

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES 2025-26

Sugar Research Australia Opening Statement

Thank you, Chair, for this opportunity to present to the Senate Estimates Committee. I am Mike Barry, the Chair of Sugar Research Australia, elected in Nov 2024, and I'm accompanied by the organisation's CEO, Mick Bartlett, who was also appointed in October last year.

Together, we work with the Board and Senior Leaders of the organisation to fulfil SRA's purpose and responsibilities. The Executive team is relatively new and together with the Board, have recently reprioritised KPI's to the areas of Variety development, productivity, farming systems and sustainability.

SRA is the leading research organisation dedicated to supporting the Australian sugarcane industry. Through collaborative research and innovation, SRA aims to improve productivity, profitability, adoption, biosecurity and sustainability for sugarcane growers and millers.

SRA is funded through a combination of levies and matched funding by the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, which approximates to industry contributions of 55%, contributions by government of 33%, and other funding making up 14%.

SRA annually consults all groups on research priorities and funding, and decisions are made considering all stakeholders, with priorities then set with our investors including growers, millers, and government, in mind.

As many of you are aware, the sugarcane industry has been experiencing challenging seasons for several years. Flooding along coastal regions of Far North Queensland, and Northern NSW, together with mill closures and the high-cost burden of operations, has contributed to the challenges faced by the industry.

Therefore, experiencing these conditions does reinforce the need for and value of effective and ongoing research, development, with an emphasis on the importance of encouraging adoption across the sector.

Thank you, Chair and Senators. We are happy to take your questions.