

Women in cane chat

By CLEMENTINE NORTON

GROWING up on a cane farm, Stacey McQuillen knows first-hand the powerful role women have in keeping the sugar industry ticking over.

She no longer has a direct hand in producing cane, but in her role with AusSAFE Super, she sees women every day who are keeping up with the boys in every aspect of farm-life.

"Men tend to run the farms, but women are the backbones — a lot of them do all the financial side," Miss McQuillen said.

"I deal with cane-farming women every day, so I am a keen supporter of (organisation) Women in Sugar."

A free workshop was held at the Old Bundy Tavern yesterday to discuss ways to promote the role of women in the industry, with keynote speaker Oli-

via Maragna.

Ms Maragna is the daughter of Maryborough cane farmers, and grew up to become the 2008 Queensland Young Business Woman of the Year.

"She was really inspirational," Miss McQuillen said.

"We came up with a lot of great ideas about how women can provide leadership in the sugar industry."

Canegrowers deputy chief executive officer Ron Mullins said out of about 90 elected representatives in the organisation, only four were women.

"We'd like to see that increase," Mr Mullins said.

"Women have a very strong role within existing partnerships — a lot of the time they are the heart of the business."

He said Canegrowers hosted the event as part of a series across Queens-

land, with workshops exploring practical ways to encourage women to become involved with the future development of the industry.

"It was a good workshop and we looked at a lot of areas for potential growth and ways that Canegrowers can support women," Mr Mullins said.

One of the main problems identified was time, with many women working full-time and caring for families as well as working on family farms.

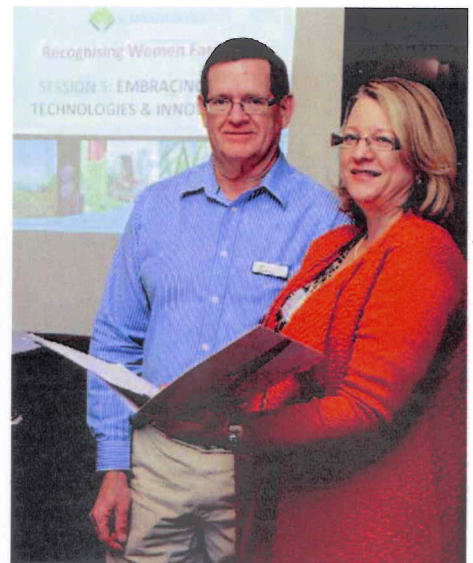
"Women (in the Bundaberg region) already have a strong role within the industry, and they have the Women in Sugar group," Mr Mullins said.

"With the conference we aim to improve communication with women in the industry and help them take a more active role."



Stacey McQuillen from AusSAFE Super chats with local Women in Sugar Dianne Bailey and Katrina Chapman.

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Canegrowers deputy chief executive officer Ron Mullins and Gordana Blazevic, who organises workshops for cane growers, at Monday's seminar for Women in Sugar.

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