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Submission against removing provision to apply to clear regulated vegetation for irrigated/high value agriculture.

Bundaberg Sugar Ltd (BSL) is a grower, miller, refiner, and marketer of sugar and related products in Australia. BSL owns approximately 20,000 hectares of land and is one of the largest cane growers in Australia, producing around 600,000 tonnes of cane per annum. BSL operates two sugar mills and a refinery in the Bundaberg region. Millaquin and Bingera mills crush in total around 1.6 million tonnes of cane per annum producing 220,000 tonnes of raw sugar and together with production from the refinery, the sugar is valued at around \$170 million. Most of the cane is transported by cane railway utilising around 330km of main line track.

BSL is a major employer in the region employing around 350 people with this number increasing to around 500 during the crushing season.

BSL's two mills currently have low throughput by industry standards with a combined crushing capacity in excess of 2.5 million tonnes per annum, i.e. BSL has the ability to crush an additional 0.9 million tonnes of cane per annum. BSL has been trying to increase throughput to its mills to ensure the viability of both mills. If throughput were to drop below current levels, BSL would need to consider closing Bingera mill.

Should this mill close, not only would there be associated unemployment but there would be a requirement to transfer cane currently crushed at Bingera to Millaquin mill which is situated in the vicinity of Bundaberg's town centre. This would have significant adverse community impacts if transported by road, as this would involve the transfer of 730,000 tonnes (43,000 full trucks) through town.

Compounding the lower than optimal throughput of the two mills is the changing landscape in the Bundaberg region as it experiences a shift from predominantly sugar cane growing to tree crops, namely macadamias and avocados. To counter this, BSL is continually assessing opportunities to increase cane supply to its mills. This has included investing in improved irrigation systems to increase yields on land it currently farms. In conjunction with this vertical expansion, it is also paramount for BSL that opportunities are available to increase the area of land under sugar cane, including land that currently contains regulated vegetation under the Vegetation Management Act. Provision needs to be in place to allow clearing of land that is suitable for growing irrigated/high value agricultural crops such as sugar cane.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Guy Basile", written over a horizontal line.

Guy Basile
Chief Executive Officer