



Media Release

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**Agriculture and Environment
Committee**

Chair: Glenn Butcher MP
Deputy Chair: Tony Perrett MP

Agriculture inquiry to look at weeds impacts and controls

Parliament's Agriculture and Environment Committee is investigating the impacts of invasive plants (weeds) and the effectiveness of control programs for Queensland's \$12 billion agriculture sector.

Committee Chair and Member for Gladstone, Glenn Butcher MP, says the inquiry will focus heavily on the effectiveness of government weed control programs and how well different agencies are working together.

"Staying ahead of weeds requires vigilance and cooperation" Mr Butcher said.

"Neighbours, community groups, departments and all levels of government need to be working cooperatively and smartly. The committee is keen to gauge how well this is happening on the ground."

"To achieve this, we will study the impacts and controls of three key weeds in Queensland: prickly acacia, giant rat's tail grass and fireweed."

Just over 3,200 introduced plant species have become naturalised in Australia, 500 of which have been declared noxious or are under some form of legislative control.

It is estimated that the cost to the Australian economy from the agricultural impacts of weeds is around \$4 billion annually. This includes the direct costs of weed control, reduction in yield and contamination of agricultural products. The economic impacts of weeds on nature conservation, tourism and landscape amenity have been estimated at a further \$4 billion annually.

The committee is taking written submissions for the inquiry until **16 January 2017**.

The committee has published an [information paper](#) for the inquiry.

For media comment: please contact the committee Chair, Glenn Butcher MP on (07) 4904 1100

For background information: please contact the committee secretariat on (07) 3553 6662, via email at: aec@parliament.qld.gov.au or visit the committee's webpage at: www.parliament.qld.gov.au/aec.

The inquiry terms of reference and information on the three weeds for case studies follows:

Terms of reference for the inquiry

The committee will investigate and report to Parliament on the impacts of invasive plants (weeds) and their control in Queensland, particularly whether:

- the responsibilities of local governments in relation to the control of prohibited, restricted and invasive plants imposed under s.48 of the *Biosecurity Act 2014* are reasonable, and local governments are meeting those obligations
- programs for the control of weeds on Crown land administered by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines are effective
- Biosecurity Queensland's weeds programs, including biological controls and new technologies, are adequately funded and effective at controlling weeds
- environmental programs administered by the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection impact favourably on weed control programs administered by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and local governments, and
- federal, state and local government weeds programs are coordinated to maximise their achievements and to have a whole of government approach.

Case studies

Prickly acacia is regarded as one of the worst weeds in Australia because of its economic and environmental impacts and potential to spread. Originally introduced to Queensland from India as a shade and specimen tree, each medium-sized prickly acacia can produce as many as 175,000 seeds per year.

At present over 6.6 million hectares of arid and semi-arid areas of the state are infested. If left unchecked, prickly acacia could spread to vast areas of grasslands and woodlands throughout Australia.

Giant rat's tail grass arrived in Australia in contaminated grass seed. It is a tough, perennial grass that grows up to 1.7m tall with seed heads up to 45cm long and 3cm wide.

Rat's tail grasses can produce up to 85,000 seeds per square metre in a year. Seeds can remain viable for up to 10 years. When mature, giant rat's tail grass has tough leaves which make it unpalatable to stock. It quickly dominates native grasses.

Fireweed is a native of Madagascar and Southern Africa and may have started in Australia as a garden plant. It has yellow daisy-like flowers and grows to 50cm tall in ideal conditions.

Fireweed is an annual perennial, and toxic to livestock. It spreads quickly and competes strongly with pasture grasses. Each plant can produce over 10,000 seeds during the growing season.

Fact sheets for weeds in Queensland are available from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries website: www.daf.qld.gov.au



Prickly acacia



Giant rat's tail grass



Fireweed
