

# Media release

11 September 2020

Contact Dean Cayley 0408 062 850 or Peter McLennan 0428 576 238

## **DROP THE DOUBLE STANDARDS, JACK: FARMERS TELL MAYOR TO FIX RATES MESS**

FARMERS reeling from a massive Bundaberg Regional Council rates hike of up to 235% have condemned Mayor Jack Dempsey for double standards after he attacked outgoing State Natural Resources and Mines Minister Anthony Lynham.

Speaking on the ABC, Cr Dempsey attacked Mr Lynham after the Cabinet Minister announced he would not be recontesting his seat in the October 31 State Election. He accused Mr Lynham of breaking the back of agriculture.

But Bundaberg region farmers from all sectors have come out swinging with one voice, challenging the Mayor to “drop his double standards” and “fix the rates mess on his own doorstep.”

A consortium of farmers which includes Canegrowers Isis, Bundaberg Canegrowers, Bundaberg Fruit & Vegetable Growers and Agforce has roundly attacked Cr Dempsey and his councillors.

A statement from the consortium today said: “We demand that Mayor Jack Dempsey and his Councillors rescind the motion that passed the 2020 Budget and recast the Bundaberg Region budget so that all ratepayers, including farmers, see a maximum increase no greater than CPI (Consumer Price Index).”

Bundaberg Canegrowers Director Dean Cayley, who has himself received a huge rates bill for the land his family has farmed since 1946, said: “Is Jack Dempsey joking? We know he’s a former Minister and used to spinning a yarn in politics, but how he can stand the shame of his own council budget is beyond me.

“Cr Dempsey’s council is doing a great job of breaking the back of our region’s farming industry on its own with this rates rise of up to 235%. This financial sabotage by our own council – and remember we get absolutely nothing for the huge costs being imposed on us – is hurting ALL farming operations across the region. Jack Dempsey needs to fix the mess on his own doorstep and drop his double standards.”

Canegrowers Isis Director Peter McLennan also weighed in, saying: “How Jack Dempsey has the audacity to criticise Minister Lynham when he, on his own turf, is delivering a killing blow to so many of his own producers is beyond the pale.

“If Jack Dempsey wants to talk about breaking the back of farmers, he should look to his own council’s actions.

“Bundaberg Regional Council is trying to sheet the rates rise home to the State Government, saying the land values have been set by the Department of Department of Natural Resources, Mines, and Energy have created the massive hike. But every council in Queensland faced the same situation at council budget time and only Bundaberg Regional Council has perpetrated this monstrous act against the heart of our community.”

He added: “This astounding rates rise, which comes in the middle of COVID and while the world is facing a global hunger pandemic, must be reversed.