



Speech by

Hon. V. LESTER

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

Hansard 27 April 1999

PARTHENIUM WEED

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (10.26 a.m.): I alert the Parliament to the continuing spread of parthenium weed. This weed, which was imported accidentally from the United States some years ago, has now spread to many, many parts of Queensland and I am told that it has spread to some parts of western New South Wales. Some 20,000 seeds per plant can be generated and the weed regenerates every three weeks. It smothers grass and prevents it growing.

I have learned that, unfortunately, there are now some 12 properties in the south-west of the Blackall Shire that are quite severely affected. This could lead to the spread of this weed to the Paroo and Bulloo River systems and Cooper Creek. If that happens, we know the consequences.

I commend the work of the locals. However, the problem of parthenium weed is too big for them alone to control. I recognise that, at times, some small schemes have been initiated by the Government to assist. However, there needs to be a bigger, more focused commitment to biological control. There needs to be established a crack team of at least 20 persons to be ready to respond immediately there is a need, whether that is after rain, in steamy weather, or whatever. It is too late to do anything three months after that weather event.

I also call upon the Federal Government to get involved in this matter. It seems to want to stay away from this issue. However, I am led to believe that parthenium weed has now spread to some parts of other States, particularly New South Wales. There is no reason that the Federal Government could not assist by perhaps getting the Army involved or trying to assist in other ways. There needs to be at least \$1m spent annually over the next five years to eradicate this weed. Small schemes do not work. Money, and enough of it, spent now will save millions of dollars in the future through stemming production losses which, of course, mean so much to a State. I cannot emphasise that this issue, which I brought up many years ago, is with us and it is real.

Time expired.
