



Speech by

Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

Hansard Wednesday, 21 February 2007

FERAL PIGS

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (8.34 pm): I rise to draw the attention of the House the growing feral pig problem in north Queensland and to highlight the ignorance of the Beattie government with respect to this issue. The Beattie government has consistently demonstrated that it is unwilling to assist landowners suffering economic losses from pig feral damage. The Beattie government is also abrogating its environmental responsibilities by not properly controlling feral pig numbers on state controlled land such as national parks and state forests.

Not only is the government not doing enough to address the problem; the responsible ministers in the Beattie government have had the audacity to deny that there is a problem. In a letter responding to representations I made to the government last year about the feral pig problem, the Minister for Natural Resources and Water had this to say in reply—

With regards to feral pigs in the Wet Tropics, there is no evidence to suggest that the population is 'rapidly growing'. At this time of year the feral pig population appears to be larger due to increased feral pig human encounter rates. People are more active with cane harvesting operations and feral pigs are moving around more as the water and food supply dwindles, which is common at the end of the dry season. Feral pigs are therefore seen more often and the community assumes the feral pig population is expanding.

The minister should be embarrassed that he signed a letter offering this nonsense as a serious response to a serious issue that is causing environmental damage and inflicting economic losses on landowners in north Queensland.

The minister is not alone in his unwillingness to acknowledge the feral pig problem in north Queensland. The minister for environment has made public statements that indicate a similar lack of understanding. The minister for environment had this to say in the local media while trying to defend her indefensible inaction on feral pigs in my electorate—

Queensland Parks and Wildlife staff have advised that in areas affected by Cyclone Larry they have not observed an increase in feral pig populations in protected areas, nor had there been an increase in the number of reports of pig activity from the community.

I say to both ministers that, if this is the advice they are getting from their departments, it is the wrong advice. So frustrated are the landowners and industry organisations in my electorate, Canegrowers has initiated a petition calling on the Beattie government to face up to its responsibilities by properly controlling feral pigs on state controlled land. My office is assisting with this petition and it has my full support.