



Speech by

Hon. R. WELFORD

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

Hansard 28 April 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Black Striped Mussels

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (10.03 a.m.), by leave: Over the last month officers from the Departments of Primary Industries, Transport and the Environmental Protection Agency have been working feverishly to protect Queensland's ports from infestation of the black striped mussel. Honourable members will recall the discovery of these introduced marine pests late in March in three anchorages in Darwin, and would be aware of the extreme measures necessary to eliminate them. There have been grave fears that vessels, in particular the northern prawn fishing fleet, moored in the three areas since Christmas were infested.

While Commonwealth, Queensland and Northern Territory authorities have had no trouble identifying fishing trawlers and agreeing to satisfactory treatment of them at sea, Queensland was also being threatened by an unknown number of other vessels, including cruising yachts. I wish to inform the House that a total of seven vessels known to have moored in either Cullen Bay Marina, Tipperary Waters Marina or Frances Bay Mooring Basin did come into Queensland waters and ports and have been thoroughly checked.

Under the protocols developed in agreement between the Commonwealth and Queensland, officers from each of the departments have inspected the hulls of each of the vessels as well as their internal plumbing. Some of these inspections have required departmental divers scouring every centimetre of the hulls as well as carrying out endoscopic investigation of the seawater intakes.

Some members with maritime interests would be interested to learn that the most environmentally safe method for the eradication of black striped mussels is circulating water heated at over 50 degrees centigrade down through the ship's plumbing for half an hour. Three Cairns-based prawn motherships that tie up against northern prawn fleet vessels and service other vessels to and from the fleet have also been asked to treat their internal seawater systems and will have diving inspections of their hulls.

An enormous effort has gone into locating and treating vessels that may have come into contact with black striped mussels and I congratulate officers from each of the three departments for their dedication to the task. That effort is continuing. While we are confident that no Queensland port has been infected, a comprehensive monitoring system of the State's ports from Karumba to Coolangatta is being implemented. At the same time, we will continue to work closely with the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service to determine the long term directions for controlling the introduction of this insidious marine pest introduced by hull transport.

This is yet another example of this Government's proactive approach to protecting jobs and the environment and to securing the future of our important primary industries.
