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Media alert: Rural Press Club event to highlight game changing opportunities for sugar in biofuels and bioenergy

Queensland's sugar manufacturing sector could be the next step in Australia's renewable energy transformation, providing a domestic biofuels capability and enough electricity for up to 500,000 homes, according to industry leaders speaking tomorrow (15 May 2025) at noon at the Rural Press Club of Queensland event, The Future of Sugar and Bioenergy in Queensland.

An expert panel from across energy and primary industries will outline how sugar manufacturing can supercharge regional economies through the continued production of sugar, and expansion into renewable electricity and low carbon liquid fuels production, turning one of Queensland's oldest industries into its newest energy powerhouse, and solidifying more than 20,000 regional jobs.

"This is the closest thing the sugar industry has to a silver bullet," said Ash Salardini, CEO of Australian Sugar Manufacturers.

"We have the opportunity to reinvest in retooling our factories to co-optimize the production of sugar and bioenergy, maintaining our position as Queensland's second largest agricultural export," Mr Salardini said. "At the same time, we can provide power to hundreds of thousands of homes and promote liquid fuel security for hard to abate sectors, including the Australian Defence Force."

Licella, with the support of an \$8 million grant from the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA), is advancing detailed feasibility and FEED studies for a proposed biorefinery at the Isis Central Sugar Mill in the Bundaberg region.

Licella's Executive General Manager David Taylor says that the project represents a significant step in diversifying Queensland's sugar industry, creating new revenue streams and supporting long-term economic sustainability for regional communities.

"We are delighted to be working with Isis Central Sugar Mill as we advance Project Swift and look to deploy our Australian-developed technology to unlock additional value from sugarcane residues, alongside new economic opportunities for regional Queensland," Mr Taylor said.



“With the potential to produce approximately 60 million litres of advanced biofuels annually, of which 40 million litres would be SAF, the project represents an important step towards scaling a local low carbon liquid fuel industry in partnership with key stakeholders operating across the sugar value chain.”

Craig Wood, CEO of Isis Central Sugar Mill said “Biofuels will be part of the future for the sugar industry, and Isis Central Sugar Mill is walking the walk on this opportunity with our pilot project to convert bagasse into biofuels.”

Australian Sugar Manufacturers is continuing to engage governments to develop enabling policy to capture the bioenergy opportunity, including a national biofuels feedstock strategy, and options for the establishment of a contract-for-difference with governments to catalyse capital investment in cogeneration.

“If governments come to the table and work with the sugar industry, we can ensure a regional manufacturing and renewable energy powers house in Queensland,” Mr Salardini said. “All the ingredients are here. We just need the industry-government coordination and commitment to capture it.”

About the event

This Rural Press Club event, in collaboration with Australian Sugar Manufacturers, brings together thought leaders and industry experts to unpack the critical role of sugar and bioenergy in Queensland’s future. The speakers will explore the opportunity the sugar industry also to deliver affordable, reliable and renewable electricity for Queensland. With energy affordability now a top political and economic issue, this is a conversation Queensland cannot afford to miss.

Industry stakeholders available for comment at the event

Craig Wood - CEO of ISIS Central Sugar Mill
Lucy Carter - Partner, LEK Consulting
Ash Salardini - CEO of Australian Sugar Manufacturers
David Taylor - Executive General Manager of Licella
Stefan Vogel - General Manager, RaboResearch

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***Australian Sugar Manufacturers (ASM)** is the peak industry body representing the nation’s sugar manufacturing sector, contributing \$4.4 billion annually to the Australian economy and supporting more than 20,000 jobs in regional communities. ASM works closely with its members, industry stakeholders, and government to develop and advocate for policies that enhance the sustainability, competitiveness, and long-term economic contribution of the sugar manufacturing sector. From the production of raw sugar, bio-based manufacturing and generation of renewable energy, the sugar manufacturing sector continues to support communities, create jobs, and foster a sustainable future for the industry, and the broader economy.*