



Rob Katter MP
Member for Mount Isa



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Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House QLD 4000

RE: Inquiry into the impacts of invasive plants (weeds) and their control in Queensland

I write to make a contribution to the investigation into the impacts of invasive weeds and their control in Queensland. As a representative of a vast rural electorate, the issue of Prickly Acacia and other invasive species is a high priority. Devastation caused by the existence of this plant doesn't just impact the region environmentally, it also causes huge economic problems.

I have come into contact with small to medium landholders who have spent upwards of \$100,000 a year on control of Prickly Acacia on their property. As 20% canopy cover of this invasive species can cut pasture production by 50%, it is evident its presence eats away at both the productivity and profits of our landholders and has negative flow-on effects to our towns.

For that reason alone industry in regional QLD must be given every opportunity to deal with this threat. Without both better grazing conditions and stable control measures we are likely to see land lose its health, producers lose their viability and ultimately an exodus from rural communities. Therefore while discussing current funding models it is imperative this committee seeks to find solutions for better management of this pest. At the very least, the spread of Prickly Acacia needs to be stopped before it moves further into the Lake Eyre catchment.

Under current programs there is a lack of funding and coordination between councils. Councils should be encouraged to cooperate and be provided with adequate funding to implement joint solutions. A lack of consistent funding for these programs has also been an ongoing issue. Despite these ongoing problems there have been some successes with one NRM group reporting the eradication of 50 million Prickly Acacia plants in two and a half years on a budget of just \$365,000 per financial year from the Queensland Government.



This success was only achieved with other substantial contributions to the Group. It is clear there is significant room to grow similar programs which will continue to benefit local businesses and also employ locals.

As one of the biggest and least discussed environmental disasters in Queensland the committee must seek to expand on current successes and explore programs which provide producers with an incentive to control the weed, such as reduced land rents for pastoral lease holders or reduced rates for freehold land owners.

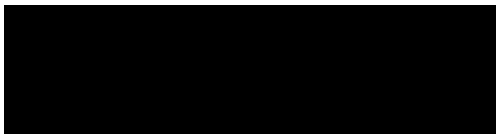
I do acknowledge that a small number of producers see value in the Prickly Acacia to a limited extent and I urge the committee to look at measures for addressing the issues through control rather than eradication. Targeted programs that focus on the control of Prickly Acacia across the affected region can provide a stimulus for job creation and flow on economic activity in a number of ways. Beyond the direct labour required for control programs, I am aware of a number of businesses looking to value add to Prickly Acacia waste by turning it into a low emissions fuel to sell into established markets.

The Mitchell grass plains are a highly valuable, yet often unrecognised, natural asset to Queensland. Regrettably we are seeing the plains rapidly convert into a Prickly Acacia woodland by this “cane toad” of invasive weeds. Its deterioration is often overlooked by the mainstream media however its loss would be as devastating to regional Queensland as the loss of the Great Barrier Reef would be to areas on the coast.

I encourage the committee to use this review to look beyond the effectiveness of existing programs to the opportunities that exist to turn this problem into a solution for the agriculture industry and regional communities.

I look forward to exploring solutions and current measures into this problem further.

Yours sincerely



Rob Katter

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