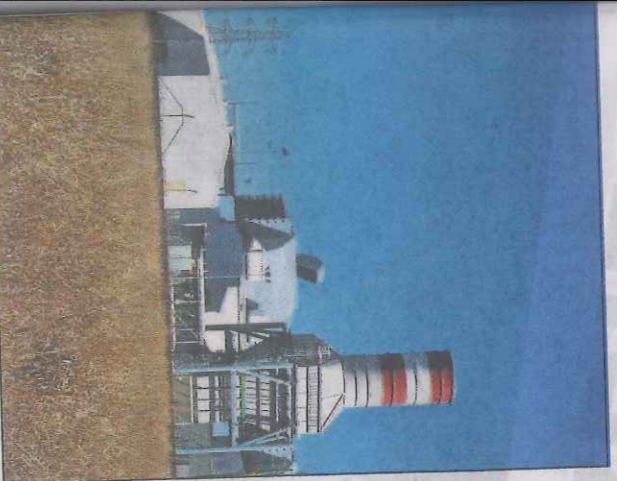


# OPINION

queenslandcountrylife.com.au/opinion

## EDITORIAL

# Nats' coal call risks energy errors of the past



**T**HE most significant thing you need to know about the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's comprehensive plan to lower sky-high power prices by about 25 per cent is that it's just that. A plan. First the federal government needs to get its fractious party room to commit to its National Energy Guarantee and the full suite of ACCC reforms to the electricity sector. Not to mention securing agreement among state governments of various party persuasions.

Paraphrasing ACCC commissioner Rod Sims, he argues poor policy and bad decisions have broken the market and it falls to politicians to fix it.

"We must move away from narrowly focussed debates; addressing affordability requires change across a broad front," he

says.

The ACCC calls for public investment in new power generation, with the technology to be determined by the market, to support new supply and to drive down prices.

The government commissioned the ACCC's report last year and is currently considering its response, which was released last week.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull is a vocal supporter of the ACCC's "technology agnostic" approach to new power supply. And so are two leaders in regional Australia representing some of those hardest hit by sky high power prices - Nationals leader Michael McCormack and his Resources Minister Matt Canavan.

But there is one confusing exception when it comes to coal.

"I'm a big supporter of coal, I know my

party is a big supporter of coal, and I know Malcolm Turnbull has said that whilst we are technology-agnostic, the fact is coal is going to play a very important part of Australia's future energy needs going forward," Mr McCormack says.

Mr Canavan agrees, arguing that "It's very clear from what (the ACCC) said that coal and gas and all other types of fuel should be included here".

Coal fired power plants are 40 year investments. Government has been shown to be a poor judge of the power market in the past.

Using public money to promote one particular type of long-lived power supply risks locking in elevated prices for years to come.

The ACCC has shown us what to do. The government should leave the energy market alone.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### PRODUCERS DUDDDED AGAIN

It was interesting to read in the *North Queensland Register* on 14/6/18, "Biosecurity-audits about to kick off".

I attended a workshop in Bowen on 25/8/2017 and we were told to just fill in your "Biosecurity Plan Template" to what suits your operation. The plans range from twenty to forty questions (no guidelines, no regulations) and to just put it in the drawer and forget about it; sounded a bit strange.

Now we find two more requirements, animal welfare and biosecurity, have been added to the LPA audits in October 2017. Were the majority of the industry consulted on this? We've been dudded again!

In *Queensland Country Life* on 24/5/2018 "Farm Biosecurity is central to good land management", is wrong! Good land management is to allow landholders the right to protect the land from unwanted intruders with no right to be on the land.

We have bureaucrats with no idea of what good management is all about making policy. They all claim to be experts but have no skin in the game, when it all goes wrong, they walk away and the landholder has to deal with it. Dudded again!

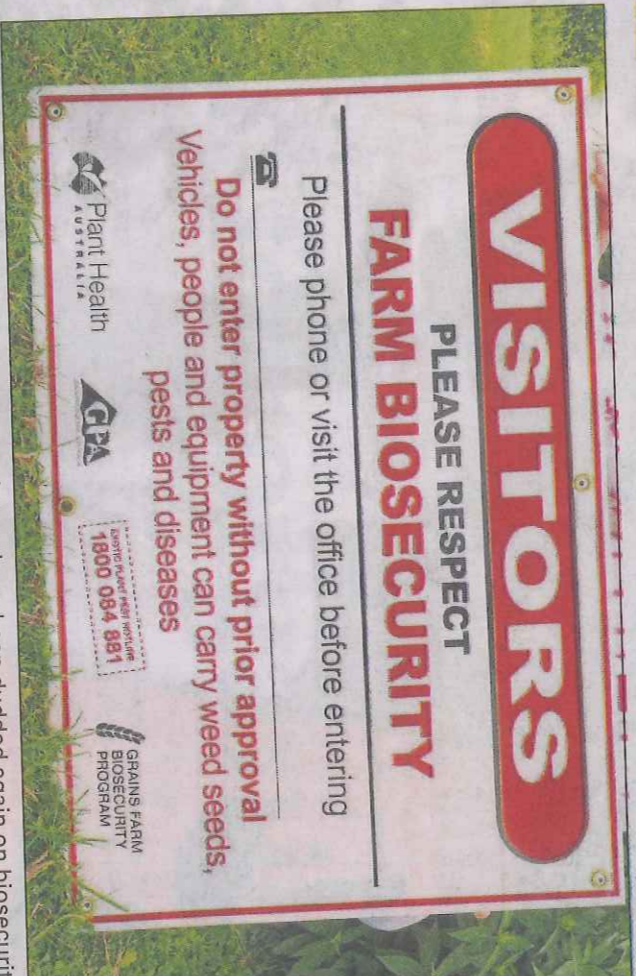
Also under the biosecurity banner in *QCL* on 24/5/2018 "Farmers act as custodians of the land ensuring it is sustainable for future generations." This statement is correct but how can landholders ensure the land remains sustainable when resource companies and government agencies have the power to ride rough shod over them and do what they want with no respect or responsibilities to the land holder, his financial position or the land? Dudded again!

It appears landholders are the only ones to have to abide by biosecurity regulations.

- Andrew Rea, Eton Vale, Bowen

### NEG TO HIT PRODUCERS HARD

The federal government is spinning its National Energy Guarantee as a plan to reduce the cost and to guarantee the supply of our energy. Are primary producers aware



Andrew Rea, Eton Vale, Bowen, says producers have been dudded again on biosecurity consultation.

of even a few of the proposals contained in this draft NEG? How many realise that "high usage" customers of energy will be called upon to reduce usage whenever the grid is threatened with overload?

If this becomes law it follows that these companies have no guarantee of supply! How long would such companies continue to persevere? Who will determine which customer is "high usage"?

How many producers have considered the consequences of a forced shut down of an abattoir, a packing shed and its associated refrigeration, a fruit, nut or vegetable processing plant, a sugar mill, their own irrigation plants? Are these customers seen as "high usage"? If such operations have to accept responsibility for maintaining their own "peak power", just how many could survive? What might cause the threat of an overload? A simple change of weather, where the wind stops blowing, where the sun is obscured by cloud, or both.

There is no capacity in current proposals to offer certainty of supply at all, though

there is a deceptive implication that this is the intent of the proposal.

The energy market is a broken mess, caused by government intervention in pursuit of ideological positions, and primary industry is threatened with severe hardship, if not extinction in many areas.

Contrary to claims that this NEG will reduce energy cost many do not believe these claims. Reducing cost on prices that have risen some 150 per cent in recent years by some 1 - 2pc is again simple deception.

Subsidised, mandated usage of so called "renewable energy" has brought us to this crisis and nothing short of the removal of both subsidy and mandated use will allow a correction to occur. Unless our government withdraws Australia from the Paris Accord this cannot happen. Our Prime Minister emphatically refuses to consider doing so! It is imperative for all producers to take a keen interest in this matter and start pressing their political representatives to act in the interest of industry and the nation.

- Ray Ward, Monto

## OFF SAYS

OFF frequently talks about the challenges and opportunities ahead for Queensland agriculture. By 2050, we are told that the world's food system will need to produce 70 per cent more to feed an increasingly crowded planet. Modern farming using plant biotechnology innovation will likely play an increasing role to meet these demands while ensuring we maintain sustainable farming systems in a changing and challenging climate.

Plant biotechnology continues to have significant benefits for farmers, communities, consumers, economies and the environment. Genetically modified (GM) crops have made a significant contribution to global food supply and security as farmers must sustainably intensify production.

The increased productivity of GM crops worldwide has produced an additional 213 million tonnes of soybeans, 405mt of maize, 27.5mt of cotton lint and 11.6mt of canola, which would not have been achieved with conventional technology. In 2016, the adoption of GM technology resulted in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions equal to the removal of 16.75 million cars through agricultural practices requiring less fuel use and storing additional soil carbon. GM crops provide greater opportunities to improve water use efficiency, reduce pesticide use, breed drought tolerance, and provide cost-effective solutions for reducing health problems, and nutritional deficiencies. For example, Golden Rice could more than halve the disease burden of Vitamin A deficiency in developing countries, and nutritionally enhanced wheat could halve bowel cancer rates in Australia.

Farmers are natural innovators and generally embrace technological advancement. In 2017 there was an 8pc increase in GM crop plantings demonstrating a willingness to grow GM crops when given access and the opportunity to do so. Growing more on less land, increased crop yields, enhanced international competitiveness and reducing agricultural's environmental impact are some of the benefits.

Governments must ensure non-science based and unnecessary costly regulation doesn't prevent farmers from reaping the benefits of and being a world leader in agricultural innovation. - Stuart Armitage, OFF president



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