

# Queensland Biosecurity Strategy Consultations

## 1. Introduction

A consultation process was implemented by Biosecurity Queensland, of the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, to help develop the first Biosecurity Strategy for Queensland. The following is a summary of the process and findings from the stakeholder consultations. The range of stakeholders that have provided input has been diverse and valuable to the Strategy development process.

## 2. Consultation process

The basis of the consultation process was the distribution of the “*Queensland Biosecurity – a Discussion Paper*” (the Discussion Paper) approved by Cabinet on 23 June 2008. The Discussion Paper was developed in conjunction with a stakeholder reference group comprising a wide range of stakeholder representatives. The Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries released the Discussion Paper on 24 July 2008 with the submission period closing on 30 September 2008. The Discussion Paper was mailed directly to 312 stakeholders identified as having an interest in biosecurity in Queensland and made available to the public on the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries website.

Biosecurity Queensland conducted twenty four meetings during the consultation period. The meetings included:

- Four public meetings – Bundaberg (2), Mareeba and Brisbane.
- Eight stakeholder interest group workshops – plant industry, science, banks, marine, apiary, animal industry, horse industry and invasive plants and animals.
- Eight specific stakeholder workshops – AgForce (Brisbane (2) and Toowoomba), Growcom, Local Government Association of Queensland (Toowoomba and Cairns), Queensland Farmers Federation and Timber Queensland.
- Four Department or Primary Industries and Fisheries staff meetings – Cairns, Rockhampton, Brisbane and Toowoomba.

Seventy-six written submissions were received. Submissions received and stakeholders consulted with are listed at the end of this report.

## 3. Overall comments

Stakeholders who participated in the consultation process affirmed the overall importance of biosecurity and supported the development of a Biosecurity Strategy, the need for a robust emergency response capability and the requirement for a risk based approach. Views on the required levels of prevention and preparedness tended to vary depending on experiences with biosecurity events or appreciation of specific threats, such as foot and mouth disease for the cattle industry. The use of risk to determine

biosecurity investment priorities has widespread acceptance, albeit the actual determination of priorities is likely to attract differences of views.

There was general support for an increased focus on prevention and surveillance that delivers early detection, therefore reducing emergency response costs and increasing the likelihood of eradication. Feedback from industry stakeholder workshops suggested that producers would incorporate increased biosecurity measures provided a return on investment could be shown and the measures could be incorporated into existing farm systems. There was no support for mandatory on-property biosecurity systems.

There was widespread concern by producers across many industry sectors about the potential financial implications for their businesses from reporting biosecurity incidents on their properties. This may hinder early detection initiatives and impose higher costs on government and industry in responding to biosecurity threats.

Resourcing for biosecurity, whether it is realignment of existing resources or obtaining additional resources, was a consistent theme from stakeholders with a strong view expressed about the need for increased funding by the government. Industry groups expressed concerns about their ability to generate new funds and non-members gaining the benefits without making financial contributions (referred to as 'free riders'). Stakeholders' preferred the government to provide additional funding.

There were differing views about the relative importance of economic interests, environmental values and social impacts in determining biosecurity investments. Some stakeholders expressed concerns that investment in managing existing pests and diseases would be reduced and funds reallocated to other priorities. Local government consistently did not support the prospect of additional responsibilities being required of them without sufficient resources.

Stakeholders consider that relationships between government, industry and the community are fundamental to achieve active participation, build capability and gain shared leadership. Pre-emergency response relationships were also identified as crucial to successful responses.

Many industry groups identified the need for consistency between state and national biosecurity arrangements. This was also reflected in a consistent view about the importance of access to national and international markets and harmonisation of state and national arrangements to reduce compliance costs. There was a broad willingness to work together to influence the national agenda. Not all industry groups or sectors are a part of the national cost sharing deeds which impacted on the extent industry groups were involved in national decision making. Local government and port authorities for example stated that they had very little if any involvement but didn't want to be left out of discussions about strategic issues.

#### **4. Strategy issue comments**

The principles in the Discussion Paper were supported by stakeholders with additional principles suggested on market access, environmental resilience and a biosecurity duty of care.

The comments provided by stakeholders have been categorised into nine key sections of the draft Strategy.

##### *4.1. Shared leadership*

Stakeholders' willingness to lead on biosecurity issues ranged from those who already provide a high degree of leadership to those who have little capacity or inclination to lead.

Stakeholders sought clarity of roles and responsibilities which are likely to differ for emergency responses, prevention, surveillance, preparedness, recovery and managing established pests and diseases, and chemical contaminants. They also wanted to ensure that people and organisations had the skills and resources to undertake any leadership role.

It was clear through industry consultation that national bodies such as Animal Health Australia, Plant Health Australia, Biosecurity Australia and AQIS, could play a key role in facilitating shared leadership. Stakeholders indicated that the Queensland biosecurity strategy should be consistent with any recommendations of the Beale inquiry.

In summary, there is strong support for governance and advisory arrangements that support a shared responsibility and decision making and advisory processes must be conducted with balanced representation from all relevant stakeholders.

##### *4.2. Prioritise investment*

A risk-based approach to prioritising investment was supported by all major stakeholders with several environmental groups seeking to ensure a balance between economic, environment and social objectives in the application of this risk focus. There was also support for greater investment in prevention, surveillance and preparedness. Stakeholders actively investing in or benefiting from current management activities expressed concern at any reallocation of investment from managing establishing pests and diseases to prevention and surveillance

At least one-quarter of stakeholders including AgForce, Queensland Farmers Federation, Growcom and the Local Government Association of Queensland, sought greater funding allocation to biosecurity by the state government. Specific comments included the need for the State Government to significantly enhance core funding for biosecurity and realign investment priorities to focus on core infrastructure, human capacity and on-ground activities that deliver the most beneficial outcomes.

In considering realignment, stakeholders sought equal weighting of social and environmental impacts with economic impacts in risk analysis processes and investments being influenced by the predominant public or private benefit outcomes that are generated. Stakeholders didn't support further reductions of field-based positions but agree with more mobile staff and improved extension.

Stakeholders also sought recognition of the existing level of local government, industry and private sector investment in biosecurity, but acknowledged the quantum of industry and private investment is unknown.

#### *4.3. Science*

Stakeholder comments on biosecurity science primarily related to increased collaboration, importance of science to good decision-making and provision of biosecurity tools. They indicated a need to align Queensland science with national science framework and priorities, recognise existing science collaboration with natural resource organisations and identified the importance of relationships and collaboration between science providers. Two stakeholders also argued for science to be applied to the needs of end users.

A number of gaps were identified by stakeholders regarding the provision of scientific services. There were certain risk areas where there are capability gaps, such as plant science capacity, access to pest and disease diagnosticians and taxonomy skills for identification of marine and other pests. There was also support for the need to develop and expand social science capabilities.

#### *4.4. Tropics*

Eleven stakeholders supported a focus on the tropics with three qualifying their support on the proviso that it should not be to the detriment of other areas of Queensland. There was widespread understanding of the risks caused by the proximity to South-East Asia and the isolation of the northern areas of Australia. Consequently, stakeholders support a focus on border protection and greater co-ordination between federal, state and industry organisations in northern Australia.

The Wet Tropics Management Authority identified both the climatic conditions being conducive to invading species and the probable climate change effects being important drivers of increased vulnerability to invading species.

Indigenous communities located in the tropics have the potential to increase capacity to tackle tropical biosecurity risks, particularly in surveillance activities.

#### 4.5. *Emergency response*

Stakeholders viewed emergency response as a key issue. The strength of their views was expressed in terms of:

1. The need for a focus on building the emergency response capacity and capabilities of governments, industry and the community to manage responses in a coordinated and holistic manner.
2. Auditing of skills and capacity of organisations and individuals is required so as to involve them in emergency responses to gain maximum response effectiveness.
3. Concerns about Biosecurity Queensland's capacity to continue core functions whilst dealing with a major response.

There was a high level of awareness that Queensland is the front line state in terms of emergency responses to incursions of exotic organisms although stakeholder interest tended to depend on how recently they were involved in or affected by a response. Three stakeholders commented that emergency response approaches should be applied to the management of existing species where they are detected outside their current range (e.g. Siam weed).

Several stakeholders were signatories to existing national response plans or were aware of them. These conform to principles agreed among the Commonwealth, States and industries concerning coordination and cost-sharing for a range of pre-determined pests and diseases. Stakeholders wished to see continued improvement of these arrangements, particularly in the areas of broadening the range of industry signatories and ensuring that environmental threats were given adequate attention.

During stakeholder meetings, strong support was given to the concept of a 'biosecurity reserve' of trained staff drawn from stakeholder groups. Stakeholders saw it as important that DPI&F's core functions were not diminished during emergency responses as a result of the diversion of staff.

Four stakeholders suggested that the State develop a 'biosecurity funding reserve' to allow a rapid response to a threat without the need to negotiate funding.

Relationships before, during and after responses were seen as crucial to mounting successful responses. Stakeholders also requested high levels of communication with a broad range of affected parties during responses to ensure that their needs and concerns were taken into consideration.

A 'whole of government' approach to biosecurity emergency responses was supported as was the integration of biosecurity emergency response into the state disaster management network.

#### 4.6. Surveillance

A broad range of stakeholders strongly supported collaborative and coordinated detection, notification and diagnostic activities. They also supported coordinated work with the Australian Government to improve prevention activities through identifying and reducing pathways for species that pose high biosecurity threats for Queensland. A key driver for the stakeholder's strong support is the need to maintain and increase market access and to protect the productivity of Queensland's agricultural industries.

Stakeholders specifically identified gaps in current surveillance activities in the marine and native and plantation forestry areas.

There is significant opportunity to improve informal surveillance with Indigenous communities, landowners, industry, community groups and interested individuals. Stakeholders supported this approach provided that it was backed up with adequate training and barriers to reporting were removed.

#### 4.7. Managing established pests, diseases and existing contaminants

The major focus for stakeholders in this area was the management of invasive plants and animals. Some 'proof of freedom' issues were raised with respect to plant pests and diseases. Little comment was made on established animal diseases and contaminants.

Stakeholders recognised that invasive plants and animals are major threats to biodiversity and impose costs on production systems. It was pointed out that the Strategy must be equally focused on stopping threats from entering Queensland; eliminating existing threats; and halting the emergence of biosecurity threats from exotic organisms that currently exist.

While it was acknowledged that there is significant investment in this area, calls were made for increased investment. Several stakeholders supported the continuation of investments in managing established pests without acknowledging that benefits may have diminished over time since the initial investments commenced.

Stakeholders clearly communicated the need to better define roles and responsibilities for the effective management and monitoring of invasive plants and animals. There were however diverse views about who should have what roles and responsibilities. Concerns were expressed about the role of local government in enforcing compliance and the ability of state land management agencies to adequately manage pests on land under their control. Improved co-ordination and greater leadership in managing invasive plants and animals was supported.

#### *4.8. Active participation*

The concept of active stakeholder participation in biosecurity was broadly supported but it was acknowledged that the general community has a poor understanding of biosecurity. In order to redress this, ten stakeholders called for a proactive education and awareness campaign to raise the level of understanding. Stakeholders offered many practical solutions to increase participation in biosecurity and were willing to be involved in the implementation of these programs. Consequently, a public communication plan is considered a key component of the strategy.

The consultations showed that there is a willingness of stakeholders to work with government and industry to ensure the best results can be achieved for the benefit of all stakeholders. The caveat on industry's willingness to actively participate is the requirement that input is meaningful.

Stakeholders recognised that sound legislation is required to underpin the biosecurity system. Ten stakeholders were supportive of new biosecurity legislation and wished to be involved in its development.

#### *4.9. Capability and service delivery*

Stakeholders placed a strong emphasis on increasing capability and improving service delivery of Biosecurity Queensland. Stakeholders wanted services to be more coordinated, available and market focused. Third party providers, including regional Natural Resource Management groups, were seen as one avenue for delivering these outcomes.

Stakeholders wished to participate in and develop biosecurity training programs to increase stakeholder capability and capacity.

#### *4.8 Gaps*

Generally stakeholders expressed that the Discussion Paper was comprehensive although some gaps were identified including:

1. Environmental groups advocated that the biosecurity objectives in the strategy be incorporated into the objectives of other state agencies and that there was no recognition of the intrinsic right of native species to exist.
2. The inclusion of animal welfare did not fit neatly into the Strategy and that a separate animal welfare strategy should be developed to align with the national animal welfare strategy.
3. The importance of market access within the Strategy should be given greater emphasis. This is highlighted with the surveillance issues.
4. Some stakeholders suggested that the link between biosecurity and human health could have been highlighted more.

## Stakeholders consulted

One hundred and thirteen stakeholders either attended one of the consultation meetings and/or lodged a written submission with Biosecurity Queensland.

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## Submissions received

76 stakeholders lodged a written submission with Biosecurity Queensland.

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AgForce	5. Murray, David
Animal Health Australia	Department of Primary Industries (Vic)
Australian Pig Doggers and Hunters Association	Department of Public Works
Australian Seed Federation	Department of Territory and Municipal Services (ACT)
Australian Shipowners Association	Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry
Breeders, Owners, Trainers & Reinspersons Association (Qld) Inc	Emergency Services Queensland
Brisbane City Council	Environmental Defenders Office (Qld) Inc.
Brismark	Environmental Protection Authority
BSES Limited	Equine Hoofcare Services Pty Ltd
Cairns Port	Flinders Shire Council
CANEGROWERS	Flower Association of Queensland Inc
Carroll, MG	Gladstone Regional Council
CSIRO	Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
Circus Federation of Australia	Greening Australia Queensland (Ltd)
Cunningham, Susan	Growcom
Darling Downs-Moreton Rabbit Board	Hodgon, John
Deardon, Natalie	Invasive Species Council Australia
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry – Australian Quarantine Inspection Service	Ipswich City Council
Department of Education, Training and the Arts	Local Government Association of Queensland
Department of Housing	Lockyer Valley Regional Council
Department of Main Roads	Logan City Council
Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries staff:	Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Hon Peter Garrett
1. Atzeni, Michael	Moreton Bay Seafood Industry Association
2. Colson, Emma	Nursery Garden Industry of Queensland
3. Lawson, Simon	
4. McGaw, Clyde	

Ports Corporation of Queensland  
Powerlink Queensland  
Queensland Egg Farmers Association  
Inc  
Qld Regional NRM Groups Collective  
Queensland Beekeepers' Association  
Inc  
Queensland Conservation Council  
Queensland Corrective Services  
Queensland Farmers' Federation  
Queensland Murray-Darling  
Committee  
Queensland Outdoor Recreation  
Federation Inc  
Queensland Ports Association  
Queensland Water Commission  
Queensland Weed Spread Prevention  
Committee

Queensland Weeds of National  
Significance Chairs: Hymenchnne,  
Lantana, Parthenium, Prickle Bush  
and Rubber Vine.  
Rockhampton Regional Council  
RSPCA – Qld  
Safe Food Production Queensland  
Saw Darryl  
Shipping Australia  
Sugar Milling  
Sun Water  
Sustainable Poultry Alliance  
Thomas, Anthony  
Timber Queensland  
University of Queensland Veterinary  
School  
Wet Tropics Management Authority  
Wildlife Preservation Society of  
Queensland

A copy of the submission may be available by contacting the specific stakeholder directly.

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*Stakeholders who attended consultation meetings but did not lodge a written submission*

Australian Biosecurity CRC  
Australian Mango Industry Association  
Australian Passionfruit Industry  
Association  
Australian Plantation Products and  
Paper Industry Council (A3P)  
Australian Rural Exports Pty Ltd  
Avocados Australia  
Boar Busters  
Brisbane Ports Corporation  
Bundaberg Sugar Growers  
Cairns Regional Council  
Carter Holt Harvey  
Cassowary Coast Regional Council

Corbek Timber Preservation  
Forest Enterprises Australia  
Goat Industry Council of Australia  
Griffith School of Environment  
Gympie Regional Council  
Hinchinbrook Shire Council  
Hyne Timber  
Invasive Animals CRC  
Meat and Livestock Australia  
Northern Gulf Natural Resource  
Management  
Osrose Australia  
Parkside Timber  
Plant Health Australia

Queensland Chicken Growers  
Association  
Queensland Dairyfarmers'  
Organisation  
Queensland Oyster Growers  
Association  
Queensland Sea Scallop Ltd  
Queensland Seafood Industry  
Association

Rapid Training  
Shipping Australia Limited  
Swift Australia Pty Ltd  
Tablelands Regional Council  
The Ecology Centre  
Toowoomba Regional Council  
Tropical Invasive Plants Research  
Project