The cane growing industry is proud of the ongoing success of our voluntary best management practice program, Smartcane BMP.

Acknowledged by the international accreditation program, Bonsucro, as meeting on-farm sustainable sugar requirements, the program is growing from strength to strength.

We are currently celebrating the 550th grower accreditation in the State. The Mackay district has the most grower accreditations at 106. Grower accreditations continue to increase and re-accreditations (undertaken as part of a five year review of farming operations) are also gaining pace. More than 122,300 ha have been accredited including 18 per cent of production under cane in Mackay.

In addition, more than 1950 cane farming enterprises have now been benchmarked, equivalent to 310,661 hectares.

Cane farmers throughout the Mackay/Plane Creek regions are showing the State and the nation they are conscientious about the way they run their farms, with environmental sustainability at the forefront of their everyday actions.

Yet despite support for the Smartcane BMP program from the State Government, there now appears to be an undertone that what the industry is doing is still not good enough.

It leads one to think that no matter what achievements are made by the farming sector we will see the goalposts continue to be moved, setting us up to fail and preventing any acknowledgement of our achievements and our ongoing success.

Yes, CANEGROWERS on behalf of members will continue to protest against the unnecessary mandatory Reef regulations put in place by the State Government last year. But on the flip side we have also attempted to instil in our members the responsibility we all have to farm according to modern day sustainable methods in order to protect and build on our natural capital.

As time goes on technological advances in testing have improved to the point where the authorities are now able to pick up even the slightest traces of farm chemicals in our water ways. Reports are still saying that these levels are not good enough. But many growers are now beginning to wonder when enough will be enough.

The message to all State Government representatives is that it is now more obvious than ever that the big stick approach is backfiring with growers. If you want our continued engagement you need to acknowledge the personal investment and progress that we’ve made rather than leave us to wonder what will need to be done for government to be content with our pace of change.

In other news, CANEGROWERS Mackay is disappointed by News Corp’s decision to move solely to digital and end print runs of our local regional papers. In particular, we are sad that
the Rural Weekly is soon to become a thing of the past. We can ill afford to lose these journalists who have told the stories of our vibrant rural sector so well. I regret that this is my last opportunity to communicate with you through this forum. CANEGROWERS Mackay has had a long and fruitful association with the Rural Weekly in bringing to you the issues important to the cane farming sector. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our readers for your support throughout the years and also for the great feedback that we receive as a result of this fortnightly column. I also want to thank all those journalists that have taken a keen interest in our great industry and for giving us the chance to be able to get our message across to our members and our communities.