MEDIA RELEASE

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IT STARTED HERE: Mackay Canegrowers celebrates 100 seasons

"I often say, Mackay is the centre of the sugar industry, and our Centenary, which begins today, really drives that point home. Our State organisation put down its roots right here in Mackay," said Mackay Canegrowers Chairman Joseph Borg.

On January 21, 1926, the Queensland Cane Growers Association first met, at Mackay Boys School. Mia Mia grower George Johnson became the first Chairman at that 1926, and was a titan of the organisation for the decades to come.

Part of a broader sugar industry conference, the meeting was chaired by Deputy Premier (later, Queensland Premier) William Forgan Smith, Member for Mackay.

"Forgan Smith was a very interesting gentlemen," said Mr Borg. "He was also the Minister for Agriculture and had a vision for the way in which Queensland's agricultural industries could be stabilised through farmer and grazier-led organisations."

A piece of legislation was delivered, enabling the formation of grower-led associations empowered to charge levies to all producers in that sector, to help the farmer representative advocate for their members and drive change and structures that worked for farmers. It also enabled commodity-based marketing boards.

The cane growing sector made use of that legislation to form Queensland Cane Growers Association, setting a small levy.

"At that first meeting Forgan-Smith said: "*Whatever decisions may be arrived at, it is well to keep that important principle in view- that the interests of the whole are always greater than the interests of the unit and what is of benefit to all must be of benefit to the individual*."," Mr Borg quoted.

"And that is what has lain at the heart of Queensland Canegrowers for a century. Whether it is ensuring that growers get fair dealing with millers and their cane payments, or advocating for improved technologies and research to drive better mill performance, or better cane varieties, Canegrowers is there, fighting hard and speaking up.

"It's an important tradition, and one for which we are proud to carry the torch."

"These days, membership of Canegrowers is not compulsory. It is an honour that our members continue to see and put value on what we strive and achieve for them across industry relationships, advocacy, and farm practices. In unity, we maintain strength as growers.

"This cake is a sweet trimming to launch what is most certainly a proud year for CANEGROWERS Queensland, and especially Mackay Canegrowers."

The local industry will celebrate with a Centenary Gala Dinner at Mackay Turf Club on March 12.

"We are planning a night of music food and laughter for our local members," said Mr Borg. "It follows State Policy Council being held in the region, so Directors from across Queensland will join us, including our State Chairman Owen Menkens. With music from local favourites Mango Junction, and one of the region's best-loved characters, Meecham Philpott as MC, we expect a great night to celebrate this milestone!"

Tickets are available on Try Booking, head to https://bit.ly/3Zm4LIg . Special discount for Canegrowers Members!

The local commemoration of the Centenary was celebrated with a cake shared by staff and grower representatives.

CANEGROWE
MACKAY