



Speech by

Hon. HENRY PALASZCZUK

MEMBER FOR INALA

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Wollemi Pine

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries) (10.05 a.m.), by leave: Earlier this year I announced that Queensland had won the exclusive world rights to propagate and commercialise the rare living fossil, Wollemi pine. I have brought a Wollemi pine into the House for the interest of all honourable members but, unfortunately, it is far too rare to table. Indeed, Wollemi pine is only found in two natural stands in an isolated section of the Wollemi National Park near Sydney. The exact location of these natural stands has not been publicly revealed.

The Department of Primary Industries and the Brisbane based Birkdale Nursery were awarded the rights to commercialise Wollemi pine on behalf of the New South Wales Royal Botanic Gardens ahead of proponents from interstate and overseas. I can announce today that work is under way in Queensland to propagate the Wollemi pine, whose closest relatives are fossils from about 100 million years ago. Construction of a new climate controlled greenhouse and potting shed for the propagation of Wollemi pine at Gympie is due to be completed before Christmas. For the honourable member for Gympie, that is good news because that is going to create more jobs in his electorate. Additional facilities at the Wollemi propagation complex at Gympie are due to be completed in February.

This project will generate new jobs and millions of dollars in new exports. Two million plants are planned for annual sale by the year 2005. Wollemi pine has enormous potential as a household plant, especially in the lucrative Japanese market where about 300 million conifer pot plants are sold each year. More than 50 jobs are expected to be created in the development phase of this project alone.

Importantly, commercialisation of Wollemi pine will also ensure this living fossil is preserved and any illegal trade is discouraged. Later today I will join representatives from the Department of Primary Industries and Birkdale Nursery to demonstrate the propagation process. Queensland is using its growing capacity as a Smart State to generate new jobs and new profits and, at the same time, preserve this rare living fossil for future generations. I will hold up the sample of the Wollemi pine for the benefit of all honourable members. Every time I look at this beautiful plant, all I can think of is jobs, jobs, jobs.
