



Speech by

Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

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AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY, PESTICIDES

 **Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (3.32 pm): I rise today to call on the Bligh government to step up its efforts to challenge the recent proposal by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority to ban the use of the agricultural herbicide diuron. The APVMA has raised concerns about the use of diuron, which it claims presents a risk to aquatic ecosystems. Since the APVMA's sudden and unexpected announcement some belated consultation has occurred with rural industries, but there is still enormous uncertainty facing the agricultural sector.

Both the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister for Environment need to take this issue seriously. The Minister for Agriculture needs to acknowledge that if growers lose this herbicide from their farming toolbox—there is currently no equivalent replacement product—there will be significant economic losses in the form of lost productivity and higher costs of alternative weed control methods because diuron is an effective product for the purposes of pest weed control, and the Minister for Agriculture should know that.

The Minister for Environment should be challenging the decision of the APVMA because the banning of diuron will actually have a perverse environmental outcome. The Minister for Environment needs to understand that the withdrawal of diuron will force farmers to control pest weeds with alternative products and farming practices. The fact is that alternative products will not be as effective as diuron in managing broadleaf weeds and vines in cropping areas and may have to be applied more frequently to achieve effective control. Farmers may also be forced to use more mechanical control methods of cultivating soil more often than is currently necessary in an effort to control pest weeds, increasing the potential for any dissolved sediments or nutrients or chemical residues to run off into the aquatic ecosystems that the APVMA is supposedly concerned about. The voluntary efforts of farmers to reduce the amount of agricultural chemicals such as diuron being used have once again been ignored by a Labor government.

(Time expired)