



Speech By  
**Patrick Weir**


**MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE**

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Record of Proceedings, 16 July 2020

**STATE DEVELOPMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND AGRICULTURAL  
INDUSTRY COMMITTEE**

**Report, Motion to Take Note**

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (3.41 pm): I rise to make a contribution as a member of the committee that undertook the second iteration of this self-referred inquiry. It was begun in the last term of parliament after it was introduced in 2016. It lapsed with the election and it was picked up again, and finally the report was tabled in December 2019. This was an opportunity to provide some solutions and some avenues to address the threat that weeds pose to the agricultural industry across this state. Unfortunately, that opportunity was missed as only one recommendation came out of the whole report and that was that the report be noted.

As the chair has said, the impact of the three weeds was investigated in this inquiry. Those weeds are prickly acacia, giant rat's-tail grass and fireweed. In my part of the world on the Downs fireweed is by far the most prevalent. People can actually find it while driving around now; they can see the yellow flowers. Of the three weeds included in the inquiry, fireweed is the only one that has toxicity; it can be fatal to cattle. That is very hard to diagnose. It usually takes an autopsy to discover they were a victim of fireweed. There are two different varieties of fireweed. One is an introduced species from South Africa and the other is native. That further complicates the situation. They are very hard to distinguish from one another; people actually need to know a fair bit about them.

Giant rat's-tail grass was another one that we looked into. We went to Gladstone and looked at giant rat's-tail grass there. Mind you, we had to walk through a lot of grader grass before we could get to the giant rat's-tail grass; there were weeds everywhere. It is a significant problem up there and one that is not easily solved. We saw a similar situation when we went to Gatton. We saw a national park in Gatton that was full of giant rat's-tail grass that was coming from state owned land onto private land. We also saw hobby farms in that area. We also get fireweed in my part of the world and I know the member for Ipswich West does in his part of the world as well. There is not enough control by some of those landowners and there is no sufficient register to show where those outbreaks are located.

In terms of prickly acacia, we went to Hughenden and Barcaldine and also out to Aramac. Prickly acacia is taking over a lot of land up in the north. It really took off amongst those open flowing bore drains in the north. Capping those bore drains has certainly helped, but we saw thousands of acres of prickly acacia. We did a tour to view where they have been spreading pellets on it by air. They are doing a great job to control that. There are very few native trees there for shade, so they have to be very careful that they do not take them out.

It was incredibly disappointing at the last federal election for Minister Furner, the state minister, to stand up with the federal minister and pledge \$5 million worth of funding to address prickly acacia because after the election that just disappeared; we have never seen it. I tabled a photo in this House after the dreadful floods in North Queensland to show that prickly acacia has just gone wild. It probably

had one of the biggest spreading and seeding events since it has been here. It is right down into Warrego and it is threatening Eyre basin. This is a weed that we need to take a grip of, and this was an opportunity to do it.

Some of the failings are between state owned land, federal land and council land and some of the challenges are with small councils. For instance, in Barcaldine they have a very small rate base. They do not have a lot of funds. The councillors who are asked to enforce this are often neighbours with those who offend. This report was an opportunity to provide a road map through that. At every agriculture meeting I have been to since this started people have asked me, 'Where's the report? Where's the report?' There was disappointment from AgForce, the QFF, Desert Channels and those NRM groups; they were disgusted that this was the best effort the committee could come up with. So much work went into the inquiry. There were 60 submitters to this, 49 people appeared at hearings and all we could do was note the report.

*(Time expired)*