

MEDIA RELEASE

Sugar millers welcome Mackay Regional Council decision to protect the cane supply

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The Australian Sugar Milling Council (ASMC) welcomes the decision by the Mackay Regional Council to protect land under cane from being converted into industrial land, as proposed by Edify Energy.

“The Sugar Industry supports more than 20,000 jobs and \$4.4 billion in economic activity across regional Queensland community – to be able to provide this value we need to have land under cane, it is a very simple calculation”, said Mr. Ash Salardini, CEO of the Australian Sugar Milling Council.

The proposal for battery infrastructure to be installed on prime agricultural land in the Mackay region is concerning to the broader sugar milling sector, putting needless pressure on cane supply.

“There are so many opportunities for the milling sector, including in ensuring Queensland has an affordable and reliable source of power through the energy transition. To do this, we need more sugarcane not less.”

“In addition to sugar, we can potentially provide sustainable aviation fuel that would meet 10% of the demand for domestic aviation fuel, or install one gigawatt of renewable electricity through cogeneration capacity that is the equivalent to powering over 800,000 Queensland homes.”

Carl Morton, CEO of Mackay Sugar Limited, noted the need to balance the needs of all industries in the Mackay region to ensure Mackay is a vibrant and economically sustainable region in the coming decades.

“We are a major jobs and economic contributor in the Mackay region, and fundamentally we need a reliable supply of cane. Even losing small percentages of supply puts our viability under stress.”

“We are not opposed to renewable energy, but we need to get smarter about our land-use planning – we can’t create a new industry by displacing existing industries.”

“What is frustrating is that this debate should not be seen as a zero-sum game. There is an abundant amount of industrial land available in our region that is close to transmission lines and substations that are ideal for renewable energy infrastructure”, concluded Mr Morton.

The ASMC has an ambitious target to grow the supply of cane to 34 million tonnes (currently 30 million tonnes) and welcomes this decision to protect and maintain cane supply in the Mackay region. For more details see the ASMC sector priorities at: <https://asmc.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/STATE-ELECTION-PRIORITIES-DOCUMENT-Final.pdf>

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About the Australian Sugar Milling Council: *The Australian Sugar Milling Council is the peak industry body for the Australian sugar milling sector – contributing \$4.4 billion annually to the Australian economy and supporting more than 20,000 jobs. The ASMC works with its members, industry stakeholders, other industry representatives and government to develop and promote policies that enhance the sustainability, viability and economic contribution of the sugar industry in Australia.*