



SUGAR CANE FARMING

According to a local farmer, sugar cane has been burned in the Tweed Valley for around 90 years.

“While there are areas of Australia where cane is no longer burned pre-harvest, there are two main exceptions. The NSW and Burdekin River industries.

Cane can be successfully harvested with minimal losses of cane up to 80- 90 tons per hectare (TPH) without burning. The Tweed average is 115 TPH for 12 month old cane with 24 month old cane, 30% of the crop averaging 150 TPH this must be burned for maximum recovery of crop.

The global average for rain fed cane is 38 TPH so while Tweed has trouble cutting cane without pre-burning many countries/areas do not. Brazil for instance averages below 80 TPH so cane harvest without burning there is not a problem.

Cane is burned every day, weather permitting, between June and December. Each field is only burned once per year. How far can the ash travel depends on the fire and the time of day if there is an inversion layer in the atmosphere not far but if the air is clear and the ash rises it could get to the Gold Coast say 20-30km away.”