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AUSTRALIAN SUGAR MANUFACTURERS MEDIA RELEASE

DISASTER RECOVERY SUPPORT CRITICAL FOR QUEENSLAND CANE RAIL NETWORK

Australian Sugar Manufacturers (ASM) is urging the Queensland and Federal Governments to include cane rail infrastructure in disaster recovery funding following severe flooding in the Bundaberg region.

ASM Chief Executive Officer, Ash Salardini said while it is still too early to determine the full extent of the damage, there are serious concerns about impacts to farms and the region's vital cane rail network.

"Our first thoughts are with the communities affected by flooding in and around the Bundaberg region, including workers and families connected to our two sugar manufacturing facilities in the region," Mr Salardini said.

"Currently it is too early to fully assess the damage, but there will likely be impacts to farms and to the cane rail network that underpins our local sugar industry."

Queensland's 4,000 kilometre cane rail network is one of the largest rail networks in Australia and plays a critical role in transporting around 30 million tonnes of sugarcane each year, keeping significant freight task off our regional roads.

"This privately funded network receives no direct support from state or federal government for its maintenance, despite carrying one of the largest land-based freight tasks in Queensland," Mr Salardini said.

"Natural disasters are becoming more frequent, and the cost of repairing damaged infrastructure continues to rise. Each major weather event costs the sector millions of dollars to repair - money the industry increasingly does not have."

Mr Salardini said the industry is already facing significant financial pressure due to declining global sugar prices, with many growers and manufacturers likely to face losses over the coming years.

"Without direct access to disaster recovery funding for cane rail infrastructure, the sugar industry may have no choice but to consider shifting the freight task onto public roads," he said.

"We have every right to use public roads, and continued indecision on disaster relief recovery funding will mean that we will have to actively consider using regional road networks. This will be bad for already stretched regional roads, bad for local congestion, and bad for the sugar industry, however, our options are narrowing," said Mr Salardini.



Mr Salardini said the situation was particularly frustrating given the role the sugar manufacturing sector is expected to play in strengthening Australia's fuel security and supporting economic development in Northern Australia.

"The sugar industry is regularly identified as part of the solution to Australia's fuel security through biofuels and ethanol production, and as a key contributor to the economic development of Northern Australia," he said.

"When disaster strikes, the industry simply needs the same level of support afforded to other critical infrastructure."

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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.