

Sugar mill closing after 140 years

PLEYSTOWE sugar mill near Mackay will close at the end of the year after crushing cane for nearly 140 years.

Its demise comes about because the district does not produce enough cane to run the Mackay Sugar Co-operative's four mills.

Chairman Eddie Westcott said crops had been declining for several years.

"We simply cannot maintain four factories for these smaller crops," he said. "There seems to be a fundamental shift in people's confidence at the moment and we are not going to commit to spending lots of capital in the milling operation until we can see some return of confidence in the growers."

The mill is the fourth to disappear in Queensland since the turn of the century.

The others were at Nambour, Bundaberg and Mourilyan.

The announcement of the Pleystowe mill's closure was not un-



SUPPLY ... crops are getting smaller.

expected, according to Canegrowers CEO Ian Ballantyne.

Rationalisation was the "golden thread" touching all parts of the industry from deregulation and marketing to restructuring. The number of growers had fallen by 2000 to 4000 in five years.

Meanwhile, unseasonal wet conditions have delayed this year's harvest from Beenleigh, south of Brisbane, to far north Queensland. Some districts are weeks behind with the cut.

Peter Morley

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