ANNUAL REPORT
2024-2025

CANEGROWERS

OUR
VOICE
GROWING
QUEENSLAND

CONTENTS

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GROWING
QUEENSLAND

VISION

The industry's influential peak body, working effectively with growers, districts and stakeholders to deliver industry prosperity

PURPOSE

Leading a strong, profitable and innovative sugarcane industry, supporting growers and their communities with passion, professionalism and a unifying voice

VALUES

- Accountability to our members
- A focus on issues relevant to our members
- Credibility, integrity and professionalism
- Open and effective communication between CANEGROWERS, growers, industry partners, stakeholders and the wider community
- Community consciousness

GOALS

- Superior advocacy impact
- Outstanding service
- Highest quality governance
- Robust partnerships across industry stakeholders
- Progressive and innovative industry evolution

OWEN MENKENS

CHAIR'S REPORT

The 2024–25 season tested Queensland's cane-growing families in ways that were as challenging as they were revealing.

From unrelenting wet weather and mill disruptions to a one-in-fifty-year flood in the Herbert, growers faced a year that demanded patience, ingenuity and grit – and once again proved that this industry's strength lies in its people.

The 2024 crush was disappointing, coming in at just 27.3 million tonnes for Queensland. For the second time in three years more than a million tonnes of cane were left standing in the paddock. A combination of prolonged wet weather, poor mill performance, and industrial action conspired to slow the season. Industrial disputes in the Wilmar and Tully regions were particularly disruptive, and while CANEGROWERS worked tirelessly with millers and unions to find solutions, the result was a lengthened season and lost crushing days.

Despite the frustration, growers once again showed the patience and perseverance that have carried this industry through more than a century of challenges.

Weather was not our only test. In the Herbert region, where widespread flooding caused significant crop losses and damage to infrastructure, our advocacy secured an expansion of disaster-recovery payments to include the real cost of replanting plant cane. A critical recognition of the true expense of getting a farm back on its feet.

We also achieved an important change to the definition of "primary producer," ensuring that growers with off-farm income are not denied the support they deserve. These wins matter. They ease the immediate burden on affected families and signal to government that our industry's voice is both persistent and persuasive.

The past year also brought major developments in our long-running efforts to keep the industry strong and well-represented. Across many districts we saw increased participation in local industry elections, culminating in the election of a new CANEGROWERS Board and Policy Council in May.

I was honoured to be re-elected Chair, with Joseph Marano and Steven Marbelli as Vice Chairs, and we welcomed Claude Santucci and Glenn Betteridge to the Board. Their experience and commitment will help guide us through the challenges and opportunities ahead. Other returning Board directors included Michelle Fischer, Joseph Borg, and Kevin Borg.

“Despite the frustration, growers once again showed the patience and perseverance that have carried this industry through more than a century of challenges”

I would like to formally recognise Stephen Calcagno, Chris Bosworth, Greg Rosato, Greg Plath and Mark Mammino for their invaluable contribution to the Policy Council and also thank Chris and Mark as outgoing directors of our Board for their input to the organisation.

On the advocacy front, we chalked up several significant achievements. Our sustained pressure forced Sugar Terminals Limited (STL) to send a member-status declaration letter, prompting dry shareholders to relinquish shares and enabling districts to facilitate share sales between active and inactive growers. The STL Annual General Meeting saw the remuneration report voted down once again, a clear sign of grower dissatisfaction with the leadership at the time.

The process was not without drama, STL tried every procedural manoeuvre imaginable to cancel legitimate proxy votes, dragging the count out for weeks. Ultimately, grower resolve prevailed, and I am pleased that Paul Schembri was elected to the STL Board as a grower shareholder, strengthening the representation of those who actually grow the cane.

Beyond the boardroom, we continued to build connections with the broader community and showcase the modern, sustainable face of our industry. Our presence at the Royal Queensland Show (Ekka) proved a sweet success, drawing strong visitor numbers and giving Queensland families a chance to engage with the story of sugarcane. I extend heartfelt thanks to our staff whose energy and creativity made the display one of the show’s highlights.

Innovation and thought leadership were front and centre this year. We hosted the second Sugar Cubed event in Brisbane in April, aligning it with the Australian Society of Sugar Cane Technologists conference to maximise value for participants. Then in June we welcomed the world to Cairns for the landmark World Association of Beet and Cane Growers meeting, a powerful demonstration of Queensland’s standing on the global sugar stage.

Both events required meticulous planning and a huge effort from our team, and they delivered exceptional opportunities for growers to exchange ideas, explore new technologies, and strengthen international networks.

Our policy work has kept pace with the evolving energy and transport landscape. We released a new *Sugarcane Transport Load Restraint Guide* to help growers navigate complex regulations and opportunities, and we continued to champion a national biofuels feedstock strategy that would see sugarcane play a pivotal role in decarbonising aviation and other hard-to-abate sectors. The Federal Government’s growing interest in sustainable aviation fuel positions Queensland cane as a key ingredient in Australia’s clean-energy future.

State politics also offered encouraging signs. The election of a new Queensland Premier, himself the son of a cane farmer, gives our industry a voice in the highest office and fresh opportunities to press our case for supportive policies. We welcomed the launch of the *Primary Industries Prosper 2050* plan and the accompanying commitment to regional development, and we will hold the government to its promises to invest in infrastructure and innovation.

Education remains a cornerstone of our long-term strategy. We advanced our work in schools with new classroom modules and resources designed to bring the story of cane back to Queensland classrooms. Initiatives such as these inspire the next generation and help the wider community understand the environmental stewardship and technological sophistication of modern cane farming.

Not every battle was easy. The Christmas period brought further mill delays, taking a heavy toll on farming families who rely on a timely crush and consistent cashflow. Yet again, growers adapted and persevered. Their grit reinforces why this industry endures, because of the people who refuse to give up.

As I reflect on this year, I am struck by the sheer range of issues we have faced, from natural disasters to industrial disputes, from market reforms to international diplomacy.

Through it all, CANEGROWERS has remained steadfast in advocating for members, strengthening our structures, and promoting a sustainable and profitable future. None of this would be possible without the dedication of our staff, the wisdom of our district leadership, and, above all, the commitment of our grower members.

To every grower and their family – thank you. Your hard work keeps not only our organisation but an entire industry alive and thriving. As the 2025 crush, which kicked off in late May, gathers pace, I remain optimistic. The challenges are real, but so are the opportunities.

Whether it’s negotiating fairer supply arrangements, advancing biofuel initiatives, or continuing to push for stronger disaster support, CANEGROWERS will be at the forefront.

I look forward to meeting many of you in the coming year as I travel across the state. Together we will continue to prove that Queensland cane is not just a crop – it is a cornerstone of regional communities, a driver of innovation, and a vital contributor to Australia’s economy and climate goals.

DAN GALLIGAN

CEO'S REPORT

If we are to be honest, this year has been hard yakka!

As our Chairman notes in his contribution to this Annual Report, the 2024/25 season really tested the grit and determination of growers across the state. For all the reasons that have been well stated, we have too much cane left in the paddock, and successive years of standover are eroding value across the industry. As usual, this is felt most acutely by growers.

It's not just the cumulative effects on productivity – a series of bad years has also impacted confidence and morale across the sector. Whether you are cane growing, milling, hauling or harvesting, these difficult years test confidence in the industry.

With our strong membership base, CANEGROWERS takes seriously its responsibility not only to represent members but also to support the industry as a peak body. Our activities and resources come almost entirely from member support. Yet year after year, research shows members want CANEGROWERS working at the whole-of-industry level – servicing the needs of today and planning for a better future.

To do this, we need a clear strategy and strong financial due diligence, focusing on solving problems and delivering opportunities. The details of our efforts are described within this report, and many highlights align directly with the Board's strategy, articulated through five key strategic themes.

Strategic theme 1: Providing superior advocacy

Advocacy outcomes are at the core of what members expect from CANEGROWERS. We don't just advocate to politicians – we amplify the voice of growers to a diverse range of decision-makers. Rather than simply being busy, we want our advocacy to have impact and deliver results.

Genuine, effective advocacy is a team effort, and rarely are outcomes achieved in isolation. As the saying goes, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

Highlights included:

- **Disaster assistance policy changes** – Working with Queensland Farmers' Federation to expand grant guidelines to include plant cane costs and broaden the definition of primary producers to remove penalties for off-farm income.
- **Mossman transport support** – Partnering with CANEGROWERS Mossman, MSF Sugar and the local community to secure funding to offset transport and logistics costs for cane harvested in Mossman but processed in Mulgrave.
- **Bioenergy advocacy** – Working with Bioenergy Australia, GrainGrowers and the Australian Sugar Manufacturers to call for a Bioenergy National Feedstock Strategy and policies supporting a domestic biofuels sector.

Strategic theme 2: Outstanding service to members

We continue to deliver practical outcomes for growers – solving problems through advice, insight, tools and services. Examples include:

- Conducting a harvesting risk assessment, analysing district-by-district risks and identifying opportunities in the critical harvesting sector.
- Analysing fertiliser supply chain drivers to identify ways to dampen price increases.
- Securing an emergency APVMA permit for aerial application of MCPA to manage vine weeds.
- Engaging early with NHVR on load restraint issues – running regional workshops and facilitating direct dialogue between growers, industry and compliance staff.
- Working with NHVR, TMR and QPS to secure Christmas curfew exemptions and develop a protocol for harvester permit approvals.

- Releasing the updated *2024 Sugarcane Transport Load Restraint Guide* and conducting roadshows and webinars. Additional advocacy sought approval for new flotation tyres and expanded crossing points for tracked harvesters.
- Delivering Farm Business Resilience Program and Business Essentials workshops – 18 events reaching over 110 growers, exploring topics such as risk management, strategic planning, sugar pricing, bookkeeping and people management.
- Updating the electricity tariff comparison tool with 2024–25 rates and worksheets to help growers match tariffs to operations.
- Launching SmartAg Queensland with QFF – 187 participants completed training, including 39 in truck licensing, 103 in pilot/escort operations, 19 forklift licences and 26 chemical safety courses. Haulout driver training expanded into two new districts, creating 15 job placements.

Strategic theme 3: High-quality organisational collaboration

Our districts are the heartbeat of the organisation and the best vehicle for connecting growers to CANEGROWERS. We work as one organisation – listening and responding to growers' needs and delivering integrated services through district companies.

Examples included:

- Partnering with Plant Health Australia to deliver a two-day Sugarcane Industry Biosecurity Preparedness Workshop in Townsville.
- Providing ongoing advisory and technical support to district offices and cane analysis auditors, including troubleshooting, reviewing audit reports and coordinating workshops.
- Supporting the development of a Laboratory Methods Review Group to maintain standards across sugar mills.
- Rolling out Project Headland, assessing strengths, weaknesses and opportunities in each cane supply area to improve productivity – already adopted by two districts.

Strategic theme 4: Robust industry partnerships

Our partnerships give us strength – sharing the burden and delivering outcomes together. True partnership requires honesty and resilience, even when things get difficult.

- We expanded our sustainability credentials, with growers' adoption of Smartcane BMP now recognised by Coca-Cola, Nestlé and global standards such as ProTerra, Vive and Bonsucro.
- Through Bioenergy Australia, we ensured the interests of feedstock providers like the cane industry remain central to the national biofuels debate, with CANEGROWERS involved in state and federal roundtables.
- Our representation across key forums – QFF Board, NFF Members Council, the Australian Cane Growers Council, the Australian Sugar Alliance and the World Association of Beet and Cane Growers – strengthens our influence and insight into how other industries manage challenges and drive efficiency.

Strategic theme 5: Progressive and innovative industry evolution

We are an industry that continues to evolve. The defensive stance once taken on sustainability has shifted – now both State and Federal governments seek our input and endorsement of sugarcane as a sustainable feedstock for future biofuels.

Industry evolution also depends on investing in our people:

- The Next Ratoon Young Leaders Mentoring Program saw its second cohort of graduates – a tremendous success showcasing the talent eager to contribute to the industry's future.
- We supported young grower tours from Cairns, Herbert River and Rocky Point, as well as Women in Sugar groups from the Herbert and Burdekin, who visited Brisbane to meet staff and see firsthand the expertise behind our work.
- For the second year, we hosted Sugar Cubed, a grower-focused conference delivered with ASSCT – a rare but vital opportunity for farmers and researchers to learn from one another. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

We have seen this year that we can be positive without being naïve. The difficulties we face only drive us harder to solve problems.

This report shows that CANEGROWERS is addressing immediate industry pressures while also working strategically to unlock future potential – both as a certified, sustainably produced sugar supply chain and as a feedstock provider for a low-carbon fuels industry.

Ultimately, it is our people who will unlock this potential. I must acknowledge the thousands of hours given by grower leaders and volunteers who offer their time and farms for media events, workshops, political visits and field days. You make this work worthwhile.

Our staff are passionate about their roles and work diligently and skilfully to deliver on our commitments. Across Brisbane and our districts, our people demonstrate long-term dedication to growers and this industry. I hope readers of this report share in the pride we take in delivering the outcomes that follow.

ABOUT THE INDUSTRY

During the 2024–25 sugar season, which ran from May to January, the Australian industry harvested 28.8 million tonnes of sugarcane. The crop was transported by road and rail to 21 mills for processing.

Sugarcane was sourced from 326,001 hectares of farmland stretching from Mossman in far north Queensland to Grafton in northern New South Wales, with an average Commercial Cane Sugar (CCS) content of 13.28 units.

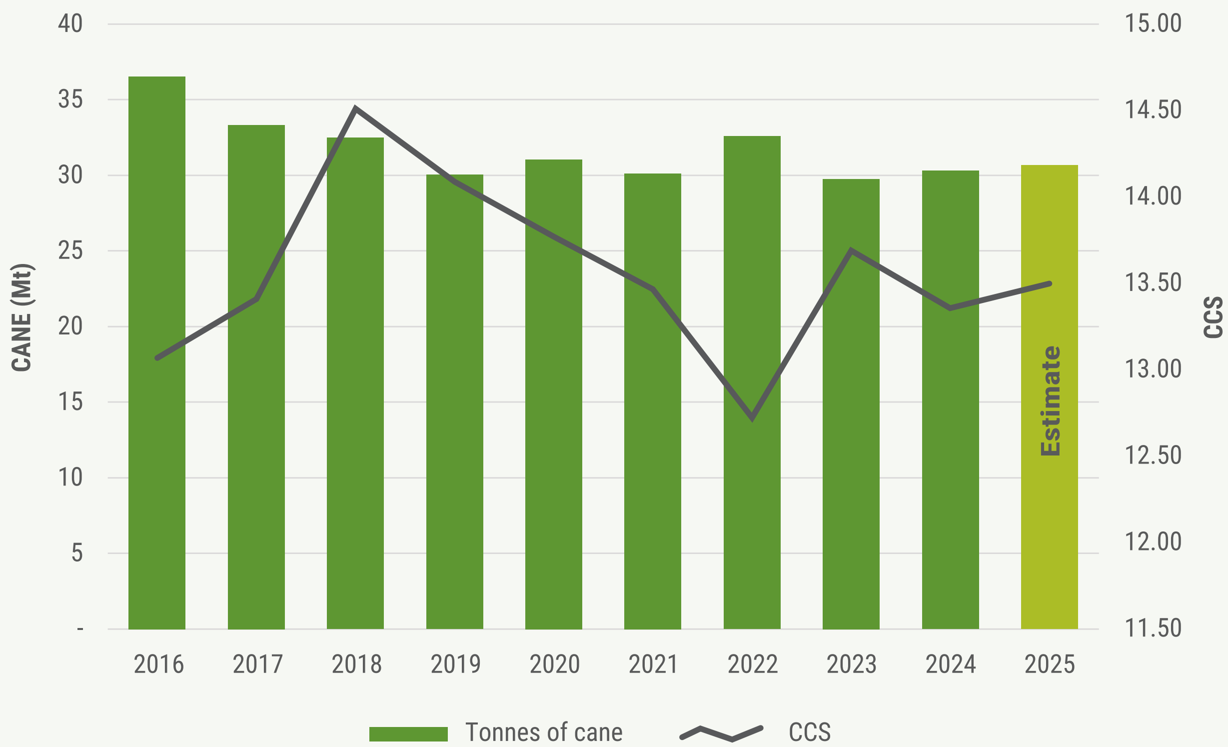
In Queensland alone, 27.3 million tonnes were harvested from 314,146 hectares, approximately 1.36 million tonnes less than in the 2022–23 season. This below average crop reflected a combination of poor growing conditions, industrial action at some mills, weather related harvesting delays, milling breakdowns, and labour shortages.

Around 76% of Australia's raw sugar production was exported to key markets including South Korea, Japan, Indonesia and the United Kingdom, with the balance refined for domestic consumption. Given the volatility of global sugar markets, Australian growers continued to manage price risk through sugar marketers.

TABLE 1	AUSTRALIAN PRODUCTION OF CANE AND SUGAR IN THE 2023 AND 2024 SEASONS							
	TONNES OF CANE		TONNES OF SUGAR IPS (EST)		CCS		HECTARES HARVESTED	
Mill area	2023	2024	2023	2024	2023	2024	2023	2024
Mossman	516,894	180,920	63,168	21,783	12.22	12.04	7,152	3,294
Tableland	622,218	742,378	86,177	102,894	13.85	13.86	6,947	9,078
Mulgrave	1,004,086	782,739	144,038	97,764	11.98	12.49	11,104	10,902
Innisfail	1,488,104	1,115,019	173,116	132,978	11.63	11.92	20,785	19,251
Tully	2,536,921	2,162,041	322,189	271,771	12.7	12.58	29,437	29,216
Herbert River	3,993,737	3,840,886	519,985	475,502	13.02	12.38	54,528	52,575
North Qld	**10,161,960**	**8,823,983**	**1,308,672**	**1,102,690**	**12.64**	**12.5**	**129,953**	**124,316**
Burdekin	**8,033,831**	**7,965,295**	**1,111,079**	**1,111,159**	**14.75**	**13.95**	**68,091**	**67,929**
Proserpine	1,702,639	1,673,749	247,904	230,475	14.56	13.83	20,305	19,494
Mackay	5,154,217	4,849,521	699,777	656,045	13.5	13.52	62,013	55,444
Plane Creek	1,304,351	1,300,416	183,000	180,108	14.03	13.85	16,324	15,544
Central Qld	**8,161,207**	**7,823,687**	**1,130,682**	**1,066,628**	**13.81**	**13.64**	**98,642**	**90,482**
Bundaberg	989,029	1,203,996	145,823	149,407	14.74	13.82	13,123	14,371
Isis	1,084,475	1,269,651	167,027	176,158	14.71	13.38	16,644	17,047
Rocky Point	215,875	193,731	28,452	26,335	13.48	14.12	2,524	–
South Qld	**2,289,378**	**2,667,378**	**341,302**	**351,900**	**14.61**	**13.63**	**32,292**	**31,418**
Queensland	**28,646,376**	**27,280,343**	**3,891,734**	**3,632,376**	**13.72**	**13.36**	**328,978**	**314,146**
Condong	399,138	399,649	48,615	47,518	12.18	11.89	4,104	3,526
Broadwater	308,262	511,391	40,074	59,270	13	11.59	3,909	4,144
Harwood	405,754	603,836	53,276	71,434	13.13	11.83	4,093	4,186
New South Wales	**1,113,154**	**1,514,876**	**141,965**	**178,222**	**12.75**	**11.76**	**12,106**	**11,856**
AUSTRALIA	**29,759,530**	**28,795,219**	**4,033,699**	**3,810,599**	**13.69**	**13.28**	**341,084**	**326,001**

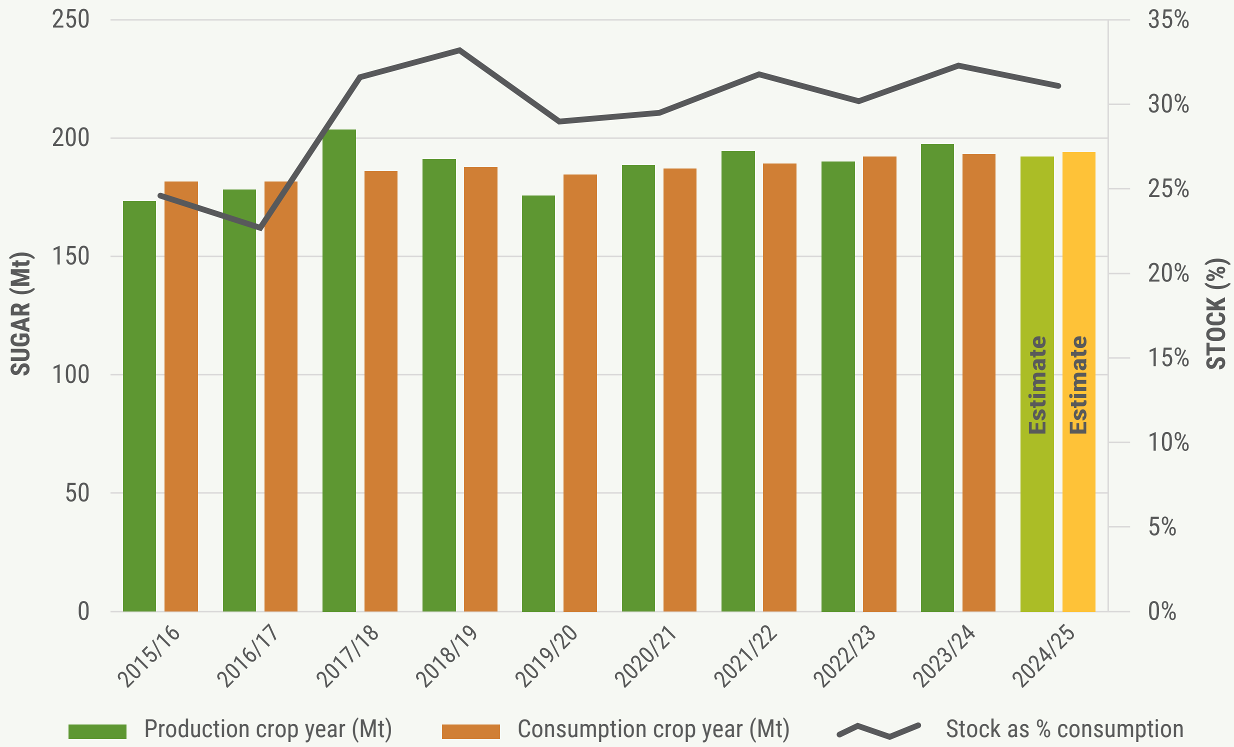
GRAPH 1
WORLD SUGAR PRICE

GRAPH 3
AUSTRALIAN PRODUCTION



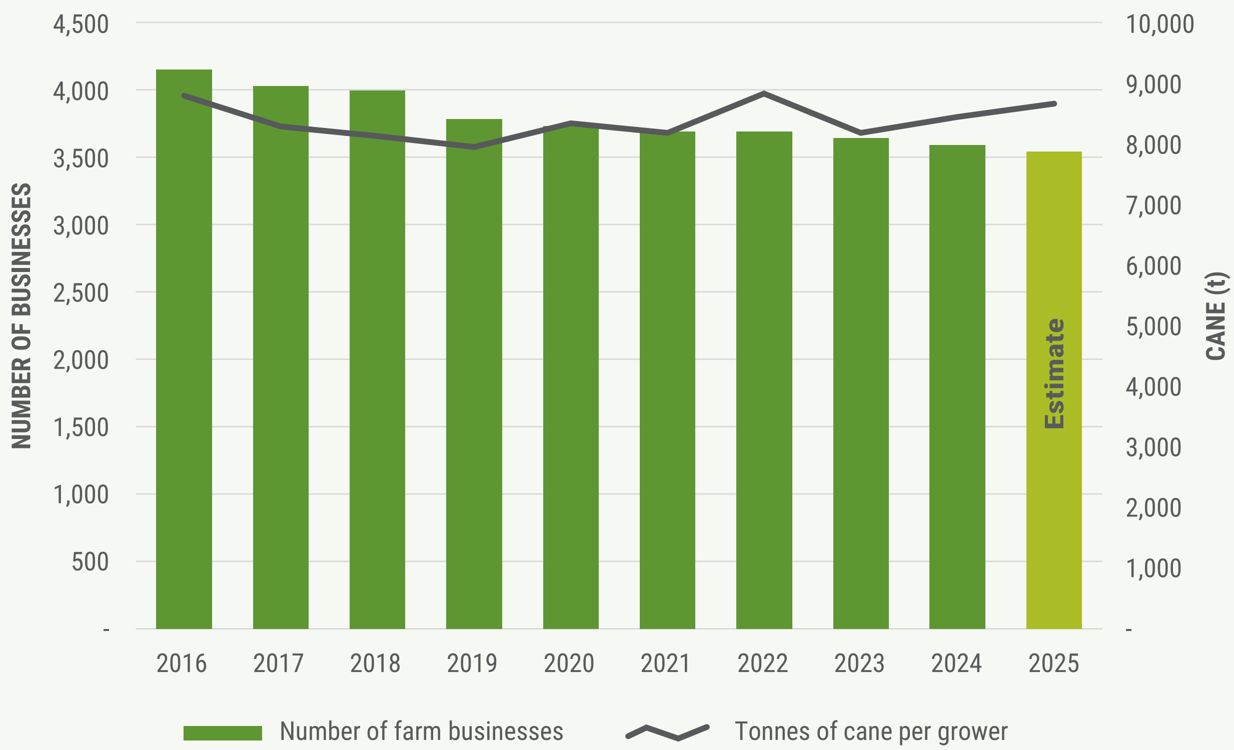
GRAPH 2

WORLD SUGAR PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION



GRAPH 4

AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRY TRENDS



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

The Company's financial performance for the year reflected a carefully managed budget following another challenging crush.

An underlying trading loss of $968,732 was recorded, before accounting for the net change in the fair value of financial assets. Levy revenue remained steady, and a positive contribution from investments boosted total earnings. Expenditure was closely managed and remained within expectations.

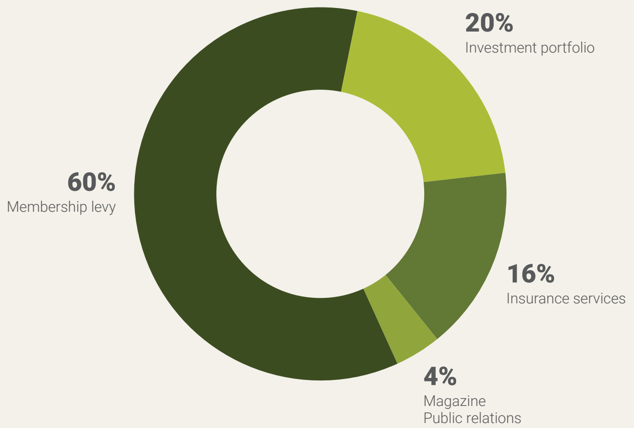
While costs exceeded income for the year, the result demonstrates the Board's commitment to investing in services and initiatives that support members and strengthen the industry.

Net assets increased year on year, with total equity rising to $34.5 million. This outcome highlights the Company's prudent financial management and strong investment returns, which continue to build reserves and provide a stable platform for future operations and strategic priorities.

The audited statutory Annual Financial Report for the year ended 30 June 2025 is available separately to members and can be accessed via the members' portal at **www.canegrowers.com.au**. Members may also request a copy from the Company Secretary by contacting the Brisbane office on **07 3864 6444**.

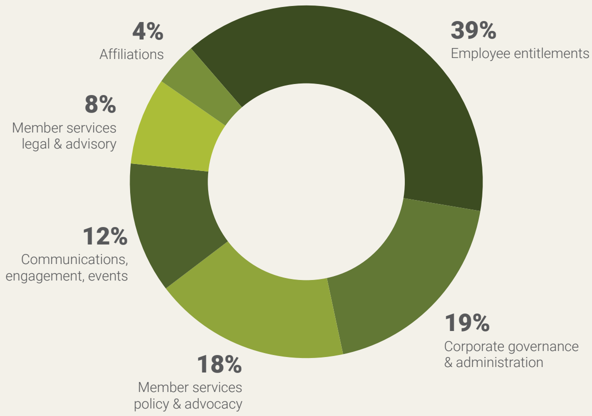
REVENUE CONTRIBUTION

as of 30 June 2025



CORE SERVICES OPERATING EXPENSES

as of 30 June 2025



ABOUT CANEGROWERS

CANEGROWERS is a not-for-profit public company dedicated to advancing the sugarcane industry and supporting the profitability and long-term sustainability of cane farming.

The organisation consists of the state company, Queensland Cane Growers Organisation Ltd, and 13 district companies. Together they represent growers through 85 elected directors and almost 100 professional staff who provide grower services, industry management, advocacy, and communications.

BOARD

The CANEGROWERS Board comprises eight directors elected from the Policy Council, with at least one director from each of the four cane-growing regions: Far North, North, Central, and Southern.

The Board oversees corporate governance including strategy, budget, risk management, and compliance. It sets the company's strategy and corporate policy and delegates day-to-day management to the CEO.

To meet its obligations to the company and its grower members, the Board convenes at least quarterly and as required. This year, the Board visited NSW to join the Clarence Canegrowers Association's 100 year celebrations.

POLICY COUNCIL

The CANEGROWERS Policy Council is made up of 18 growers, one from each mill area, nominated by the district companies.

As the primary grower representative forum, it provides strategic direction for the CANEGROWERS group and shapes industry policy on behalf of growers. Strong regional representation ensures industry-wide perspectives are heard and practical solutions are developed collaboratively.

The Policy Council meets at least three times a year, with frequent communication between meetings and participation in committee meetings.

POLICY COMMITTEES

From 27 May 2025 CANEGROWERS now convenes four Policy Committees comprising Policy Council members, senior policy staff, and District Managers.

These committees examine emerging issues and make recommendations to the Policy Council, helping to establish industry policy positions that address growers' needs and guide strategic decision-making.

MEMBERSHIP

CANEGROWERS has been representing and advancing the interests of sugarcane growers in Queensland since 1926.

Continuing high levels of membership reflect the value that CANEGROWERS offers to growers through products, services, advocacy, and benefits. This value begins at the district office level, is strengthened by CANEGROWERS in Brisbane, and extends its influence from farms to the broader industry, international trade, and global markets.

The membership fee schedule, based on a levy placed upon each tonne of cane produced, is published in the Australian Canegrower magazine each year in May. Queensland CANEGROWERS has implemented a maximum cap on membership fees so that no grower pays more than the equivalent of 100,000 tonnes, regardless of their total production.

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.

CANEGROWERS continued the valuable member benefit of providing free crop insurance for all members, covering fire, hail, and transit-related losses to their crop. This gives members peace of mind that their crop is covered, while also lowering operating costs for growers.

Members also enjoyed advocacy, products, services, discounts, and support through projects such as Business Essentials, which supports pricing and business needs.

PARTNERSHIPS

Australian Cane Growers' Council

The Australian Cane Growers' Council Ltd (ACGC), a controlled entity of Queensland CANEGROWERS, 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 Chair Owen Menkens is Chairman of ACGC and along with CEO Dan Galligan attended international meetings of the WABCG (World Association of Beet and Cane Growers) and National meetings of the National Farmers Federation (NFF).

Representing Australian cane growers at these events provides an opportunity to participate on the national and world stage and play a leading role in addressing challenges in the sugar sector.

Australian Sugar Industry Alliance

CANEGROWERS plays a leading role in the Australian Sugar Industry Alliance (ASA).

ASA aims to bring the industry together on matters of common interest, working collaboratively on the industry's Sugar Plus vision.

Owen Menkens is Chair of ASA and CANEGROWERS has continued to provide extensive in-kind support as secretarial services and through participation in key strategy meetings and workshops.

AFFILIATIONS

Queensland Farmers' Federation

The Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) is a federation that represents the interests of peak state and national agricultural industry organisations, which collectively represent more than 13,000 primary producers across the state.

As a tier 1 member, CANEGROWERS works with QFF on issues such as water and energy pricing, biosecurity, farm business planning, land use planning, workforce planning, education and training, and workplace health and safety.

CANEGROWERS' Senior Vice Chairman and QFF Board member, Mark Mammino, attended QFF Members' Council meetings along with CANEGROWERS CEO Dan Galligan.

National Farmers' Federation

CANEGROWERS, through ACGC, is a founding member of the National Farmers' Federation (NFF), the peak

national body representing farmers and agriculture across Australia.

NFF provides a vital forum for cane growers to influence national policy. CANEGROWERS Chairman Owen Menkens is a Members' Council representative of the NFF.

The NFF and its members have a vision for Australian agriculture to exceed $100 billion in farm gate output by 2030. The Roadmap identifies opportunities and challenges, along with policies and actions to achieve this. A Roadmap Report Card is prepared each year.

CANEGROWERS has continued to work in partnership with the NFF on its Diversity in Agricultural Leadership Program, which seeks to support the development of female leaders in the sector.

World Association of Beet and Cane Growers

CANEGROWERS, through ACGC, is a member of the World Association of Beet and Cane Growers (WABCG), which has over 34 member associations and unites 5 million sugarcane and sugar beet growers from five continents.

These growers are responsible for 60% of global sugar production. CANEGROWERS is represented by Chair Owen Menkens.

In June 2025, CANEGROWERS hosted the annual WABCG Conference in Cairns for the first time in almost two decades. The event was a rare opportunity to showcase the local industry on the international stage, and to highlight the innovation, sustainability and resilience of Australia's cane-growing regions. At this event CANEGROWERS Chairman Owen Menkens was elected as the President of the WABCG for a three year term.

Australian Farm Institute

CANEGROWERS is a corporate member of the Australian Farm Institute (AFI), which leads farm policy discussions to ensure a viable future for the Australian agricultural community.

AFI delivers timely analysis and insights, and promotes evidence-based policy solutions that maximise the economic and wellbeing of our farmers.

Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia

CANEGROWERS is a member of the Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia (PIEFA), a not-for-profit company formed through a collaboration between the Australian Government, primary industries organisations, and the education sector.

CANEGROWERS worked closely with PIEFA during the year to develop and promote sugarcane curriculum-aligned teaching resources, industry careers, and participation in events connecting the sugarcane industry with schools across the country.

SERVICES

Insurance

CANEGROWERS, in partnership with local district offices, has a team of qualified insurance professionals located across cane-growing regions to provide independent insurance advice to farming families and the regional communities they support.

As a Queensland based rural insurance provider CANEGROWERS Insurance provides a personalised approach to insurance cover, providing access to a broad range of products and underwriters and one on one brokerage services.

Legal Services

Free legal services are provided to CANEGROWERS, including 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. Mr Cooper also provides advice and assistance to CANEGROWERS district companies on issues such as the renewal of cane supply agreements.

Mr Cooper informs incoming and existing Board members throughout the CANEGROWERS organisation about corporate governance obligations and their legal duties, as well as the expectations of their roles as grower-elected representatives.

CANEGROWERS Marketing Information Service

CANEGROWERS developed the Marketing Information Service (MIS) to assist members in navigating the competitive landscape of marketing services and products.

The service provides free weekly and monthly updates (including a podcast), designed to offer a consistent format focused on the main market drivers. This helps growers follow the complex sugar market with consistent logic, cutting through to the more fundamental market drivers.

CANEGROWERS has expanded this service by building in a free business essentials training course that supports growers in understanding their cost of production.

YEAR IN REVIEW

Through a wide range of tailored and targeted programs and services, CANEGROWERS works for growers, delivering tailored programs and services that drive productivity, strengthen profitability, and support a sustainable future for the industry.

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

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

Lack of practical and effective options for aerial control of vine weeds continues to be a concern for growers. CANEGROWERS has worked with Sugar Research Australia (SRA) to implement studies that will:

- establish residue levels for MCPA from several trial sites, to provide the data required for a permit that allows aerial application; and
- evaluate the efficacy of helicopter application of 2,4-D using Accu-Flo nozzles, which will underpin a case for much reduced downwind buffers.

In July 2024, the APVMA handed down a proposed regulatory decision on paraquat after a 30-year review. This proposed decision would have limited the rate of application of paraquat in cane to well below the minimum effective dose, on the justification of risk to native animals.

In September 2024, CANEGROWERS secured an emergency APVMA permit for aerial application of MCPA to manage vine weeds, using data from collaborative trials. This permit is active until December 2025.

CANEGROWERS worked closely with SRA, GRDC, Syngenta and others to prepare a submission highlighting the importance of paraquat for cane farming, the environmental risks of alternatives, and the weaknesses of the environmental risk modelling used. A grower survey on paraquat use patterns was developed and used to support this case.

BIOSECURITY

Biosecurity awareness and preparedness is critical for the ongoing profitability of the Australian sugar industry.

CANEGROWERS is the industry member of Plant Health Australia (PHA) and the signatory to the Emergency Pest Plant Response Deed (EPPRD).

This deed is administered by PHA and determines the cost-sharing and management of responses to any pest or disease incursion. CANEGROWERS works closely with SRA on these matters.

The updated Sugarcane Industry Biosecurity Plan, prepared by SRA and PHA with support from CANEGROWERS, reviewed the list of priority threats and the actions and

investments that will minimise the risk of their entry into Australia while also maximising the chance of an effective response to such an incursion.

Red Witchweed (RWW) is a parasitic plant that attaches to the roots of certain grasses and can impact the cane, grain and grazing industries through trade, market access and risk of further spread. An eradication program for RWW is now in its second stage and is due to finish at the end of 2025.

The industry's cost-sharing contributions to the RWW eradication program have now been completed. After 10 years of activities, 98% of land has been released from quarantine, soil seed loads reduced by over 99%, and new detections reduced by over 99%. Department of Primary Industries (DPI) will continue eradication work and "proof of freedom" surveillance into the next decade.

In April 2025, CANEGROWERS partnered with PHA to deliver a two-day Sugarcane Industry Biosecurity Preparedness Workshop in Townsville. Attendees included growers, CANEGROWERS district managers, mill farm managers, productivity services staff, SRA and other cane organisations.

The workshop provided training on pest threats, on-farm biosecurity measures, and the structure of a major biosecurity response. Feedback was very positive.

CANEGROWERS has engaged in broader biosecurity initiatives, including contributing to the National Plant Health Committee's work on sustainable investment in biosecurity, attending Queensland Biosecurity Partners forums, and providing feedback on Biosecurity Queensland's new On-Farm Biosecurity Basics education module.

CANEGROWERS also supported planning for the Queensland Feral Pig Action Plan and met with the National Feral Pig Action Plan to discuss cane losses and management needs.

BUSINESS ESSENTIALS

As the implementing partner for the Farm Business Resilience Program (FBRP) in the sugar industry in Queensland, CANEGROWERS has delivered Business Essentials workshops across the industry for the past four years. The initiative is funded by the Australian Government Future Drought Fund as well as the Queensland Government.

This year the series has consisted of a combination of in-person workshop sessions, 18 events exploring topics such as risk management for growers, strategic planning, sugar pricing, intermediate bookkeeping and industry knowledge (e.g. mechanisms for cane payment and CCS determination), along with a series of online webinars that explored topics centred around managing people, strengthening relationships and safeguarding the business. The program had a direct reach of 110 individual growers.

This year Business Essentials partnered with the Next Ratoon program to deliver leadership mentoring for young growers. Looking ahead the program will aim to deliver a new round of grower training and engagement aimed at strengthening the resilience of our growers and leaders throughout the industry.

CANE ANALYSIS AUDITORS

CANEGROWERS continued to provide advisory and technical support to district offices and cane analysis auditors. The cane analysis auditor support service remained active throughout the year, including troubleshooting, reviewing audit reports, and coordinating annual workshops.

A virtual workshop was held with representation from almost all districts, featuring updates from the National Measurement Institute on instrument compliance and from SRA on Near Infrared (NIR) technologies.

CANEGROWERS reaffirmed the importance of maintaining strong audit programs aligned with Cane Supply Agreements and supported the development of a Laboratory Methods Review Group to maintain standards across Australian sugar mills.

CANEGROWERS is represented on the Australian National Committee as a member of the International Commission for Uniform Methods of Sugar Analysis Ltd.

DIVERSIFICATION

Momentum for diversification grew steadily during the year, with significant demand potential demonstrated in a number of reports for low-carbon liquid fuels (LCLF), including sustainable aviation fuel (SAF).

Discussions were held with numerous organisations looking to utilise sugarcane components as a feedstock, however, few are close to commercialisation. Jet Zero Australia and Licella are actively involved with plans to produce SAF in the sugarcane regions, the latter progressing a pilot project to produce SAF from bagasse at the Isis Mill.

CANEGROWERS continued to lead advocacy at a state and federal level and was actively engaged with Bioenergy Australia, Low Carbon Fuels Alliance of Australia and New Zealand, and QFF to support policy settings that would enable low-carbon liquid fuels production. The opportunity also exists for increased power cogeneration from bagasse across the industry, which could underpin the improvement of mill performance.

CANEGROWERS will persist in advocating for a feedstock strategy to leverage these exciting opportunities for growers.

ELECTRICITY

The energy transition continued to reshape the operating environment for irrigated sugarcane, bringing both cost pressures and new opportunities. CANEGROWERS has worked to keep growers' needs at the centre of policy and market change, especially around tariffs, metering, grid works and behind-the-meter generation.

Retail and Network price updates for 2024–25 maintained strong time-of-use signals. While off-peak pricing remains an important signal for the market, the higher off-peak and lower peak rates somewhat diluted the signal of abundant solar and wind energy during the day.

Tariff 22C matured as a practical option for many irrigators. CANEGROWERS analysed farm load profiles and updated our guidance on when 22C or alternative tariffs suit different pump sizes, duty cycles and crop water requirements. In many instances, Tariff 34 suited irrigators better (though with a slight risk of interruption) with comparably lower pricing than Tariff 20.

CANEGROWERS refreshed and re-released the electricity tariff comparison tool with the new 2024–25 rates and windows, with step-by-step worksheets to help growers match tariffs to their operational constraints.

With significant renewable generation and transmission projects advancing, CANEGROWERS engaged state agencies and network service providers to protect on-farm reliability. Our priorities were fair treatment for customers affected by construction and maintenance windows, maintaining and enhancing biosecurity control during exploration and works, sensible outage planning, and strong community engagement.

Through the Ag Energy Taskforce and direct forums with Ergon/Energex, CANEGROWERS advocated that irrigation load flexibility, when supported by the right tariffs and technology, can help the grid, but should not come at the expense of water scheduling, crop performance or affordability.

The continued roll-out of smart meters highlighted practical issues for larger irrigation pumps where direct-connected meters are limited to 80-amp protection. CANEGROWERS escalated cases where growers were left unable to operate after meter exchanges and pressed for pragmatic solutions, clear accountability, timely CT-metering upgrades where needed, and avoidance of unexpected costs and downtime for customers.

CANEGROWERS produced an advisory note for districts outlining questions to ask before a meter change, and worked with retailers and network businesses requiring that growers receive advance notice of meter changes and are informed about large motor/pump limitations. While still not satisfactorily resolved, CANEGROWERS continues to pursue and progress the matter.

CANEGROWERS advanced policy positions on fair export and local use of renewable energy. CANEGROWERS outlined options for enabling local energy sharing/virtual net metering among farms on the same feeder and recognising the strategic value of sugar mill cogeneration.

Our goal remains to unlock energy generation capacity access for growers while keeping network charges and compliance practical. CANEGROWERS made submissions and provided data to regulators and government throughout

the 2025-26 pricing process, highlighting irrigation load characteristics, the impacts of metering constraints, and the need for simple, farm-friendly tariff design.

CANEGROWERS continued to press for clear, consistent communication to customers during meter exchanges and grid works, and for tools that let irrigators plan confidently around tariff windows and seasonal operations.

CANEGROWERS will remain a strong voice for growers to ensure the transition supports a reliable, affordable and sustainable energy future for Queensland sugarcane.

ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY

CANEGROWERS works to strengthen the industry's reputation for environmental stewardship and social responsibility by fostering community confidence, minimising regulatory pressures, and demonstrating the sustainability of Queensland sugar across domestic and international markets.

In partnership with industry and supply chain stakeholders, CANEGROWERS promotes voluntary, practical, and cost-effective management changes that deliver lasting benefits for farms, the environment, and the wider community - showing that collaborative solutions are more effective than prescriptive regulation.

In 2024–25, CANEGROWERS advanced Smartcane BMP alignment with international sustainability programs. Module 4 (People & Business) requirements were updated to match the VIVE Sustainable Supply Programme, with new audit-readiness resources developed for growers and facilitators.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS & CLIMATE CHANGE

Progressing the actions in its climate change policy, CANEGROWERS commissioned a study that showed the relative contributions of different practices to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and measured the impact of changing these practices on emissions.

The report was able to compare results with older studies and found that farm emissions have reduced by at least 30% since 2005, due mainly to changes in nitrogen use, tillage practices and irrigation efficiency. CANEGROWERS has now commissioned a study on how much additional reduction in emissions can occur over the next 5 to 10 years through greater adoption of best practice. This project is ongoing.

Preliminary analysis indicates that for Smartcane BMP compliant farms, further emissions reductions are

limited. Options for further reductions through practice change include greater use of nitrification-inhibitor fertilisers, improved irrigation scheduling in the Burdekin, and efficiency improvements in Mackay, Bundaberg and the Tablelands.

CANEGROWERS has worked with Agriculture Innovation Australia to assess and improve the design of a GHG emissions calculator designed specifically for agriculture. CANEGROWERS has also developed its own version of this calculator, which will be integrated with Smartcane BMP.

CANEGROWERS contributed to national processes, including workshops to improve the National Greenhouse Gas Inventory methodology for agriculture (where CANEGROWERS argued against the use of a single state-average fertiliser rate for cane) and engagement with the Cooperative Research Centre for Net Zero in Agriculture to identify cropping-focused research opportunities.

HARVESTING RISK

Harvesting risk continued to be a major concern for growers and contractors, with evidence of ageing machinery, workforce shortages, and escalating operating costs.

CANEGROWERS collaborated with SRA to expand access to the Harvest Mate tool, allowing CANEGROWERS district managers to better understand and benchmark harvesting costs, with the ultimate aim to assist growers and their businesses.

An investigation into the structure of harvesting businesses and a simple costing exercise was completed, highlighting the need for a better understanding of how depreciation is treated with ageing equipment and the need for sustainability in business models, including the potential benefits of cooperative structures.

INDUSTRY SUSTAINABILITY

Off-farm impact on water quality is the major environmental issue influencing perceptions of our industry's sustainability credentials, through its potential influence on the health of waterways, estuaries and inshore waters of the Great Barrier Reef (GBR).

However, communities and markets are also interested in issues like GHG emissions, the health and safety of workers, and fair work practices. Consequently, Smartcane BMP has modules that cover these and other issues related to environmental stewardship and social responsibility, with the latest Module 4 specifically covering emissions, fair work practices and Workplace Health & Safety (WHS) in alignment with international market sustainability requirements.

CANEGROWERS continues to participate in a number of sustainability initiatives and opportunities to ensure there is a targeted and coordinated industry approach that builds on the pivotal role of Smartcane BMP.

CANEGROWERS continues to work with SRA and Australian Sugar Manufacturers (ASM) to develop a sustainability reporting framework for farm and mill sectors. Such a report will be essential in communicating the sustainability credentials of the industry.

In 2024–25 governance of this project was reset after the termination of the original consultant. The project is continuing, with governance models agreed and data mapping underway.

CANEGROWERS has also strongly influenced the ongoing SRA Life Cycle Analysis (LCA) project. This project is updating baseline estimates of environmental impacts of the industry, including calculating an emissions baseline for the industry.

These figures are highly sought after by key customers and end-users of Australian sugar. CANEGROWERS has worked closely with SRA, insisting on representative farm input data and expert review after errors in nitrogen data compromised earlier attempts.

CANEGROWERS remains a partner in the Agrifutures funded Life Cycle Analysis Metrics project, ensuring sugarcane's traceability and sustainability metrics are robust.

CANEGROWERS met with the Australian Sustainable Finance Institute (ASFI) to propose formal acknowledgement of Smartcane BMP practices as meeting the new sustainable finance taxonomy criteria. The goal is for all Smartcane BMP accredited farms to be eligible for improved finance conditions acknowledging the environmental stewardship of best management practice.

CANEGROWERS engaged directly with Nestlé and Coca-Cola to ensure Smartcane BMP is recognised within their responsible sourcing and sustainability programs. Coca-Cola confirmed their domestic sourcing requires sustainability assurance, which Smartcane BMP is positioned to deliver.

MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT AND INNOVATION

During 2024–25, CANEGROWERS placed strong emphasis on membership engagement and innovation, ensuring that growers remained connected, supported, and informed during a period of both industry challenge and opportunity.

This work focused on strengthening ties with members across all districts, creating development pathways for the next generation, enhancing member benefits, and positioning the sugarcane industry as an innovative and sustainable sector in Queensland agriculture.

Strengthening member connections

CANEGROWERS delivered an extensive program of grower meetings across Queensland. District annual general meetings and pre-season gatherings were held in Tablelands, Cairns, Innisfail, Herbert River, Burdekin, Proserpine, Mackay, Bundaberg, Isis, Maryborough, and Rocky Point, with strong attendance from growers and families.

These meetings provided vital opportunities to share updates on advocacy, trade and market access, member services, and industry performance. They also created space for growers to raise local concerns, share ideas, and connect directly with CANEGROWERS leadership including the Chair, CEO, and senior staff.

Guest speakers at these meetings often highlighted issues beyond farming, including mental health, with dedicated sessions on men's wellbeing in Cairns drawing strong engagement from members.

Participation in wider industry forums also ensured that members' perspectives shaped the future direction of agriculture in Queensland. CANEGROWERS contributed to events such as the Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) AgTech and Innovation Breakfast and Queensland Fruit and Vegetable Growers (QFVG) Social Licence Panel at the 2025 Rotary FNQ Field Days in Mareeba.

Building future leaders – The Next Ratoon Mentoring Program

The Next Ratoon mentoring program returned for its second year in 2025, following the highly successful establishment of the program in 2024. Next Ratoon connects young growers from across Queensland with experienced mentors drawn from agribusiness, research, and education.

Seven young growers graduated from the 2024 program, representing six cane growing regions.

The 2025 Next Ratoon mentoring program commenced in February 2025 with six mentees who either run their own business or are part of a family business.

The mentees developed personal and professional skills in leadership, negotiation, and decision-making through a structured six-month program.

The Next Ratoon would not work without the mentors, and CANEGROWERS is very appreciative of their commitment to the program. The mentors came from within the sugarcane industry and across agribusiness with a diverse range of skills, knowledge, and experience.

Feedback for the 2024 and 2025 programs has been overwhelmingly positive. Many graduates have gone on to take up leadership opportunities within their districts or on boards, underlining the program's value as a pipeline for industry leadership.

Young Growers and Women in Sugar

Young growers remained a strong focus of CANEGROWERS engagement efforts. Professional development trips were held in Cairns, Herbert River, and Rocky Point, giving participants hands-on exposure to new farming technologies, sustainability practices, and innovative approaches to cane farming.

These trips also provided invaluable networking opportunities, encouraging collaboration and knowledge-sharing across districts.

CANEGROWERS worked with the Women in Sugar Herbert River (WISH) network, with a delegation of 15 representatives from Herbert River, Burdekin, and Innisfail travelling to Brisbane and Rocky Point. The tour included briefings with CANEGROWERS leadership on advocacy, Smartcane BMP, and sustainability, site visits showcasing on-farm innovation and diversification. This initiative highlighted the growing role of women as leaders and advocates within the cane industry.

Practical Learning – CANEGROWERS Webinars

CANEGROWERS webinars delivered practical, targeted learning opportunities for members. Topics included load restraint and transport safety (delivered in partnership with the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator) and follow-up sessions with Business Essentials that included pricing and industry succession planning.

These webinars provided accessible training for growers, contractors, and millers, ensuring they are equipped with up-to-date knowledge and resources to run safe, compliant, and profitable businesses.

Showcasing the Industry – Sugar Cubed Conference

The Sugar Cubed conference has quickly become a flagship event for CANEGROWERS. The inaugural conference in Mackay in May 2024 attracted over 100 growers and industry leaders and featured site visits, keynote speakers, and panel sessions on productivity, mill performance, sustainable aviation fuel, traceability, and the bioeconomy.

Building on this success, the Sugar Cubed 2025 Conference, held in April at the Royal International Convention Centre in Brisbane, brought together more than 150 growers, researchers, policymakers, and industry stakeholders under the theme "Growth for Generations."

Across two days, the program showcased innovation, sustainability, and collaboration through field trips to cutting-edge research facilities and farms, keynote addresses, as well as panel discussions on global markets, biofuels, cogeneration, intergenerational wealth, and the future of farming.

Delegates explored opportunities in ag-tech, diversification, and industry resilience, and sponsorship support from industry partners demonstrated the value that external stakeholders place on these forward-looking initiatives.

Expanding Member Benefits

Members continued to access a broad suite of benefits, including crop insurance, superannuation education through Australian Retirement Trust, fuel and vehicle discounts via QFF partnerships, health cover options through Queensland Country Health Fund, and input deals through suppliers such as BOC.

Listening to Members – The 2025 Membership Survey

The 2025 member survey provided valuable insights, with a strong sample size of members participating. While satisfaction with CANEGROWERS services was strong, only 44% of respondents expressed confidence in the industry's future, highlighting concerns around mill performance, rising input costs, and workforce challenges.

Encouragingly, three-quarters of respondents supported greater collaboration across the industry and nearly half identified investment in technology as the key to revitalising the sector. These insights will guide future engagement and innovation priorities.

International Connections

CANEGROWERS hosted 20 students from the University of Texas in Brisbane and provided an overview of the industry, farming and business practices, Smartcane BMP, and sustainability.

The students were keen to learn about the Queensland sugarcane industry, which followed on from their visit to the Burdekin.

Driving Innovation and Sustainability

Innovation remained central to CANEGROWERS agenda. A key highlight was work with Coca-Cola Europacific Partners, SRA, and start-up Avalo AI to explore the use of artificial intelligence in sugarcane breeding, an exciting initiative that could accelerate the development of new varieties.

Sustainability partnerships also deepened, with CANEGROWERS supporting Smartcane BMP accreditation and participating in ProTerra, Bonsucro, and VIVE frameworks to align Queensland sugar with global market requirements.

CANEGROWERS worked with American Sugar Refining Inc (ASR) to support ProTerra Social Verification Audits in Mackay and the Burdekin between September and October 2024. In May 2025, CANEGROWERS met with Bonsucro to discuss the Bonsucro production standard, sustainability, and ESG needs in the Australian industry.

These initiatives strengthen the industry's ability to demonstrate environmental stewardship, responsible labour practices, and traceability to international buyers, securing access to premium markets.

MILL PERFORMANCE AND VIABILITY

Discussions with Australian Sugar Manufacturers (ASM) and CANEGROWERS advanced the concept of a unified "Sugar United" model to optimise mill area operations as if managed by a single owner. CANEGROWERS shared season length models and advocated for common definitions of mill reliability, capacity, and availability.

These models, which assess the impact of poor mill reliability on growers, were made available to all districts. Although ASM has not yet secured consensus from its members to proceed, dialogue continues and progress is expected to be made at a mill owner level facilitated through Project Headland.

PROJECT HEADLAND – SUGAR PLUS

CANEGROWERS worked with several districts to develop strategic plans under Project Headland, which is designed to build on the Sugar Plus initiative from the district level upwards.

Workshops were held in Isis and Proserpine, involving data analysis, goal setting, and district board engagement to identify district specific challenges and opportunities.

The initiative aims to build long-term regional resilience by addressing mill viability, harvesting, transport, and value-add opportunities through a coordinated strategic framework.

REEF WATER QUALITY

CANEGROWERS continues to encourage, initiate and collaborate in voluntary programs and projects that support growers to make cost effective practice changes that reduce the risk to downstream environments.

CANEGROWERS participated in a number of relevant forums including the Reef 2050 Advisory Committee (RAC) which includes a range of stakeholders and attempts to advise government on the design, implementation and evaluation of reef programs, including those related to water quality. As part of the RAC, CANEGROWERS argued for greater integration of catchment management and for plans that are dynamic and relevant to growers on the ground.

To help get much needed reform in the arrangements for reef water quality programs, CANEGROWERS continues to advocate for changes consistent with our clear Policy Position on Reef Water Quality. The review of the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan (WQIP) may still be an important opportunity to achieve these goals if all parties work in good faith.

In 2025 CANEGROWERS welcomed the draft Reef Water Quality Improvement Plan framework, which for the first time recognised economic co-benefits for regional communities and included a more collaborative, ground-up approach to land management targets. While cautious until full drafts are released, this represents a potential shift in tone.

In 2024–25, CANEGROWERS was actively engaged in the government's statutory review of reef regulations. CANEGROWERS advocated strongly for phosphorus to be removed from nitrogen-phosphorus budgets, arguing that phosphorus use is not the major water quality risk it is being regulated as. While the Department was unreceptive, CANEGROWERS continues to push for science based reform.

CANEGROWERS raised grower concerns with Eco-Markets Australia regarding the Constructed Wetlands protocol for Reef Credits, warning that it risks reducing cane supply, increasing flood risks, and undermining landscape health. We welcomed Eco-Markets' efforts to discourage problematic projects but remain concerned about the lack of fertiliser based credit projects under the new projector tool.

CANEGROWERS continues to communicate about reef science to members, including reviewing the 2024 Scientific Consensus Statement and briefing growers on findings. CANEGROWERS challenged the framing of nitrogen as the single dominant issue, instead pushing for balanced recognition of multiple water quality factors.

RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND EXTENSION

Collaboration with Sugar Research Australia (SRA) continued to influence RD&E priorities, despite concerns about project delivery. CANEGROWERS participated in the SRA Research Showcase and contributed to the Annual Operating Plan and 10-Year RD&E Strategy.

An independent review of SRA operations called for improved internal processes, and CANEGROWERS, as an industry representative body, contributed feedback to the federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

CANEGROWERS supported SRA's 10th Anniversary R&D investment of $32.6 million in additional projects. SRA laboratories moved from the old location at Indooroopilly to establish the Innovative Research & Industry Services (IRIS) Laboratories at Acacia Ridge.

SMARTCANE BMP

Smartcane BMP is the industry owned and led gold standard to record and verify practices on farm. The program provides a credible and pragmatic means to achieve regulatory compliance and evidence of growers embarking on practice change.

The program has increased the use of farm record keeping and has enabled leading growers to have a seat at the table for constructive discussions with government. Uniquely, Smartcane BMP verifies on-farm best-practice through independent third-party auditing and accreditation processes.

The core modules in the Smartcane BMP program have been supported by the Queensland Government since its inception. This funding supports the employment of local district facilitators, the auditing process, and administration of the program..

Smartcane BMP accreditation is formally recognised under the current Reef Regulations, providing accredited farming enterprises with an alternative pathway to compliance and ensuring they are not the focus of regulatory activities, including on-farm visits.

Since commencement of Phase 4 in January 2023, an additional 152 enterprises farming 24,294 ha have been accredited. A further 258 enterprises successfully extended their accreditation for another five years maintaining the 96% re-accreditation rate. Across Queensland, there are now a total of 801 enterprises farming 173,775 ha. This equates to approximately 45% of the total cane area.

Re-accreditation loads have been significant this year with the Mackay District recording the most reaccreditations (40 reaccreditations; 4762.9 ha) closely followed by Herbert River (19; 4020.1 ha) and Tully (15; 4655.3 ha). CANEGROWERS acknowledges the efforts of the district facilitators and growers the length of Queensland as all Smartcane BMP involved districts have recorded growth in 2025.

This strong uptake of the industry led program has increased interest from stakeholders. *Module 4 – People and Business* is now available on the Smartcane BMP website for growers to benchmark their business and identify areas for improvement. Module 4 is the last piece of the puzzle for Smartcane BMP to meet international sustainability credentials requirements.

A major highlight for 2025 was finalisation of the understanding with the VIVE sustainable supply programme. This provides new opportunities for districts where mills seek accreditation to access a global sustainable sugar supply chain. CANEGROWERS continues work to provide value add opportunities for accredited growers, and both the sustainable sugar and sustainable finance sectors are engaged in discussions to drive recognition of Smartcane BMP accredited grower efforts.

With such buy-in to the Smartcane BMP program from Queensland cane growers, the viability for the long-term certification of Sustainable Sugar has been secured.

TRADE POLICY AND MARKET ACCESS

CANEGROWERS maintained strong advocacy to defend grower returns, and strengthen and maintain market access for Australian raw sugar. A key achievement was securing tariff-free entry through the Australia-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), overriding the UAE's ability to apply its World Trade Organization (WTO) permitted 15% sugar tariff. This reinforces the value of diverse, secure markets.

Attention also centred on India's sugar policies, which continue to distort world markets. Working with DFAT and like minded countries, CANEGROWERS pressed India to comply with WTO rules and redirect surpluses into ethanol production.

While India approved one million tonnes of exports, this was delayed, scaled back from the three million tonnes originally sought, and no direct export subsidies were offered. These outcomes, supported by CANEGROWERS early interventions, helped reduce market disruption.

CANEGROWERS also engaged on emerging EU surplus sugar issues, urging against subsidised beet exports, and supported improvements to the US sugar tariff rate quota system in ways that balance supply needs and market stability. With Australia chairing the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership in 2025, CANEGROWERS is focused on ensuring China and Indonesia's applications address sugar market access concerns.

Beyond defensive work, CANEGROWERS promoted long-term opportunities, including cooperation with India on biofuels, and contributed to inquiries on free trade agreements and Australia's agricultural role in South-East Asia. International collaboration was strengthened through the Global Sugar Alliance's 25th anniversary meeting in London and preparations for the Thai Sugar Conference and ASEAN Sugar Alliance meeting.

Through these initiatives, CANEGROWERS continues to ensure Australian sugar retains competitive, sustainable access in global markets while building partnerships that support resilience and growth.

TRANSPORT

Safe and compliant cane transport remained a key focus. CANEGROWERS worked extensively with the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR), the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) and the Queensland Police Service (QPS) to secure exemptions for Christmas curfew periods and developed a protocol for harvester permit approvals.

The *2024 Sugarcane Transport Load Restraint Guide* was released and promoted through a series of well attended roadshows and webinars, supporting industry understanding of load restraint obligations. Further efforts included advocating for the approval of new flotation tyres and expanding crossing points for tracked harvesters under the National Agricultural Vehicle Notice.

Coordination with NHVR compliance officers increased, and a clear message was communicated, agricultural vehicles must meet standards, including fatigue management, load containment and roadworthiness.

WATER

Queensland's water policy agenda stayed busy during 2024–25. CANEGROWERS engaged across pricing, planning, metering and major infrastructure so that irrigators' affordability, reliability and seasonal operating needs were front and centre.

The Queensland Competition Authority (QCA) completed its review of Sunwater and Seqwater irrigation prices for 1 July 2025 – 30 June 2029, publishing final reports on 7 Feb 2025.

The government's decision was gazetted on 13 June 2025. CANEGROWERS analysed scheme-by-scheme impacts, briefed districts, called for a better process for consultation on a transition to a Regulated Asset Base approach for capital renewals and advocated for stable two-part tariffs and prudent service standards.

The government amended the *Water Act 2000/Water Regulation 2016* to strengthen non-urban water measurement (announced 25 July 2024). New technical standards for meters, telemetry/data loggers and information requirements were then issued in Dec 2024, with a 2024–25 compliance plan published to guide implementation. CANEGROWERS pushed for practical timelines, proportionate costs and clear guidance for large irrigation installations.

Regional water planning

CANEGROWERS participated in basin reviews and water planning processes involving cane districts and supported local district engagement with Government to ensure that irrigators' needs are maintained, and that practical and operational realities are taken into account, balanced with application of thorough scientific review. Some plans included significant changes such as the move to combine three Central Queensland water plans into one, with the first round of consultation completed on 4 Nov 2024.

Regional Water Assessments (RWA)

CANEGROWERS continued engagement across RWA regions (including the Burdekin), pressing for credible demand forecasts, efficiency options and transparent Benefit-to-Cost Ratios alongside any new infrastructure options identified by the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water's (DRDMW) program.

In 2024, the State Government confirmed that the original Paradise Dam wall could not be repaired and that a new dam would need to be built downstream. Through 2024–25 the project remained in detailed business case and approvals, with the Coordinator General showing the project progressing through the Impact Assessment Report process. CANEGROWERS advocated for clear signals on water availability, construction timing and any price impacts during delivery.

CANEGROWERS works closely with QFF, particularly through the Water and Energy Policy Committee to strongly advocate for our growers, which through QFF is supported by a coordinated response across sectors for common challenges.

In doing so CANEGROWERS:

- Lodged submissions to the QCA and departmental consultations, and provided district briefings on pricing methodology and expected outcomes under the 2025–29 price path
- Provided grower guidance on meter standards, telemetry/data obligations and staged compliance pathways; escalated site-specific issues where costs, access or technical constraints risked unfair impacts
- Engaged with DRDMW to ensure irrigation reliability and scheme affordability remain explicit assessment criteria in planning
- Laid the foundations for advocacy to extend the irrigation pricing discount to counteract inefficiencies within Sunwater service delivery

With several active water planning processes underway, CANEGROWERS will continue to monitor, support and advise our district organisations and grower representatives.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Addressing workforce shortages remained a top priority. CANEGROWERS sat on the advisory committee and played a key role in delivering SmartAg Queensland's subsidised training program.

Overall, 187 participants have completed training, with 39 participants who completed truck training and licensing, 103 who completed the pilot/escort training, 19 who obtained their forklift licence and 26 who completed chemical safety training.

A needs analysis confirmed the high demand for haulout driver training, which was rolled out in two new districts, resulting in 15 new job placement outcomes.

CANEGROWERS organised contractor webinars on HR, WHS and business management topics, and worked with trainers to ensure delivery quality and appropriate course design.

Strategic efforts are underway to shift from compliance based training to business and technology skills development. The Rural Jobs and Skills Alliance has been terminated and SmartAg will absorb some of its functions.

CANEGROWERS continues to focus on workforce attraction through a national advertising and social media campaign, along with a jobs board that connects employers and employees.

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

Unfortunately, there have been a number of fatalities in the industry and CANEGROWERS continued its leadership in WHS through education, industry collaboration, and policy development.

A roadshow was organised in partnership with NHVR and Workplace Health & Safety Queensland (WHSQ), providing clarity on compliance requirements, with eight workshops held between Cairns and Rocky Point and attended by more than 240 participants.

CANEGROWERS contributed to the finalisation of the Rural Plant and Cane Rail Safety Codes of Practice and facilitated AI-based WHS management tools in collaboration with James Cook University, helping growers generate tailored farm safety systems. Business Essentials offered WHS workshops, although grower engagement remained low.

DISTRICT REPORTS

MOSSMAN

Following on the heels of Tropical Cyclone Jasper and the December 2023 floods, the 2024 season was especially tough for the Douglas Shire community. Growers faced an uncertain future and wondered how they could afford to repair damaged farms and infrastructure. The State Government pledged $12.5 million to support industry transition and recovery.

In 2024, Mossman Julatten growers signed a multi-year cane supply agreement with MSF Sugar's Tableland Mill, while Mossman coastal growers secured a one-year agreement with MSF's Mulgrave Mill.

Julatten growers were required to contribute to the existing transport arrangements to the Tableland Mill. Coastal growers had to organise and fund transport to the Mulgrave Mill. A contractor was engaged for hauling, and to make it viable the State Government subsidised the $30-per-tonne haulage cost, with $15 per tonne coming from the government, $3.33 from MSF Sugar, and $11.67 from growers.

Up to $6 million of government funding was set aside for this. By the end of crushing, with funds left over, an extra $3 per tonne was paid for transported cane and $14 per estimated tonne for unharvested crop.

Because the Mulgrave Mill's cane receival infrastructure was not ready, Mossman coastal growers began supplying cane later than other Mulgrave growers. Small deliveries started in early July, with full supply from 12 July 2024. Mulgrave Mill finished in mid-November, but Mossman coastal cane continued by rail to South Johnstone Mill until 23 November.

Small deliveries started for Mossman growers in early July.
Photo credit: Raldini

Julatten growers sent 18,632 tonnes to the Tableland Mill. Coastal growers sent 206,920 tonnes to the Mulgrave and South Johnstone mills, totalling 225,552 tonnes, 83% of which came from CANEGROWERS members. CANEGROWERS Mossman and QCGO waived administrative fees for 2024, charging only the crop insurance fee of $0.035 per tonne.

The final coastal district average cane payment was 12.0048 ccs, producing a final price of $47.50 per tonne. Despite the challenges, growers secured income through to July 2025.

Coastal cane areas were: 3,294 ha harvested, 777 ha fallow and 1,979 ha standover, 6,050 ha in total. Average yield was 62.82 tonnes per hectare. Commercial harvesting costs rose more than usual due to difficult conditions and cane quality, averaging $12.50 per tonne including fuel and $10.50 excluding fuel (ex-GST).

The State Government's Transition Group explored new agricultural options and potential uses for the Mossman Mill site. With little progress on a mill sale, a change of government in the October 2024 election brought a new Premier and a further $6 million for transport to support a 2025 crushing season.

Throughout 2024 CANEGROWERS Mossman continued its services and advocacy, focusing on the CSA with MSF Sugar, the transport agreement, and setting up harvesting operations and paperwork for a new mill. The organisation remains active on the Transition Committee and in the Douglas Chamber of Commerce, both key advocates for local industry and business.

TABLELAND

Tableland Mill commenced crushing on 22 May 2024 and wrapped up on 23 November 2024, completing 28 weeks of operations. The mill processed a total of 742,407 tonnes of cane; the lowest tonnage ever recorded for the district.

Despite this challenging season, the district achieved a weighted CCS of 13.86 and an average yield of 82 tonnes per hectare. While these results raised concern across the district, they have also driven renewed efforts to improve productivity.

WABCG delegates watching a dual row harvester in operation on the Tablelands

To address the issue, a joint venture between SRA, MSF and CANEGROWERS Tableland established a new distribution and mother plot in the southern zone. This initiative has already delivered positive results, with demand for clean seed exceeding the combined uptake of the previous three years.

Two varieties stood out as strong performers this year:

- **SRA26:** Planted by nine growers in the southern district, this relatively new variety was the season's top seller.
- **SRA37:** Chosen by 10 growers across the district, continuing its steady rise in popularity.

It is encouraging to see growers diversifying their plantings, particularly as 45 % of the crop remains KQ228. By adopting new varieties, growers are working to reduce the risk of major crop losses should KQ228 be impacted in the future.

With the retirement of Drewe Burgess (CANEGROWERS) and the resignation of Graham Cripps (MSF), the district is currently without a resident agronomist. SRA has continued to oversee local variety trials, ensuring this crucial work carries on.

A regional highlight was the successful staging of the FNQ Rotary Field Days. For the first time, a dedicated "Sugar Tent" was hosted, featuring representatives from SRA, QSL, CANEGROWERS Tableland.

The tent operated throughout the three-day event and drew more than 100 attendees with direct links to the sugar industry. It provided an important opportunity for growers, researchers and stakeholders to engage on key issues, share insights and discuss industry innovations.

The WABCG held its international conference in Cairns, attracting delegates from around the globe.

The third day featured a field trip across the Tableland district, showcasing the region's diverse agricultural landscape. The tour highlights included a visit to the Jack Murat coffee processing plant, a demonstration of Bray Farming's dual-row harvester, lunch at Tinaroo Dam, and a scenic drive down the Gillies Range to coastal cane farms.

The tour was well received and provided international visitors with valuable insights into the district's innovative farming practices and natural beauty.

Throughout the year, CANEGROWERS Tableland ensured members' voices were heard by representing them on key committees and working groups, including:

- Tinaroo Water Committee
- Queensland CANEGROWERS Electricity Committee
- Ergon Energy Irrigation Tariff Forum
- Policy Council for Queensland CANEGROWERS
- Regional Water Reference Group
- Agricultural Commodities and Planning Committee
- Agricultural Forums Subcommittee (Rotary Field Day planning)

CAIRNS

The past twelve months have been another challenging period for sugar producers in the Russell, Mulgrave, Trinity, and parts of the North Johnstone catchments, all represented under the umbrella of CANEGROWERS Cairns Region. Like many others in Queensland agriculture, the impacts of extreme weather have been felt to varying degrees.

Advocacy and representation remained central to CANEGROWERS Cairns Region's work. Regular engagement with local political representatives helped ensure ongoing recognition of the sugar industry's importance to the regional economy. Grower representatives also played an active role in the annual review of the South Johnstone and Mulgrave Cane Supply Contracts, ensuring members' views were heard in all discussions.

Water quality and sustainability projects, along with Smartcane BMP, continued to demonstrate growers' commitment to environmental stewardship. This focus was highlighted by the completion of the Mulgrave Russell Water Quality Program. While the main program has concluded, TropWATER monitoring and first-flush retention trials have continued into 2025. Extending the monitoring project has provided an excellent opportunity to collect long-term data from the wetland diversion project in the Mirriwinni area.

Over the past year, a large number of growers across the region have been targeted for compliance audits. Many were already Smartcane BMP accredited, making the process straightforward and highlighting the benefits of accreditation. Demand for Smartcane BMP accreditation remains strong, with many reaccreditation audits keeping the Smartcane BMP team highly active.

To meet increasing member demand for grower services, the organisation purchased an additional direct-drill bean planter, improving access to equipment for fallow crop management. The mud spreader also continues to be well utilised.

Professional development remained a priority, with a well attended Business Essentials workshop held at the Mulgrave office. Feedback confirmed that the two-day event provided growers with valuable tools and insights to support their business operations.

Looking ahead, CANEGROWERS Cairns Region will continue to focus on advocacy at local and state levels, expanding grower services, and strengthening the industry's profile in Far North Queensland. Ongoing monitoring of seasonal influences and industry engagement focused on viability will ensure members are supported through both challenges and opportunities.

The organisation remains committed to delivering strong representation, practical services, and forward looking strategies that safeguard the industry's future and the prosperity of the communities it supports.

INNISFAIL

The 2024 season in the Innisfail District was marked by relentless wet weather, with rainfall recorded on 174 days of the first 200 days of the year. South Johnstone Mill lost 746 hours to wet weather by the ninth week of the harvest. To their credit, harvesting groups and MSF Sugar still managed to get the crop off by December.

Early 2025 saw further wet season inundations and damage caused by the North and Far North Queensland Tropical Low, however in the Innisfail region, the event wasn't as destructive as flooding from ex-Tropical Cyclone Jasper a year earlier. The latter led to the closure of the Australian Sugar Heritage Museum and in turn, a relocation of the CANEGROWERS Innisfail office to its CBD premises in January 2025.

Concurrently, the organisation underwent a period of internal transition. Manager Sandra Henrich departed, and Grower Services Manager Debra Telford stepped into the managerial role. A few months later, Natalie Hayward bolstered the executive team as Corporate Services Manager.

Leadership shifts also occurred at the board level during early 2025. Retiring director Victor Guarrera was succeeded by Louis Fichera following the CANEGROWERS triennial elections. At the state level, CANEGROWERS Innisfail's Chairman Joseph Marano was elevated to Senior Vice Chair of CANEGROWERS.

Membership participation remains solid and new growers are continuing to earn Smartcane BMP accreditation, while existing participants have successfully undergone reaccreditation.

Our extension staff have assisted in preparing growers for audits, while continuing to support them with productivity goals as part of the Johnstone Sugarcane Practice Change Program, backed by Queensland Government's Reef Water Quality Program. Objectives complement and build on progress made through the recently concluded Cassowary Coast Reef Smart Farming initiative.

Feral pig control remains a pressing issue. A collaborative, place based program led by CANEGROWERS Innisfail in conjunction with MSF Sugar is developing practical, industry-specific best-practice methods for feral pig management and monitoring in the Wet Tropics.

Meanwhile, the harvesting sector faces challenges due to a shrinking contractor base. To tackle this, CANEGROWERS Innisfail and Cairns Region, along with MSF Sugar have formed a steering committee to strategise sustainable solutions.

These and other concerns formed the core of advocacy discussions following the 2024 Queensland election. High-level meetings included the Minister for Primary Industries Tony Perrett, and the DPI Director-General, Graeme Bolton. Mr Bolton also joined a shed meeting to speak directly with growers. Additionally, State Recovery Coordinator Andrew Cripps and SRA's new CEO Mick Bartlett were part of dialogues concerning disaster recovery and research priorities, respectively.

Representing CANEGROWERS Innisfail, Manager Debra Telford addressed attendees at Sugar Cubed 2025, and our representatives attended further key industry conferences, including those hosted by the Australian Society of Sugar Cane Technologists and WABCG.

Extension staff assist with a field trial at Miles Darveniza's farm in the Innisfail district

TULLY

Above average rainfall accompanied by an above average number of wet days impacted yield for the 2024 season. At season end, total cane through the rollers was 2,162,130 tonnes. Yield was down approximately 11 tonnes per hectare on the 10-year average, with final tonnes per hectare being 74.01.

Total area harvested was 29,282.04 hectares. In addition, there was approximately 650 hectares used for plant material and just over 13% fallow. Total area is slightly under the 35,500 hectares capped area for the Tully District.

The season average CCS of 12.57 was also down on the 10-year average.

Total timeframe for the season was 25.23 weeks. After wet weather and lost time due to cane supply was removed, the season exceeded the contractual Target Season End Date by 18 minutes. The 2024 season ended at 12.18 am on 11 December.

Season 2025 commenced on 3 June, 12 days prior to the traditional start date of 15 June. By then the mill had processed approximately 130,000 tonnes.

Triennial elections for local directors occurred in April 2025, with no ballot required. Two directors did not recontest positions, two new nominations were received making up the required number of directors for the Tully District constitution.

Director Joe Vasta did not renominate after 21 years of directorship at CANEGROWERS Tully. Joe first joined the Board in 2004 and was successful in being elected for seven terms.

Joe was Chair of Tully Canegrowers Co-operative Limited, which consists of four Mitre 10 hardware stores: Tully, Tully Trade, Mission Beach, and Cardwell.

Steven Crema did not nominate for the 2025 election, choosing to focus on further development of his farm. Steven first joined the Board in 2019 when negotiations were in progress for a new supply contract. This was a significant time when directors spent an enormous amount of time at the negotiating table.

CANEGROWERS Tully would like to take this opportunity to thank Joe and Steven for their contribution to the Tully cane industry and welcome the two new directors to CANEGROWERS Tully.

Don Colls, a grower from Lower Tully who is also involved in Tully Rotary and Tully Coast Guard. Andrew Apap, a grower close to the township of Tully and the Syndicate district. Andrew's family also grew bananas until recently, choosing to focus on cane farming and assisting their son Luke with contract planting in the Tully district.

The Tully Board consists of Bryce Macdonald, Jamie Dore, David Singh, Don Colls and Andrew Apap.

There was also a change in management for 2024, with Elisha La Fauci opting for a change in careers. CANEGROWERS Tully would like to take this opportunity to thank Elisha for her contribution to the Tully cane industry over the past couple of years.

In November, CANEGROWERS Tully welcomed Barry Dun as the new Manager of Business. Barry has an extensive insight into the sugarcane industry and is well known in the Tully district.

Tully directors meet monthly for board meetings, and on most occasions have industry related guests attend. For example, in 2024- 2025 the Board had deputations with QSL, STL, TSL, QRIDA, SRA, Cassowary Coast Regional Council and staff, Rates Advisory Groups, River Trust, Ministers from the State Government, Bio Security, National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and Workplace Health and Safety.

Tully district is represented at CANEGROWERS Policy Council and through Farm Inputs and Research committee and the Membership Reference Group.

CANEGROWERS Tully also assisted Tully Sugar Limited celebrate 100 years of continuous business in the Tully District. Celebrations included a book launch, Beyond the Banyan, gala dinner with 540 attendees, steam locomotive rides around the mill, car show, high tea with 250 attendees, cemetery tours and industry day. Celebrations lasted for seven days.

CANEGROWERS Tully would like to thank staff, members of Tully district, directors and industry partners for their contribution and support over the past twelve months.

HERBERT RIVER

The 2024 harvest season was significantly disrupted by a combination of adverse factors that reduced efficiency and affected crop quality. Prolonged wet weather, ongoing industrial disputes between the mill and its workforce, and persistent challenges with mill transport and operational reliability collectively caused major delays across the district. These disruptions placed considerable pressure on both growers and contractors.

CANEGROWERS Herbert River and the mill had initially agreed to commence crushing on 11 June, however, due to the mill's lack of readiness, crushing was delayed until 25 June. The late start, compounded by 553 hours of lost time from wet weather, industrial action, and recurring mill reliability issues, resulted in a drawn-out season that did not conclude until 19 December.

By season's end, 1,830 hectares of cane remained unharvested as standover, highlighting the severe operational setbacks experienced. District CCS also suffered, averaging 12.38, well below expectations.

In total, 3,840,886 tonnes of cane were harvested from 52,575 hectares, delivering an average district yield of 73.1 tonnes per hectare.

Mill performance remained a key area of concern, particularly within transport operations. Late bin deliveries, inconsistent communication regarding mill stops and maintenance schedules, and reduced loadings continued to frustrate growers and contractors. The lack of timely updates to harvester operators on known delivery delays further compounded inefficiencies and hampered planning throughout the season.

2024 marked the third year of CANEGROWERS Herbert River delivering the Major Grants Project.

The Grower Incentive Grants under this program are designed to deliver the dual benefits of improving water quality outcomes for the Great Barrier Reef lagoon while enhancing productivity and profitability for local growers.

The Board and management of CANEGROWERS Herbert River see participation in this program as essential to positioning the district as a leader in innovation and sustainability.

Across three rounds in 2024, the Major Grants Project distributed $1.7 million in funding, which, combined with grower co-investment, generated a total $3.7 million in economic contributions to the Herbert district.

The Smartcane BMP program continues to deliver meaningful outcomes for both growers and the environment. Completion of its three core modules ensures compliance with Queensland's reef regulations while also driving ongoing business improvements. Accredited growers are recognised as operating above the compliance threshold for reef protection.

Herbert River young growers visit to Brisbane

30 additional growers engaged in Smartcane BMP in 2024. At the time of reporting:

- 84% of cane growing businesses in the Herbert are registered and benchmarked
- 53% (152 businesses) have achieved full accreditation
- These figures reflect a total cane-growing area of 66,175 hectares.

Smartcane BMP has proven to be a practical, well supported initiative that provides growers with effective record-keeping tools and templates, helping streamline compliance while fostering continuous improvement across the industry.

In March 2024, the CANEGROWERS Herbert River Young Growers Branch embarked on a professional development trip to Brisbane. This offered young growers valuable exposure to industry research, sustainability initiatives, and opportunities for professional networking. The itinerary featured:

- **Queensland Cane Growers Organisation (QCGO) visit:** Participants were welcomed by CEO Dan Galligan and attended presentations from Matt Kealley, Burn Ashburner, Kate Reardon, and Michael Quirk, covering topics including farm inputs, research, environmental sustainability, reef science, and Smartcane BMP
- **Sugar Research Australia (SRA) Woodford:** Young growers undertook a guided tour of SRA's facilities to gain a deeper understanding of the role and value of cane research.
- **Rocky Point Mill and farm visits:** The group toured the mill and visited local farms to explore operational challenges and how growers are addressing them, including revenue diversification strategies.
- **Rocky Point Mulching Facility:** Participants were given a guided tour to observe sustainable practices in action.

The trip offered invaluable insights into sustainable farming, applied research, and industry best practices, contributing significantly to the professional development and knowledge of the next generation of cane growers.

Throughout 2024, Manager Frank Scardamaglia continued to provide growers with vital support across a wide range of farming and industry-related matters. This included assisting members with siding concerns and rationalisation processes, securing NHVR permits for oversize machinery and track harvesters, and liaising with Transport and Main Roads and local councils on road access permits, infrastructure, and road classifications to improve grower access and efficiency.

Frank also worked closely with members to address CCS and cut-to-crush discrepancies, resolve harvesting challenges, and progress broader advocacy efforts aimed at securing long-term improvements to the district's farming operations.

CANEGROWERS Herbert River farewelled two highly valued members of our organisation. After an extraordinary 28 years of dedicated service, long-term staff member Leona Gangemi departed, leaving behind a legacy of commitment and contribution. Her impact will be long remembered and deeply appreciated.

CANEGROWERS Herbert River also acknowledged the departure of Chris Bosworth, who stepped down from the board at the end of the last term. Chris had served as a director since 2013 and, most recently, as Chair for one term. Over more than a decade, his commitment to the board has been integral to guiding the organisation through key challenges and opportunities, and his contribution is recognised with sincere appreciation.

BURDEKIN

The 2024 season ran from 10 June 2024 to 18 January 2025, an extended 32 week crush. Start dates shifted due to Wilmar's EA dispute and strikes, compounded by nearly seven weeks of wet weather and ongoing mill performance issues. As a result, 2,611 ha of standover cane remained in the paddock, along with burnt cane that was condemned and dumped. Inkerman and Kalamia Mills finished before Christmas, but Invicta and Pioneer continued until the week ending 18 January 2025.

The crop was first estimated at 8.47 million tonnes, later revised to 8.2 million tonnes, with final throughput of 7.96 million tonnes. CCS began well above budget but fell after the mid-August rain, finishing at 13.95 (down from the 14.32 forecast). Average yield was 117.3 t/ha, producing 1,099,323 t of sugar for a sugar yield of 16.36 t/ha, reflecting the lower CCS.

- **Standover:** CBL CSA holders with involuntary standover received $8.20/t from Wilmar.
- **Mill performance:** Extended crushing triggered payments of $0.26/t (North Bank) and $0.07/t (South Bank).

In December 2024, CANEGROWERS Burdekin representatives mediated with Wilmar over a 2022 Notice of Dispute on equity management, cessation of crushing, and bin allocation at Inkerman Mill. A commercial settlement was reached, but similar issues occurred in 2024 and may prompt a further dispute.

Soon after the season ended, severe flooding from the 29 January 2025 tropical low hit Giru hard. CANEGROWERS Burdekin hosted a QRIDA Disaster Assistance Recovery Workshop on 18 March to outline available support.

Grower Development

- **Business Essentials Course in March:** Two-day training on cost of production, marketing, budgeting, bookkeeping and business planning.
- **Young Growers Tour during March:** Visits to Tully, Cairns and SRA Meringa Station, plus a presentation from pioneering fishing company Little Tuna.

The NHVR assumed cane haulage compliance from TMR, focusing on billet spillage and load restraint. Extra officers actively monitored overloaded bins. CANEGROWERS hosted a well attended local forum on 3 April with NHVR and Queensland WH&S.

CANEGROWERS Burdekin representatives attended the Sugar Cubed 2025 conference in Brisbane during April.

Members and staff, Rhonda Man, Margaret Linton, Judy Sgarbossa and Michelle Andrews, joined the Women in Sugar Herbert River study tour to Brisbane and Rocky Point during May.

Brothers in arms Tate and Lucas Koppen surveying the damage at the family's Giru cane farm

The 2025 CANEGROWERS triennial elections saw director Greg Rossato retire after three terms (to 30 April). Board positions increased from six to seven, welcoming Nic Pucciarmati (North Bank) and Glenn Pola (South Bank). Returning directors were Owen Menkens, Glenn Betteridge, Rian Swindley, Charles Papale and Steve Pilla.

- Glenn Betteridge became CANEGROWERS Burdekin Chair, Rian Swindley Deputy Chair.
- Owen Menkens was re-elected Chair of CANEGROWERS and Glenn Betteridge elected as a CANEGROWERS Director.

CANEGROWERS Burdekin AGM on 8 May 2025 featured presentations from Burdekin Cane Audit Services Ltd (BCAS) on the cane audit process and from Wilmar senior management on the 2025 season outlook.

The highlight of the year was the Burdekin's Sweetest School Competition, a CANEGROWERS Burdekin initiative with BPS, SRA, the Burdekin Shire Council, local schools and grower mentors.

Fourteen schools competed to grow sugarcane, with winners announced at the Australian Hand Cane Cutting Championship on 31 May 2025.

CANEGROWERS Burdekin continued strong advocacy on water policy – working with QCGO and QFF on the Burdekin Basin Water Plan Review, Sunwater CAC and the Lower Burdekin Rising Groundwater Project.

Young grower learning to plant seedlings

CANEGROWERS Burdekin's Water Committee met with Hon Ann Leahy MP, Minister for Local Government and Water, in Ayr on 25 May 2025.

Smartcane BMP participation now includes 334 growers benchmarked over 78,609 ha, with 92 growers accredited across 33,223 ha. CANEGROWERS Burdekin's free service assisting members with Farm Nitrogen and Phosphorus Budgets remains well supported.

The 2025 season began 3 June 2025 with a common start date across all four mills to encourage a November finish and reset the district's growing cycle. Progress has been steady, and an early finish is hoped for.

CANEGROWERS Burdekin thanks all members for their ongoing support and loyalty and remains committed to representing their interests.

PROSERPINE

In 2024, Proserpine Mill crushed 1.67 million tonnes of cane. While performance improved in the latter half of the season, early season industrial action and mill issues impacted on performance, before December rains ended the crush abruptly. Mill industrial action would eventually be settled on 3 September 2024. The mill closed on 14 December, leaving about 70,000 tonnes as standover.

Average CCS for the season was 13.83, marginally below the five-year average of 14.18. CCS dropped by over three units from mid-October to early December, reflecting the impact of a late close. Minor frost, flowering, and waterlogging also affected cane quality and ratoon growth.

Despite a change in mill management at the season end, off crop maintenance would continue to focus on factory availability and steam efficiency to hopefully improve crush rates for the following year.

Proserpine District Canegrowers Cooperative (CANEGROWERS Proserpine) continued to work on long-term sustainability projects for the district. This involved securing an agreement to release unallocated water under the Whitsunday Water Plan, which included support for licenses to build dams, with particular focus on the O'Connell and Andromache River areas. Efforts to reinstate the Myrtle Creek Sand Weir remained ongoing.

CANEGROWERS Proserpine also continued to represent growers on the Whitsunday Regional Council's Cane Land Working Group to address development and infrastructure challenges. This included the protection of cane areas and maintenance of roads, drains and culverts. Unfortunately, a few issues were ongoing such as loads limits being placed on Kelsey Creek Bridges which continued to affect input supplies and other transport requirements.

In partnership with CANEGROWERS, QFF and the Office of Industrial Relations (OIR), various training programs were

Two Haulout Driver training courses in May 2025 delivered 19 new workers to the harvest sector. Pictured are some of the course students with trainers

delivered, including Pilot/Escort Courses, Business Essentials, WHS, Transport and Compliance, and Fatigue Management workshops. The first harvester contractor meetings were also held in support of this vital but challenging sector.

Member services remained a priority, from bailing payments and lease agreements to STL transfers, compliance assistance, legal input (from CANEGROWERS) and business planning.

CANEGROWERS Proserpine also acted as a CANEGROWERS service provider for QRIDA Drought Preparedness Grants, and kept members informed on compliance requirements including NMP Budgets, Chemical Record audits and WHS legislation.

Cooperative rules were updated to meet ATO non-for-profit criteria, and adjustments to the Cane Analysis Program were submitted to Wilmar to improve stale cane provisions.

Events and engagement included the 2025 Pre-season meeting, BBQ and beers sessions, and the successful Whitsunday Show Cane event, which was well supported by sponsors and growers. After progressing the Young Farmers Trophy and Kids Cane events, further plans were made for inclusion of the Sweetest Schools program for launch in the following year.

Key personnel changes occurred through the year, with Emma Lewis appointed Executive Officer, Racheal de Koning as Insurance Broker, and Luke Valmadre joining the Board after Triennial Elections in April 2025.

CANEGROWERS Proserpine thank members for their support and participation in the events that took place during the year and look forward to a successful crush in the next.

MACKAY / PLANE CREEK

The 2024 crush again extended into the New Year, challenging productivity and profitability in Mackay and Plane Creek districts for the fourth consecutive year. Mackay sugar milling area had a 33 week crush of 4.85 million tonnes, ending 14 January. Season CCS was 13.2.

Wilmar Plane Creek had a highly delayed start due to industrial action and processed 1.31 million tonnes over 27 weeks to 3 January. Season CCS was 13.77.

A record amount of standover was left behind, some 700,000 tonnes in Mackay, and 150,000t in Plane Creek.

Equity was a major concern as Marian Mill suppliers slipped further and further behind as the season wore on.

Mill reliability was the critical influencing factor in 2024's long crush, with issues in particular at Marian and Plane Creek mills. It was positive to see Mackay Sugar's $112M spend during the maintenance season, and that seems to have had some influence on a better beginning to the 2025 harvest.

Grower representatives have continued a vocal stance in the media and in harvest management meetings on key issues slowing harvest. As the 2025 harvest began in June, it was clear that the primary concern in both milling areas was around cane transport and logistics, and strong representations have been made on growers' behalf, including collaborating to develop strategies to improve this situation.

Mapping and IT issues plagued the Mackay milling area across the 2025 harvest's first 30%, creating issues around group and mill equity.

The 2025 triennial election period brought on a transition in leadership at Mackay Canegrowers Ltd (CANEGROWER Mackay), with Joseph Borg voted Chairman by the MCL Board. Brett Leach was voted Deputy Chair.

Joseph remains Chair of Mackay Area Committee and brings to the Chairmanship experience gained from seven years on the CANEGROWERS Mackay board, including three as Deputy Chair, and representation on CANEGROWERS Policy Council and Board, including as Chair of the Trade and Economics Committee in the previous term.

Mr Borg is currently a Central Region representative on the CANEGROWERS Board. Outside of CANEGROWERS, Mr Borg is also Chair of Pioneer Valley Water.

Kevin Borg had served as CANEGROWERS Mackay Chairman for 12 years, the longest-serving Chair since 1960. He has presided over an era of strong communication and forthright representation through a challenging period for the sugarcane industry as it has grappled with issues such as the marketing debate and the introduction of the *Sugar Industry Code of Conduct*, the introduction of extended Reef regulations, mooted changes to Bulk Sugar Terminal Operation, and a period of sustained poor mill performance.

Mr Borg remains Chairman of Plane Creek Area Committee, representing that area at Policy Council and on the CANEGROWERS Board. CANEGROWERS Mackay thank Kevin for his continued service to growers of the region, and the industry.

For the 2024 season, Mackay Sugar area members accounted for 77.15% of cane tonnage processed. In Plane Creek 84.24% of cane processed was supplied by CANEGROWERS members.

The district offices free member service assisting leasing arrangements continues to prove a valued offering, with Grower Services supporting 126 new, extension and expiring leases, and 28 notifications of changes in farm details. Training and payroll services continue to be important elements of member offerings.

Over 2024–25, CANEGROWERS Mackay has focussed on core areas like harvest management and equity, strategic advocacy and engagement across community, the regional supply chain and with all levels of government, and with industry issues including active harvest labour programs.

CANEGROWERS Mackay continue to engage with regional economic development, particularly around the development of markets and supply chain for sugarcane based bio-commodities and continue to argue for a return for growers on any value add to cane.

BUNDABERG

During the 2024–25 financial year, Bundaberg CANEGROWERS staff and directors continued their focus of being proudly member focused and farmer biased. They provided representation, leadership and services while promoting unity in the interests of growers.

Bundaberg CANEGROWERS resourced a strong advocacy campaign targeting sustainable electricity pricing, transport, biosecurity, cane firing, reef regulations, right to farm and water sustainability issues. Our leadership ensured that federal, state and local politicians were aware of the impacts of policy and red tape on our members, and of growers' concerns in relation to these and other issues.

This advocacy delivered tangible outcomes, including the announcement of new electricity time of use tariffs, the extension of the Sunwater electricity cost pass through trial, and greater transparency on matters related to water security and the Paradise Dam rebuild.

Bundaberg CANEGROWERS assisted individual growers to complete Energy Audits and implement recommendations, continued to help with N and P Budgets, and supported growers through the Reef Compliance Audit process to ensure adherence to Reef Regulation requirements.

Manager, Tanya Howard and Chair, Mark Pressler

Bundaberg CANEGROWERS also continued its pursuit of reversing the Environmental Protection (Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019, which included the Burnett Mary region in the "Reef Regulation" process for the first time in 2019. This inclusion is scientifically unjustifiable, as our river systems cannot impact the reef, which, at its southernmost point, lies at least 80 kilometres to the north-east, and prevailing ocean currents predominantly flow south, not north.

Through SmartAg Queensland, farmers can access training to help attract, train and retain a skilled and diverse workforce. This funding enabled members to undertake subsidised programs, including 28 Forklift course participants, 24 Chemical Safety Training participants and 21 Pilot/Escort course participants.

CANEGROWERS Brisbane staff were welcomed to the district for an industry familiarisation tour that included an on-farm talk by Mark Pressler, a visit to the Bundaberg Sugar Services Limited One-eye Sett shadehouse facility, and a tour of Millaquin Mill, including the cane analysis lab and Bundaberg Port Sugar Terminal.

Bundaberg CANEGROWERS holds representation on the Coastal Burnett Groundwater Management Area Advisory Committee and continues to provide secretarial support to the organisation. The committee has provided feedback on the meter revalidation process and potential changes from Area B licence holders to Area B allocations.

Bundaberg CANEGROWERS welcomed the decision by the Crisafulli Government to reject Fox Resources' Mineral Development Licence (MDL) 3040 application, after concerns were raised about potential impacts of a future coal mine on the region's agricultural industry, water resources, environmental values, liveability and tourism. Bundaberg CANEGROWERS remain opposed to any mining activity on agricultural land.

Bundaberg CANEGROWERS maintains a full contingent of auditors providing complete audit coverage at Millaquin Mill to ensure growers receive a fair deal. In 2024 growers received $55.00 + GST per tonne of trash supplied to Oreco, and assistance continues to ensure payments and administration of the Oreco contract proceed as arranged.

Ray Goodwin provides insurance advice to growers to ensure they are adequately covered and receiving value for money. Glenn Harris, local QSL Grower Relationship Officer, is available to assist with sugar marketing and QSL Direct and is in the region most Mondays and Wednesdays.

Bundaberg CANEGROWERS continues to build relationships with Bundaberg Sugar Services Ltd, Bundaberg Regional Irrigators Group, Queensland Sugar Ltd, Bundaberg Ag-Food & Fibre Alliance Ltd, the Grain in Cane Cooperative and Bundaberg Regional Council to create synergy and minimise duplication.

CANEGROWERS staff toured the Bundaberg district in Aug 2024

The 2024 season crop estimate was 1,228,436 tonnes. Millaquin Mill commenced the pre-crush of non-relative plantation cane on Monday 21 May 2024, processing 72,902.84 tonnes, followed by the commencement of core-season cane on Monday 10 June 2024.

A record throughput was achieved with a total of 1,205,229.24 tonnes crushed for the 2024 season, with a season average CCS of 13.59. Millaquin Mill ceased crushing operations on Wednesday 11 December 2024.

ISIS

The 2024 season presented significant challenges and opportunities for the district, with our organisation providing comprehensive support to growers while navigating unprecedented mill reliability issues and advancing key policy advocacy initiatives.

The season proved exceptionally difficult, as Isis Mill experienced repeated breakdowns and significant lost time during the peak CCS window. Despite these setbacks, the mill crushed 1.256 million tonnes with a season average CCS of 13.41. CANEGROWERS Isis continued to review the allocation processes for delayed cane and worked closely with the Auditor throughout the season.

Delivering on our motto, *"your business is our business"*, CANNEGROWERS Isis assisted growers on many fronts. CANEGROWERS Isis kept members regularly informed of industry developments, compared electricity tariffs, and supported water meter revalidations. CANEGROWERS Isis monitored and communicated fire restrictions, obtained seasonal fire permits, and managed sugarcane trash supply contracts and payments. CANEGROWERS Isis also helped members meet reef compliance audit requirements and connected them with subsidised training opportunities.

CANEGROWERS Isis participated in a new mill led alliance spanning the Isis and Maryborough districts, aimed at increasing mill throughput to 1.5 million tonnes.

A comprehensive review and negotiation of our Cane Supply Agreement (CSA) was completed. The CSA working group met extensively throughout the year, delivering significant improvements to the agreement. CANEGROWERS Isis also helped develop new Group Harvesting Equity Principles and Processes to support Isis Mill's transition to an external contractor for cane supply logistics management.

CANEGROWERS Isis maintained strong advocacy across local issues, successfully engaging with Bundaberg Regional Council on agricultural rating equity and Right to Farm concerns. This resulted in the council's commitment to develop protective policies and establish an Agriculture Committee.

Engagement extended to broader industry matters, including active participation in the Burnett Basin Water Plan review, the QCA irrigation-pricing review, and ongoing electricity-pricing advocacy. CANEGROWERS Isis' Federal Election Strategy featured systematic engagement with candidates on key regional issues such as Paradise Dam rebuild funding and workforce constraints.

The year concluded with significant organisational change and farewelled long serving Chair Mark Mammino, who retired after 27 years of dedicated service to CANEGROWERS Isis.

Triennial elections brought substantial board renewal, welcoming new director Christopher Russo alongside continuing directors Susan Bengtson, Simon Ricciardi and Letitia Taylor. Peter McLennan was elected Chair and Simon Ricciardi Deputy Chair, providing fresh leadership while ensuring continued strong representation and advocacy for members.

MARYBOROUGH

2024 highlighted just how different the weather was compared with 2023. CANEGROWERS Maryborough recorded a significant increase in crop size, with an expected 445,000-tonne crop almost completed. Unfortunately, not all the cane was harvested, and approximately 20,000 tonnes or more became stand-over into 2025, and reached the end of a 27 week season, which is a little longer than ideal.

Maryborough field day

It has been a challenging year for maintaining momentum, with extensive wet weather delays and transport issues frequently affecting operations.

The relationship with the mill developed positively and progressively during the year, setting a constructive tone for the future. While this does not erase the frustrations of the current season, several initiatives are already in view:

- Connecting trucks to harvest groups
- Coordinating harvesters in larger geographic groupings to improve service delivery
- Progress towards an upgraded unloading facility at the mill

As mentioned last year, we explored a joint operation with CANEGROWERS Isis. CANEGROWERS Maryborough can now confirm that a joint Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed with Isis CANEGROWERS to appropriately organize these discussion.

Early 2025 was an election year for CANEGROWERS boards across the state, and a vote was required in our district, with six candidates standing for five board positions. The outcome saw the return of all standing representatives.

Productivity Services successfully established a local seed cane plot this year, with first distribution scheduled for September 2025. This initiative will help reinvigorate cane varieties in the district.

The district bus tour was also reinstated in March, drawing strong participation.

ROCKY POINT

Rocky Point endured another difficult harvest during the 2024–25 season, plagued by mill/cogen issues and persistent wet weather. There was a good crop of one-year-old cane, and most of the two-year-old cane showed consistent growth. CANEGROWERS Rocky Point pushed for a June start, but the mill finally began crushing on 31 July 2024.

From early November the wet weather was relentless. The mill crushed its last day on 10 December and, after a further six days of rain, terminated the 2024 season on 16 December with only 56% of the estimated crop harvested. In the last six weeks of the season, only 14 days of crushing were completed.

Fortunately, a high sugar price provided cash flow to ease the financial pressures of running a farming business.

Growers also received their share of the US quota, which further helped the financial situation.

The crop estimate for the 2025 season is 365,000 tonnes, with more than half classified as stand over cane. Due to the ongoing wet weather, the one-year-old cane has suffered and will not perform as well as expected.

CANEGROWERS Rocky Point's main productivity focus is on RSD, as about 30% of the crop is potentially infected. An SRA harvester steriliser unit was fitted to a John Deere 3510 before the start of the 2024 season. Further work will continue through 2025-26 to assess whether the steriliser stops the transmission of RSD between blocks.

If effective, the plan to roll out more units across the harvesting contractors. CANEGROWERS Rocky Point also continue to run grower workshops to keep growers up to date with the latest products.

CANEGROWERS Rocky Point's Service Agreement with SRA will expire on 30 June 2025, and will seek a renewal early in the new financial year.

The ongoing wet weather during 2024–25 has caused severe flooding across the district.

A major flood in early March 2025 reached only 0.4 m below the 1974 flood level. CANEGROWERS Rocky Point has continually pressed Gold Coast City Council to upgrade and maintain the flood-mitigation scheme. This remains an ongoing battle, as increasing upstream development has placed additional pressure on existing drainage infrastructure, and the lack of Council action is causing further frustration and losses for affected growers.

CANEGROWERS Rocky Point has an agreement with the Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce (FAST) for the ongoing supply of fire ant bait to distribute to growers for ground treatment. After the March 2025 flood, fire ant numbers increased dramatically due to ants "rafting" into the district. Recently, our directors negotiated an aerial treatment of the district to suppress the fire ants, expected to occur in early August 2025.

In March 2025, four Rocky Point young growers travelled to Townsville to connect with other young farmers from the Herbert, Burdekin, Mossman and Tablelands regions. They visited former Rocky Point young growers in the Burdekin and then travelled together to Cairns, learning about modern farming systems and the latest in harvesting, including the John Deere double row harvester.

They also visited the SRA breeding facility at Meringa and a business called Little Tuna, run by a young local couple. The trip concluded at the Atherton Tablelands with a unique look at the Bray operation. All participants came away with new ideas and an appreciation of how different each area is, yet all share similar challenges.

CANEGROWERS BOARD

Owen Menkens
Chairman

Mark Mammino
Senior Vice Chairman

Joseph Marano
Vice Chairman

Michelle Fischer
QCGO Board

Joseph Borg
QCGO Board

Kevin Borg
QCGO Board

Chris Bosworth
QCGO Board

Bryce MacDonald
QCGO Board

Term: May 2022-25

CANEGROWERS POLICY COUNCIL

Mossman
Matthew Watson

Tableland
Claude Santucci

Cairns Region
Stephen Calcagno

Innisfail
Joseph Marano

Tully
Bryce Macdonald

Herbert River
Chris Bosworth and Steven Marbelli

Burdekin
Owen Menkens, Greg Rossato, Steve Pilla and Glenn Betteridge

Proserpine
Glenn Clarke

Mackay
Kevin Borg,
Greg Plath,
Joseph Borg and
Bill MacDonald

Bundaberg
Mark Pressler

Isis
Mark Mammino

Rocky Point
Michelle Fischer

Brisbane
Dan Galligan, CEO and Jodie Mittelheuser, CFO.

Term: May 2022-25

Back row L-R: *Greg Plath, Steven Marbelli, Chris Bosworth, Matthew Watson, Bryce Macdonald, Bill MacDonald, Glenn Betteridge, Glenn Clarke, Neil Maitland (Cairns Region delegate on behalf of Stephen Calcagno), Claude Santucci, Greg Rossato, Steve Pilla*

Front row L-R: *Kevin Borg, Jodie Mittelheuser, CFO, Dan Galligan, CEO, Joseph Marano, Owen Menkens, Mark Mammino, Michelle Fischer, Joseph Borg, Mark Pressler*

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CANEGROWERS

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