



Speech by

**JEFF KNUTH**

**MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN**

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Hansard 17 November 1998

### **NOXIOUS WEEDS**

**Mr KNUTH** (Burdekin—ONP) (7.10 p.m.): Over recent weeks and in the past there have been many reports of fish kills in north Queensland's creeks and ponds. A fair amount of unfounded criticism has been directed towards agricultural and horticultural farmers for those supposed kills of resident fish populations. The claims have been unsubstantially based on fertiliser and pesticide run-off into adjoining watercourses and ponds situated adjacent to the approximate locations of farms.

Some recent studies have indicated that the latest fish kill in north Queensland was due to lack of oxygenisation of the water. This has been scientifically linked to the choking up of the ponds and creeks due to two introduced water weeds known as hyacinth and salvinia. These two noxious weeds have been the curse of our watercourses for years and it is really time to get serious about their permanent removal and destruction.

A third weed that is causing more problems to watercourses and lagoons but has not been receiving the same attention is the water plant cumbungi. This plant is appearing more and more in our north Queensland catchment watercourses, lagoons and ponds and is becoming a disaster in the Burdekin wetlands area. Cumbungi has not been declared a noxious plant, yet it is proving to be more detrimental to the waterways than the other two weeds. Cumbungi is responsible for choking the life out of ponds and lagoons, mainly in the way it restricts waterfowl from landing in the water.

Cumbungi is a tall, robust reed. I have seen pictures taken of a watercourse several years ago when it was free of cumbungi and full of wildlife. Presently, the same watercourse is almost devoid of waterfowl and looks ugly. I believe that if cumbungi is not addressed and declared, it will choke up all the waterways in the Burdekin area and there will be an environmental disaster within two years. In some areas there already is such a disaster. I believe that the Department of Environment should be looking into cumbungi, along with hyacinth and salvinia, before they spread any further and kill more marine life and destroy more waterfowl habitat.

I bring the Waipuna system to the attention of the Minister. The Waipuna system is especially designed to control soft tissue vegetation. The Waipuna system pumps superheated water, which is then floated on the current watercourse into the target vegetation at a precise temperature, pressure and volume. The boiling water caps the stem and starves the root system. This is an environmentally friendly system of killing noxious weeds, however funding needs to be made available by the Queensland Government to ensure that the system can be put to use.

Currently, councils and private contractors have access to the Waipuna system, but they need a commitment by the Queensland Government to allocate the moneys needed. I ask the Minister for Environment and Heritage to look into this system and at what is happening in north Queensland's waterways before we have more environmental degradation of our waterways. It is only a matter of time before another fish kill occurs. We need to re-oxygenate the waterways to preserve our marine life.

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