



Speech by

Stuart Copeland

MEMBER FOR CUNNINGHAM

Hansard Tuesday, 28 March 2006

CLIFTON PEST AND WEED SHOW

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (10.10 pm): The initial Central Downs Pest and Weed Show was held back in 2003. This year the Clifton Pest and Weed Show, held on 18 March, continued to build on that success. It was held at Clifton recreation grounds. There was a large crowd in attendance with people coming from all over the Darling Downs and from as far away as the Gold Coast. The Central Downs Land Care Association presented this event in order to showcase excellence in pest and weed management and also to raise environmental awareness.

Central Downs Land Care Chairman, Ian Sobbe, and the committee members worked very hard on this event for over 12 months and the efforts they put in should be acknowledged. The day provided an opportunity for farmers and householders to come along and view the numerous displays, demonstrations and exhibitions and also to listen to the informative talks that were held on the day. Topics at this year's event focused on basic conservation, pest management, soil fertility, permaculture, risk management and safety, identification of weeds, and environmental forecasting.

During my visit I was very glad to help present the awards to the winner of Australian's best pig trap competition, which was won by a farmer from Millmerran. The prize was \$1,000 cash. That is indicative of just how big a problem feral pigs are in our area of the Darling Downs.

In addition, there was also a school project competition and special mention goes to the students from Clifton State High School for their wonderful efforts. Events such as the Clifton Pest and Weed Show are fantastic for creating awareness and further educating the public. It is great to see farmers being proactive in addressing environmental concerns. It is a real shame that none of the metropolitan media, which so often portrays farmers in Queensland as being environmental vandals or raping the environment, was there to see the proactive work—the great work—that farmers are doing to address the real environmental concerns out there with regard to pests and weeds.

Senator Ron Boswell opened the event. The member for Toowoomba North was there representing the state minister for natural resources and mines, who was a late withdrawal from the program. I always welcome members of the government to come to my electorate because it gives me an opportunity to remind my constituents of the things that the government is not doing when it comes to environmental management.

I have spoken many times in this parliament about the removal of extension officers from Natural Resources and Mines and the department of primary industries. Every person I saw on that day in Clifton agreed with me about the real environmental problems that are being caused because those extension officers have been withdrawn. This government has withdrawn extension officers, has withdrawn the advice that has been provided at on-farm level, has withdrawn that expertise out of towns like Pittsworth, Clifton, Millmerran and Warwick. Now that expertise simply does not exist in the department of natural resources.

Time expired.