



Speech by

**Hon. HENRY PALASZCZUK**

**MEMBER FOR INALA**

Hansard 9 March 1999

### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

#### **Wollemi Pine Project**

**Hon. H. PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries) (9.53 a.m.), by leave: As I address the House this morning, in Sydney the New South Wales Government is making an announcement about the rare plant pictured in this photograph. The plant is so rare that few people on the planet can claim to have ever seen it. It is regarded as a living fossil with its closest relatives dating back more than 100 million years.

The plant in the picture is the Wollemi pine, named after the only place in the world where it has been discovered, the Wollemi National Park, 150 kilometres north-west of Sydney. This morning's announcement confirms a Queensland tender has secured the exclusive world rights to propagate and commercialise Wollemi pine. It is a threatened species and commercialisation has been recommended as the best way to preserve it. The successful Queensland tender, proposed by the Department of Primary Industries and Brisbane's Birkdale Nursery, will generate new jobs and new exports for Queensland. In the development phase alone, 50 jobs will be created with a multimillion-dollar export boost each year. Late last year, the New South Wales Royal Botanic Gardens selected the Queensland tender ahead of 13 other interstate and international proponents.

This joint arrangement combines the world-renowned research and development expertise of the Department of Primary Industries with the international marketing skills and excellence of the Birkdale Nursery. As a New South Wales Government spokesman said in the Sydney Morning Herald this morning—

"It's certainly something that is living on Sydney's doorstep but at the end of the day it's important that the most capable group gets the job."

The Department of Primary Industries will invest \$6m into the development of Wollemi pine with two million plants planned to be sold annually into the new millennium. Birkdale Nursery, which in recent years has developed export markets in North and South-East Asia, Europe, the Middle East and the Pacific islands, will market the plants domestically and abroad.

Wollemi pine was discovered five years ago and consists of two natural stands with a total of 40 mature individuals and 200 seedlings. The exact location of the Wollemi pine has not been publicly revealed and there are tight controls on all plant material removed from these natural stands. Birkdale Nursery director—

**Mr Welford:** Good electorate, that.

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** Certainly. Barbara McGeoch sums up the commercial opportunities for her company and our State very well—

"Not only will the Wollemi pine provide us with an exciting business opportunity, but we will be able to offer the global marketplace a chance to share the enjoyment of owning, nurturing and conserving an ancient, endangered plant."

Where else can local expertise and innovation be used to ensure a very rare and endangered plant, discovered hundreds of kilometres away, be preserved for future generations while commercialising it, creating new jobs and new exports? I ask the question: where else but Queensland?