

## BRANCHED BROOMRAPE CONTROL PROGRAM – 22 November 2011

**Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (15:46):** I rise today to bring to the house's attention the disgraceful decision by this government and this new Minister for Agriculture, in one of her first moves, to cut the funding to the branched broomrape control program in the Murray Mallee. I talk in regard to a community focus group meeting held last night in Mannum where 45 farmers were in attendance—and this is only a portion of people directly affected—but this decision by both the state and federal Labor governments will affect, I believe, all farmers not just in this state but in this country as time goes on.

What we are seeing with the decision by the commonwealth government to cut its contribution of \$2.6 million a year and what I believe is the state government's decision to cut the \$1.9 million per year which has been \$45 million invested over the past 10 years in the eradication program for branched broomrape, and I am informed that conservatively there has been \$68 million over that time spent by landholders with their own money regarding spraying the parasitic weed and building holding yards for stock and other management practices for managing broomrape.

I believe and community members certainly believe that branched broomrape will just explode by these two governments taking their eye off the ball. We are just on the eve of people getting to year 12 of the program where they can get out of quarantine—now what? There will be no differentiation between people doing the right thing or not. Stock sales will be the issue. Will we end up with stock out of the broomrape area only being able to be sold for slaughter? People who do want to get a clean bill on their land titles will have to now pay for surveys if they want to be declared clean. This will be a cost-recovery function under Biosecurity SA.

So what will we have? We will have an area bounded by Swan Reach, Borrika, down to below Tailm Bend and towards Palmer. The state Labor government will cut funding and the liability to itself. From what I am informed, it just wants to cut and run from this responsibility. It has talked to the local Natural Resources Management Board saying, 'You can pick up the management of this,' but they are not too keen at all, I can assure you, from what I understand. This is, as I said, the \$1.9 million annual cut.

I want to talk about the management plan the National Steering Committee for Branched Broomrape is developing, because it has decided to cut and run from this parasitic weed, as well. There are factors where it is saying that the best long-term approach is for landholders to manage branched broomrape according to their production and marketing needs; that the highest risks associated with commodities produced in the current quarantine area are host-rich hay and straw; small seeds and soil and chaff agricultural machinery; and that interstate and international protocols need to be developed to ensure trade is not restricted or disrupted. I reckon this is a good one: branch broomrape is not currently having any production or biodiversity impacts.

The strategy with branched broomrape, according to this management plan, becomes another important weed that is primarily managed at the property level, supported by additional tools such as interstate certification arrangements to manage high-risk materials and machinery. The proposed plan is to get on product freedom rather than with properties. They are saying that property freedom is not considered necessary under the proposed arrangement and would be an individual decision for landowners. Eradication will not be the aim of the program past June 2012, because that is when all the funding is going to run, and grant schemes will be discontinued from March 2012. Farmers will still need to keep records. There is a whole range of other proposals in this with bulk wash down facilities. Where will people go with their product?

They are proposing to do a survey to monitor the status of broomrape in the management area in three to five years. I reckon I could save the time and tell them that it will just explode. Non-preferred arrangements include removing the quarantine zone and all restrictions and immediately moving to an unmanaged situation. I believe that is where we are going. One of their other non-preferred arrangements is maintaining the current quarantine zone but with a focus on individual infested properties. Resourcing would be a major issue: code for 'no more government funding'.

Maintaining the integrity of the quarantine area requires ongoing surveillance and surveys. That is exactly right and I think it is absolutely disgraceful that this government, which got in on the back of branched broomrape nearly 10 years ago, is now just abandoning its responsibilities.