



Speech by

Hon. R. WELFORD

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

Hansard 25 March 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Parthenium Weed

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (10.07 a.m.), by leave: I wish to inform the House of an important initiative by the Beattie Government to support rural Queenslanders. Last week, a workshop was held at Roma to develop a Queensland-wide strategy to control parthenium weed. As our rural community is well aware, parthenium has the potential to dominate the environment and reduce productivity in both grazing and cropping areas.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr WELFORD: I appreciate that the Opposition is not interested in this subject, but I am concerned about rural communities. I will tell the House what the Government is doing to address the concerns of rural communities.

Parthenium is an expensive and difficult problem to control. It poses a threat to human health as it can cause severe allergic reactions. Late last year, there was extensive germination of parthenium weed in central Queensland brought on by early rainfall and flooding. The Beattie can-do Government has provided immediate financial and human resources to help land-holders combat the threat to pastures. A sum of \$220,000 was allocated to cover the cost of free herbicide to local government for roadside spraying and for the construction of wash-down facilities at Taroom and Injune. Another \$400,000 is being spent on research on biological control agents.

Last week, stakeholders met in Roma to start work on a Statewide strategy—a long-term plan to protect rural land-holders and their important contribution to our economy. Participants represented a wide variety of occupations, regions and expertise. A working paper arising from the workshop addresses health issues and primary production impacts through a range of strategies.

There will be wide consultation prior to the drafting of the Queensland parthenium weed strategy. I am pleased to say that the member for Fitzroy has taken a keen interest in the issue and has drawn my attention to the concerns of the rural constituents in his electorate. With this community engagement process moving quickly, a strategy should be ready for endorsement by late May.

Our Government's objective in the field is aimed at restricting core infestations of parthenium in central Queensland and preventing its spread to other parts of Queensland. The Roma workshop endorsed this objective. In addition, the Government has launched a three-year project across southern Queensland, with the assistance of Natural Heritage Trust funding, to further combat the spread. The project will focus on four key elements: awareness, prevention, eradication and containment. It will support the initiatives of the Queensland Murray Darling Committee and the South West Local Government Association to stop this weed gaining a foothold in the region. It will be overseen by a community-based steering committee chaired by Mungallala land-holder and councillor, John Ford.

Industry, catchment and land-care communities and all levels of government will work together to develop effective strategies for on-ground action. Some of the issues identified to date include the spread of parthenium by vehicles, machinery, stock and fodder, the availability and coordination of resources, and incomplete data and information. This Government, the can-do Beattie Government, will work closely with all stakeholders to develop effective and relevant strategies to control this threat to rural production. Our Government has been more active than any Government has ever been before in tackling these weed problems. We will continue to work to protect the livelihoods of rural families.