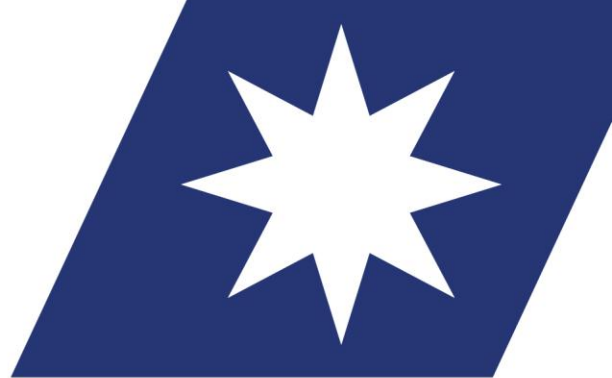


**NICK DAMETTO**

Katter's Australian Party

**Member for Hinchinbrook**



## MEDIA RELEASE

24/7/2018

### Green tape stifles cane farmers

HINCHINBROOK MP Nick Dametto has called on the State Government to slash green tape and unnecessary regulatory charges in a bid to stop cane farmers walking off their land.

With the world sugar trading price below the cost of production at \$334 a tonne, Mr Dametto said it was time government gave farmers a break from the increasing costs of electricity and overzealous environmental regulations.

"Farmers in my electorate, and across the North, have to put up with everything from the absurdly high cost of power and insurance to extreme environmental regulations that curtail their ability to grow their crops in a cost-effective way.

"Given the world sugar trading price is in a slump, governments at all levels need to look at how they can best support our cane farmers through these tough times.

"I know the State Government could act tomorrow to alleviate some of the issues and potentially help save farms in Hinchinbrook from total financial ruin."

Australian Cane Farmers Association Herbert Region director Carol Mackee said obscenely high insurance and council rates only added to the burden of the fixed costs of production for planting (fuel, harvesting and fertiliser) that were set to top \$869 per tonne this year.

"For example, for a property just under 239ha, one farmer has to pay \$37,000 in rates before he farms. This is obscene," she said.

"Stamp duty comes to mind from a government perspective, as well as the burden of rules, regulations and paperwork which is now over the top."

Mrs Mackee said ongoing fees and charges from banks only worsened the situation, with some loans requiring the interest component to be met along with the principal.

"Farmers haven't been able to replace equipment and struggle to buy a new tractor or implements. They are also struggling to pay for repairs," she said.

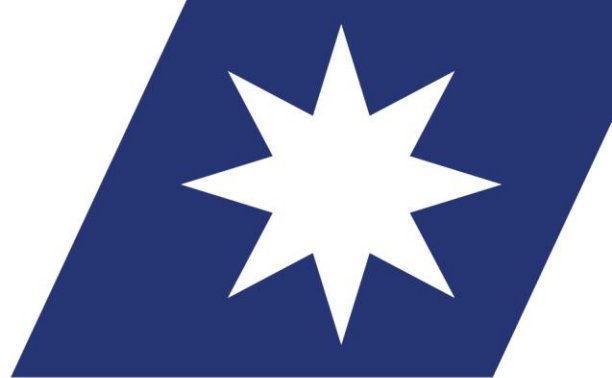
Canegrowers Herbert River manager Peter Sheedy said issues hurting the industry at a State level were Labor's destructive vegetation management laws, power prices and excessive reef regulations.

"The most recent changes to the vegetation management laws are seen as completely unnecessary and restrictive on the agricultural industry," he said.

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"Power prices have also risen enormously and contribute 47 per cent of the revenue collected to State coffers. An immediate reduction in power prices is well and truly justified and will have a greater positive impact on irrigated rather than rain fed producers."

Mr Sheedy said the State Government's desire to impose minimum reef environmental standards through regulation was stifling innovation, as opposed to the Federal Government's Reef Rescue incentive grants scheme which encouraged co-investment by producers in improved farming practices with modern equipment.

However, Mr Sheedy said the State-Government funded Smartcane BMP program, which encourages self-management, was proving popular amongst cane farmers in the Herbert River district.

"We have some 313 grower businesses registered with 52,152 hectares benchmarked or 78 per cent out of 67,000 hectares under cane production," he said.

"There are 54 businesses fully accredited representing 14,309 hectares or 21 per cent of the total cane area. Full accreditation involves a rigorous process of record keeping covering best practices."

Mr Dametto said farmers knew how to best care for their land.

"At a time when our sugar industry is suffering financially, the State Government should be a help, not a hindrance," he said.

"I have every confidence our cane farmers can bounce back from this slump but they need that regulatory burden lifted before it's too late."

—ENDS—

*Caption:*

*Hinchinbrook MP Nick Dametto is calling on the State Government to slash green tape and unnecessary charges in a bid to stop cane farmers walking off their land.*

### Media Enquiries

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