

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 668

Asked on 17 May 2018

MR J MADDEN asked the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister outline some of the research projects that the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries is involved with regarding pest weeds?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for the question.

The Invasive Plants and Animals Research group in Biosecurity Queensland has an applied research program that aims to better manage Queensland's worst weeds and pest animals to reduce their impacts on agriculture, the environment and the community.

The research group's work is undertaken at five centres across the state: the Ecosciences Precinct and Health and Food Sciences Precinct in Brisbane, the Pest Animal Research Centre in Toowoomba, and the Tropical Weeds Research Centre in Charters Towers and South Johnstone.

The group collaborates with numerous Queensland, interstate and overseas organisations. Higher degree students are supported to work on several research projects in weed management. Projects cover the development of effective control strategies and methods (e.g. biological control and herbicides), as well as improved knowledge of weed biology and assessment of weed impact.

Current work includes the assessment of new biological control agents for prickly acacia, bellyache bush, Siam weed, mikania, lantana, giant rat's tail grass, mother-of-millions, cat's claw creeper and several cacti (*Cylindropuntia* species) in quarantine laboratory testing and overseas field trials.

After many years without success, there are now a number of promising agents in the final stages of testing for bellyache bush and prickly acacia. Surveys for agents in the weeds' native ranges are being undertaken for Navua sedge, bellyache bush and prickly acacia. Mass rearing and release of biocontrol agents approved for release in Australia is also being undertaken for parkinsonia, lantana, parthenium, coral cactus, Hudson pear, rope pear, snake cactus and jumping cholla. These agents are becoming widely established with some dramatically effective results on coral cactus.

Projects are supporting state or national eradication programs on numerous weeds, including red witchweed, miconia, mikania and limnocharis. Effective control options are being sought and ecological data collected that will help determine the frequency and duration of control activities. Similar work is continuing for former eradication targets Siam weed and Koster's curse.

Trials are identifying effective herbicides, application rates and techniques (e.g. splatter guns) for control of a number of weeds in Queensland, including prickly acacia, Chinese apple, night-blooming cereus, stevia, Koster's curse, rubber vine, alligator weed, cabomba, sagittaria, bogmoss, glush weed, sicklepod, giant rat's tail grass and Gamba grass.

Ecological research to assist management (e.g. seed longevity, environmental requirements, management effectiveness) is being undertaken on numerous weeds, including fireweed, parthenium, neem tree, yellow bells, Gamba grass, sicklepod, sagittaria and mesquite.