



Speech by

**Hon. HENRY PALASZCZUK**

**MEMBER FOR INALA**

---

Hansard 29 November 2001

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Queensland Turfgrass Foundation**

**Hon. H. PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (10.12 a.m.), by leave: Mr Speaker—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** Recently I had the—

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Callide will cease interjecting.

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** Recently I had the great pleasure of launching a new foundation aimed at accelerating Queensland's development as a leader in tropical and subtropical turf species and its management. A first for Australia, the Queensland Turfgrass Foundation will significantly raise the industry's profile by allowing its players to pool resources and expertise, to promote the industry and to guide its growth and development through research and education. I am pleased to inform members that the Department of Primary Industries will work closely with the foundation and the turf industry to get this foundation up and running.

Amenity Horticulture, in which the turf industry plays a major role, is big business in Queensland, and we are becoming increasingly aware of the enormous contribution the industry is making to our standing as the Smart State. In fact, the industry contributes approximately \$1.5 billion annually to the Queensland economy, and more than 35,000 people are employed within the industry. Despite this, the extent of the impact of the industry, and indeed the challenges of the industry for the future, remain relatively unknown. The initial cost of laying turf, for example, is often dwarfed by its maintenance costs. It is to this end that the foundation will make a valuable contribution.

Councils in south-east Queensland spend an estimated \$300 million annually in maintaining grassed areas, and millions of dollars is spent by our top sporting clubs in establishing world-class playing fields. From my experience, the turf research currently being undertaken by the Department of Primary Industries' Agency for Food and Fibre Sciences demonstrates that the potential gains from becoming smart in turf management are enormous.

Just last week I announced that the Brisbane Lions players could soon be playing on home turf even in Melbourne, thanks to DPI research in this area. Among new turfgrasses being cultivated at the DPI's Redlands research station are some more shade-tolerant varieties perhaps better able to handle the unique conditions in modern sports stadiums. The DPI is working closely with Melbourne based company HG Turf to investigate the performance of these varieties on major stadiums in the south. Early next year, planting material from the research station will be established in small plots at Colonial Stadium and other stadiums in Victoria. The current work with HG Turf focuses on promising new turfgrass varieties sourced from overseas by DPI but not yet available commercially. Members can see that the possibilities for the future of this industry are very good, and we are hopeful that the new foundation will position the industry to take advantage of that.

The turf industry in the United States alone is worth more than \$30 billion annually. Presently, Australia imports most of its grass cultivars from the US, but there is enormous potential for

investigation of native grasses. The establishment of this new foundation means that we are in a position to take advantage of a large proportion of this market share. Potential export markets include tropical areas such as South-East Asia and arid areas such as the Middle East.

---