



CANEGROWERS



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CANEGROWERS slams Wilmar and unions

CANEGROWERS Chairman Owen Menkens has slammed both sides in the long-running pay dispute between Wilmar Sugar and unions representing mill workers, calling the current situation reckless and potentially disastrous for the industry.

Yesterday, unions released recommendations from the Fair Work Commission's non-binding conciliation process held between the parties last week.

However, Wilmar has already rejected these recommendations, which inevitably prolongs the months-long stalemate and puts the dispute on course for a binding arbitration in September.

In the meantime, unions have vowed to continue the rolling stoppages that have wreaked havoc on the season to date.

"This dispute has dragged on for months and both sides have been either unwilling or unable to reach a resolution," Mr Menkens said.

"Enough is enough! Growers have had a gutful of being used as bargaining chips and not knowing from one week to the next if their mill will be crushing.

"The situation has already cost growers and contractors a lot, not just financially, but also a huge amount of ongoing stress and anxiety."

Mr Menkens said if the sides were determined to let the Fair Work Commission's arbitration process decide an outcome in September, then the crush should continue uninterrupted until that time.

"Letting the independent umpire decide seems like a sensible decision, as the parties are obviously incapable of negotiating the matter themselves.

"But if that's the course we're on, then a continuation of strike action serves no purpose. It's obviously not going to help anything. All it will achieve is further disruption to the season and damage to the industry.

"Both sides need to stop now. Stop delaying a resolution, stop holding half of Queensland's sugarcane industry to ransom, stop hurting cane growing families, stop damaging regional communities. Just stop!

"A month from now the Commission will decide. Until then, let's just get on with the crush for the good of the entire industry."