

Burdekin Initiative Co-ordination Meeting held 5 March 2001.

Oral Presentation by Ian Haigh – Representative for Burdekin Canegrowers

Welcome to this meeting.

As a grassroots grower I am very interested in the outcomes of this Initiative.

Sustainable agriculture is of a particular interest.

I, like all my fellow farmers want to continue farming into the future.

I am also a member of the North Burdekin Water Board and Chairman of Pioneer Canegrowers a unit of CANEGROWERS. Today also represent Burdekin Canegrowers.

I mention this only to add weight to some remarks I will make today.

As a member of the Burdekin community I am also keenly interested in the outcomes as the long term sustainability is important to us all.

The more we understand what makes it all work the better we will be able to sustain and manage our resources.

Regardless of views expressed by some I know that farmers do care about their soil and resources that enable them to produce crops and make a living.

Some care more than others.

One of the outcomes of this initiative is to communicate results and solutions that will continue our sustainability to all growers.

How we go about that needs careful consideration and subsequent action.

Last year when George Nielsen, chairman of the NBWB, addressed this meeting he asked that the various agencies involved pulled together to avoid duplication and minimise the flow of mixed messages.

That is still very important especially when new agencies become involved as the program moves forward.

Another area of concern to us is the possibility that results of the programs in this Initiative will be viewed as sensitive to the stakeholders for whatever reason.

As farmers we will have plenty of reasons that something or other will not work etc.

A lot of us are resistant to change and are unable or not willing to look for the positives.

The politics of our various bodies will be expressed by many as a reason not to look at or consider some action.

That is not a reason not to look at everything together.

I ask that whatever the issue is it should not be blocked because some would view it as sensitive.

I am aware that some results of investigations are already being seen as sensitive.

All issues need to be properly analysed and outcomes considered by the parties involved before it is decided what is what.

Emerging issues should not be publicised prematurely for whatever reason, but be given the opportunity to be considered and debated by the stakeholders so the correct way forward can be decided that will ensure success not aggravation and rejection.

As farmers we are more inclined to accept facts and a reasonable solution than emotional claims that only serve to put us offside and defensive.

We have organisations that have a track record of helping our farmers make difficult decisions and accept a different path forward to secure our industry future.

Finally I would finish with one more request.

It is vital that whatever is decided as a result of this initiative's programs that a practical way of implementation and communication be developed so we can use the results in an effective way.

To often the result of excellent research is lost when it comes down to the paddock.

To put it bluntly if it is not practical to carry out, if it is not user friendly, then we are all in trouble.

And believe me that is important.

Looking round the participants today I do believe that is what will happen.

I just thought a reminder would not go astray.

Communication and practical solutions will ensure the success of the Burdekin Initiative.

It is that success that is so important to us all.

AND I MEAN ALL OF US.

Ian Haigh