

MEDIA RELEASE

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Labor must hold the line on broomrape eradication

Labor governments must not lose their resolve on an eradication program for a plant pest that threatens valuable South Australian food crops and exports.

Opposition Agriculture spokesman Adrian Pederick says the root parasite branched broomrape can devastate crops, for example tomato crop yield by 75 per cent and canola by 90 per cent.

Mr Pederick said under a national eradication program established in 2000, hundreds of thousands of hectares in SA are surveyed annually to contain and destroy the pest.

'If left unchecked, broomrape has the potential to decimate crop production and export markets. Worse still, it could destroy the value of the land itself,' Mr Pederick said.

'The national eradication program is supported by federal government funding; without that commitment the whole program would be at risk.

I am aware that a technical review committee is currently considering the status of the broomrape program.

'In these times of budget cuts and with Labor's attitude to rural matters, it is to be hoped state and federal governments don't lose focus on the importance of seeing this program through.

'It is imperative we see this through. To pull the funding plug now would lay waste to ten years of hard work and \$45 million invested so far.'