



Speech by

Hon. HENRY PALASZCZUK

MEMBER FOR INALA

Hansard 11 November 2003

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Fire Ants

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (10.09 a.m.): Two years ago we started an ambitious campaign to eradicate one of the world's most invasive pests from one of Australia's most populated regions. The effort to eradicate fire ants from the greater Brisbane area has certainly been a mammoth undertaking—an undertaking made easier by the support of the local community and the backing of the Commonwealth and all state and territory governments. The fire ant is an uninvited guest that poses serious threats to our country. The eradication campaign is working; there is no doubt about that. The Fire Ant Control Centre has reported from interim monitoring results that 97 per cent of known fire ant infested properties are now fire ant free. Despite this success, it is worth restating the objectives: we aim to eliminate all fire ants, which are the size of a grain of rice, from footpaths, garden beds, yards, parks, schools, median strips, paddocks, vacant land and riverbanks in an area equivalent to more than 100,000 football fields.

To eradicate the ants, we need to know precisely where they are. In recent months, fire ants have been detected in areas of the south-west such as Purga, South Ripley and Yamanto. These detections would normally be treated as outliers as per normal procedures. However, I can announce today that the national consultative committee has decided to amend the eradication plan to increase treatments in these areas. This will mean that a further 26,000 hectares of land in the Ipswich and Beaudesert shires will be incorporated into the treatment area of the fire ant eradication campaign on top of the 47,000 hectares already under treatment. A further surveillance zone will be declared around this new south-western treatment area. This new area will include parts of Amberley, Yamanto, Purga, South Ripley, Flinders View, Raceview, Blackstone and Spring Mountain. Four treatments are to be applied and, as most parts are non-urban, much of the treatment will be able to be applied using helicopters. Already, half of the existing treatment area is covered by aerial applications.

Whilst we are increasing treatments there, the consultative committee has decided that the four treatments could be reduced to two in many parts of the existing treatment zone. The reduced treatments will be in the following areas: near the mouth of the Brisbane River in parts of Boondall, Virginia, Nudgee, Banyo, Hemmant, Wynnum and Tingalpa; Ormiston near Redland Bay; Logan Central and Slacks Creek; eastern parts of the existing treatment zone from Acacia Ridge, Sunnybank Hills, Algester, Stretton and Parkinson; and on the other side of that treatment zone, including parts of Seventeen Mile Rocks, Sinnamon Park, Jindalee, Fig Tree Pocket, Jamboree Heights, Mt Ommaney, Pinjarra Hills, Bellbowrie, Moggill, Barellan Point, Redbank Plains, New Chum, Collingwood Park, Bellbird Park, Springfield and Camira. We are not claiming victory in these areas yet, but our efforts to date have been successful and reduced treatments can be justified. The fire ant is not going to go away without a fight. We will maintain the fight, because if we can beat the ant here we will have saved the rest of Australia.