




Speech By  
**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE**

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Record of Proceedings, 31 August 2016

### ADJOURNMENT

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (11.16 pm): Today I tabled a petition of 920 signatures from the Atherton Tablelands calling on the government to take action to combat the invasive pest weed Navua sedge. It states—

The Petition of the residents of Tablelands Regional Council Local Government area wish to draw to the attention of the House the critical level of the infestation of Navua Sedge ... and the devastating impact it is having on prime agricultural land on the Atherton Tablelands and surrounds. Conservative estimates predict that over 50% of grazing pasture could be lost if strong action isn't taken immediately to eradicate and control this weed on farms and on roadsides.

We the petitioners call on the government to take urgent action to:

Fund research and development into Navua Sedge for a pre-emergent and long-term management solutions.

Establish a Navua Sedge pilot program on the Atherton Tablelands and include farmers, stakeholders and Local Government in the program.

Continuation of the recent allocation of funds provided the Tableland Regional Council for spraying of Department of Transport and Main Roads controlled roadsides and verges at a minimum application rate of 5 sprays per year.

Agriculture is the largest employer on the Atherton Tablelands, and Navua sedge is killing it and it is getting worse. Navua sedge is an invasive weed and has the capacity to spread at an alarming rate. The weed has now been found in the drier areas of the Tablelands where initially it was thought it could never survive and the situation is now critical. Biosecurity Queensland points out that Navua sedge is extremely aggressive and takes nutrients, light and moisture from the natural pastures and is capable of forming dense stands that can smother many tropical pasture species. In pastures, Navua sedge is unpalatable and provides little feed value for cattle. Navua sedge can cause death in cattle as they cannot pass it, there is no nutrition, they put on no weight and they starve. Each flower has over 500 seeds which remain viable in the ground for over three years.

Without the existence of a pre-emergent herbicide, control of this weed is reliant on intensive and regular spraying. The devastation of this weed can be seen on neighbouring Fiji. Navua sedge has reduced the carrying capacity of pastures by up to 40 per cent and is a major cause of low milk production. It is estimated that Navua sedge could have a larger impact on pastures in Far North Queensland than it has had in Fiji. Applying the scenario of reducing carrying capacity rates by 50 per cent could potentially reduce the agricultural economy and the Queensland economy.

I am pleased that the call for urgent action has been heard by the Department of Transport and Main Roads, and I welcome the much needed additional spraying rates for Main Roads road verges. The Atherton Tablelands Regional Council, the agricultural industry and I are seeking support for funding the research and development program for Navua sedge.