



Funded by Burdekin Canegrowers and Wilmar Sugar

Grower Update

ISSUE 36 – DECEMBER 2019



Welcome to the December issue of our BPS newsletter. We hope you find the articles contained in this issue informative.



This issue contains:

- Manager's Christmas Message
- BPS Study Bursary Recipient
- Crop Data
- SmartCane BMP Update
- Variety Trial Update
- BPS Seed Cane Plots
- Soil Testing
- Vehicles for Sale
- Staff Contacts



Merry Christmas from BPS

The board, management, and staff of BPS would like to wish all growers and industry personnel a Merry Christmas and a safe and Happy New Year.

The BPS office will close at 4 pm on December 20, 2019 and reopen at 7 am on January 6, 2020.

MANAGER'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

As 2019 draws to a close, I would like to take this opportunity to wish all members a very Merry Christmas and hope you get to spend some time with family and friends. This year has been one with plenty of challenges, as well as many positives and opportunities to progress our industry. The introduction of amended Reef Regulations late this year has been a focal point in recent weeks. There are still some areas that require clarification, however BPS, SRA and local collectives sent a series of questions to the state government for clarification around a range of issues in relation to the regulations and the answers provided by the state were distributed by the local collectives. If members would like BPS to obtain further clarification on anything, please let us know.

The weather this year was certainly a mixed bag, with significant rain and overcast weather early in the year. The rain was very welcome, particularly for the Delta aquifer, however the long period without sunlight contributed to some loss in potential yield for the 2019 harvest season. However, figures supplied by Wilmar indicate the 2019 season average CCS was 14.94 and 116.2 tonnes/Ha. This is in comparison to the 2018 season that had an average of 15.0 and 116.2 t/Ha. Growers should be commended on maintaining the same average yield from 2018, despite some adverse conditions.

BPS has continued to ensure that distribution of approved seed cane and pest and disease management is a cornerstone of our services. Seed cane sales were a little down on previous years with around 4200 T distributed, however we are aware many growers had a big rush planting this year due to the rain. We are expecting an increase in sales next year with WSRA17 available. Please contact your field officer to order this variety, as availability is limited and allocations will be made on Ha of BPS levies paid. RSD surveys this year indicated that levels of RSD are not increasing, however they are also not decreasing. We encourage all growers to ensure on farm hygiene is maintained to minimise risk of spread of RSD and other pests and diseases.

BPS have also spent significant time assisting growers with SmartCane BMP accreditation, along with training and assisting growers in the use of some very useful record keeping tools. Agtrix Farming is an online record keeping tool that all BPS members have access to at no cost – this was something requested by members at focus groups in early 2019. Feedback from growers has been very positive that this is an easy to use record keeping tool, that not only meets the requirements of reef regulations, but is more importantly good business practice. The other tool available to growers is IrrigWeb – an online record keeping and irrigation scheduling tool. Numerous growers are using IrrigWeb and finding it very helpful in ensuring that the correct volume of water is being applied at the right time. IrrigWeb sends a grower a weekly email detailing irrigation dates and volumes in the upcoming week, as determined by the crop growth stage, soil moisture content and local weather conditions. Please contact any BPS staff member for assistance in setting these tools up on your farm.

I would like to thank all BPS members and industry partners for their support this year, as well as a special thanks to all the hard working BPS staff. All staff strive to meet member requests for assistance, and pursue opportunities to improve productivity and profitability for members. BPS has a clear strategic plan, and all staff are very committed to ensuring the best outcome for our industry. Please contact us if you have ideas or suggestions on how we can better serve our members.

Best wishes for the festive season and we look forward to a productive 2020.

Rob Milla

BPS STUDY BURSARY RECIPIENT

The BPS Study Bursary recipient for 2020-2022 has been selected and Amelia Pivotto has accepted the offer. Amelia has applied to study an Agricultural Science Bachelor course at the University of Central Queensland (CQU).

She will become the fifth student BPS has assisted since the study bursary was introduced. Bursary recipients are rewarded for success, so only receive financial assistance if they achieve a 75% or better pass rate on a minimum of four subjects per semester.

We wish Amelia great success and hope she will remain in the district following completion of her degree.



CROP DATA

Once the crushing begins to wind down, BPS field officers begin collecting everyone's crop data. Some people may have already been visited by their field officer. Crop data is information about your farm for the current year that BPS records to assist in managing risk in the district in relation to pests and diseases.

Practices recorded in our electronic system include:

- Fallow management
- Variety and plant source
- Use of approved seed cane
- Planting contractor and planting method
- Grub and other pest management
- Pest and disease incidence - location and amount of damage
- Soil amelioration.

Why does BPS collect and record this information?

- Crop data allows us to understand the extent of pests and diseases in the area. In the past, when large numbers of rats have been reported we have been able to set up baiting programmes. We can also see if these management methods are having an effect. This is also the case for treatments used on the cane such as Suscon and Confidor.
- Most importantly, if there was a disease found on a farm, we can determine who planted the block and test any farms that were planted directly afterwards. From the crop data information, the plant source for that block can be identified and also tested. This allows us to immediately isolate the source of the disease, and hopefully prevent an outbreak.

A recent example of where we were able to assist members in terms of specific pest advice due to accurate data collection was an instance where there was a new outbreak of itch grass. Due to our records, BPS

were able to track the planting contractor, plant source and harvesting contractor and inspect blocks that were involved in these operations to ensure minimal spread of itch grass.

How is the data used and is my information kept confidential?

- Overall reports are generated from the information supplied from collecting crop data and are presented at the BPS Annual General Meeting. ***However*** individual information is **not** disclosed to any third party.

A specific example of where this data was used in recent times was BPS obtaining a region wide permit for rat baiting, including aerial application. By providing aggregated data on the tonnes of cane and area affected by rats (based on data provided by members), BPS was able to obtain the district wide permit for use of registered products. In the absence of regional data, it is likely that individuals would have to apply for permits, rather than BPS provide this service on members' behalf. We have also been able to provide data to funding and research bodies that justifies research into new methods of pest and disease control. For example, aggregated data on increasing levels of canegrub damage has been used to support research into alternative insecticides for canegrub control.

How is the data recorded at BPS?

- In most cases, the BPS field officer will collect your crop data face to face and record this information on a hard copy of your mill map.
- This is then transferred electronically onto our geographic information system, which allows us to report aggregated data without identifying individuals.
- These records are a very important aspect of BPS' service delivery, and ensure that historical pest and disease incursion is recorded for future management.
- It is important to emphasise again that individual data is not disclosed to any 3rd party.

Some confusion with allowing BPS access to Wilmar Data

During 2018, a letter was sent from Wilmar to growers asking for consent to share their data with BPS. All BPS members can decide if they would like to share their Wilmar data with BPS, however it is worthwhile providing some context around how BPS uses this data. The Wilmar data refers to two separate aspects:

1. Map layer including variety and crop class information
2. Productivity data such as tonnes cane, CCS, soil type etc

The BPS collected 'crop data' (referred to in previous paragraphs) is stored on our electronic geographic information system. This system uses the Wilmar map layer to record pest and disease incursion within an area e.g. your farm or block. If a grower does not consent to sharing their data with BPS, then we cannot record pest or disease incursion with our current system – which may impact on the accuracy of records into the future, as well as the ability for us to manage pest and disease issues in the most effective manner.

Productivity data is used to generate all the variety performance reports available to members at shed meetings and other information sessions. If this data is not shared, then the information BPS provides back to its members will be incomplete and less accurate.

BPS understands that some members may have concerns around sharing of some of their data (particularly your productivity information), so there may be opportunity for growers to consent to sharing their map information only. Please contact any BPS staff member or management to discuss if you have concerns or questions.

SMARTCANE BMP



What is Smartcane BMP?

Smartcane BMP is an industry owned program focussing on improving farming practices for the betterment of growers' businesses.

What is the process?

The initial process involves **registering** for BMP which can be done online or at a workshop which is held every fortnight at BPS. During the workshop a series of generalised questions are filled in to benchmark each grower as to where their current business practices are. This is called the **self-assessment** and covers off on the 3 core modules listed below. This identifies where the business can possibly be improved and paves the way for record keeping. Growers then work with local facilitators to fill in the gaps and work towards accreditation. BMP **accreditation** involves collecting records for at least the last 12 months to demonstrate the business' management practices.

The 3 core modules are:

1. Soil health and nutrient management
2. Irrigation and drainage
3. Weed, pest and disease management

Some new and effective tools that have helped growers successfully pass BMP are Agtrix and IrrigWeb, both of which are free to BPS members. Agtrix is online platform for farm nutrient and chemical record keeping and is compliant with current Reef Regulation.

IrrigWeb is an irrigation record keeping and scheduling tool that takes into account current local weather conditions and farm soil types to forecast future irrigations. Emails are sent to growers every week to notify when the next irrigation for a block is due which is based on the information the grower puts into the system including the date and water applied.

The Burdekin's progress (%)

Currently the Burdekin has:

- 93% of the area registered in BMP
- 88% of the area self-assessed or benchmarked
- 24% of the area accredited.

More growers are going through the process of becoming BMP accredited and have found value in the program, whether it be through cost efficiencies or improved business practices. The photo right shows one of the most recently accredited growers in the Burdekin, Andrew Cross - manager of MHPF, with a BMP auditor.



Wilmar incentive

Wilmar is currently offering anyone that has achieved BMP accreditation before the 30th June 2020 a one off incentive payment of 15 c/t capped at 25 000 t.

Confidentiality

All information collected by the program is kept securely by CANEGROWERS. Anonymous, aggregated data only is used to show the wider community how farmers are taking up best management practices.

If you would like to enquire about SmartCane BMP you can call Jasmine Connolly on 0438 934 601 or Terry Granshaw on 0437 553 149.

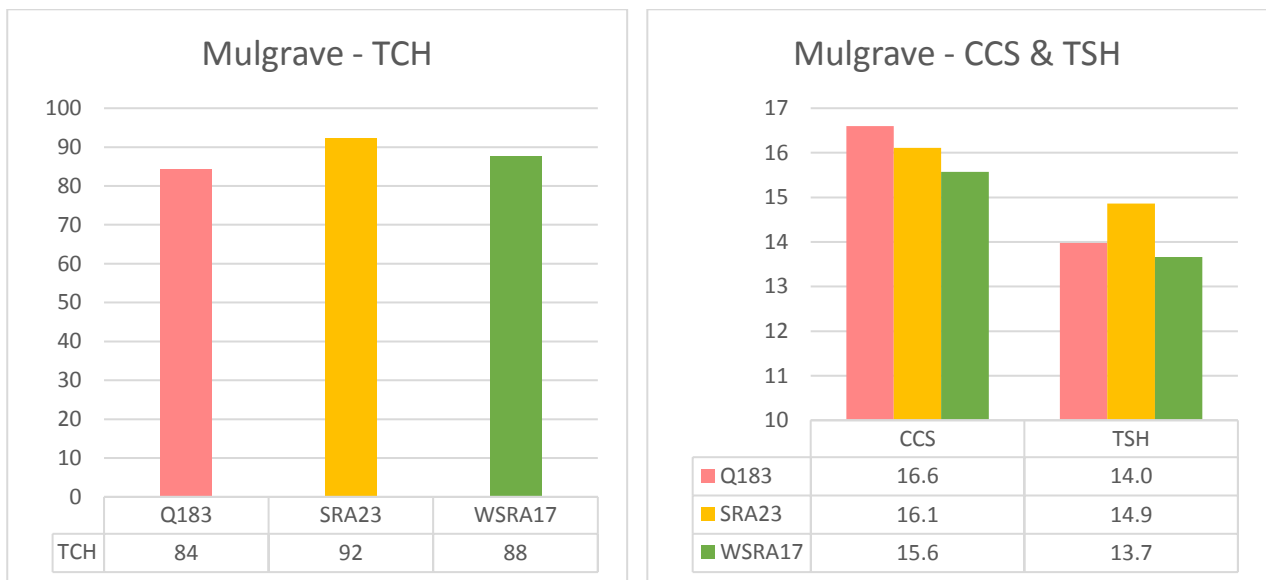
VARIETY TRIALS

Variety strip trials are an important component of the BPS trials program as they provide us with information on variety performance under commercial growing conditions. In 2019 there were 9 trials from plant to fourth ratoon. We are particularly interested in the results for WSR17 (available to members in 2020) and SRA23 (available 2021).

Plant 2019

This trial is at Mulgrave on a block that runs from sodic duplex at the top to cracking clay on the bottom. Planting was in late August 2018 following harvest of the previous cane crop in July 2018. The varieties in the trial were: WSR17, SRA23 and Q183.

Yields were relatively low at this site as it was a plough-out replant situation. SRA23 was the best overall variety for tonnes of cane and tonnes of sugar. Q183 had the highest CCS reading, but the lowest cane yield.

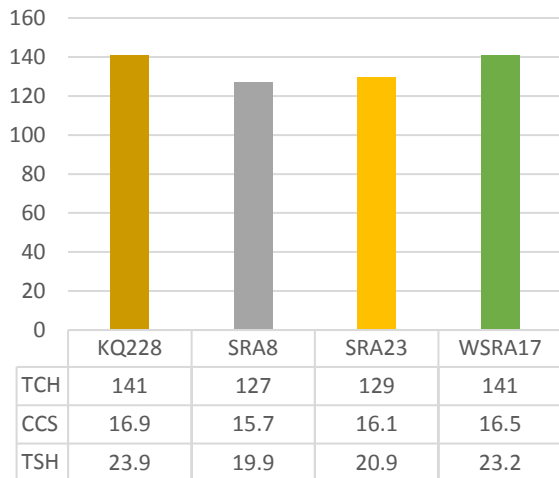


First Ratoon

There were two first ratoon sites – Rita Island and Millaroo. At Rita Island the best variety was KQ228 with the highest tonnes of cane, CCS and tonnes of sugar. It was closely followed by WSR17, with the same tonnes of cane, but slightly lower CCS. In comparison, SRA23 had much lower tonnes (129 t/ha versus 141 t/ha). This trial had MODDUS applied prior to harvest.

There was little to choose between Q240 and SRA8 in the Millaroo trial. Tonnes of cane for these varieties were basically the same, with Q240 having slightly higher CCS. SRA23 had the best CCS in the trial but was 10 t/ha behind Q240 and SRA8 in cane yield.

Rita Island - TCH



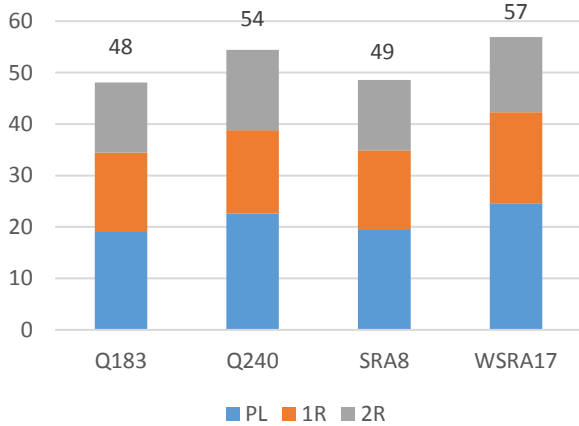
Millaroo - TCH



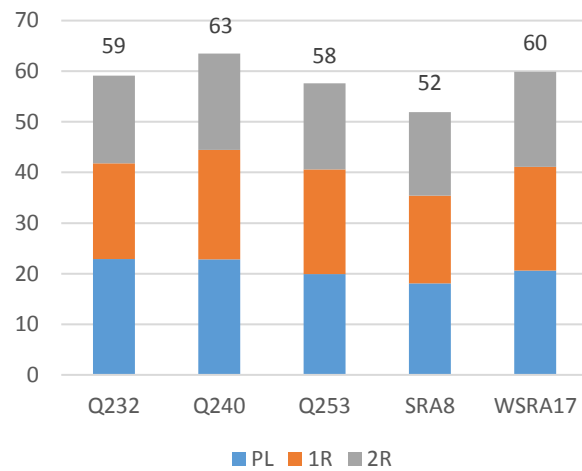
Second Ratoon

When the second ratoon trials were planted, SRA8 and WSRA17 were the varieties of interest and were included at all of the sites. The Aerodrome trial also includes SRA23. WSRA17 has performed well at the Upper Haughton and Iona sites, but has not done as well at Aerodrome where SRA23 has been the best.

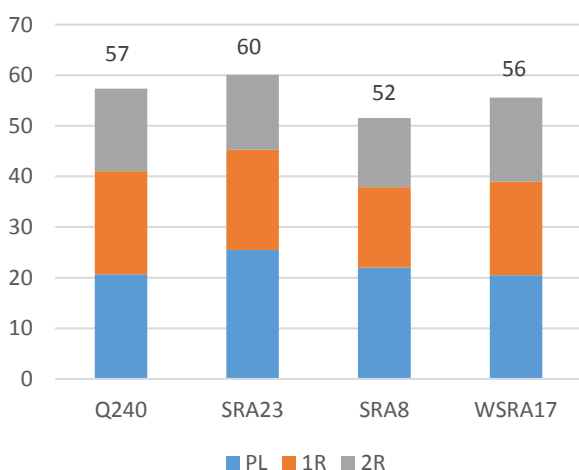
Upper Haughton - Total tonnes sugar



Iona - Total tonnes sugar



Aerodrome - Total tonnes sugar



This is only a summary of some of the trial results.

Trial results will be discussed in more detail at the next round of shed meetings that will be held in February 2020.

SEED CANE PLOTS

Burdekin Productivity Services Ltd (BPS) has 9 Approved Seed Cane Plots in operation for 2020. Not all plots are the same. There are combined Mother and Distribution Plots (Green); Distribution Plots only (Orange); an Isolation Plot (Grey); and Mother Plots only (Pink). The chart below lists each of these plots and includes details of ownership, who acts as Plot Holder and management arrangements. The next chart depicts areas under approved cane as plant or first ratoon and areas under fallow.

BPS is anticipating a solid uptake of new variety WSRA17 that is available to growers from 2020 onwards. We have prepared an additional 2 Mother plots as an overflow to increase propagation.

Burdekin Approved Seed Cane Plots – 2020

Plot	Location	Type	Owner	Plot Holder	Management
Inkerman Plot	Home Hill	Mother & Distribution Plot	Inkerman Cane Growers	Inkerman Cane Growers	Farm Manager employed
P & K Plot (Pioneer & Kalamia)	Ayr	Mother & Distribution Plot	PCGO & KALAGRO	PCGO & KALAGRO	Farm Manager employed
Brock Rd Plot	Clare	Mother & Distribution Plot	Invicta Cane Growers Org. Lease to BPS	JJB Farming subcontracted to BPS	JJB Farming
Rapisarda Plot	Clare	Distribution Plot only	Rapisarda	Rapisarda	Rapisarda
Millaroo Plot	Millaroo	Distribution Plot only	Invicta Cane Growers Org. Lease to BPS	Cervoni Farming subcontracted to BPS	Cervoni Farming
Giru Plot	Giru	Distribution Plot only	Lyons	Lyons	Lyons
Christensen Isolation Plot	Ayr	Isolation Plot	Christensen	Christensen	Christensen
Duncan Mother Plot	Ayr	Mother Plot only (overflow)	Duncan	Duncan	Duncan
Galea Mother Plot	Giru	Mother Plot only (overflow)	Galea	Galea	Galea

Burdekin Approved Seed Cane Plots – Area

Plot	MP – Cane Hectares	MP – Fallow Hectares	DP – Plant Hectares	DP – 1R Cane Hectares	DP – Fallow Hectares	Total Ha
Inkerman Plot	5	5	23	23	23	79
P & K Plot (Pioneer & Kalamia)	3	3	21	21	21	69
Brock Rd Plot	2	2	7	7	7	25
Rapisarda Plot			8			8*
Millaroo Plot			2	2	2	6
Giru Plot			7	5	6	18
Christensen Isolation Plot	2	2				4
Duncan Mother Plot	4					4
Galea Mother Plot	2					2
TOTAL	18	12	68	58	59	215

* Floating Plot – New location each year

Production at the Burdekin Approved Cane Plots during 2020 is estimated as follows:

Mother Plot Cane – 18 Hectares @ 80t/Ha = 1440 t (for Planting Distribution Plots, Mother Plots and Variety Strip Trials)

Distribution Plot Cane – 126 Ha @ 80t/Ha = 10 080 t (For sale to Growers as Approved Seed cane)

Isolation Plot Cane – 2 Hectares @ 80t/Ha = 160 t (For Planting Mother Plots and Variety Strip Trials)

Note: Mother Plots and Isolation Plot are full stick planted after hot/cold water treatment. Distribution Plots are billet planted – No water treatment

The following Seed Cane Distribution Flow Chart shows the sequence of propagating a new variety for distribution to growers.

Seed Cane Distribution Flow Chart – New Variety

SRA Plant Breeding Program identifies the most likely variety/s for release to industry and prepares a small quantity for BPS

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

BPS does not set the price of seed cane that is sold from the plots. The Plot Owner sets the price and retains all proceeds from seed cane sales.

BPS covers the cost of:

- Plot planning, weighbridges, inspections & sampling.
- Organising sales and administration of seed cane accounts
- Funding additional Mother Plots
- Funding Isolation Plot
- Treatment of cane – Operating hot and cold water treatment tanks.



Year 1 - Isolation Plot

New variety is hand cut, stripped & loaded onto 1.5 tonne crates and soaked in cold water for 40-48 hours at BPS.

This is to reduce the risk of transmitting chlorotic streak and leaf scald for all new varieties being released

Cane is then soaked in hot water at 50 degrees for 3 hours

This is to reduce the risk of transmitting Ratoon Stunting Disease (RSD)

Cane is then planted into an Isolation Plot separated from commercial cane blocks.

The Isolation Plot is inspected regularly by BPS Staff to ensure that no genetic variation or diseases are present. This includes walking the plot and conducting RSD sampling.

Year 2 - Mother Plot

The cane is hand cut from the Isolation Plot and stripped then loaded onto crates.

The new variety is cold soaked for 40-48 hours then transferred & soaked in hot water at 50 degrees for 3 hours

Cane is then planted into an Approved Mother Plot.

The Mother Plot is regularly inspected by BPS Staff to ensure that no genetic variation or disease has occurred in the new variety or other varieties planted in the plot. RSD sampling is conducted.

Year 4 – Distribution/Sales

Approved seed cane is sold from the Distribution Plot to growers.

Year 3 - Distribution Plot

The cane is cut from the Mother Plot and planted into the Distribution Plot. The Distribution Plot is inspected regularly by BPS Staff to ensure that no genetic variation or disease has occurred in the new variety or other varieties planted. RSD sampling is conducted.

SOIL TESTING

Soil testing is an important component of the farm management system. Regular soil testing allows growers to monitor fertility trends on their farm and to make the best decisions about nutrient requirements.

BPS provides a soil testing service to its members. The current cost of soil testing is \$137.50 (including GST) per sample. This price covers: collecting the sample; sending it to the lab for analysis; and providing a nutrient recommendation.

When we collect a soil test, there is some information that we need in order to provide you with the best recommendation. This includes: the crop class – plant, replant or ratoons; fallow management; and any ameliorants (mill mud, gypsum, lime) that may have been applied or are planned.

Below is a copy of the sheet that we use to collect this information. The sheet is also available on the BPS website (in Grower Tools on the Useful Links page).

To arrange a soil test please contact any of the BPS staff members.

Soil Test Information



Name _____
 Farm _____ Block _____
 Date sampled _____ Sampling depth _____

Bag sticker:

GPS: Lat: _____ Long: _____
(Use Google Maps and decimal degrees e.g. -19.654781 147.452187)

Crop Class <small>(for recommendation; ratoon done automatically with plant/replant)</small>	Yield Potential
Plant (fallow) <input type="checkbox"/>	150 t/ha <input type="checkbox"/>
Replant <input type="checkbox"/>	180 t/ha <input type="checkbox"/>
Ratoon (specify) _____	Other _____
If Replant	
Harvest date: _____ and	Expected plant date: _____

Fallow Management

Bare/grass <input type="checkbox"/>			
Legume and management	Harvested Grain yield (t/ha)	OR	Green Manure Biomass (circle)
Soybean <input type="checkbox"/>	_____		Poor
Mungbean <input type="checkbox"/>	_____		Average
Cowpea <input type="checkbox"/>	_____		Good
Lab lab <input type="checkbox"/>	_____		
Other crop	_____		

Ameliorants	Rate (t/ha)	When applied
Mill mud	_____	_____
Mill ash	_____	_____
Mud & ash mix	_____	_____
Gypsum	_____	_____
Lime	_____	_____

Notes/Comments

Kalamia - mud only Invicta & Inkerman - mud & ash mix
 Pioneer - ash only

VEHICLES FOR SALE

\$15 000 including GST

2013 Mitsubishi Triton 4x4 Dual Cab manual transmission

Registration 147 SYC

120 000km with complete service history

Drives well, Very good condition

Heavy Duty Steel Bull Bar - Aluminium Tray with back window guard - UHF Radio - Air Conditioned - Side steps – Tow Bar - Tinted Windows - Seat Covers



\$16 500 including GST

2014 Mitsubishi Triton GLX 4x4 Dual Cab manual transmission

Registration 146 TTI

148 000km with complete service history

Drives well, Very good condition

Heavy Duty Steel Bull Bar - Aluminium Tray with back window guard - UHF Radio - Air Conditioned - Side steps – Tow Bar - Tinted Windows - Seat Covers



For more information: Contact Mark Rickards (Commercial Manager) – 0427 834 800

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