



Speech by

Hon. V. LESTER
MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

Hansard 14 September 1999

GIANT RAT-TAIL GRASS

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (10.12 a.m.): I refer to the greatest noxious weed threat that this nation has ever seen, giant rat-tail grass. This tough type of grass from South Africa has spread to Gympie, Gladstone, Rockhampton and to the north west of those places. A number of properties have been severely affected. For example, a property that had a carrying capacity of 1,500 cattle has seen that capacity fall to 500, and it is getting lower. Cattle cannot eat the weed. Once eaten, the seed of the grass is passed through cattle and is deposited on the ground, where it grows again. Wet seeds of the grass are sticky and are spread readily, for example, by birds. The seeds can also float on top of water. The weed can destroy the environment and can cost millions of dollars through land loss; affected land can never be used again.

Years ago, I gave the same warnings about parthenium weed, and we did not do enough about it then. We need to spend more money on eradicating this weed now. I seek leave to table this vacuum packed specimen of the weed in the Parliament.

Government members interjected.

Mr LESTER: This is not something to laugh about. It is a serious matter.

I call on the Government to purchase a property and to fund the best available scientists to work on the eradication of this weed. The weed should be put on the national list of noxious weeds. Let us start early and deal with this weed now before it spreads, degrades our land and results in millions of dollars being lost through properties being rendered unviable. I seek the support of the Parliament to do something about this weed not tomorrow but now.
