



Speech by

Hon. HENRY PALASZCZUK

MEMBER FOR INALA

Hansard 3 June 2003

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Wheat Streak Mosaic Virus; SARS

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (10.11 a.m.): I want to update honourable members on the national response to the detection of wheat streak mosaic virus. On Friday a meeting of the national management group determined that the cost of eradicating wheat streak mosaic virus far outweighed the benefits. Therefore, the virus is no longer regarded as nationally exotic.

The virus has been detected at two sites in Queensland—at the Leslie Research Centre and Wellcamp Research Station on the Darling Downs. So far all test results from all samples collected here in Queensland have returned negative. Queensland will maintain the approach of containment within these two DPI sites.

Unfortunately it seems this virus has become well established in at least parts of Australia. Whilst these detections are regrettable, the fact that we have not seen severe damage in recent seasons indicates that the virus poses a small threat. The Queensland government has worked closely with the federal government, other states and territories and industry on the response to this virus. We agree that a full eradication campaign would not be justified. The fact is that the virus may be present in the Queensland grain belt. However, testing so far has not found the virus, but of course further surveillance is planned in spring.

It is critical that this survey work is undertaken to determine the full extent of the virus. It is not practically feasible to apply any interstate movement restrictions on grain or seed of host species. However, we will continue to work with the other governments and industry to manage this virus.

On a further biosecurity issue, I thank Dr Hume Field of the Department of Primary Industries for his work in China tracking down the source of the severe acute respiratory syndrome. Dr Field was part of a three-member team assembled by the World Health Organisation to track down the source of the disease. Following detailed examination and interviews with local health officials, the team has developed a hypothesis of a wild animal source. The analysis also showed no link to pet or farm animals. Dr Field will continue to be involved in the international response through regular teleconferences with experts from around the world. Dr Field has been asked to present his findings from the work in China to the WHO global conference on SARS to be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on 17 and 18 June.