The Australian Cane Growers' Council (ACGC) is the forum for the nation's sugarcane producing states of Queensland and New South Wales. ACGC presents a common voice in national and international forums on behalf of cane growers. CANEGROWERS Chairman Paul Schembri is Chairman of ACGC while the Directors include Queensland growers Kevin Borg, Owen Menkens and Ross Farlow of New South Wales.

### Australian Sugar Industry Alliance (ASA)

CANEGROWERS continued to play a lead role in the Australian Sugar Industry Alliance (ASA) which brings together the entirety of the Australian industry to provide a united front on matters of common industry interest.

These have been identified as trade and market access issues, the role of sugar in a balanced diet and issues affecting the industry's 'social license' to operate including environmental concerns.

Paul Schembri and Owen Menkens represent CANEGROWERS, and Kevin Borg and Michael Pisano are representatives of their cane growing regions.

CANEGROWERS has continued to provide financial support to ASA as well as in-kind support through

## Australian Farm Institute (AFI)

CANEGROWERS is a corporate member of the Australian Farm Institute (AFI). AFI was created to carry out a strategic role on behalf of Australian Farmers. It utilises funding provided via their membership fee to carry out or commission research projects on strategic policy issues of importance to Australian agriculture.

Some recent projects include; the impacts of energy costs on the Australian agricultural sector and a review of Australia's agricultural trade.

## Services

### Insurance

CANEGROWERS provides quality insurance advice, products and service for members and local communities at competitive prices.

CANEGROWERS, in partnership with local District offices, currently provides six qualified insurance professionals in all cane growing regions to assist growers and ensure access to the best sugarcane-specific products on the market plus general insurance products that extend beyond the needs of the farm. Members also have access to the long-standing crop insurance product underwritten by CGU.

### Legal Services

Legal services are provided to CANEGROWERS district offices and

grower members through a retainer arrangement with Chris Cooper of CJ Cooper & Associates.

Chris Cooper assists individual growers through a phone-in legal service that is provided free of charge to members. CANEGROWERS members can call the Legal Services hotline on 1800 177 159. Queries often relate to trespass, aerial spraying, tramline easements, machinery performance disputes and safety issues.

CJ Cooper & Associates provides advice and legal assistance to CANEGROWERS district companies with issues including the renewal of cane supply agreements.

Mr Cooper also informs incoming and existing Board members throughout the district companies about their legal duties and the expectations of their roles within the CANEGROWERS organisation.

### Marketing Information Service

Grower choice in marketing, facilitated by 2015 amendments to the *Sugar Industry Act* and supported by the federal Sugar Code of Conduct, has been operating for two years presenting sugarcane growers with the opportunity to manage their sugar price risk exposure independently.

New contracts, systems and processes are now mostly in place.

The introduction of competition in the provision of marketing services

has created a new dynamic within the Queensland industry and become a driver of innovation in this part of the supply chain.

To help CANEGROWERS members navigate the new environment, CANEGROWERS has developed a new independent Marketing Information Service.

This service provides information and education materials to members around their pricing options along with tools and regular market updates to help explain the potential impact of various sugar price movements.

During the year face-to-face workshops have been held for CANEGROWERS members in each district. These were well-attended and the service has received strong positive feedback. The workshops are continuing into the 2019 season.

A new members-only page on the CANEGROWERS website supports the service by making available the tools and market updates, including video presentations to explain recent market developments. The service is also designed to better inform local accountants to assist in their dealings with growers.



Paul Gregory explains his 3-row GPS-guided bed former to fellow CANEGROWERS district directors during the Directors Field Trip in Cairns in May 2019.



# Year in Review

## A-Z of CANEGROWERS activities, programs and projects

Across a wide range of policy areas through lobbying and consultation activities, and through managing and engaging in programs and projects with other organisations and government, CANEGROWERS works to advance the interests of sugarcane growers.

### Agricultural chemicals

CANEGROWERS advocates for the safe and effective use of agricultural chemicals, based on science and the advice of the national regulator, the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicine Authority (APVMA).

CANEGROWERS continues to be part of the Executive Committee of the National Working Party for Pesticide Application (NWPPA) which deals primarily with issues around spray drift. It includes representatives from manufacturers, grower groups, spray applicators and research and development corporations across viticulture, horticulture and broadacre agriculture.

Following a proposal from CANEGROWERS, the APVMA has approved an industry-wide aerial baiting permit for the control of Australian ground rats in lodged sugarcane. The permit is valid until 31/03/2022 and was an extension of a previous aerial baiting permit for the Mackay and Herbert regions.

CANEGROWERS was successful in achieving a review of the downwind aerial application spray permit for 2,4-D including a re-examination of proposed buffer zones which would have made the application of 2,4-D difficult to manage in the Wet Tropics region. As a result, the APVMA issued a new permit for the use of 2,4-D products in sugarcane.

CANEGROWERS has liaised with other industries, through the National Farmers' Federation, to coordinate a response to public commentary around perceived risks

from glyphosate use in Australian agriculture. NFF members have defended the safe use and availability of glyphosate given extensive scientific evidence of its safety. As with similar bodies in other countries, the APVMA considers products containing glyphosate to be safe when used as per the label instructions.

The Queensland Government, through the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, has renewed its focus on growers' compliance with their legal obligations for chemical use. CANEGROWERS has sought clarity on how a compliance program would operate and emphasised the importance of building awareness amongst growers of their legal obligations. CANEGROWERS is seeking agreement that growers accredited under Smartcane BMP will not be a target of any compliance program.

### Bio-futures

CANEGROWERS continue to support the Queensland Government biofuels mandate and the Queensland Biofutures 10-Year Road Map and Action Plan.

The CANEGROWERS Farm Input and Research Committee remains actively engaged with several organisations proposing to use a range of technologies and working on possible business models.

### Biosecurity

Biosecurity awareness and preparedness is critical for the productivity and profitability of the Australian sugar industry so CANEGROWERS is committed to working for the good of the industry in a range of forums:

- with the National Farmers' Federation (NFF) through the Biosecurity Taskforce
- with the Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) through

their Biosecurity Taskforce

- as the industry member of Plant Health Australia (PHA) and the signatory to the Emergency Pest Plant Response Deed (EPPRD)
- through the Biosecurity Partner Forum organised by the Queensland Government, Biosecurity Queensland and the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources
- at the Queensland Biosecurity Roundtable presented by the National Biosecurity Committee and co-hosted by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources and Queensland Biosecurity
- and at six-monthly meetings of Plant Health Australia and its industry members.

In early 2019, CANEGROWERS and SRA hosted a biosecurity training workshop facilitated by Plant Health Australia and attended by growers and representatives from QCGO, ASMC, ACFA and DAF. The meeting was designed to improve industry's preparedness to manage a pest incursion and included an overview of the EPPRD and information on cost-sharing, communication, owner reimbursement costs and managing the emergency response.

The eradication of Red Witchweed (*Striga asiatica*) at Habana, Mackay is into its third year. This parasitic plant can impact the cane, grains and grazing industries through trade, market access and risk of further spread. The Eradication Response Plan covers a period of 10 years to 2024/25.

CANEGROWERS has met with Biosecurity Queensland regarding its project work on all invasive ants (fire ants, electric ants and yellow crazy ants) to encourage speedy response work and explore the potential for

CANEGROWERS and Smartcane BMP to assist with increasing awareness of the threats. Biosecurity Queensland agreed to support grower training in chemical use including a session on invasive ants.

## Cane analysis

CANEGROWERS provides support for cane analysis auditors across the industry with a workshop and the provision of consulting services. CANEGROWERS has also engaged with and provided input into the National Measurement Institute proposal for the approval of NIR in cane payments.

CANEGROWERS attends The Australian Sugar Milling Council technical committee meetings to provide grower input into reviews of laboratory practices.

## Cane burning

CANEGROWERS has for some time been concerned that the Cane Burning Notification issued in 2004 and the CANEGROWERS *Cane Firing Guide* were open to interpretation and required a review.

CANEGROWERS raised this with Queensland Fire and Emergency

Services (QFES) which responded positively and a combined consultation process was undertaken with eight workshops held in sugarcane growing regions.

This resulted in the drafting of a new *Notification for Burning of Sugar Cane* which became effective from 31 May 2019. It is supported with an information sheet and compliance checklist giving cane growers the authority to burn sugarcane in accordance with the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990*, provided minimum conditions are met.

The permit system remains in place and a permit to light a fire must be obtained unless all the conditions of the Notice can be met.

## Disaster relief

CANEGROWERS participated in the Agricultural Coordination Group for the North and Far North Queensland Monsoon Trough event of 25 January - 14 February 2019.

The extent of this disaster lead to the declaration of Category C and D assistance under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements meaning affected growers had access

to significant grants and low interest loans while CANEGROWERS was funded to provide industry recovery officers to assist growers for six months in the Burdekin and Herbert River districts. To June 30 2019, 720 cane growing businesses had been approved for the grants totalling some \$30.4 million.

As part of the Queensland Government Drought and Climate Adaptation Program CANEGROWERS has been part of a project with QFF to assess the use of parametric insurance options. For sugarcane this is proposed as an index triggered payment for cyclones. The index depends on the severity of the cyclone and the distance of the centre of cyclone from the insured sugarcane farm.

## Electricity

CANEGROWERS objective is to ensure growers have access to lower and competitively priced electricity that promotes the growth and development of Queensland's irrigated sugarcane production.

CANEGROWERS work is influencing policy decisions and pricing structures for the benefit of irrigators and the wider community.

Advocating for change in Australia's deeply flawed electricity production, distribution and pricing systems, CANEGROWERS has worked closely with QFF, NFF, the National Irrigators Council and the Agriculture Industries Energy Taskforce to raise concerns over electricity prices with the Queensland and Federal governments, the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) and Energy Queensland.

By commissioning work from the Sapere Research Group, CANEGROWERS made detailed submissions to the Queensland Competition Authority (QCA) and the Queensland Government arguing that, exceeding prudent and efficient levels, electricity costs and prices in the state are too high. CANEGROWERS provided the AER with a comprehensive analysis of problems with EQ's regulatory proposal and tariff structure statement for 2020-25 for the Ergon and Energex networks and recommended it reject the proposals.



An example of sugarcane burning being carried out in the Burdekin.



CANEGROWERS work is delivering results - Energy Queensland has developed tariffs, currently being trialled, for irrigation use that provide for lower cost electricity where irrigators are willing to cut their electricity use during critical peak periods.

## Leadership education

CANEGROWERS offered six scholarships to growers for programs run by the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation. They were made possible with assistance from the Federal Government's Agricultural Industries Fund.

Three growers participated in a Training Rural Australians in Leadership program and three participated in the twelve-week Agribusiness Leadership Program.

## Project Cane Changer

Project Cane Changer was initiated by CANEGROWERS, in partnership with human behaviour consultancy Behaviour Innovation and with funding from the Queensland Government.

It has drawn on principles of behavioural science to develop, implement and evaluate an innovative program aimed at ensuring cane growers feel valued and recognised for their role as stewards of the land and an increase in the adoption of best management farming practices.

The first project was conducted from 2016-2018 in the Wet Tropics. It identified the key barriers to behavioural change and designed and delivered five strategies to address these barriers.

One strategy was asking growers to commit to the project by signing a Cane Changer Commitment which included the future changes they would like to make to their businesses. The project linked to Smartcane BMP and has directly contributed to more growers becoming benchmarked in the program.

Participants in the project reported experiencing higher levels of personal and industry responsibility, confidence, recognition and mental well-being. The project received excellent feedback from government, industry, natural resource management groups and the science community.



*Growers Bill MacDonald (Mackay), Joanne MacDonald (Isis) and Greg Erkkila (Herbert River) were sponsored by CANEGROWERS to participate in the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation's 2019 Agribusiness Leadership Program.*

On-going support of the program for 2019-20 was secured from the Australian Government's Reef Trust Partnership through the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, so it will continue in the Wet Tropics and expand to the Burdekin, Mackay-Whitsunday and Burnett-Mary regions.

## Research development and extension

CANEGROWERS supports Sugar Research Australia (SRA) and provides input into its strategic planning process. Adoption of research outcomes by growers is a priority objective for CANEGROWERS so the implementation of the SRA adoption strategy is supported through the development of regional strategies which will combine to provide an overall industry adoption strategy.

At present, harvesting and soil health extension/research programs are mostly aimed at adoption and it is hoped that these will continue in future years.

A focus on fibre quality measurement (FQM) and work to ensure that varieties can be discarded earlier in the selection process (and not carried through to the final stages of development and release before fibre quality issues are known) are supported.



*Project Cane Changer Project Leader Dr John Pickering spoke with growers at a Tully Variety Management Group meeting.*

Yellow canopy syndrome (YCS) remains a big concern for growers and it is hoped that the significant body of research being undertaken will provide some answers in the near future.

CANEGROWERS has participated in the research into diversification and value adding and appreciates that SRA is looking to invest in alternate uses of sugarcane.

CANEGROWERS Nitrogen Roadmap work in previous years has led to the establishment of the SRA SIX EASY STEPS Advisory Committee. This is a positive step towards ensuring that research to achieve better nitrogen use efficiency is supported by robust science and data which can be used to provide updated information for the SIX EASY STEPS toolbox and guidelines. This offers confidence to growers and supports sustainable farming.

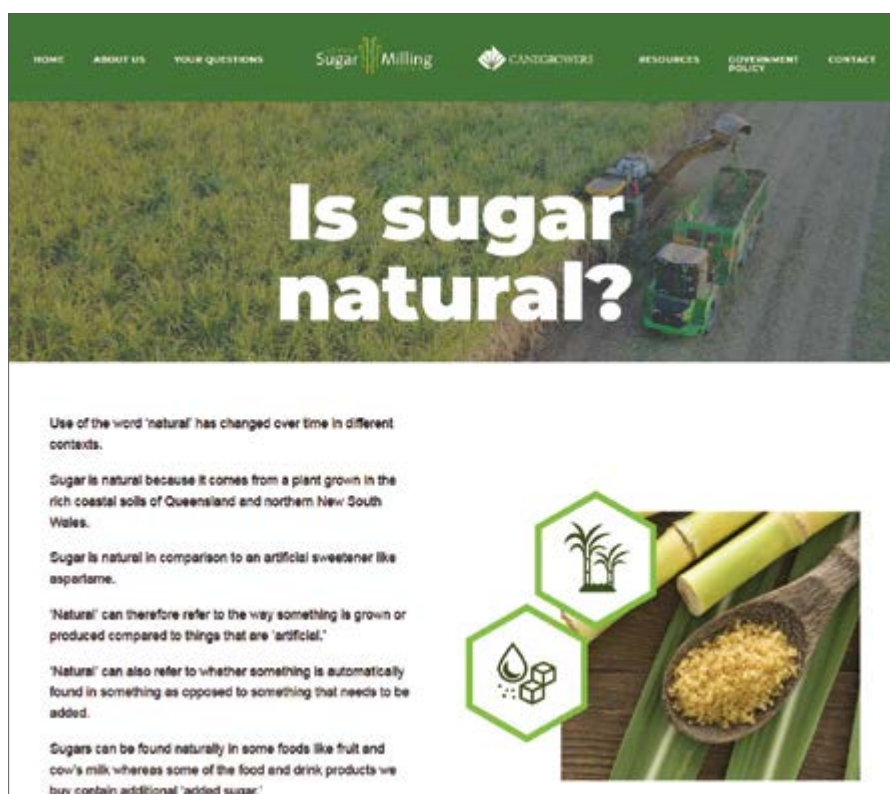
CANEGROWERS is leading projects aimed at providing growers with additional information in the areas of enhanced efficiency fertilisers and water use and energy use efficiency. These include EEF60, Energy Savers Plus Program Extension and Farm Water Futures.

## Rural Jobs and Skills Alliance

CANEGROWERS is a member of the Rural Jobs and Skills Alliance (RJSA) which provides leadership and advice to government, service providers and other organisations on employment, skills, industry training and workforce planning issues on behalf of Queensland's agriculture industries.

RJSA has been going for around four years and is gaining recognition amongst government agencies and service providers as representing agriculture's training needs in Queensland. RJSA manages a Agriculture Extension Work Placement Program with nine trainee extension staff in the sugarcane industry.

An ambitious Queensland Agriculture to Schools Education Program has been proposed to ensure agriculture is adequately addressed at school level. Discussions with the Queensland



Website developed as part of the Social license to operate project to answer consumer and community questions about sugar.

Government have commenced to provide a holistic and effective industry-driven schools engagement program.

## Smartcane BMP

Smartcane BMP is the Queensland sugarcane industry's best practice program. It recognises the achievements of growers and assists growers to identify and evaluate changes to farming practice that meet their business goals. It does this through the benchmarking of current practices against the program's standards, providing support for practice improvement, and facilitating certification of growers who meet the standards through an independent audit.

The program is owned and managed by CANEGROWERS for use by all growers. It is supported with funding from the Queensland Government.

Smartcane BMP facilitators are based with CANEGROWERS or productivity services organisations in each district, and support grower participation and provide, or organise, specialist advice.

Delivery of Smartcane BMP

concentrates on the three components of sugarcane farming that affect both productivity and risk to the environment:

- Soil health and nutrient management
- Irrigation and drainage management
- Weed, pest and disease management

Accreditation in Smartcane BMP is achieved through certification in these core modules.

The program also encourages and supports growers to benchmark and seek improvements in other components of the farm business including:

- Variety selection, planting and harvest management
- Farm business management
- Natural systems management
- Workplace health and safety

The program has been available to growers since 2014 and has just entered a new phase of delivery which will run until June 2022.



The number of farming businesses which have benchmarked their practices against the standards in the program has grown to 1,815. These growers farm 289,000 ha of sugarcane in Queensland, 70% of the state's cane area.

The proportion of cane area benchmarked stands at 90% in the Wet Tropics, 83% in the Burdekin, 61% in the Mackay-Whitsunday region and 37% in the Mary-Burnett region.

The number of accreditations has grown from four at the start of 2015 to 402 as at 30 June 2019. The accredited cane area stands at 95,000 ha. Most accreditations have occurred in the Wet Tropics which now has 44% of its cane area managed by accredited growers. In the Burdekin 19% of cane farm businesses are accredited, in the Mackay-Whitsunday 10% are and in the Mary- Burnett region the figure is 8%.

Growers who are accredited report that the process was of benefit to their business, provided a robust endorsement of their stewardship and took less effort and time than expected.

## Social license to operate project

CANEGROWERS has recognised and has been responding to changing attitudes within the community about the industry and sugar as a food product. In a collaborative project with the Australian Sugar Milling Council, negative perceptions are being addressed. Project activities have included joint working sessions on the key messages the industry will convey and the development of a website to answer consumer and community questions about sugar.

## Sustainable Sugar

As buyers of sugar are increasingly requesting sugar that is sourced from a producer/marketer which can demonstrate sustainability through a certification system, CANEGROWERS has acted to position the Queensland industry to meet this need.

Most end-users have developed sustainable sourcing policies that require the procurement of sustainably sourced sugar by 2020 so CANEGROWERS has been working to understand and satisfy these needs.

CANEGROWERS promotes the use of Smartcane BMP as a mechanism for meeting the needs of all the global

sustainability platforms. As Smartcane BMP serves multiple roles for growers, it can avoid the duplication and additional costs associated with participating in multiple programs. The milling and sugar marketing sectors also see Smartcane BMP as the pathway for growers to be certification-ready, and, following approaches from CANEGROWERS, a number of companies are offering incentive payments to accredited growers through Cane Supply Agreements.

During 2018-19, Coca-Cola Amatil (CCA) announced that all sugar in its non-alcoholic beverage range in Australia would be sourced from growers independently accredited as following sustainable production frameworks. Under purchasing contracts running to 2021, purchases will be a mix of Smartcane BMP and Bonsucro certified sugar.

Bonsucro is the international sustainability standard for sugar with the highest level of participation representing 25% of the land under cane. In December 2016, Smartcane BMP was recognised by Bonsucro as having full alignment with its sustainability indicators and in 2018, an independent consultant engaged by Bonsucro re-confirmed full alignment



Burdekin growers Kevin and Amanda Mann are Smartcane BMP accredited.



of Smartcane BMP with Bonsucro. However, the evaluation found that Bonsucro did not meet all of the requirements of Smartcane BMP as the modules in the Queensland program are specific to cane production in the state.

CANEGROWERS has continued efforts to strengthen the alignment of Smartcane BMP with the other major sustainability platforms including Proterra and Czarnikow's Vive program. This work should be finalised by the end of 2019 through activities such as Social Verification audits with Burdekin growers conducted by Proterra with support from American Sugar Refining (ASR). As part of this work, CANEGROWERS has positioned Smartcane BMP as the on-farm component of certification systems for sourcing sustainable Queensland sugar.

A new project is underway to enhance the traceability of sustainably grown sugar, following a grant to CANEGROWERS of \$2.246 million from the Federal Government's Smart Farming Partnerships initiative. The project is investigating the use of blockchain technology to verify the provenance of sugarcane for domestic and overseas purchasers of sugar, and to test the likelihood of premium payments for fully traceable sugar.

Initial work is scoping the feasibility and design of a customised, digital supply chain solution for sugar that stakeholder orientated and meets all user needs. Stakeholder consultations and supply chain mapping are well advanced.

## Trade Policy & Market Access

With 80% of Australian raw sugar exported, securing access to the world's best returning markets is a priority for CANEGROWERS and work is directed at securing a more favourable and profitable export market environment for Australian sugar.

CANEGROWERS works closely with the Australian government, QSL and the Australian Sugar Milling Council (ASMC) and like-minded members of the Global Sugar Alliance to improve the terms of trade for Australian sugar, defend existing market access arrangements, ensure sugar is included in all future trade agreements and hold countries accountable to their international commitments. CANEGROWERS approach in building these alliances domestically and internationally is to have one voice, carry a single message and take a targeted strategic approach to securing trade outcomes.

CANEGROWERS has met regularly with Australia's Minister for Trade and senior government officials in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and Department of Agriculture (DA) to ensure trade issues affecting sugar are fully understood and to support Australian Government efforts to secure a more favourable and profitable export market environment for Australian sugar.

CANEGROWERS coordinates and manages the activities of the Global Sugar Alliance. Members have devoted significant resources to work for the removal of Indian sugar subsidies that are adversely affecting the world sugar market. To ensure ongoing and coordinated action in support of the challenge taken by Australia, Brazil and Guatemala in the World Trade Organisation and to build pressure for change to India's sugar policies, the Alliance meet three times during the year and engaged in several teleconferences.

## India

The glut of sugar being produced in India is a direct result of its domestic sugar subsidies and the flow of this surplus onto the world market, with the aid of export subsidies, has driven world sugar prices to lows not seen in more than a decade.



The CANEGROWERS Economics and Trade Committee toured MSF Sugar's Tableland Mill, where Manager Kirk Lang provided a briefing on the cogeneration plant.

Concerned that both India's sugar domestic price supports and its sugar export subsidies contravene the commitments it has made in the WTO, with industry support, Australia lodged a counter-notification with the WTO. Working closely with Global Sugar Alliance members, CANEGROWERS has built an international coalition calling on India to remove its subsidies and comply with international obligations.

Working together, CANEGROWERS and ASMC jointly engaged the India firm *Indonomics* to provide strategic advice about India's regulatory environment, assess India's sugar policy settings and develop a reform agenda and strategy for change to be used by industry and government as we work to support those looking to change India's sugar policies.

## Indonesia

CANEGROWERS is strongly advocating Australia's expeditious ratification of the Indonesia-Australia Cooperative Economic Partnership Agreement. It reinforces the reduction in the tariff paid on Australian sugar entering Indonesia to 5% *ad valorem*.

## Trans-Pacific Partnership

CANEGROWERS lobbied for and welcomed the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CP-TPP) between Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, New Zealand, Singapore and Vietnam.

It was signed on 8 March 2018 and entered into force on 30 December 2018 for Australia, Canada, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand and Singapore. For other members it entered into force 60 days after the completion of their respective ratification processes.

CP-TPP builds on and consolidates the concessions provided in the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement (JA-EPA) by eliminating the tariff Japan imposes on Australian sugar and reduces the levy imposed on high pol sugar by more than the reduction achieved in the JA-EPA. Vietnam eliminated the in-quota tariff charged on sugar imports from

CP-TPP members. Australia will receive a guaranteed 7% share of any Mexican sugar import quota for raw sugar in those years in which Mexico is an importer.

## Peru FTA

Improved terms of access for Australian raw sugar to Peru was secured with sugar's inclusion in the Australia-Peru FTA. There have been delays in Australia's ratification of the agreement. Although the initial amounts of raw sugar access to Peru under the agreement are small, CANEGROWERS is urging ratification of the agreement because it sends a clear message that new market access provisions for sensitive commodities such as sugar can and should be included in all trade agreements.

## EU-FTA

Making the case for the full inclusion of sugar in the Australia-EU FTA CANEGROWERS has ongoing engagement with senior European Commission agricultural officials and EU agricultural industry representatives.

## United Kingdom

Following Brexit, an FTA would present an opportunity for the United Kingdom and Australia to re-establish the trading relationship in raw sugar that was lost when the UK joined the European Common Market in 1974. There has been strong interest in both the UK and Australia towards entering into FTA negotiations. CANEGROWERS is fostering this interest through its ongoing engagement with UK refinery and industry representatives. Both UK raw sugar refiners and UK government officials have expressed strong interest in removing the barriers that prevent UK refiners from competitively sourcing Australian raw sugar.

## Transport

CANEGROWERS sits on the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator Agricultural Industry Oversight Group, the Queensland Ministerial Freight Council and the Operations Industry Subcommittee. Through these committees

CANEGROWERS has had input into the Ministerial Freight Strategy and Queensland Freight Action Plan.

After nearly two years of development the National Class 1 Agricultural Vehicle and Combination Mass and Dimension Exemption Notice 2019 came into effect in May 2019. This will replace a number of existing sugarcane-related Notices which will be phased out. CANEGROWERS has ensured that the road access conditions for the movement of sugarcane agricultural vehicles were at least maintained. There are still a few issues to be addressed.

CANEGROWERS has continued as a member of the Fuel Tax Credit Coalition which includes mining, tourism, fisheries, forestry and agriculture. The objective is to clearly show that this is not a subsidy and ensure the fuel tax credit is maintained.

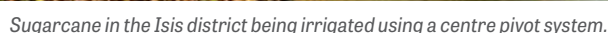
## Water

Water and electricity are critical inputs to the irrigated part of the Queensland sugar industry. CANEGROWERS works to ensure that the regulated prices for both are efficient and do not impose an unnecessary burden on irrigators.



CANEGROWERS was represented by Chairman Paul Schembri and CEO Dan Galligan in Brisbane at the public hearing of the Innovation, Tourism Development and Environment Committee's examination of the Environmental Protection (Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019.





## Water quality impacts of farming

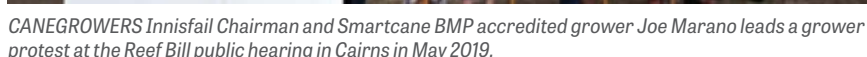
- The Reef 2050 Advisory committee, which advises governments on planning, implementation and evaluation of reef programs including those related to water quality.
- The Steering Committee for research conducted by the Tropical Water Quality Hub, funded by the Australian Government. Research projects in the Hub are designed to contribute directly

- The Great Barrier Reef Synthesis Workshop, which is held annually to consider the latest science and how this can be best used to improve the health of the Great Barrier Reef.

The Australian Government's Reef Trust program has been the primary mechanism for delivering the water quality objectives of the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan. This includes the Reef Alliance Project, managed by QFF on behalf of CANEGROWERS and other industries, that has supported 580 growers (76,000 ha of cane land) to improve nutrient and irrigation management over the past three years. This project has received funding for an additional ten months of delivery from the Reef Trust Partnership (RTP), a newly formed alliance of the Australian Government and the Great Barrier

CANEGROWERS has met with the GBRF to discuss its investment of \$200 million of Reef Trust funds for water quality improvement over the next five years. \$140 million of this will be invested on the ground to reduce dissolved inorganic nitrogen, sediment and chemical loads in the highest priority catchments. CANEGROWERS has emphasised the need for growers to have ownership and confidence in any program that seeks their participation.

Reef Trust funding has also supported the Enhanced Efficiency Fertiliser project which is hosted by CANEGROWERS and implemented by Sugar Research Australia. The \$7.1 million project is determining the best use of EEF's for improved nitrogen use efficiency while maintaining or improving yield, through 60 trials on growers' farms.





CANEGROWERS, supported by the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre, organised and facilitated a forum on innovative use of nitrogen in Cairns on 6-7 November 2018. More than 100 people, including a good number of growers, participated. The forum heard from researchers, scientists, extension professionals and growers on the research and practice they are undertaking on the paddock, in the catchment and across the Reef. There was a genuine willingness from participants to hear about the science, understand where the industry is at, and help set the future direction. The forum was supported by SRA, the Australian Government Reef Program and the National Environmental Science Program Tropical Water Hub.

Plans for new regulations over cane farming were announced by the Queensland Government during 2017. CANEGROWERS policy position has been consistent during the subsequent consultation process:

1. CANEGROWERS does not support reef regulations.
2. CANEGROWERS does not support the extension of regulations to the southern region (Bundaberg, Maryborough and Isis).
3. Smartcane BMP is the preferred option to regulations as it supports continuous improvement, productivity, profitability and water quality outcomes.

4. CANEGROWERS supports the recognition of accreditation in the Smartcane BMP as meeting the current regulations should the Queensland Government continue with its regulatory policy.

The *Environmental Protection (Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill* was introduced into the Queensland Parliament in February 2019. The Bill was referred to a parliamentary committee review process and, despite numerous written and verbal submissions by CANEGROWERS, individual growers, and other industry organisations to the Committee, and big attendances at regional hearings scheduled after industry outcry, the committee recommended that the Bill proceed without changes.

CANEGROWERS initiated a campaign through news and social media calling for the Bill to be rejected or, at the very least, revised to address the key issues identified in submissions.

In anticipation of the Bill being passed, the Office of the Great Barrier Reef has drafted some of the regulations for implementing each component of the Bill including new minimum practice standards for both existing cane and new cane land. CANEGROWERS has participated in discussions with OGBR staff in regard to these standards with the intent of both minimising the complexity of the standards and the risk of negative

impacts on the viability of farms and mill districts.

## Workplace Health and Safety

CANEGROWERS is a member of the Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ) Rural Industry Sector Standing Committee and attended the Farmsafe Australia Conference 2018, the Agricultural Electrical Risk Forum and Electrical Safety Board workshop.

As a consequence of a WHSQ Best Practice Review and the relatively poor agricultural safety record there has been an increased focus on compliance in agriculture and the sugarcane industry is no exception. WHSQ inspectors have been instructed to issue an infringement notice for priority infringements which include overhead or underground electric line (safe distance), use and storage of chemicals, working in confined spaces and safe use of plant and machinery.

CANEGROWERS does not see penalties as particularly effective and will be working with WHSQ to try and increase the positive messages and provide growers with the opportunity to understand how to improve safety. This will include a review and the use of Smartcane BMP as a tool to assist growers to improve safety and not just for compliance.



CANEGROWERS Mackay Chairman Kevin Borg and CANEGROWERS Proserpine Chairman Glenn Clarke spoke at the Reef Bill public hearing in Mackay.





# District Reports

## Mossman

The biggest challenge for CANEGROWERS Mossman in the 2018-19 year was acting as Bargaining Agent to assist in the negotiations, with other Agents and Mackay Sugar Ltd for the acquisition of Mossman Mill by local growers. The transaction was close to being completed at the close of the year.

In the 2018 season, crushing started on 5 June and finished 5 November

for growers supplying Mossman Mill and 30 November for growers toll-crushing at Tableland Mill. Growing conditions had been reasonable and growers achieved good tonnages and CCS levels.

Cut to crush estimates held very well which resulted in 154,413 tonnes IPS sugar.

In 2018 Mossman Mill had just over 1.1 million tonnes of cane contracted. 290,826 tonnes of cane was processed under the toll-crushing agreement

with MSF Sugar's Tableland Mill.

Coastal growers supplied 560,704 tonnes of cane for an average of 13.73 CCS and Mareeba growers supplied 549,354 tonnes of cane for an average of 14.28 CCS. The final average of all cane contracted to Mossman Mill was 14 CCS.

The 2018 final Coastal mill average sugar price was \$382.95 per tonne IPS and this equated to a final mill average cane price of \$34.12 per tonne of cane.



Gerard Puglisi and the Mossman Next Gen group put on a successful cane display at the 2018 Mossman Show. Congratulations to C Fasano & Co who took out the Champion Exhibitor and Most Successful Exhibitor for 2018.



Growers at the CANEGROWERS Mossman 2018 AGM, listening to guest speakers from QSL, Chief Operating Officer Robert Hines and Finance Manager – Customer Relations Bryce Wenham.



CANEGROWERS Mossman provided growers with assistance and represented them on many local and state matters.

The organisation its involvement with local groups such as the Local Marine Advisory Group, Wet Tropics Sugar Industry Partnership and Wet Tropics Healthy Waterways Partnership and also promoted CANEGROWERS Insurance business and Smartcane BMP benchmarking and accreditation.

CANEGROWERS Mossman sponsored the Mossman Next Gen Sugarcane display and competition at the local Show.

## Tableland

Over the 12 months the CANEGROWERS Tableland Board provided support to the Board of Far Northern Milling Pty Ltd in its endeavour to purchase the Mossman Mill. This included negotiating a ten year Collective Cane Supply and Processing Agreement. The transaction was close to being finalised at the end of the year.

Tableland Mill commenced crushing on 6 June 2018 and finished crushing on 29 November. Total crush through Tableland Mill was 692,859 tonnes in 25 weeks which included 290,826 tonnes of Mackay Sugar toll crush cane.

As a result of the good wet season and favourable growing conditions, the Tableland cane crop averaged 110.11 tc/ha with 67% of farms businesses achieving yields above 100 tc/ha. The seasonal average relative CCS was also above average at 14.26.

Smartcane BMP facilitator John Barbetti continued to work with local growers towards their Smartcane BMP accreditation. There are 19 accredited businesses in the district totalling 5,235 ha of cane.

During the past 12 months, members were represented on various committees and working groups including the Mareeba Dimbulah Irrigation Area Council, Building QLD Nullinga Dam Stakeholder Reference Group, QCA Irrigation Price Path Review, Mareeba Dimbulah LMA,



Four generations of the Zappala cane-growing family, Concetto Zappala (90 yrs) still working every day, Sam Zappala (60 yrs), Anthony Zappala (33 yrs) and Max Zappala (6 months). The family operate cane farms at Bartle Frere, Woopen Creek and Garradunga, Far North Queensland.

CANEGROWERS Electricity Committee, Disaster Management and Recovery Response, Natural Sciences Award Selection Panel, Mount Emerald Wind Farm Consultative Committee, Ergon Energy Irrigation Tariff Forum, Smartcane Best Management Practice Program, Cane Changer and Mareeba Rodeo Sugarcane Competition.

## Cairns Region

The 2018 season was not without the usual challenges for the Cairns Region.

Crushing commenced on 12 June for Mulgrave Mill suppliers, with the South Johnstone Mill suppliers

commencing on 13 June. Both zones experienced below average tonnages although CCS values were above average. Favourable weather conditions contributed to the CCS values in both areas.

Over the year, the greatest percentage of grower services provided to members were related to environmental issues. The most pertinent were government audits for reef regulation compliance, supporting growers through the Smartcane BMP processes and developing Nutrient Management Plans. These plans came under the umbrella of the Wet Tropics Sugar Industry Partnership. As a part



Jason Salvetti of Salvetti Farming receiving Smartcane BMP Certificate of Accreditation from Tableland's Smartcane BMP Facilitator John Barbetti.

of this partnership, growers have also been able to access some vertical tillage equipment under a grants program allowing for the trial of some innovative ideas.

The water quality monitoring project, Project 25, continued to utilise new technology to provide real-time data from various locations through the Russell/Mulgrave catchments. The sampling sites are designed to provide accurate runoff data from all land users within the catchments including urban infrastructure. The Project remains grower-driven and continues to expand within the catchments.

## Innisfail

South Johnstone Mill commenced crushing on 13 June and finished on 18 November. The total tonnage crushed was 1,447,884.47 tonnes, of which 8,189.57 tonnes was assigned to Mulgrave Mill. 163,253 tonnes of South Johnstone Mill contracted cane was crushed at Mulgrave Mill, making the total cane supplied under a Supply Contract to South Johnstone Mill, 1,602,947.90 tonnes. A very low yield of 71 tonnes/ha was recorded. Seasonal Average Payment CCS was 13.62 as a result of dry conditions.

The number of growers and amount of area covered by the Smartcane BMP program continued to increase to reach 91% of the cane area in the district in 2018, with the area accredited reaching 48%. Growers farming a further 31% of the cane area have expressed interest to become accredited.

CANEGROWERS Innisfail continued a Hosting Agreement with Wet Tropics Sugar Industry Partnership (WTSIP) meaning two extension officers were working from the CANEGROWERS Innisfail office. The Hosting Agreement with Wet Tropics Major Integrated Project (WTMIP) also continues, with the co-ordinator and two extension officers located in the office.

CANEGROWERS Innisfail also hosts the Enhanced Efficiency Fertiliser Project (EEF60) extension support officer.

CANEGROWERS members are receiving valuable support through the combined hosting arrangements with all of the extension officers supportive of each of the projects being delivered in the district.

The Cane Changer Program was active in the district throughout 2018. As the program aims to engage not just cane

growers, when the State Government Minister for Environment, Leeanne Enoch was appointed she was invited to visit and took the opportunity to sign a Cane Changer Commitment. This was later framed and presented to her in her office in Brisbane.

CANEGROWERS Innisfail organised another successful Agricultural Field Day. It was the fifth Field Day and received support from both local and northern agricultural industries. The biennial event will be conducted again in 2020.

A co-ordinated effort by local stakeholders and Cassowary Regional Council resulted in the adoption of a Feral Pig Control Strategy using funding from the Queensland Government's Panama TR4 Program. The Sugar Industry in Tully and Innisfail are each receiving \$10,000 per year, to assist with feral pig control efforts.

## Tully

The 2018 crushing season in Tully resulted in the sugar content of the crop reaching record levels, turning a very average sugar price into a more acceptable cane price. The dry conditions have had an impact on cane yields for the current crop, which will be the lowest for several years.

Smartcane BMP accreditation is approaching the 100 growers milestone meaning more than 75% of the Tully cane production area will be farmed by accredited growers. This result has been achieved through the combined efforts of the Tully Extension team, with Smartcane BMP facilitator Nick Stipis working with growers to help them overcome any hurdles. The nutrient management plans provided under the Wet Tropics Sugar Industry Partnership project, involvement with Wet Tropics Major Integrated Project, the work of the Tully Cane Productivity Services Team and Sugar Research Australia (SRA), the growth in the Tully Variety Group and Cane Changer activities, have all supported growers and made these results possible.

CANEGROWERS Tully has been involved in the pilot work for the



Alf Nucifora, Tom Harney and Peter Jackson with the petition Tully growers presented to Tully Sugar Limited.



CANEGROWERS Marketing Information Service trialling its workshops in person and using technology, to better understand the market cycle of sugar and the opportunities that forward pricing and pools can have on growers' incomes.

A fundamental issue for sugar pricing is the life of the Cane Supply Contract, and CANEGROWERS Tully has been negotiating since December 2018 for a new Cane Supply Contract, as the current one ends with the 2019 season.

Despite the early start and significant grower consultation there has been no finalisation of a contract. While negotiations continue, CANEGROWERS Tully and its legal team are progressing a notice under the Sugar Code to resolve outstanding issues.

Long term CANEGROWERS Tully member and Chairman Tom Harney and Director Chris Condon did not seek re-election and their contributions to CANEGROWERS and the Tully sugar industry is recognised.

Following the triennial elections, the CANEGROWERS Tully Board now comprises Jamie Dore (Chairman), Bryce Macdonald, Joe Vasta, David Singh and Steve Crema.

## Herbert River

The 2018 calendar year was impacted by major and damaging weather events. Flooding in early 2018 inundated crops and while the harvest period was one of the driest on record it concluded with record breaking rainfall. Falls of 700mm were measured in a single night with the big totals continuing until rainfall of 3000mm was recorded.

The result was major losses for some growers. Category C disaster assistance funding was approved by government and growers were given access to financial help to repair significant damage.

The 2018 harvest itself began on 12 June and ended on 30 November. Crop size was a pleasant surprise as the district harvested in excess of 4.7 million tonnes, a yield of almost 84 t/ha.

It was the second year of harvesting under a new Cane Supply Agreement negotiated under the choice in marketing legislation. Growers became more familiar with making marketing choices however, matching statements from Wilmar and QSL was an ongoing challenge. Through the

CANEGROWERS Marketing Information Service, the organisation is building a marketing comparison and education program.

CANEGROWERS Herbert River was pleased to receive recognition for the various efforts undertaken in recent years to improve the quality of the water flowing to the Great Barrier Reef. In particular, the Healthy Waterways Report Card gave a very good result for eight coastal catchments including the Herbert River.

The Wet Tropics Sugar Industry Extension effort for Herbert River continued to supply local growers with support through the work of Leanne Carr and Jarrod Sartor. They assisted growers with nutrient management planning based on the SIX EASY STEPS program leading to positive productivity outcomes, more cost-effective nutrient management, and being able to satisfy the requirements of one of the core modules of Smartcane BMP.

In the district 87 farming businesses have been Smartcane BMP accredited in the three core modules accounting for some 21,577.9 hectares or 32.2% of the Herbert River cane area whilst overall 56,606.8 hectares or 85.4% of



Retired CANEGROWERS Herbert River manager Peter Sheedy being thanked for his service during a Policy Council dinner in Brisbane in November 2018. Pictured with wife Elizabeth and CANEGROWERS Chairman Paul Schembri.



Women in Sugar Australia 2019 conference organisers (L-R) Caroline Pace, Leanne Bonassi, Kelli Carbone and Sharon Figuera from the Herbert River Women in Sugar group.



*There was widespread flooding in Queensland's northern cane growing regions in early 2019.*

the district's 67,000 hectares of total cane area has been benchmarked by 354 growers who are at varying stages of preparation towards accreditation.

During the 2018 year we welcomed Ray Cervellin to the Smartcane BMP team.

Peter Sheedy, who had been the CANEGROWERS Herbert River Manager for 30 years, was farewelled. A large number of members and staff attended Peter's retirement and farewell function. He has been replaced by Frank Scardamaglia.

## Burdekin

The 2018 harvest results were similar to the previous year for the region at 8,023,681 tonnes. Cane yield was lower

than the previous year at 116.6 t/ha with CCS averaging 15.

The Burdekin mills performed marginally better than the previous year across the 23 week harvest but still breached benchmark mill performance guarantees which invoked compensation payments to growers.

The Burdekin Shire was one of many effected by the monsoon weather event in February 2018 which brought widespread flooding affecting the cane growing period. State and Commonwealth governments combined resources to jointly fund assistance to growers and provide an industry resource officer who was housed in the CANEGROWERS Burdekin office to assist with special disaster assistance recovery grant applications.

Low raw sugar prices are a major driver in exploring and encouraging the activity around diversification in other crops or other uses for cane. A funded project aimed at addressing the challenges of alternative logistical and harvesting arrangements needs to be investigated and implemented.

CANEGROWERS Burdekin has attracted a welcome and substantial increase in membership this year and will strive to be a truly effective, enduring and unifying force in maximising the profitability, productivity and sustainability of cane growers in the Burdekin region.

## Proserpine

The Proserpine sugar industry continues to recover slowly after the extreme weather event of 2017. Although the 2018 crop was marginally bigger at 1.56 million tonnes, production is yet to return to the long-term average. While the crop struggled to meet expectations, the season average CCS of 14.95 was above the district average and provided an unexpected bonus in an otherwise disappointing year.

The mill performed well during the crush, enabling the harvest to be completed in just 18 weeks. As part of its Cane Supply Agreement obligations, CANEGROWERS Proserpine undertook weekly visits to the mill to administer the Cane Analysis Program. The program is supported by NIR spectrology which is approaching end-of-life. After extensive consultation, the mill-owner has committed to replacing the current unit with new NIR technology. The new unit should be fully operational during the 2019 crushing season.

Additional funding was secured by CANEGROWERS and Queensland Farmers' Federation for the district to continue to provide an Industry Recovery and Resilience Officer to assist post-cyclone recovery efforts. The funding also allowed the district to participate in a trial on the potential suitability of parametric insurance for weather-related events.

During the year, several more growers achieved Smartcane BMP accreditation. While the program is delivered by the local productivity company, CANEGROWERS Proserpine continues to maintain an active role in administering and promoting it on behalf of the local industry.

The insurance business continued to operate in an extremely competitive and changing business environment. While performance over the past few years has been hampered by escalating premiums, the situation was exacerbated by the loss of our long-term Authorised Representative. CANEGROWERS Proserpine gratefully acknowledges the temporary support provided by the wider insurance



*From L-R: Justin Blair, Lindsay Altmann, Glenn Clarke, Senator Bridget McKenzie (Minister for Agriculture), George Christensen MP, John Casey, Bill Blair and Tony Large.*



network however, the future delivery structure is under review.

CANEGROWERS Proserpine continued to provide administrative support to Sugar Services Proserpine, Kelsey Creek Water Cooperative and Six Mile Creek Irrigators Cooperative.

CANEGROWERS Proserpine also maintained an active role in industry affairs representing growers on a range of industry, regional and community related boards and committees.

## Mackay

The Mackay sugarcane crop of 4.67 million tonnes was lower than usual, due to the extended 2017 crush season and a failed wet season. However, the sugar content of 14.33 CCS was one of the highest in the past five years. Milling performance improved to 82.6% reliability across the three mills.

Plane Creek had a relatively smooth 2018 harvest due to dry conditions and 1.142 million tonnes was processed. CCS reached 14.69 but the dry weather meant the crop fell away and the yield of 66 t/ha was disappointing. The mill crushed 421 tonnes cane per hour with a performance of 82.33%.

A proposed investment in Mackay Sugar by a German sugar manufacturer, Nordzucker, was the major issue occupying Mackay Sugar growers during the year. CANEGROWERS Mackay played a pivotal role in investigating aspects of the proposal for growers, including the effect of a return to the CCS cane payment system.

The Deferred Cane Payment of \$2 per tonne continued for the 2018 season. This payment was reviewed and eliminated in May 2019.

Severe bushfires badly damaged a number of farms and crops in November 2018, leading to a significant number of insurance claims fielded by the grower services team.

The move to marketing choice for growers for the 2019 season and beyond was also facilitated by the CANEGROWERS Mackay team, including work on the changes

required to the Cane Supply and Processing Agreements.

CANEGROWERS Mackay has vigorously campaigned against increased farm regulation related to water quality and increased electricity and water prices. The negative impact of vegetation management laws on growers' ability to prevent and fight bushfires was another issue on the agenda.

A total of 574 Mackay and Plane Creek growers registered for Smartcane BMP during the 2018-19 financial year. 59 cane growing businesses have achieved accreditation in the three core modules. The number of growers seeking accreditation is increasing and with greater capacity provided within Mackay Area Productivity Services and Plane Creek Productivity Services the increased numbers will be adequately served.

Private software company, Agtrix, is currently testing an updated spatial recording system which will be available soon for growers across the region. Eventually the platform should be able to provide automated data collection for compliancy programs, such as Smartcane BMP and Bonsucro.

CANEGROWERS Mackay was successful in applying for regional jobs and investment packages funded through the Federal Government and the Energy Savers Program funded through the Queensland Government.

Both projects are proving to be hugely beneficial in identifying energy

efficiency savings and in providing a platform to advise growers on operational changes to achieve enhanced performance from their irrigation systems.

The information and data obtained from these projects is also being used in other programs, such as Smartcane BMP. In addition, CANEGROWERS Mackay has acquired licences for the IrrigWeb software tool, to promote and provide better scheduling techniques for growers.

CANEGROWERS Mackay has provided siding inductions and haulout and pilot/escort training. The payroll staff workload increased with the conversion to Single Touch Payroll. The insurance arm successfully expanded its business. The electronic newsletter, CEO weekly update, continued to keep all members fully informed of events and issues in between publication of the monthly printed publication, The Billet.

Other assistance provided to growers included investigations into concerns about extra cane coming from Clairview, leasing agreements, milling issues, transport permits, and interaction with various government departments and regional councils. Administrative support continued to be supplied to Mackay Area Committee, Plane Creek Area Committee, Plane Creek Productivity Services Ltd and the Cane Audit Committee.



*The farm of Burnie and Laraine Ward after the Mackay bushfires on 27 and 28 November 2018. An estimated 234 ha of land owned by CANEGROWERS members was burnt in the Pioneer Valley and 600 ha under cane in the Blue Mountain region.*

## Bundaberg

During the 2018-19 financial year CANEGROWERS Bundaberg staff and directors continued a focus of being proudly member-focussed and farmer-biased. They provided representation, leadership and services while promoting unity.

CANEGROWERS Bundaberg resourced a strong advocacy campaign targeting sustainable electricity pricing, transport, cane-firing and water quality-related issues. This leadership ensured that federal, state and local government politicians were in no doubt about the impacts of policy on members as well as the community, and the concerns in relation to these issues.

This advocacy approach led to tangible outcomes including the reduction of onerous restrictions on moving excess dimension agricultural vehicles around the district and the implementation of an electricity tariff previously not available to irrigators. In 2018-19 the Bundaberg District was drought declared.

CANEGROWERS Bundaberg provided assistance to individual growers to progress through the Smartcane BMP program - with registration, benchmarking and record keeping. Smartcane BMP was on display at the local AgroTrend field day.

Ray Goodwin provides insurance advice to growers, to ensure they are adequately covered and are receiving value for money.

CANEGROWERS Bundaberg continued to build relationships with Bundaberg Sugar Services Ltd, Bundaberg Regional Irrigators Group and the Grain in Cane Cooperative to create synergy and minimise duplication.

The season crop estimate at the start of the crushing in 2018 was 1,500,000 tonnes with the final tonnage being 1,312,794.68 tonnes. The mills performed reasonably well and the continuation of a six-day mode at Bingera had minimal impact.

Millaquin Mill crushed a total of 741,674.21 tonnes for an average CCS of 14.74. Bingera Mill processed 571,120.47 tonnes of cane through its rollers for an average CCS of 14.89. The seasonal pool price was based on a final pool price of \$375.66 plus \$6.87 US quota premium and \$2.78 shared pool premiums, to give \$390.85 per tonne of IPS.

## Isis

The 2018 crush began with very dry conditions and saw a total of 1,202,300 tonnes through the Isis Central Sugar Mill over a 20 week period.

Crushing commenced 18 June 2018 and continued without interruption until

week 17 when welcome rainfall of 100-150mm was received in some parts of the district.

Week 15 saw an average CCS of 16.01 units, marking a new district record. It was the highest recorded weekly average CCS at the Isis Mill in recent history and we would have to look back before supplementary irrigation became part of the cane growing business in the early 1990's for a higher weekly recording.

The season ended with an average CCS of 14.65

Mirroring last year, the focus was again on balancing the costs and benefits of irrigation as the dry weather continued. A drought declaration for the area was made to take effect from 1 May 2019 and members were actively supported in applying for available drought relief.

CANEGROWERS Isis Chairman Mark Mammino has a dual role as Chairman of the Southern Region Group SRA committee that involves growers, millers and productivity board representatives from Bundaberg, Maryborough and Isis. He also represents this group at the state level and is starting to make headway.

Two groups have been formed in the Southern Region to progress Farming Systems and Water Management activities along with continuing support for the Harvesting Clean Cane initiative. Another key focus of the group will be Regional Cross Industry practice change and extension activities led by CANEGROWERS Isis Manager, Angela Williams.

As part of the Isis 20:20 Productivity and Profitability initiative, Smartcane BMP, Nutrient Management Plans and Individualised Productivity plans are being developed with growers in an integrated way to ensure work that is done is streamlined. A particular focus has been working with growers to customise record keeping solutions that meet their needs.

Isis 20:20 is a combined effort of CANEGROWERS Isis, Isis Productivity Ltd and Isis Central Sugar Mill with overall project management being the responsibility of CANEGROWERS



Irrigation Agronomist Pat Daley and Isis grower Ron Pickup. As part of the 20:20 project growers are offered the opportunity to have Pat Daley conduct an irrigation and energy assessment of their farm.



Isis Manager Angela Williams. In this period the team has worked with 113 growers covering 972,293 tonnes of cane achieving 487 measured and recorded practice improvements.

CANEGROWERS Isis is proud to be a part of a state-wide team advancing and securing a more sustainable and profitable industry for our grower members.

## Maryborough

2018 had early season estimates predicting an almost record crop of 940,000 tonnes for crushing after rain in late 2017. However the reality was a more modest 795,353 tonnes achieved.

The 2018 season was completed on 13 November with a combined CCS of 13.49 achieved for all cane supplied.

Maryborough growers crushed 521,171.78 tonnes with a CCS of 13.53. Corporate crushed 224,808.37 tonnes with 13.39 CCS. The Sunshine Coast grower group crushed 49,373.53 tonnes with a CCS of 13.49.

CANEGROWERS Maryborough's focus on improved water infrastructure has started to bear fruit with the Federal Government announcement of \$18 million toward an off-stream storage project just prior to its April 2019 election win. There is still plenty of paperwork required before the soil is dug for this project but the long-term support to the irrigation scheme that it will provide can only strengthen the industry's future.

The triennial Director elections resulted in a change in the district leadership group. Alan Otto and Allen Birt called time on their many years of work for the organisation and Adam Doyle and Isaac Schmidt were welcomed into positions to keep the district moving forward.

CANEGROWERS Maryborough's promotion of the industry in local shows reached a high in 2019 achieving Best display on Grounds at the Gympie Show thanks to the many volunteers who put the displays together. A human-powered cane juicer was a highlight at the Nambour show.

## Rocky Point

The 2018 cane crop was one of the largest that Rocky Point had seen for many years due to a large percentage of standover left from the 2017 year. A total of 391,765 tonnes were crushed at an average-CCS of 13.63 over 22 weeks.

The first 12 weeks of performance of the Cogeneration plant was acceptable, however, through the remainder of the harvest it operated well below an acceptable standard extending the season and forcing harvest operators to cut any day of the week the plant came back online.

The plant experienced difficulties accessing sufficient funds for repairs after the season so to assist with reliability of the plant for the 2019 harvest, CANEGROWERS Rocky Point negotiated on behalf of grower lenders to extend the repayment term of the existing loan.

With the drought in western Queensland continuing, there was huge demand for cattle fodder. A forage harvester worked in the district for a number of weeks during July and August 2018 removing small and

frosted cane. Many tonnes of baled cane trash were also sent west as an add mix for stock feed.

Dry conditions impacted the cane crop early in 2019 with no reasonable rainfall recorded until mid-way through March. The dry and hot conditions have caused severe crop reductions for sugarcane and soybeans.

Three arson attacks across the district occurred in the first half of 2019. All blocks were two-year old cane. CANEGROWERS liaised with local police, but the perpetrators were not identified.

The district has noted a reduction in fire ant nests being detected since two rounds of aerial baiting were conducted late in 2018 and early in 2019. CANEGROWERS Rocky Point has been approached by Biosecurity Queensland to participate in a Self-Management program, whereby farmers could be trained to bait fire ant nests on their own farms. This is something Directors have been pushing for since the ants were first detected in the district.



*CANEGROWERS Maryborough Manager Cameron Waterson hard at work, crushing cane at the Maryborough Show held 23 and 24 May 2019.*

# CANEGROWERS Board



Chairman, Paul Schembri



Senior Vice Chairman, Kevin Borg



Vice Chairman, Owen Menkens



Allan Dingle



Joseph Marano



Mark Mammino



Michael Pisano



Stephen Calcagno



# CANEGROWERS Policy Council



Mossman - Glen Fasano

Tableland - Claude Santucci

Cairns Region - Stephen Calcagno

Innisfail - Joseph Marano

Tully - Jamie Dore

Herbert River - Michael Pisano and Chris Bosworth

Burdekin - Roger Piva, Steve Pilla, Phil Marano and Owen Menkens

Proserpine - Glenn Clarke

Mackay - Paul Schembri, Kevin Borg, Greg Plath and Tony Ross

Bundaberg - Allan Dingle and Mark Pressler

Isis - Mark Mammino

Maryborough - Jeff Atkinson

Rocky Point - Michelle Fischer





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*An aerial view of harvesting at a sugarcane farm in the Bundaberg district.*

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