Pioneer Valley Water Co-operative Limited – electronic submission via QCA website
18 January 2023

The new tariffs aimed at encouraging small users to use more electricity during daylight hours (peak renewable input) do not take into account that for agricultural irrigation projects the optimum period is at night-time when there is little or no evaporation and generally little or no wind which affects all forms of spray irrigation.

A simple solution is to have a fixed rate agricultural (Food and Fibre) tariff of R=8cents and N= 8 cents. Increased food and fibre production will generate more government revenue.
As a distributor of irrigation water to our 250 co-operative members we have to pump water constantly (up to 120 hours) to ensure people on the outskirts of our scheme get their supplemented supply when they have ordered it. This means peak rate spikes and demand charges that are expensive and have to be passed on to our irrigators thereby making their water allocations too expensive to justify using the water. This follows on then to reduced production.

Another alternative is to utilize the Co-gen unit at Mackay Sugar Racecourse Mill to provide fixed rate electricity to all the cane growers in the Pioneer Valley through the existing Ergon Network. A network charge will ensure maintenance and repairs are covered. This could meet our growers requirements of 8cents and 8cents per kW, add another renewable microgrid to the State, and boost production of sugar cane in the region.

In the final analysis, increased electricity charges means increased water charges and thereby reduced production.