

Annual Report

Financial Statements

1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015

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Chairman's Report

This report covers the period from 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015. During this time, the board of directors have acted in a thoroughly professional manner and have always acted in the best interest of members. They should be commended for this.

Directors and Board Meetings

Six regular board meetings and one special meeting of directors were held during this period. Directors also met on numerous other occasions to ensure that the business of the board was attended to. All directors are thanked for the effort produced, and the time taken in performing their duties.

Board Structure

The current board consists of the following directors:

Grower-elected Directors - Mr CJ Hesp (Chairman), Mr BG Davies, Mr PA McDonnell

Wilmar-appointed Directors - Mr PL Larsen, Mr LW Danello, Mr IR Davies

Company Secretary - Mr ME Rickards

Management and Staff

On behalf of the board, I thank Rob Milla (Manager) and Mark Rickards (Commercial Manager) who have ensured that the management of the business has run smoothly throughout the financial year.

Rob Milla has proven to be a very capable manager and has remained focussed on the core business of pest & disease whilst creating further opportunities in differing extension duties. Together with Mark Rickards, the management team has been supported by a very capable and committed group of permanent field staff and agronomists. Rob utilises his technical knowledge to ensure the agronomy side of the business is running efficiently, while Mark as the Commercial Manager assists in overseeing the field staff duties.

Thanks goes to the committed team of field staff and agronomists. Ray Hildebrandt, Dave Paine, Wayne Squires, Kristine Grasso, Joe Savorgnan and Ashley Wheeler were our reliable field officers during this reporting period and have conducted themselves admirably at all times. Joe and Wayne have since left the organisation to pursue other opportunities and Kristine has become a mother for the first time and is on maternity leave. We wish them all well in the future. Ashley Wheeler replaced Joe as field officer during this term and has proven to be very committed to her role.

On the agronomy side, Marian Davis, Tiffany Hunt and Terry Granshaw have all joined the ranks of BPS during this period and the directors, management and other staff are all very pleased with the contribution they are making to the business.

Brendan Montafia also joined BPS in January 2015 to become the very first trainee agronomist. This initiative of the board has been well received and BPS hope to continue supporting local youth in gaining tertiary qualifications in agronomy. Our hope is that these graduates stay in the district to benefit all our members with sound, home grown agronomic advice.

Strategy & Direction

In regards to strategy and direction going forward, the board of BPS recognise that this organisation must play an ever increasing role in the delivery of extension services to growers. As other industry bodies drop out of this space, we at BPS have to take action. SRA have become more committed to research and development and now look toward the productivity boards to provide extension support. Also, various other governmental departments and other bodies including CANEGROWERS Queensland, NQ Dry Tropics, Wetland Care Australia, DAF and DNRM are looking to partner up with productivity boards across the state to organise and complete a variety of funded project activities. Because we have local knowledge and foster strong relationships with sugar industry stakeholders, these organisations realise that BPS forms an ideal link between themselves and growers.

Last year I spoke of the adoption of a new strategic plan for years 2015 – 2017, that will focus on increasing the level of grower support around the key areas of approved seed cane distribution and pest and disease advice as well as expanding the emphasis on delivery of extension and agronomic services to our valued BPS members. This plan is now in place and our goal remains to increase the productivity of each individual grower to a point where the whole district is capable of producing around 9 million tonnes of cane on a regular basis. The district's 2014 harvest was just short of 8 million tonnes and the current 2015 harvest should eclipse that total by 300 000 tonnes. There is another 700 000 tonnes to make up by end of crushing 2017. To put this in prospective, that is a 4% increase each year for the next 2 years.

There are obstacles in the way and the board is fully aware of these. Water restrictions and a low price for sugar loom as the principal threats to achieving our goal. I ask all growers not to give up hope. Circumstances will change. They always do. It will rain again and the price will eventually go back up. Growing sugarcane is a long term proposition and now, more than ever, our members should seek out assistance from BPS to ensure they are in a position to take advantage when better times return.

Projects

BPS continue to involve themselves in government funded projects that are relevant to the sustainability of Burdekin growers These include Smartcane BMP, NEMO (nitrogen, soil amelioration & water quality), Wetlands Care Australia – Barratta Catchment Project, Rural Water Use Efficiency-Irrigation Futures, Reef Programme and Grower Group Innovation Project-Harvesting Best practice. Growers may question the validity of our involvement in some of these projects, but be assured that our input is a necessary step in maintaining a viable local industry and furthermore, our participation can be regarded as insurance against the looming threat of governmental over regulation, particularly where the Great Barrier Reef is concerned. The BPS board and management have always made sure that any external projects align with the strategic plan and ultimately improve productivity, profitability and sustainability.

Plot Holders

I would like to thank all plot owners and plot managers for their contribution throughout the year. Approved seed cane is one of the most important components of a sustainable sugar cane industry. Control of disease is of paramount importance and can never be understated. BPS enjoys a great relationship with all the collectives and growers who allow seed cane production on their land. The collectives continue to give generous support to BPS in this regard and in all other facets of the operation.

Membership Fees & Funding

BPS membership fees were 7 cents/tonne for all members during 2014-2015 and will remain at the same level in the current financial year. We have been able to deliver increased services whilst maintaining the levy at this rate. The board are very mindful of economic difficulties that the industry will be facing in the immediate future so any increase in the levy is highly unlikely in the medium term. Our primary focus will remain to improve the profitability of our members by providing quality services and sound agronomic advice. We will continue to seek project funding to supplement the income stream.

Buildings & Infrastructure

During the 2014-2015 financial year, capital improvements have included the construction of a new weighbridge at the Giru plot, ongoing upgrade of computer equipment, one extra vehicle to the fleet and commencement of the extension to the office at 210 Old Clare Rd.

The building extension has now been completed. There was some conjecture about its purpose, but I can assure members that the building was necessary to accommodate 2 new offices from the agronomy team so that they can conduct business with growers and other stakeholders in a private manner. Also, we now have a much larger meeting and training room that has been used regularly to conduct grower and industry meetings and training exercises of up to 20 participants.

A well-managed maintenance program of buildings and equipment will continue to ensure that BPS can provide services to its members in an effective and professional manner.

Summary

The 2014 season saw a reasonable improvement in overall tonnage. The early finish to the 2014 crushing definitely set the district up for a more promising 2015 season. If the present crushing rate continues, with good weather, we will see another early finish which will contribute further to productivity in 2016.

BPS are here to help control pest and disease and to assist members to improve their productivity. I urge all members to take advantage of the services available.

Chris Hesp
Chairman
31st July, 2014.

Manager's Report

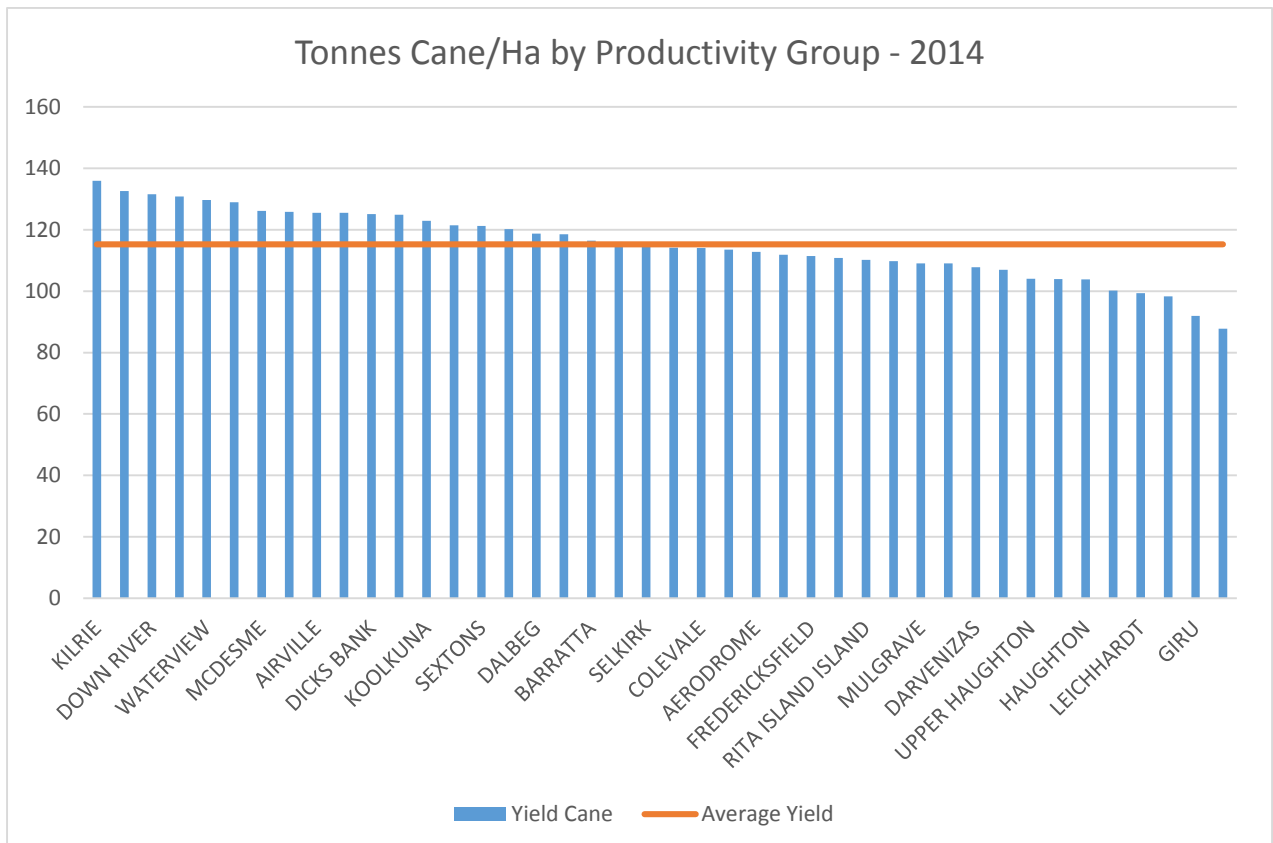
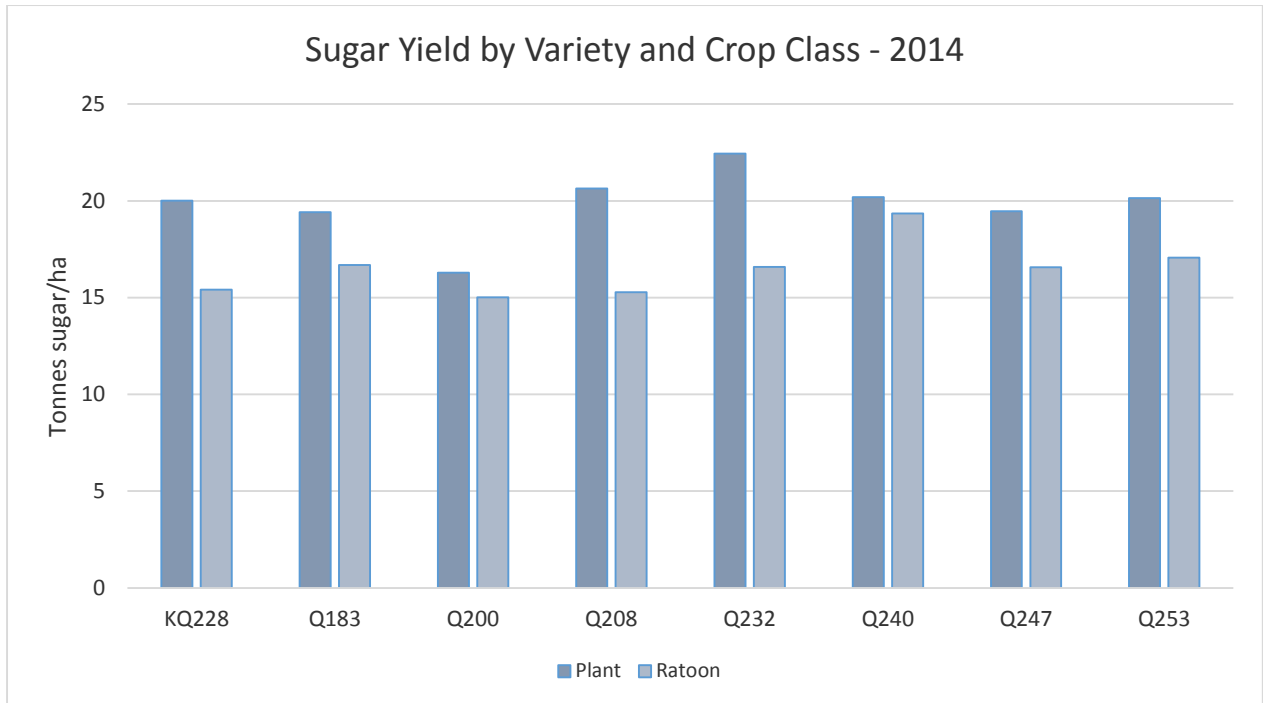
The business of BPS is evolving to meet the needs of its members. Pest and disease forms our core business and we have increased activities to minimise risk of pest and disease and maximise productivity and profitability. In addition, BPS has expanded extension capacity as part of core business to address industry needs that fit within our strategic plan. Much of these extension activities have been funded from sources other than grower levies due to the fact that government and other funding organisations see grower engagement and technical extension support as a critical part of our industry.

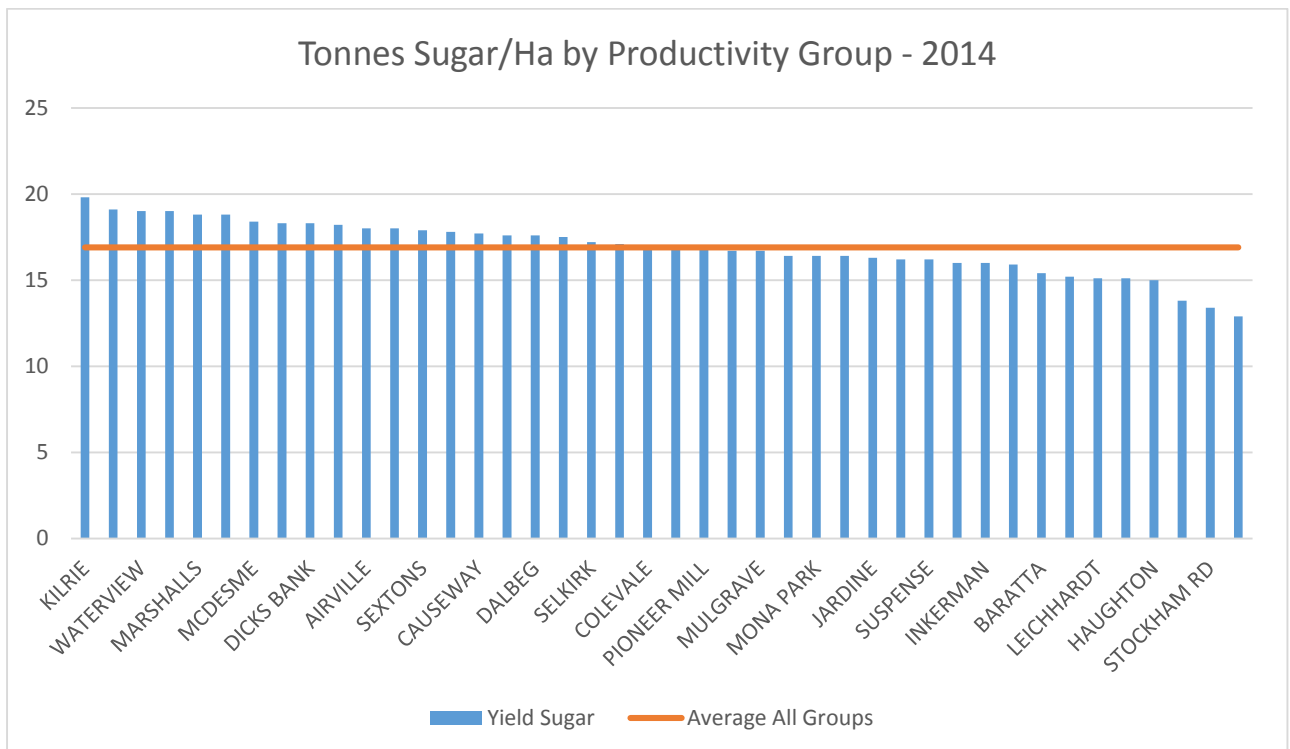
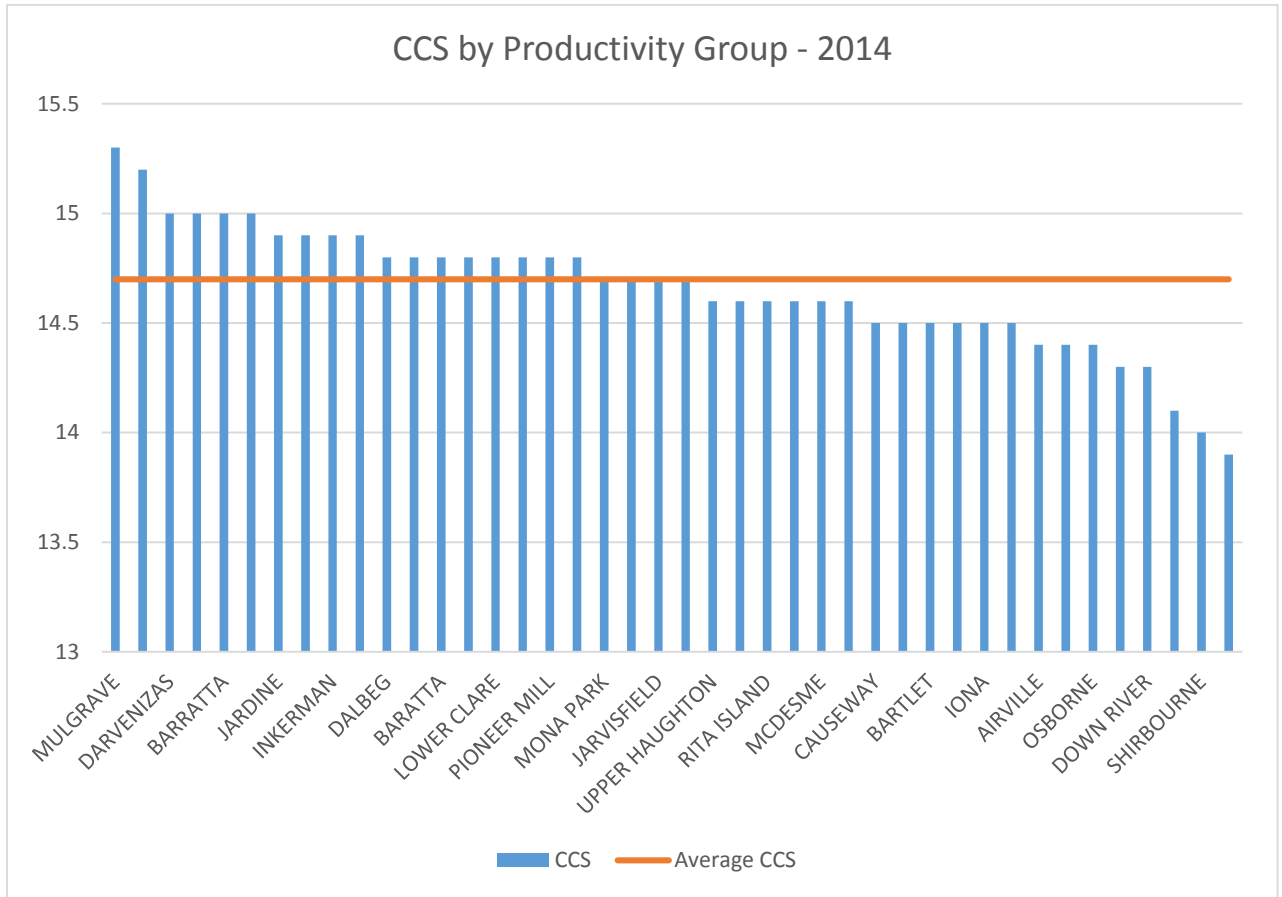
Record sales of approved seed cane were achieved during the reporting period and BPS encourages all its members to continue to regularly purchase approved seed cane as part of their farming system. Regular use of approved seed cane becomes a more important issue than in previous years since results from our RSD (Ratoon Stunting Disease) survey in early 2014 detected some presence of RSD bacteria. Field staff conducted many plant source inspections across the region to ensure that growers are selecting suitable planting material. Members are urged to use this service as variety selection and use of suitable approved seed cane is a cornerstone of minimising pest and disease risk on farm.

BPS engaged with the Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines who have provided funding to employ an extension officer to conduct trial and demonstration work around timing and efficiency of nitrogen fertiliser, as well as use of soil ameliorants (lime and gypsum) to improve soil condition and productivity. BPS also has partnered with Queensland CANEGROWERS to assist growers to be involved in the Smartcane BMP program which is critical for our industry. Early 2015 also saw BPS' first trainee agronomist being appointed – this position was created as many growers and industry people saw a gap in young and passionate people becoming involved in agriculture. The trainee will first gain exposure to the approved seed distribution part of the business and basic pest and disease services, and over time will become more involved in externally funded project activities to deliver more specific information to our members around all aspects of cane production.

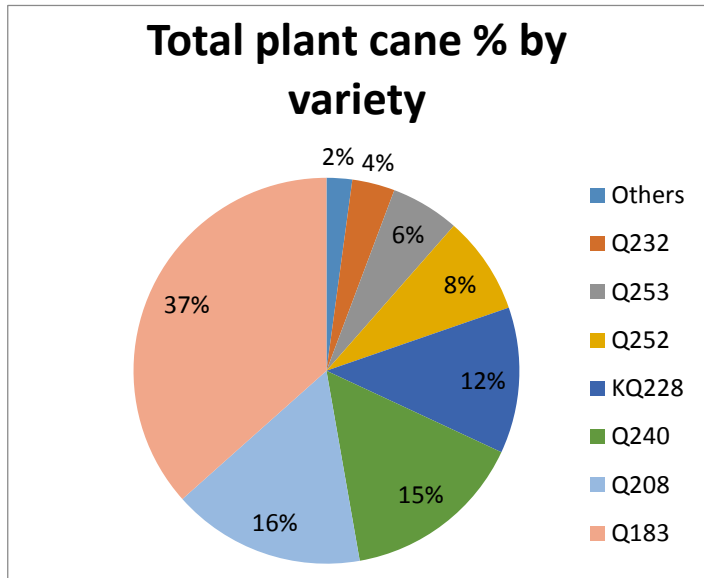
Productivity Results From 2014 Season

The following graphs are a summary of variety and productivity data from the 2014 season, data supplied by Wilmar.



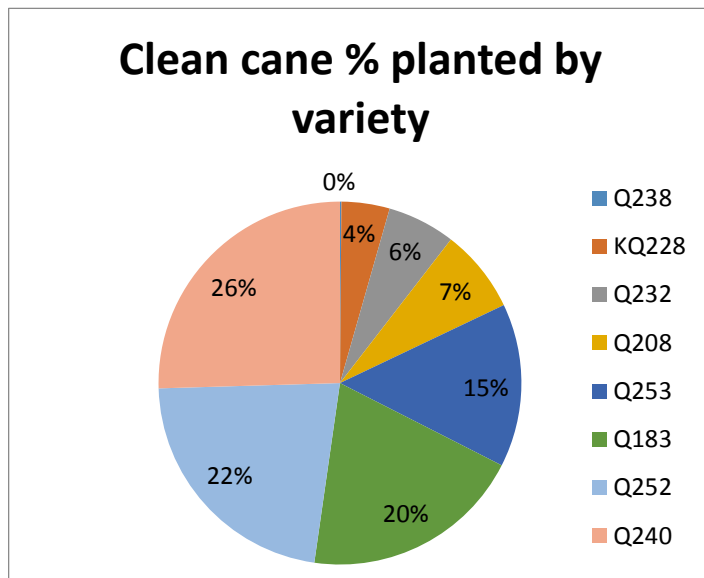


Area and Percentage of Plant Cane 2014



Variety	Area Planted (ha)
Q177	5
Q238	22
Tellus	31
Q247	57
Q133	74
Q200	235
Q232	706
Q253	1136
Q252	1624
KQ228	2417
Q240	3022
Q208	3196
Q183	7224

Area and Percentage of Approved Seed Cane 2014



Variety	Area Planted (ha)
Q238	5
KQ228	168
Q232	237
Q208	292
Q253	570
Q183	774
Q252	872
Q240	997

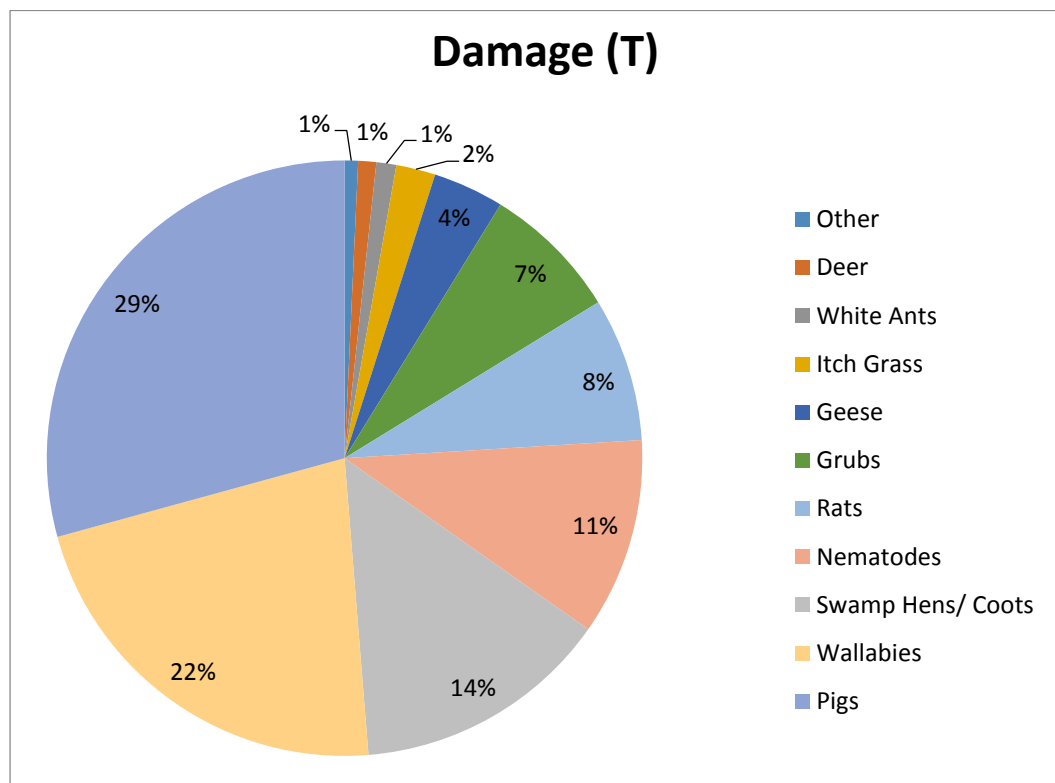
Approved Seed Cane

Sales of approved seed cane increased by 34% in 2014 to over 6000 tonnes for the first time. This is very pleasing as regular use of approved seed cane remains a basic principle in managing disease and improving productivity.

Mill Area	Plot	No. of growers	Tonnes sold	Total Tonnes Mill Area
P & K	Whitson's	151	2439	2439
Inkerman	Klaka Rd	145	1876	1876
Invicta	Giru (Lyon)	44	712	1924
	Millaroo (Cervoni)	12	132	
	Clare (Rapisarda)	12	587	
	Brock Rd (JJB)	26	493	
Total		390		6239

Pests

Pest damage results are shown below. , This data is compiled from data collected by BPS Field Officers from each grower during collection of crop data. In terms of financial impact across the region, our two most damaging pests are pigs and wallabies. The graph shows percentage of total tonnes damaged by each pest.



Pest	Damage (T)	Sugar Price (\$/T)	Damage (\$)	Affected Area (ha)
Moth Borer	30	40	1200	23
Cockatoo	50	40	2000	197
Wire worm	150	40	6000	13
Soldier fly	200	40	8000	5.6
Weevil Borer	250	40	10000	75
Deer	910	40	36400	586
White Ants	1007	40	40280	1089
Itch Grass	1989	40	79560	505
Geese	3592	40	143680	6412
Grubs	6950	40	278000	937
Rats	7265	40	290600	12543
Nematodes	9985	40	399400	595
Swamp Hens/ Coots	13026	40	521040	14168
Wallabies	20523	40	820920	17395
Pigs	27268	40	1090720	17412
TOTAL	93195		\$3727800	71955.6

Nematodes

Various species of nematodes are present in all soils. Root Knot Nematodes continue to persist in many of the lighter soils in the region. BPS can collect samples to send away for analysis if you suspect nematode damage. Management of nematodes can be complex, however the main principle for minimising the effect of plant parasitic nematodes is to build up populations of beneficial nematodes. If soil carbon levels are increased, and compaction is minimised, beneficial nematodes will stand the best chance of maintaining population levels that can control plant parasitic nematodes.

Canegrubs

While canegrubs are not as widespread as in some years in the past, they still are a major pest for our region and need to be controlled. At present, there is still only one registered chemical available for control of canegrubs – imidacloprid (in both liquid and slow release granule form). There is increasing scrutiny on imidacloprid due to its potential movement into waterways. This product has been banned in some other countries and it would be disastrous for growers in grub prone areas if this product lost its registration. Growers are urged to strictly follow label directions when using imidacloprid based products and ensure that losses of irrigation water after application of these products are kept to a minimum.

Pigs

Pigs still remain our region's largest animal pest threat in terms of lost production. BPS has an aerial pig shooting subsidy in place if 3 or more growers combine to control pigs. Please contact the office to access this subsidy. Between this shooting program, council shooting

and Wetland Care Australia's project, in partnership with BPS, over 550 pigs were shot during the reporting period. Council also have a baiting program in place to control pigs. Interestingly, both pigs and wallabies seem to favour Q252 as a food source – in some cases this variety has been eaten to the drill, with other varieties left alone.

Itch Grass

Itch grass control activities by BPS have increased in 2014/2015, with more seasonal workers employed to control itch grass paddocks as well as field staff regularly monitoring and spraying road and creek areas known for itch grass pressure. One new area of itch grass was identified in the Selkirk region last year – thanks to a vigilant and observant farm worker who spotted some itch grass in a neighbouring easement. Please contact BPS if you see areas of itch grass, so we can assist with coordinating control. Washdown of equipment becomes very important when moving machinery between farms or areas to minimise spread of itch grass and other pests and diseases.

Wild Sorghum

Unfortunately wild sorghum is becoming an increasing plant pest in the Burdekin region. If you have high sorghum pressure in a block that cannot be controlled with herbicides, BPS can assist with employing casual labour to remove plants by hand before they seed. Fallow management is very important in controlling any weed pest, particularly ensuring that weed species do not seed during the fallow. However, sorghum seeds can remain dormant for many years and areas with high seed banks in the soil will need to consider a range of control options in crop. Discuss these options with BPS staff.

Diseases

Pachymetra

Results from a BPS pachymetra survey were pleasing in that most of the blocks surveyed had very low levels of pachymetra detected. While the results are good in that there is limited presence on the sites measured, growers need to be aware that pachymetra is present in the Burdekin. Q252, Q240, Q208, Q232 and KQ228 are all intermediate varieties, and Q253 and Q183 are resistant. No major Burdekin varieties are highly susceptible to pachymetra. There is no real control for pachymetra, apart from resistant varieties. Pachymetra can be spread by soil, so ensuring machinery is cleaned down properly before moving between blocks and farms is very important.

Brown Rust

Brown rust can be quite prevalent in Q253. Symptoms tend to appear after a minor stress event such as delaying irrigation by a few days or slight damage to plants after cultivation operations. Generally, yield effects are limited and control is not warranted.

RSD

Each year, field staff from Burdekin Productivity Services conduct juice sampling of older ratoon crops to check for evidence of Ratoon Stunting Disease (RSD). After taking approximately 1000 individual samples from ratoon crops in the Inkerman and Kalamia mill areas, BPS were advised of 20 positive results for RSD. BPS wishes to advise all growers and contractors that the small number of positive results indicate the disease is in no way widespread, but protocols must be adopted to control it and to prevent it from being spread further. Field staff will survey all mill areas in 2016 using a new sampling and analysis protocol.

The bacterium that causes RSD is found in the xylem (water transport vessels) of the plant where it affects the transport of nutrients from the roots to the rest of the plant. In extreme cases, RSD can cause crop yield decline of more than 50%. Infection can be spread by any type of machinery that comes in contact with the juice of the plant, but in particular, harvesters, planters and stool splitters.

Although a serious disease, ratoon stunting disease can quite easily be prevented. The keys to controlling the disease are: sterilisation of equipment before moving from paddock to paddock and between farms; planting approved disease-free cane; and using resistant varieties where possible.

Sterilisation of equipment is achieved by firstly removing all soil and plant material with water and detergent under high pressure. Then knives and other parts of the machine that have come in contact with cane juice should be treated with a registered sterilising agent available at your chemical reseller. The sterilising solution should be left in contact with the implement for at least 5 minutes before use.

When sterilising harvesters, the base-cutter, butt-lifter roller, chopper-box and extractor fans should be disinfected before cutting cane to be sent to the mill. If cutting billets for planting, the whole feed-chain should be disinfected, as well as the base-cutter, chopper-box and extractor fans.

Smut

Smut has been observed in most blocks where Tellus is planted. BPS recommends that growers do not plant this variety due to the pressure it will place on some of the other major varieties that have an intermediate resistance rating (Q208, Q183). Blocks of Q208 have smut present in some cases where they are adjacent to Tellus. There have also been a number of older ratoon Tellus blocks that are showing significant yield reductions due to smut.

Yellow Canopy Syndrome (YCS)

Yellow Canopy Syndrome continues to show a presence in the Burdekin region in all varieties. BPS has been monitoring the extent and severity of YCS occurrences as part of the YCS research project. Fifty blocks have been monitored on a fortnightly basis, and a general area wide assessment has been made at three weekly intervals. The worst period for YCS symptoms was from January through to the end of March. By the end of June, they were only slightly visible. Symptoms have generally been observed lower in the canopy below the top visible dewlap.

The monitoring program commenced in the first week of December 2014 on fifty randomly selected blocks that were chosen in order to get a good spread of sites across the district. At the start of monitoring almost no symptoms of YCS were evident. No YCS was present in the Invicta and Inkerman mill areas, and there were only a few blocks with slight symptoms in the Pioneer and Kalamia mill areas. By the start of 2015 this distribution had changed to Kalamia and Inkerman having widespread YCS, albeit with slight symptoms only, whilst Pioneer and Invicta had only a few blocks with slight symptoms.

By the middle of February, Inkerman and Kalamia had widespread, moderate YCS. Pioneer and Invicta still only had a few affected blocks. This trend continued in early March, however by later in the month only Kalamia had widespread symptoms. In the other mill areas there were only a few blocks affected. At this stage the symptoms were slight in all areas except Inkerman where they were moderate.

Throughout the monitoring period the Kalamia area appeared to be the worst affected, Pioneer and Invicta had only a few blocks affected at any time. All varieties have been affected. In a very small number of cases the crop has been badly affected and the symptom of very flexible rubbery stalks has been seen.



YCS monitoring sites for 2014-2015. These will be used for YCS yield/sugar impact assessment

YCS symptoms do not seem to follow a consistent pattern, and exceptions to the following observations are common. In general terms, the following have been observed this season across the Burdekin district:

- KQ228, Q247 and Q238 appeared to have the highest level of visible symptoms of YCS, while Q208 seemed least affected
- There appeared to be no link to soil health or specific farming practices (e.g.: fertiliser or herbicide selection, cultivation) and the level of YCS symptoms observed

- The Burdekin Delta area appeared to be more affected by YCS for a longer period of the year than the BRIA
- The 'wave' effect of symptoms increasing and decreasing was observed

It is very difficult to provide an estimate of the effect of YCS on yield for the 2015 harvest at the time of reporting. Once harvested, data from the fifty monitored blocks will be analysed to provide a more robust yield estimate for YCS affected blocks. In the absence of measured data, BPS field staff estimated the percentage of blocks affected by YCS symptoms, shown in the table below. These estimates were conducted in early 2015, and were based on BPS staff members' observations and monitoring from Nov 2014 – March 2015.

Yield loss estimates in the Burdekin at different YCS severity ratings

2015	% with no YCS:	% of YCS with Rating 1:	% of YCS with Rating 2:	% of YCS with Rating 3:
Inkerman	15	60	15	10
Kalamia:	5	70	15	10
Pioneer:	20	60	15	5
Invicta:	30	55	10	5
District:	20	60	15	5
Estimated Yield Loss due to YCS (%)	0	2	5	20

Based on these observations and assumptions, around 245 000 T cane could be expected to be lost in the Burdekin region for the 2015 season. Using \$360/T and a CCS of 14.8, this equates to around \$8.7M potential loss for the region. The level of yield reduction of YCS affected cane, may vary significantly from these figures for individual blocks.

Projects and Extension

BPS is involved in externally funded projects that align with the strategic plan. Some of these projects align with existing work, others have involved BPS upskilling staff to deliver the project milestones or employing new staff from the project budget. BPS greatly appreciates the financial support provided by the funding organisations.

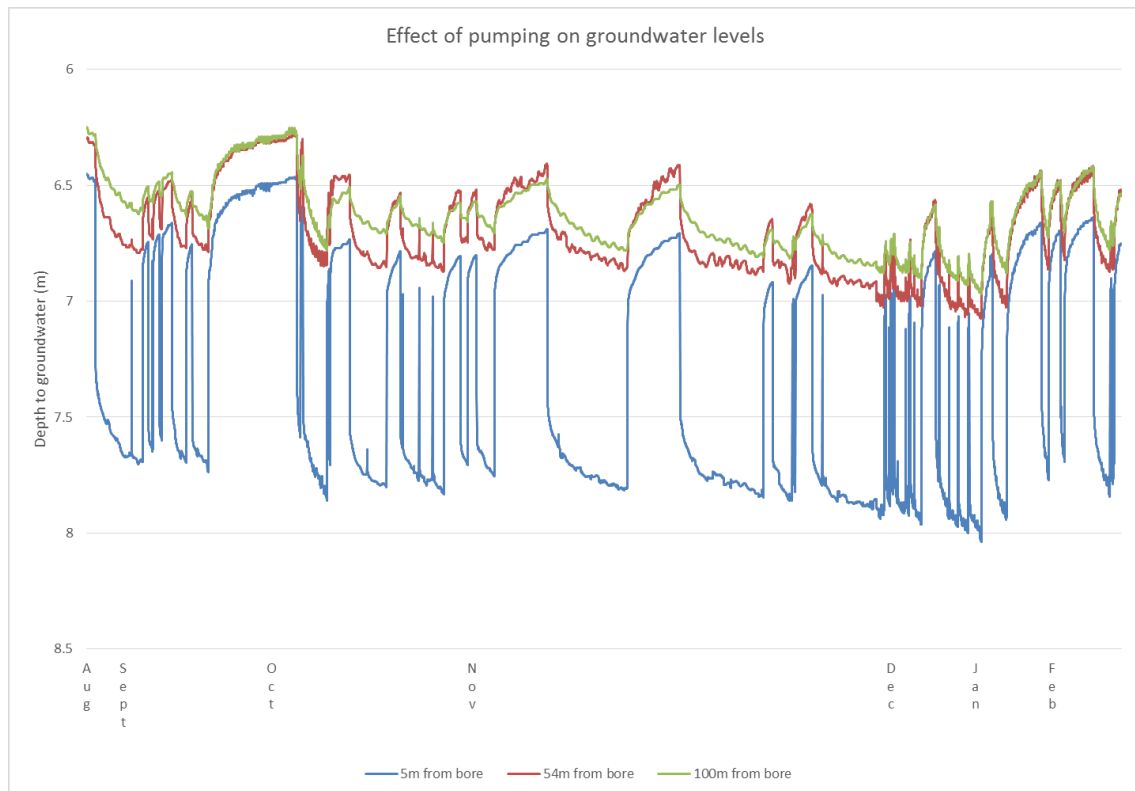
Rural Water Use Efficiency – Irrigation Futures - Funded by DNRM

The Rural Water Use Efficiency – Irrigation Futures (RWUE-IF) project is a state wide project focussed on helping irrigators to make better use of their irrigation water supplies. In the Burdekin, BPS is the host organisation responsible for the roll-out of the project. There are three components to the project: the provision of extension support to growers; a financial incentives scheme for practices that minimise irrigation losses to groundwater in the Burdekin Groundwater Management Area (BGMA); and dewatering bores.

The financial incentives scheme has been well supported by growers with over \$340 000 allocated to projects so far. The funded projects have included soil moisture probes to better

schedule irrigation, automation of irrigation to help manage run-off, and the installation of pipelines and risers to improve control of inflow rates.

The dewatering component of the RWUE-IF project is installing bores in key areas of the BGMA to see if groundwater levels can be reduced through pumping and conjunctive use. Five bores were installed in the Mulgrave district in 2014 and have extracted 638 ML in less than one year. Data logger recordings of the groundwater levels surrounding each bore are showing a lowering of the water table in the immediate vicinity of the bore.



Example of data logger readings on the groundwater levels around a dewatering bore

Harvesting Grower Group Innovation Project - Funded by SRA

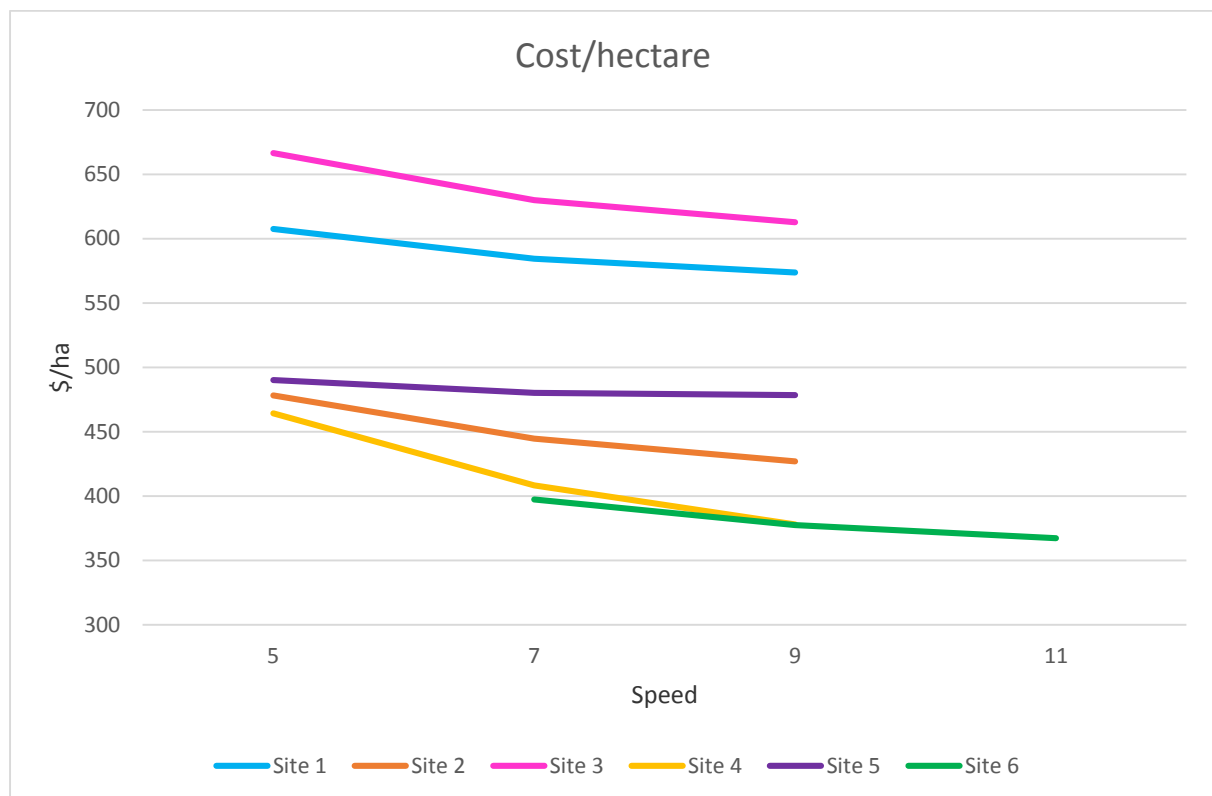
At shed meetings in 2013, growers identified harvester damage and subsequent crop loss as one of the major constraints to production. Following this, BPS successfully applied for and received funding from Sugar Research Australia (SRA) to conduct trials to assess the effect of harvester speed on crop yield and ratooning. The economic impact of cutting at slower or faster speeds is also being determined so that growers and contractors can have an informed discussion on the effect of speed on both yield and costs.

These trials commenced in the 2014 harvest season on six sites across the BRIA and delta. At each site treatment 1 was the BMP recommended speed of 7 km/hr and treatment 2 was an above BMP speed of 9 km/hr. Treatment 3 was 5 km/hr at most sites because of either crop size or ground conditions. At one site T3 was 11 km/hr. Stool and gap counts were conducted immediately prior to harvest to establish a baseline and economic data was

collected during the harvest. Post-harvest, stools, shoots and gaps were counted at 1, 3 and 6 months to see what effect the different speeds had.

Analysis of the first year's data showed no effect of harvester speed on crop yield or the number of stools and gaps in each treatment. The economic modelling showed that costs per tonne decreased as speed increased, but that this was a non-linear response, i.e. costs decreased at a greater rate between 5 and 7 km/hr than between 7 and 9 km/hr.

The trials will continue for another two years (2015 and 2016 seasons) to gauge the effect of harvester speed over the first three years of the crop cycle.



Effect of harvester speed on harvesting costs per hectare

Smartcane BMP – Funded by CANEGROWERS

The Department of Environment and Heritage Protection has funded CANEGROWERS to implement the Smartcane BMP program. Canegrowers have subcontracted BPS to deliver important parts of the Smartcane BMP program. BPS acknowledge that the Smartcane BMP program will deliver productivity and profitability gains for Burdekin growers. Improving record keeping, nutrient and weed management plans, irrigation efficiency and adopting new technologies are all key areas where BMP will improve grower's productivity and profitability.

Terry Granshaw joined BPS in March 2015 as an extension officer and the BMP facilitator for the Burdekin. Terry has successfully managed to get the first Burdekin grower accredited in the three key modules. (Soil health & nutrient management, irrigation & drainage, weed pest & disease management). Terry has another 18 growers currently in the process of

gaining accreditation. BPS encourages all growers to become involved in the Smartcane BMP program in order to review your farming system against industry standards as well as demonstrate to the larger community and government that we can self-regulate as an industry.

NQ Dry Tropics Reef Programme – Funded by NQ Dry Tropics

The Reef Programme is the replacement program for what was formerly known as Reef Rescue. The Australian Government recognised that the Reef Rescue program provided incentive money for farm machinery and practices, but little for extension and technical support. BPS' role under the Reef Programme is to provide agronomic and extension support to growers who wish to make changes to their farming practices that will maintain or increase profitability and improve water quality outcomes. This support is through shed meetings, field demonstrations and one on one extension and is conducted in partnership with Farmacist. BPS also assists the Reef Programme through providing technical and practical information to managers of the Reef Programme in NQ Dry Tropics and State and Federal Government organisations.

Over 30 shed meetings were conducted during the reporting period, with attendance rates around 35%. BPS and Farmacist appreciate the support of NQ Dry Tropics and will continue to provide relevant information for growers at these meetings. If growers have any suggestions for information or research that they feel would be beneficial to discuss, please inform us.



BPS Extension Officer, Marian Davis presenting at a shed meeting

Project NEMO – Nitrogen use Efficiency Management On-farm – Funded by DNRM

This project is jointly funded by the Queensland government's Department of Natural Resources and Mining and the Federal Government's National Landcare Programme. BPS

and HCPSL proposed the project for the Burdekin and Herbert regions as nitrogen use efficiency and maximising productivity and profitability are critical issues for growers.

Tiffany Hunt joined BPS in December 2014 as the extension agronomist responsible for this project. Tiffany is overseeing four nitrogen product, rate and timing demonstration sites and five soil amelioration (gypsum and lime) rate and product demonstration sites, located across the Burdekin. Tiffany is also working with growers in the Leichhardt and Mulgrave sub-catchment areas, using real time water quality monitoring trailers to identify practices that most contribute to nitrogen losses.



Growers inspecting a real time water quality monitoring trailer

Other Activities

Variety Trials – Six representative soil types have been selected to trial new varieties coming into the system. Three of these were established in 2013, involving Q252, Q253 and Q240, with another 3 established in 2014 with two varieties that have potential to be released – QA01-5267 and QA04-1448. BPS believes it is important to trial the new varieties in commercially managed situations and to allow growers to see them growing outside an approved seed plot where farming practice is such that growth is restricted to ensure a high quality seed source. BPS appreciates the assistance of SRA, particularly Catherine Kettle, in providing these varieties for trial use.

Nitrogen rate trials – BPS has two Nitrogen rate trials with Q253, as anecdotal evidence has suggested this variety may have a high nitrogen use efficiency. Replicated trials have been established in plant and ratoon crops to provide growers with data.

Potassium Trials – two potassium rate trials have been established in the Pioneer area amid suspicions that cane productivity may be enhanced with higher rates of potassium. Results will be obtained at crushing next year.

BPS continues to assist in grower led trial work across all aspects of the cane production system. If anyone is interested in having a trial on their farm or needs help designing or harvesting a trial, please contact the BPS extension staff. BPS also offers soil and water testing services as well as agronomic, pest, disease and whole of farm advice. Please contact the office for more details. Results from all trials are published in our quarterly newsletter and discussed in detail at field walks and shed meetings.

Burdekin Step Up Next Generation

In March this year, sixteen young growers from the Burdekin were accompanied to the Step Up Next Generation conference. The conference offered a diverse range of sessions on topics including innovative technologies, agronomy, finance, marketing, and succession planning. There was also a tour of a sugar mill as well as sugar and cocoa plantations.

Following the conference, a breakfast and field walk was held which resulted in the formation of the Burdekin Next Gen group. A soil health workshop was held due to the interest in this topic. The group will continue to meet with further activities postponed until the crushing draws to a close. Any 'young' growers are welcome to become involved in the group. Please express your interest to Tiffany and she will add you to the group mailing list.

Barratta Creek Project – Funded by Wetland Care Australia

Wetland Care Australia has contracted BPS to provide support for their project “Delivering Biodiversity Outcomes for the Barratta Creek Catchment”. This project aligns with BPS pest control activities such as collecting pest damage information from growers in our annual crop data survey as well as various pest survey activities. BPS' main responsibility under the project is to establish and maintain a database of pig crop damage, record feral animal numbers at project monitoring sites and conduct aerial shooting of pigs.

Future

BPS will continue to strive to provide a quality and cost effective service to its members with a focus on provision of appropriate quantities of approved seed cane, pest and disease services, crop data collection and extension including one on one farm advice.

Feedback from growers indicates that the extension services BPS is providing is being valued. From the recent review of the BPS strategic direction, the four main areas that BPS will focus its extension efforts on will be:

- Irrigation and water management
- Harvesting
- Soil Health
- Variety management.

BPS wants to ensure that efforts in extension are targeted to provide growers with the best information that will ultimately improve their productivity, profitability and sustainability. While BPS does not plan to become a research organisation, paddock trials, demonstrations

and development work will be carried out where there is an opportunity to improve the sustainability, productivity and profitability of our members.

BPS plans to increase efforts in pest and disease management through more RSD and pachymetra surveys, greater focus on demonstration and observation trials of potential varieties and encouraging all members to purchase approved seed cane and utilise field officers for plant source inspections.

Staff and Directors

I would sincerely like to thank all the BPS directors and staff for their commitment, support and dedication in their various roles. Directors have provided valuable input into the strategic direction of BPS and support for the management team. Our staff are absolutely critical to the success of the organisation and I have received many comments from growers and industry representatives about the professionalism and dedication of all BPS staff, which is extremely pleasing.

I would like to assure all members that BPS is continually striving to look for efficiencies within the business, to ensure that we are delivery the best possible service at the lowest possible cost.

Rob Milla

Manager
August 2015