



Speech by

Hon. Tim Mulherin

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

Hansard Wednesday, 20 May 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Crop Diseases

Hon. TS MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland) (10.06 am): Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries is continuing to support the state's \$2 billion field crop industries by developing grain crops with high-level resistance to diseases and pests. Crop diseases can be devastating. Ten years ago \$29 million was stripped in one season from Queensland's barley production, and losses continue today. Plant diseases are a major issue for industry, costing \$50 million a year for leaf diseases and \$40 million a year for root and crown diseases of wheat.

To bolster the response and research into plant disease, a scientist with significant international experience has been appointed to lead QPIF's winter cereal plant pathology team, which is working to find new ways of beating wheat and barley diseases. Dr Stephen Neate, principal plant pathologist, will be based at the Leslie Research Centre in Toowoomba. He brings 17 years experience with the CSIRO in Adelaide and eight years of research and teaching at North Dakota State University in the United States. Dr Neate is intent on finding solutions to major plant diseases in Queensland, identifying new and more effective forms of disease management and affordable chemical control.

In the grain sector, Dr Neate will lead research into minimising the effects of crown and root disease and rust through plant resistance and management practices. This research is unique in Australia, and QPIF continues to work with plant breeders in developing disease and pest resistant and tolerant varieties.

This research is also being conducted in collaboration with the University of Southern Queensland, the University of Queensland and the University of Adelaide. Research by QPIF plant pathologists has improved the level of resistance to a range of diseases in our crop varieties. Researchers have developed disease management plans and are able to respond quickly to significant disease outbreaks. QPIF researchers are also providing information to industry on ways to minimise the effect of pests and diseases on current and future crops. All this research is assisting the grains industry as we build a diverse economy powered by bright ideas.