



'Bring Back Bruce'

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Caneland masterplanning *not* about development

Flood mitigation the key to forward planning for unused canelands

Division 9 candidate Bruce Dunne supports the Cane Growers Association's initiative of masterplanning Sunshine Coast caneland and floodplains.

Contrary to the scaremongering tactics of some other candidates, Mr. Dunne confirmed that masterplanning of the rural sector was not about residential or commercial development, rather identifying positive land uses and the way forward for land owners.

"Masterplanning is needed for canelands to continue to contribute to rural production, the regional environmental landscape and the lifestyle and cultural values appreciated by the Division 9 community, both now and into the future," Mr. Dunne said.

"Canelands and flood plains are still zoned rural under the regional plan and now is the time to identify the most appropriate means of flood mitigation and ensuring water quality.

"It's also a chance to protect and preserve important fauna and flora corridors and identify open space and recreation areas. It's about giving landholders some form of direction and options into the future.

"Clearly, it is *not* about urban development on flood prone caneland."

Mr. Dunne believes that implementing best practice flood mitigation is a key issue in managing the high proportion of ex-caneland across the Sunshine Coast.

Flooding is the main biophysical factor influencing the area.

"Flooding is also likely to worsen as a result of climate change – both during extreme events and with regular inundation due to sea level rise. Through forward planning we can help reduce the effects of flooding by ensuring that any future use of the land does not worsen any flooding; and actually lessens the effects," he said.

Much of the disused caneland has laid dormant since the closure of the Nambour Sugar Mill in 2003, despite the efforts of some landowners to establish other crops or introduce livestock.

Canelands cover almost 10,000 hectares, or 2.4%, of the Sunshine Coast and the 2006 CSIRO report, 'Future Use of Sunshine Coast Cane Landscapes' found that long-term economic returns from broad acre cropping (including cane) on approximately 70% of the land was difficult to achieve - due mainly to the land being flood prone and poorly drained, producing a limited set of farming or forestry opportunities.

"Canegrowers and landowners are working in conjunction with Council to establish the best economic, scientific and environmental outcome under the existing SE Qld regional plan 2009-2031," Mr. Dunne explained.

"A sustainable rural future for the canelands will be based on a combination of rural production. There is a need to establish best rural usage for each individual landowner and any of the future land use options need to respond to the biophysical constraints of the area, including flooding, acid sulfate soils and conservation - and its rural character."

He said a strategic approach to finding a sustainable and holistic use of the land would ensure that the value of the former canelands is protected, allowing its' continued contribution to the sustainability of the Sunshine Coast.

"This is particularly important in these times of major economic, social and environmental change at the local, national and global scales.

"The local and regional biodiversity needs to be enhanced and the floodplain and waterways need protection. Any rural development must complement the rural and natural landscape; and inappropriate development must be prevented."

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