



AGFORCE CANE YEAR IN REVIEW 2024



This year AgForce celebrated 25 years and in the process, we saved the Great Artesian Basin, launched Ag Training and AgCarE into commercial operations, stopped the bio-security tax at the Senate and (for now) halted a new tax on unrealized values of farms within superannuation, while hosting Queensland State Conference, SIPP program(s) (*connecting with over 8,710 students*), and facilitated many other regional events.

Our collaboration with the National Farmers Federation helps influence our state policy matters at the national level. For example, AgForce commitment to support of NFF Trade Strategy, which resulted in Minister Farrell walking away from the European Union (EU) FTA negotiations after the EU refused to provide increase access in their agricultural market, and not without detriment to Australian producers.

We supported a campaign to free the sheep, walked out on Minister Murray Watt (at the National Press Club), expressing motion of 'no-confidence' in the Department, which coincidentally later resulted in a new Minister for Agriculture and we successfully enshrined recognition of an [Animal Welfare Statement](#) - underpinned by science and evidence.

Below we have listed some (as too many to list here) of the AgForce Cane Commodity successes and cross-commodity and committee activity impacting cane production.

AGFORCE CANE POLICY- ACHEIVEMENTS

CANE RENEWABLE FUELS

- Raising awareness of renewable energy profile of sugarcane; the greener, cleaner option through cane production systems.
 - Lodged a state and national submission on renewable liquid fuels and called for a national feedstock strategy.
 - AgForce Cane President (Russell Hall), participation in the Queensland Renewable Energy Campaign 2024.
 - Participation in feedback to the Genome Technology Research, i.e., energy productivity from cane product,
- AgForce is collaborating with a number of renewable project operators (much more to be done), in effort to get stronger Cane/Agriculture representation, including at the political levels.

WATER MANAGEMENT AND BURDEKING RISING GROUND WATER PROJECT

- Burdekin Rising Ground water is a 30-year-old issue but now we have a 4-part strategy solution await ministerial approval.
- Following the 'Strategy Project's' -work, a *collaboration with all of industry on the Lower Burdekin Rising Ground Water "Strategy Project", which reviewed 26 possible solutions and shortlisted 10 feasible options. The group agreed to proceed with 4 strategy project solutions*

The strategy proposes, 2 off farm solutions, and 2 on farm solutions (see below):

- **2 off-farm solutions:**
 - *Dewatering, Treatment and Disposal*
 - *Burdekin Haughton Water scheme, modernisation project, lining H10 pipeline, including infrastructure upgrades, and BA1 (Freeman Road section)*
- **2 On-farm solutions:**
 - *Enabling automation of irrigation practices*
 - *Implement system change, ground water extraction and conjunctive use.*
- AgForce has contributed to the Burdekin Regional Water Assessment review to ensure adequate water resources (200 GL) for significant growth of cane.
- Contributed feedback to Burdekin Basin Water Plan (2007) Review. This was set to expire 1 September 2023. The review resulted in plan being postponed, with water plan extended to expiry 2 September 2026.

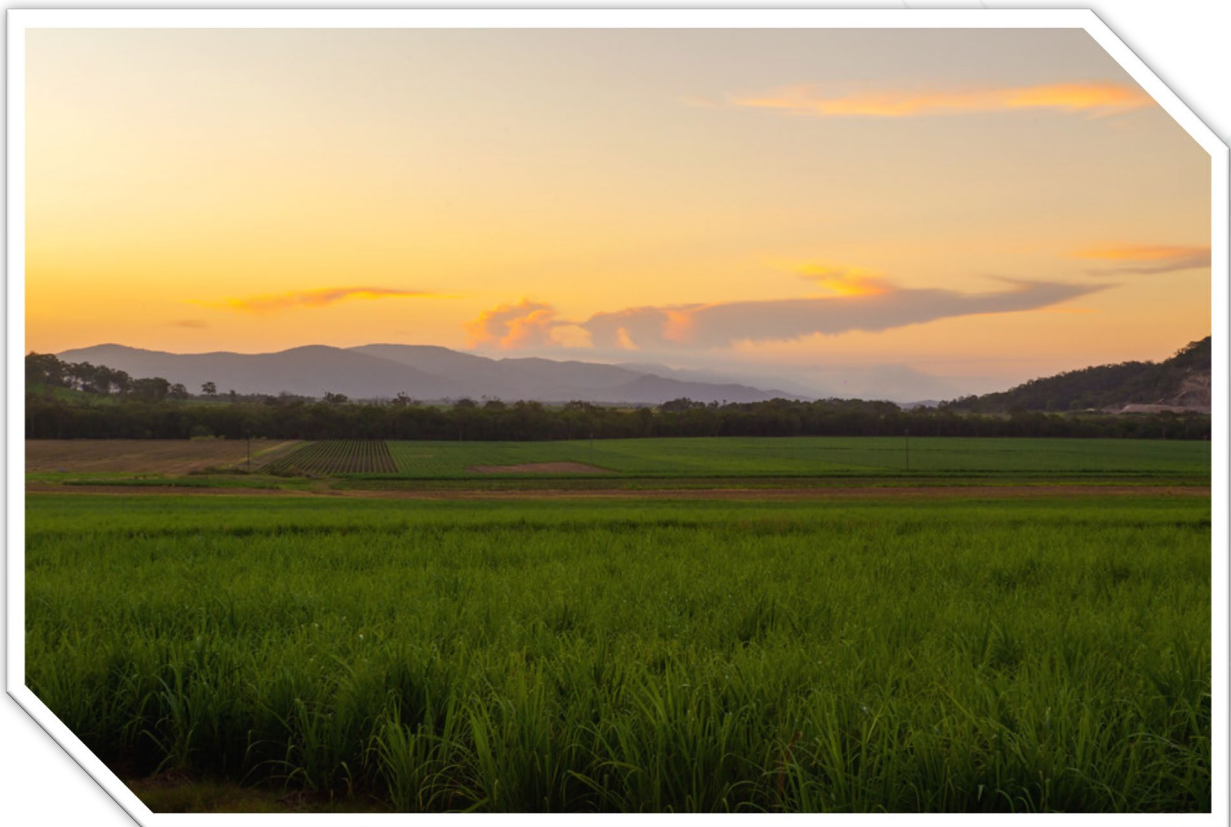
REEF

- AgForce has effectively influenced the Scientific Consensus Statement (SCS) of 2017 and 2022 and sits on the Reef Advisory Committee which seeks to find common ground and recognise we need to work together and maintain trust and credibility for benefit of all parties.
 - The Reef's [2022 Scientific Consensus statement](#) publication, which highlighted climate was the main instrument impacting changes to the great barrier reef and not agriculture.
 - AgForce continues to advocate for evidence-based Reef science to underpin government policy for Reef management.
 - AgForce continues to represent industry on the Reef Advisory Committee and is ready to stand up the AgForce Reef Taskforce as required.
- Reef Compliance Support. AgForce has this year supported cane members with REEF Compliance notice(s) and warnings, by collaborating with industry and working with government departments to promoting improvements and revisions to reef audit framework and to inform and educate members to ensure members continue to meet reef audit requirement and are aware of their rights and obligations.
 - For example, farmers can request to have a professional spokesperson (i.e., agronomist) or their member organisation representative present at reef compliance review meetings.
 - Members that seek Reef Regulations information can go to the AgForce website, [Link Here: access latest reef requirements.](#)
- Reef [2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan \(WQIP\)](#) review (September 2024).
 - In this submission AgForce emphasised the importance of basing key decisions on empirical evidence rather than modelling and stressed that climate change (not agriculture) is the primary threat to the Great Barrier Reef.

- AgForce urged recognising the strong environmental management by agricultural land managers in reef catchments and that “Departmental staff liaising with primary producers are encouraged to consider that they are addressing highly capable operators of complex agroecological systems.”

AGCARE AND FARM DATA PRIVACY

- In 2024, [AgCarE](#) became a commercial, for-profit corporate entity, fully owned by AgForce Queensland Farmers Limited.
- The AgForce Cane Board of Directors approved the establishment of an AgForce Cane - AgCarE working group, with representatives responsible for the refinement of the digitisation of the AgCarE Cane Module toward certification and incorporating sequestration into equation.
 - The AgCarE Cane Modules offer International Benchmarking Standards and is now registration on Taskforce on Nature Related Financial Disclosures (TFND), which offers a framework for environmental accounting - the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB).
 - The AgCarE group continue to progress Accreditations and Certification in multiple areas, i.e., eQual, works in [AgForce ESG \(Environmental, Social and Governance\) policy](#).
- AgForce Cane has contributed toward feedback in the development of the [Australian Farm Data Code](#), which aims to promote adoption of digital technology, by ensuring that farmers have comfort in how their data is used, managed, and shared.



AGFORCE GENERAL POLICY IMPACTING CANE

CANE CHEMICAL REVIEW

- AgForce (grains policy director) and Sugar Research Australia (SRA), formulated an AVPMA Paraquat and Diquat Member Survey and subsequently contributed to submission(s), which resulted in an extension to the review process, whilst industry undertakes appropriate scientific research.
 - The APVMA has announced a consultative review, which seeks changes to how industry represents advisory boards on Ag Vet and Ag Chemical review process.

CANE BIOSECURITY

- **Bio-security Tax.** AgForce played an important role in halting (and possibly ultimately defeating) the controversial biosecurity protection levy and potential implications for cane (see [Controversial Biosecurity Levy to Impact 85,000 Australian Farmers Amid Financial Strains. · AgForce · Advancing Rural Queensland](#))
- **Fire Ants.** AgForce appeared alongside Canegrowers as witnesses at the Federal Senate Enquiry into Red Imported Fire Ants (RIFA) on Monday March 4, 2024 (see [Concerns delays in funding compromising Red Imported Fire Ant eradication program. · AgForce · Advancing Rural Queensland](#)).
 - Relative to other organisations, AgForce has a long history of working closely with the RIFA Eradication Program.
 - We have formed a strong and productive relationship resulting in key outcomes, including a successful trial where primary producers have been supplied with substantial bait and equipment to self-treat their property. Due to its success in 2024, these trials will now be expanded in 2025.
- **National Weeds Register.** AgForce has ensured that 'Navua sedge' has progressed to Step 2 of the [National Established Weed Priorities \(NEWP\) - Weeds Australia](#).
 - AgForce is currently leading the process of nominating Navia sedge as a weed of national priority and Tablelands Regional Council is actively supporting this nomination.
 - AgForce is currently undertaking a body of work to demonstrate cross-sector support, and document the impact and cost associated with this weed.

CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT POLICY

- AgForce participated in Sugar Research Australia (SRA)- Statutory Review. Rarely are we unsuccessful in promoting our recommendations, albeit in this case no changes were adopted.
- AgForce continues to participate and contribute to the Environmental Accounting models - AIA, ([Agriculture Innovation Australia](#)) & [Greenhouse Accounting Frameworks](#) (GAF), in effort to influence outcomes and ensure cane has opportunities and future markets.
- **Fire Management:** AgForce has been advocating for significant support and for greater focus on fire mitigation and inadequacies of the current vegetation management framework, particularly concerning the ability to prepare for a fire event.

FINANCE, TAX AND SUCCESSION PLANNING

- AgForce initially raised the matter of unrealised gains two years ago, and through the NFF strength in member capacity, have successfully halted a New Super Tax on farmers' land from passing the Senate, for 2024 year.
 - Treasury Laws Amendment (Better Targeted Superannuation Concessions and Other Measures) Bill 2023.
- Young Producers Council (YPC) continue to advocate for First Farm Buyers Scheme, at multiple levels of government and with industry stakeholders.
- [Sustainable finance roadmap and reforms](#) is “all about mobilising the significant private capital required to achieve net zero, modernising our financial markets and maximising the economic opportunities associated with energy, climate and sustainability goals”.
- ASFI (Australian Sustainable Finance Institute), is the second and final round of public [Australian Taxonomy consultation](#) seeking input to the development of a [Sustainable Finance Taxonomy](#)
 - The taxonomy aims to provide a framework for identifying sustainable economic activities and investments, helping to guide capital towards projects that support environmental and social goals
 - The Accounting system for the environment impacts six key areas within climate change, mitigation criteria of electricity generation and supply, minerals, mining and metals, buildings, manufacturing and industry, transport and agriculture and land use
 - AgForce provided feedback via this consultation regarding the manufacturing element which covers biofuels, specifically addressing incorrect assumptions that could see sugar cane being deemed ineligible to be used as feedstock for biofuels.

MARKET ACCESS AND TRADE

- **Competition Policy**, AgForce has been instrumental in shaping policy views, via the NFF, as part of the
 - [2-year competition policy review](#), announced by Treasury in 2023 and the,
 - [Revitalising National Competition Policy](#), which sort to address National Competition Principles, National Competition Reform and Institutions and Governance.
 - AgForce seeks to enhance competition in the cane industry
- *Including providing feedback to,*
 - Supermarket Price Inquiry, Food and Grocery Code of Conduct Review and review into the ACCC (Australian Competition and Consumer Commission), seeking support for stronger powers and penalties to enforce Codes of Conduct, prosecute competition policy matters and unfair trading practices/contracts.
- [Merger & Acquisition](#) Reform. The government passed new legislation and implement the new merger system on 10 October 2024, introduced into Parliament the [Treasury Laws Amendment \(Mergers and Acquisitions Reform\) Bill 2024](#)

- **Competition and Divestiture Policy Statement of position** AgForce has since developed an (unendorsed) position.
- AgForce on behalf of Cane contributed the [NFF Traceability 'RegTech'](#) consultation, i.e., smart cane BMP, blockchain, AgCarE etc (Cane) 25/06/2024, as part of DAFF [National Agricultural Traceability Strategy 2023 to 2033 and Implementation Plan](#)

TRANSPORT

- THE National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) have assisted and supported AgForce heavy vehicle driver(s) (haul-out drivers) and industry members, through improved road user outcomes, through education, information, over infringement. We thank the NHVR and compliance officers for their ongoing support of our cane heavy vehicle drivers
- AgForce has contributed to the National Transport Commission (NTC) consultation and has been working with NTC towards a range of amendments to the HVNL and associated Regulations, including support for cross-border increase mass limits and weights, and other harmonisation initiatives.
- The NHVR's Safety and Compliance Officers will be working roadside and at inspection sites across the state, delivering our inform, educate and enforce approach to Queensland roads.



AGFORCE QUEENSLAND FARMERS & CROSS-COMMODITY ACTIVITY:

1. 49 Submissions for 2024
 2. **The Great Artesian Basing (GAB)**, AgForce legal Action against the Federal Government and Glencore, was instrumental in preventing industrial waste being pump into the GAB. And On 12 June 2024, Queensland government passed legislative changes ([the MEROLA Bill](#)) to permanently ban all greenhouse gas (GHG) storage, carbon capture or injection activities in Queensland's Great Artesian Basin (GAB)
 3. **School to Industry Partnership Program (SIPP)** successes, raising profile of careers in agribusiness and food and fibre production. The AgForce SIPP team visited 160 schools and connected with 6648 primary school students and 2062 secondary school students.
 4. **Climate Related Policy:** AgForce endorsed, [AgForce ESG \(Environmental, Social and Governance\) policy](#) principles and furthered work for consideration within [Australian Ag Sustainability Framework](#) and at National Farmers Federation.
 5. **State Conference & Queensland State Election - Promotional Campaign & Political Party Surveys - AgForce Back the Bush: Our People our Future: Secure your food security, support Queensland agriculture by voting to allow us to Produce, Provide and Prosper. For Campaign Survey Results, visit website: <https://www.voiceforqldproducers.org/>**
- **Workforce**, via the National Farmers Federation, continues to advocate for an Ag Visa's over the federal governments 'Worker Migration Strategy'.
 - **Telecommunications/Connectivity - 3G shutdown**, Members are experiencing reduced mobile coverage; or fortuitous coverage, which is where areas that had reception but were not technically on a coverage map. AgForce now seeks to capture data to provide detailed information to Telstra around areas that used to have coverage, which may be an avenue to assist and solve the problem. Those seeking alternative options to telecommunications access can contact (free service) of [Regional Tech Hub](#) for support.



AGFORCE CANE BOARD ACTIVITIES

GOVERNANCE AND REPORTING

- **Cane Board Changes**, effective November 2024, Russell Hall (a force of nature), step down as AgForce Cane President, and Chris Punzell, appointed Cane President. Matthew Pappin and Brad Bowen resigning as cane directors, due to other commitments.
- **Cane Competition Policy** (the board's Newly endorsed commitment, **effective October 2024**) that seeks competitive and efficient markets that encourage business activity, innovation, access to market, transparent pricing, and that enhance sugarcane productivity, and production systems.

COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES

- AgForce have secured a licencing agreement with Ag Etal to roll-out Ratoon Stunting Disease (RSD) test kits, which gives farmers a result within hours.
- AgForce Cane Seed Farm under new management committee
- AgForce Cane Water Perils, supported by improved compliance & governance structure.
- AgForce-advanced work in Ag Training, harvester and haul-out manuals, workforce ag apprenticeships
- [AgCarE Service Pty Ltd](#), property level assessment of natural capital and environmental footprint, empowering producers to tell their story.

2025 AgForce Cane Board



President: Christopher Punzell



Policy Director: Sam Forzisi



Craig Emmerson



Michael Penna



Russell Hall



Jason Quabba

WHAT TO EXPECT IN 2025

AgForce continues to collaborate with other industry partners such as the National Farmers Federation (NFF) to advocate on several national issues affecting sugarcane production.

AgForce is planning a '2025 Coastal Industry Roadshow' for March/April. The events offer members the opportunity to voice their needs, issues, concerns and challenges and discuss these in depth with fellow industry participants.

GENERAL ADVOCACY, AND FOR MEMBER AWARENESS IN 2025

- Burdekin Water Plan and Regional Water Assessment, Strategic Planning Review - Final states
- Sustainable Finance Strategy - Accounting for Nature *and Mandatory Reporting 1 January 2025*, impacting banks, manufacturing and supply chains - seeking farmers data, etc, (AgCarE the defender)
- Nature Repair Market & Bill implications to government's objective to 'protecting 30% of Australia's land and sea by 2030'.
- Land Access: Land 'purpose use', land protection, land valuations, co-existence and farmers Right to Farm.
- Ongoing ESG (Economic, Social and Governance): AgForce is part of the Queensland Emissions Agriculture Roadmap & Stakeholder Advisory Group
- The government's Nature Positive Reforms
- Renewable biofuels - access to farmers feedstock and need for state and national feedstock strategies
- Concessional farm Lending, including new entrants.
- National Traceability and Blockchain supply chain data reporting.
- Enhanced competition via stronger cane productivity systems.
- Right to Repair - Farm Machinery, progress legislation of government's commitment to allow farmers to source own repairers.
- AgForce Podcast Series - [Yarns from the Paddock](#).
- And much more under resource link at www.agforceqld.org.au



AGFORCE CANE MEMBER BENEFITS

AGFORCE CANE SERVICES & MEMBER BENEFITS

- AgForce Cane Membership, revised to 10 cents for 2025 season
- Crop Insurance - 6 cents per tonne
- Water Perils Coverage - 1 cent per tonne
- AgForce Cane Clean-Seed Farms
- Reef resources, i.e., Reef Audit factsheets and GeoPDF property maps.
- Property Valuation Assistance & Land Use / Co-existence
- Workforce - Industrial Relations support, Ag Training
- AgForce Policy team - dedicated member support.

CORPORATE PARTNER BENEFITS

AgForce membership doesn't cost, it pays!

As an AgForce cane member you receive several "Cane Service Benefits" and potential of thousands in savings and special deals through our corporate partners. To find out more call us on 07 3236 3100 or go to our website: www.agforceqld.org.au/services.

IN CONCLUSION

AgForce would like to acknowledge our cane members for their ongoing support. Your membership into the AgForce family allows us to advocate on your behalf, so you can focus on what you do best, grow food and fibre, and continue to support regional communities for the benefit of all families.

Thank you.

END.

