



Speech by

Hon. R. WELFORD

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

Hansard 7 December 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Parthenium Weed

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (9.44 a.m.), by leave: One of the most serious threats to Queensland's agricultural productivity is the threat posed by parthenium weed. This weed of national significance has already taken a foothold in key grazing and cropping areas of the State. Parthenium not only threatens these pastoral and cropping lands; it also poses a threat to human health, in some cases causing hay fever and allergic dermatitis.

Land-holders have long provided our front line against the spread of parthenium, and we have relied heavily on their views and experience. Today I am pleased to advise the House that the Queensland Parthenium Weed Strategy has been developed in partnership with rural land-holders to coordinate the fight against this rural menace. This is an important initiative by the Beattie Government to support rural Queenslanders. This strategy grew out of a workshop held in Roma in March at which key stakeholders gathered to work out ways of managing this weed. Subsequently, input has come from people with a variety of expertise representing many different occupations and regions.

The completion of the Parthenium Weed Strategy marks the start of a new era of coordinated management of this serious pest plant across Queensland. Parthenium weed has infested areas in central Queensland and there have been outbreaks in the south and west of the State. It has the potential to spread over much of eastern Australia unless active preventive measures are taken. This new strategy has been endorsed by the Chairman of the Parthenium Weed Management Group, Mr John Murphy, a grain harvester in the Kingaroy area, and the Rural Lands Protection Board. Its implementation will be managed by the Parthenium Weed Management Group, which includes representatives from across the State, as well as members from New South Wales and the Northern Territory.

By involving as many people in the community as possible and placing an emphasis on limiting the spread of parthenium seed, the Government will be accelerating efforts to safeguard extensive areas of our State's rural lands. Rural communities are well aware that parthenium seed can be spread by the movement of fodder, stock, vehicles and farm machinery. Coordinated actions taken to prevent this spread are being developed through a cooperative approach. There will be measures to improve community awareness, and land-holders on properties with established infestations will be offered skills training in control techniques. In addition, over \$400,000 will be spent this year on research into new biological controls.

Land-holders and community groups are working with the Government to use these control agents in a sustainable management system to reduce the impact of this weed. The introduction of the Parthenium Weed Management Strategy reaffirms the Government's commitment to working in partnership with regional and rural Queensland communities to improve agricultural productivity and the quality of life of rural communities.
