



Adjournment Speech

GLEN ELMES
Member for Noosa

Hansard, 10 February 2009

Noosa Electorate, Fish Abnormalities

Mr ELMES (Noosa--LNP) (9.34 pm): I would like to bring to the attention of the House the issues surrounding the two-headed fish controversy currently being played out in my electorate. It surrounds the use of the chemical carbendazim, which occurs in many forms. It is a chemical in its own right and a derivative of many other chemicals widely used throughout our agricultural industries. There have been deformities and deaths of millions of fish larvae taken from the Noosa River and spawned at the Sunland Freshwater Fish Hatchery. Carbendazim has been linked to these abnormalities. If this link is proven, then this incident is unprecedented.

I am concerned that this issue is not being dealt with with the degree of urgency that should be displayed by the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries. What is of even greater concern is the fact that, in five out of the nine households bordering the fish hatchery and the macadamia nut farm, there appears to be more than the normal incidence of cancer cases amongst residents.

I have read research material on carbendazim and have learned how it is applied in the macadamia industry. In the case of Sunland Freshwater Fish Hatchery, there is a macadamia nut farm on three sides of the property, very close to both the hatchery and the owner's home. Fish, particularly fingerlings, are at the very beginning of the food chain. In my research I have read of examples from other countries where similar mutations have occurred. The hatchery is on top of a rise and the winds are variable. While I am concerned about the viability of the fish hatchery and macadamia farm, I am more concerned about the danger to local residents and workers. Spray residue will settle on the skin. The residue will also settle on the roofs of homes and with rain will drain into water tanks, with the water then being used for washing and for drinking. In a letter to me dated 2 December the minister said that his department had been testing in and around this property for two years. I have called publicly, and I do so again now, for the results of those tests to be released.

The urgency here revolves around the health of local residents and the viability of both the fish hatchery and the macadamia farm, and public concerns about chemical run-off into Cooloothin Creek, which feeds directly into the Noosa River. I note that the minister has formed a new task force to look at this specific problem. The task force includes members of the macadamia industry as well as Dr Matt Landos, who has spent some considerable time specifically looking at the issues surrounding the Sunland Freshwater Fish Hatchery.

As I have said, testing for over two years and a new task force suggests to me that the government has not in the past but should now provide greater resources so that this investigation can be brought to a speedy conclusion and so that all the people of the local area can get on with their lives and livelihoods. For my part, I will continue my investigations until such as time as there is a satisfactory and healthy outcome.
