



Speech By  
**Christopher Whiting**


**MEMBER FOR BANCROFT**

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Record of Proceedings, 16 July 2020

**HEALTH COMMUNITIES, DISABILITY SERVICES AND DOMESTIC AND FAMILY  
VIOLENCE PREVENTION COMMITTEE**

**Report, Motion to Take Note**

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (3.36 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee Report No. 42, 56th Parliament—*Inquiry into the impacts of invasive plants (weeds) and their control in Queensland* tabled on 6 December 2019.

I want to start by thanking our secretariat who processed an enormous amount of information on this inquiry to present this report. They have done tremendous work on this. The committee's inquiry was on just three weeds—prickly acacia, fireweed and giant rat's tail. We found that the local, state and federal governments are meeting their responsibilities as need be and that our Queensland biosecurity programs are effective and financed appropriately. There could be better coordination amongst jurisdictions, but the truly scary thing I found in this inquiry is what is waiting over the border. One of these weeds has been here for 150 years, but the committee inquiry emphasised to me that our biosecurity threats are a lot greater than perhaps we perceive.

As I said, one of these weeds has been here for 150 years. It was 1872 when prickly acacia first arrived and it is considered to be one of Australia's worst weeds. Fireweed was brought into Australia 100 years ago and giant rat's tail came 50 years ago. This inquiry only looked at three weeds, but we know there are 1,400 species of weeds in Queensland and over 170 invasive weeds throughout Queensland. It is extremely difficult to eradicate every weed.

Another theme I want to touch on that we discovered with this inquiry is that a lot of initiatives and projects are happening, whether on other weeds or these three weeds specifically. I have been impressed with how all jurisdictions have worked well together under the Biosecurity Act. The Biosecurity Act is a good framework for dealing with weeds such as these three. It was introduced in 2016 and it gives that framework for all biosecurity in Queensland. The act imposes obligations on individuals and organisations to take reasonable and practical steps to prevent or minimise biosecurity risks, and biosecurity means plants or animals.

Everyone plays their part including councils, and they have done a tremendous job. There could be better coordination. An example of a successful collaboration is the Flinders Shire Council's Good Neighbour Program as well as their War on Weeds project in partnership with Southern Gulf NRM group.

At a state level I think this report also highlights what is working well and what we have done. For example, in 2016 nearly an extra \$11 million went to Biosecurity Queensland and we redirected \$20 million of funding towards our capability building in Queensland. I am so glad the report has highlighted what we are doing and what we are putting towards biosecurity risks within Queensland.

Another example is the Queensland Feral Pest Initiative, a joint federal and Queensland government funded project. There is also funding going to regional NRM groups and industry for their programs. In 2017 DNRM invested \$12 million in weed control.

One of the things that really struck me while undertaking this inquiry and also after the drafting of the report was those bigger biosecurity risks out there. There are a lot more threats that have not arrived and they are just lurking over the border. We must deal with them before they become established. That is the key. We must use science to deal with that. For example, African swine fever could cause \$2 billion worth of damage to our pork industry. If that came in we would have to eradicate entire herds. There is no vaccine for this disease and it has already arrived in Timor-Leste. If foot-and-mouth disease gets in, it would be a \$50 billion hit to the Australian economy.

One of the great things about this report into the three weeds that have been here a long time is that we are doing a lot of work on them, but biosecurity is everyone's responsibility.