

Eve McDonald

From: statements@qld.gov.au
Sent: Thursday, 23 November 2006 10:54 AM
To: Eve McDonald
Subject: Replacement Release: MULHERIN TO PRESSURE MCGAURAN OVER SMUT

Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries
The Honourable Tim Mulherin
23/11/2006

Replacement Release: MULHERIN TO PRESSURE MCGAURAN OVER SMUT**Replacement Release Please ignore initial release****MULHERIN TO PRESSURE MCGAURAN OVER SMUT**

Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries Tim Mulherin will personally ask Federal counterpart Peter McGauran to appoint a Commonwealth representative to the sugar cane smut working party headed by Dr David Watson.

The two ministers will meet face-to-face tonight in Christchurch, New Zealand, before the Primary Industries Ministerial Council tomorrow.

"I wrote to Mr McGauran offering the Federal Government a place on Dr Watson's working party but have not received a reply so I will be asking him personally for the Commonwealth to be involved," Mr Mulherin said.

"I will update Mr McGauran on the change in focus from a biosecurity strategy to one of economic recovery following the discovery of the disease outside the Bundaberg-Isis region and reiterate the importance of the Federal Government supporting the sugar industry.

"Sugar is not just a Queensland industry, it is a national industry.

"It is worth almost a billion dollars a year to Queensland alone, with 85 per cent of the sugar exported.

"With the discovery of sugar cane smut outside the original Pest Quarantine Area of Bundaberg and Childers, the threat has now been shown to be established and widespread.

"As I have said previously, I do not want to overstate the impact of sugar cane smut and any talk of an \$800 million loss is grossly exaggerated, but I do not want to underplay this issue either," Mr Mulherin said.

"Sugar cane smut is a highly infectious disease that can seriously reduce yields but the fungus is harmless to humans and animal and does not affect processed sugar.

"Canegrowers and BSES Limited have been partners with the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries in the battle against sugar cane smut from the very beginning.

"Industry has fully supported our plan of action, including the appointment of Dr Watson to head the

working party.

"The working party will examine the impact of the spread of sugar cane smut on the industry and identify measures to manage these impacts and facilitate economic recovery.

"Industry meanwhile is working towards accelerated development and planting of smut resistant varieties of cane.

"Growers in the affected districts in particular, and all of the other businesses and people who rely on this industry have been going through a very difficult period and while the Queensland Government has shown it is prepared to put in the hard yards alongside industry, the Federal Government has so far ignored the issue.

"I will be making that point very strongly to Mr McGauran."

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