

11 April 2019

By Chairman, Kevin Borg

Add your voice to our petition and oppose the Reef Bill

CANEGROWERS, in conjunction with AgForce and the National Farmers' Federation (NFF), have launched an online petition opposing the State Government's Great Barrier Reef Bill which seeks to tighten already onerous regulation of farming businesses in Reef catchments.

I urge every cane grower and farmer in Queensland to sign the petition (farmers.org.au/campaign/rejecttheregs/) and encourage your family, friends and business associates to do so also.

Public regional meetings are now being rolled out to enable people to talk to the committee in charge of the draft legislation and I urge people to turn up in large numbers to express their condemnation of the new Bill.

The proposed Bill is tantamount to an invasion of farmers' business privacy. It displays a level of belligerence and mistrust from the government which is completely uncalled for and ignores the steady progress cane farmers have made voluntarily in achieving best management practice in water quality.

Stringent reef protection regulations directly relating to farming in the Wet Tropics, Burdekin and Mackay-Whitsundays regions have already existed since 2010. These regulations require all farmers to:

- Undertake soil tests within one year of planting
- Use the results of soil tests to calculate the optimum amount of nitrogen and phosphorus in accordance with the Environmental Protection Act.
- Keep the soil test reports and records of the calculation of the optimum amount of nitrogen and phosphorus for a period of five years.
- Apply no more than the optimum amount of nitrogen and phosphorus.
- Keep records of the agricultural chemicals, fertilisers and soil conditioners applied including the amount, product analysis, date and method of application for a period of five years.
- Have a map showing the boundary of the blocks where soil testing and fertiliser and soil conditioner application has occurred.

Now, the Queensland Government is proposing to add worrying new elements to the regulations:

- Sugar mills, agronomists, extension officers and even chemical and fertiliser resellers will be required to keep and produce on request records of advice, products and services supplied to growers – an unheard of invasion of business privacy
- The Department of Environment and Science's chief executive will be able to review and change the standards of the regulations and level of interference at any time, without a mechanism for review or appeal.

- Growers will need to get an environmental authority licence to grow cane on their own land, where farmland has not been in cane production for three years of the previous 10, including one of the previous five years.

The level of distrust and belligerence displayed by the government is completely uncalled for and suggests an agenda dictated solely by green minority groups who are out of touch with farming today.

It certainly ignores the progress being made by farmers voluntarily and collaboratively within their communities to exhibit the seriousness with which they take their responsibilities regarding water quality.

Farmers all over Queensland are sick to their top teeth of the continued ignorance displayed towards them by this government.

The [#RejectTheRegs](#) petition will give us as farmers and regional communities a vital voice.

A public meeting will be held in Mackay this Thursday in the Gold Room Souths Leagues Club, 181 Milton Street, Mackay. Please register your interest in attending here:

<https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/work-of-committees/committees/ITDEC/inquiries/current-inquiries/16EnvProGBRPM>