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MEDIA RELEASE

Support for sugar sweetens code

A submission to the Sugar Code of Conduct Review by the powerful Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC) is positive news for the future of the industry according to Member for Burdekin, Dale Last.

The competition watchdog has highlighted concerns around negotiations between millers and growers and has asked the Review to include changes that would empower the ACCC to ensure choice in marketing.

"I have some concerns about the issues raised in the submission but the positive news is that the ACCC sees the value of choice in marketing for the industry as a whole," Mr Last said.

"You have an independent body whose priority is to ensure a fair go for consumers and businesses saying that Grower Choice should continue and should be enshrined in Federal Law."

Currently, Grower Choice is provided for in Queensland legislation as well as in the Code of Conduct, with the State legislation taking priority. If the ACCC's recommendations were enacted parties that breach the Code of Conduct would be subjected to fines.

"If the ACCC was empowered to enforce the Code it would provide another layer of protection for growers and for millers," Mr Last said.

"The Labor state government has made it clear that they don't support the Code of Conduct so having the ACCC on the grower's side is essential really."

"In recent months the State Government has proven they are anti-farmer but what the growers need now is confidence and assurance that they can choose who markets their sugar; not uncertainty."

With submissions to the review closed and public consultation completed, Mr Last believes that a good argument has been made to keep the Code of Conduct in place.

"Quite a few local growers made submissions as well as grower representative groups and other interested parties," Mr Last said.

"My submission centred focussed on how important a strong sugar industry was to local businesses as well as farmers and people directly employed in the industry."

"Over the long term we need to diversify the local economy but in the short term we all need a strong sugar industry."

The final report on the future of the Code of Conduct is expected before the end of the year.

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