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## MEDIA RELEASE

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**For immediate release**

### **LABOR REEF REGS A FARMERS WORST NIGHTMARE**

The worst nightmares of farmers have come true this week with landowners receiving a 64 page Environmental Risk Management Plan (ERMP), 51 pages of guidelines and almost a kilogram of propaganda from the Bligh Labor Government, demanding information about farming practices and a signed declaration under threat of massive fines and gaol terms.

Member for Hinchinbrook, Andrew Cripps, says many North Queensland farmers would find it very difficult to complete the time consuming paperwork without significant assistance and a number had already contacted him expressing concerns about the impact the new regulations would have on cane production and the viability of their farm in the long term.

“Farmers are anxious about the threat of \$166,500 fines or two year gaol terms that may be imposed on them for providing false, misleading or incomplete information in an ERMP, which they are forced to sign, because they are very complicated. Farmers don’t have confidence in the regulations, because many of them are not practical” said Mr Cripps.

“For a start, the ERMP’s must be completed by 31 September this year, smack-bang in the middle of the cane harvesting season, one of the busiest times of the year for the sugar industry. This just demonstrates a typical lack of understanding of rural industries. This is heavy-handed and unjustified targeting of farmers by the Bligh Labor Government” he said.

Mr Cripps said he had warned of the serious problems that would arise from the development of the so called reef protection regulations when the Bligh Labor Government rammed through the legislation in October 2009, which meant North Queensland farmers would no longer be farming, but undertaking an environmentally relevant activity (ERA).

“When the Bligh Labor Government’s legislation went through, North Queensland farmers were lumped in with other types of ERA’s such as sewage treatment plants and heavy metal refineries. This is ridiculous and an insult to farmers who have farmed sustainably for decades and adopted new methods as new technology became available” said Mr Cripps.

“The Bligh Government has offered no compensation to the sugar industry for the loss of production, or the time and expense to comply with the new rules, which include mandatory soil tests. What happens if farmers become unviable and are forced into non-compliance? Will Labor actually fine farmers, or lock them up, for protecting their livelihoods?” he said.

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