

A photograph of a person's hands holding a smartphone, likely using an app, while standing next to a green tractor in a field of tall green crops. The background shows a line of trees under a clear sky.

LET'S GET SMART ABOUT RECORD KEEPING

Keeping records for your cane farming business is not just a requirement for Smartcane BMP accreditation. Records are a requirement under the Queensland Government's Reef regulations as well as workplace health and safety, industrial relations and other legislation. Records also form the basis of sound business management decisions and assist in monitoring trends and changes over time.

Keeping records may seem onerous for some and a distraction from the 'real' tasks at hand. However, capturing and keeping records does not have to be complicated.

In previous *Australian Canegrower* magazines we have discussed record keeping software, but sometimes knowing where to start can be overwhelming.

As 2022 continues to throw us curve balls, let's get back to basics. Your simplest record keeping solution may be in your top pocket.

BY KATE GOWDIE
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While a smartphone alone can't replace the sophistication and functionality of some record keeping/farm management software programs or apps, using your phone to capture photos, videos, notes or record messages can satisfy your record keeping requirements in the short and long term.

Keeping records in any format (even on the back of an envelope) is better than nothing at all but recording information in a format that can be shared allows business information to be distributed to a range of stakeholders or interested



office and isn't available the next time the tractor is operated, the tractor is moved to another farm and accessing the logbook becomes difficult.

A solution may be to keep the logbook in the tractor, have the operator complete the details then capture an image of this using their smartphone. That information can then be sent via text to relevant personnel as required. The hard copy remains in the tractor but a digital record, in the form of the photo is also available.

The camera function alone on your smartphone may satisfy the majority of your record keeping requirements.

Photos of farm maps, logbooks, chemical labels, meeting notes from the whiteboard, weather conditions or fertilizer blend tickets could all replace or support handwritten records.

Creating albums on your phone that allow you to store records in an orderly format and make it easy to access them into the future are paramount to the success of this method.

The notes function on your smartphone could also be a useful record keeping tool that may be more accessible than pen and paper. The notes feature should automatically date stamp the note with the date it was captured. Be mindful that if you add to this note at a later date, the original date may be overwritten.

Another option is talk-to-text phone apps that allow you to speak directly to your phone to capture written notes. There are a range of apps that will do this so look for one that is compatible with your phone and provides the functions you require.

While using your smartphone might make for a user-friendly and easy solution to record keeping, there are limitations. Phones can fail, get lost or fall into the irrigation channel.

If you are going to rely on phone records like photos, notes or voice messages, you will need to make sure that you have a suitable back-up system and adequate storage on your device.

For further information on record keeping and/or Smartcane BMP, please contact your local Smartcane BMP facilitator. ■

parties including; other business/ family members, contractors, mills, agronomists, extension officers, auditors, regulators, financial institutions, agents and insurance companies.

Good records are also critical in successful succession planning as well as during periods of absence due to holidays or health issues.

I've seen many record keeping systems for capturing something as simple as tractor hours. There's a logbook in the cab of the tractor, the operator completes the logbook then brings the book to the office when they are done. The hard copy records are then transferred to a computer or filed centrally at the office.

I have also seen this system fail on many occasions, the logbook gets left in the cab, the logbook gets left in the

Pictured: Accredited Smartcane BMP grower, Jeffrey Plath, from Isis District has embraced smartphone record keeping.