

MEDIA RELEASE

Growers need to back the sugar industry, not talk it down at every turn

Today, the Australian Sugar Milling Council (ASMC) has noted its dismay at grower groups choosing to frequently talk down the sugar industry.

"I am frankly dismayed at some of the commentary of grower representative groups talking down our great industry. A senior Canegrowers representative is on the record suggesting that mill breakdowns in the current crush have cost them billions," said Ash Salardini, CEO of the ASMC.

"Growers work damn hard, and I want them to be as profitable as possible. While I readily acknowledge delays cost money, I doubt that the average grower has lost \$857,000 this year due to mill reliability issues. If I'm wrong, the question is *lost \$857,000 off what total?*

"I also want it on the record that mill workers bust a gut to ensure the sugar supply chain functions year in and year out, and they are the unsung heroes of our industry.

"And now this week, we have another grower representative group in the Herbert seemingly blaming the mills for not controlling the weather."

"I am surprised I need to say this, but the sector that loses most from delays in crushing are the mills. Given our high fixed cost base, we are most incentivised to ensure a smooth and quick crush."

The ASMC and leaders from the sugar milling sector reached out to cane growing groups to work collaboratively on the opportunities and challenges facing our industry and our respective sectors, and to the credit of the Canegrowers organisation, they have engaged forthrightly and in good faith.

"We do not doubt it has been a sub-optimal year due to a variety of reasons, and no one is blameless for the season. But taking pot shots at each other doesn't resolve the challenges."

The ASMC continues to engage with Canegrowers to work on the challenges and opportunities facing the sugar industry.

"The sugar manufacturing industry supports more than 20,000 jobs, exports nearly \$2.5 billion annually, and contributes \$4.4 billion to the Australian economy. The global sugar market continues to grow at just under 2% a year, there are new diversification opportunities that will de-risk our industry in the coming decades, and we have just received a record R&D investment commitment from Sugar Research Australia with a strong contribution from a Queensland Government who understands the importance of sugar to Queensland."

"I know growers and their representatives are a smart hardworking bunch, and when we truly work together the world will be our oyster. The ASMC is ready and willing to take this positive and proactive approach".

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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.*