



10 August 2023

Hon. Mark Furner MP
Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and
Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities
GPO Box 46
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Email: agriculture@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Dear Minister Furner,

RE: Joint meeting request to restore Queensland's biosecurity balance

Safeguarding Queenslanders from the impacts of destructive and harmful pest animals, diseases and weeds is integral to protecting the Queensland way of life.

From ensuring the fruit, meat and groceries in our shopping trolleys are safe and affordable to keeping the wheels turning on multi-billion-dollar industries – there are very real consequences for Queenslanders if we get the biosecurity balance wrong.

As representatives of Queensland local government, rural and regional communities, agricultural industries (including the State's fruit, nut, vegetable, nursery, livestock, and sugarcane growers), environmental and NRM groups, we know that adequate biosecurity protection requires effective partnerships between industry, communities, natural resource managers and Traditional Owners - and all levels of government.

We, the undersigned, represent an essential part of Queensland's economy, its regions, and communities.

Combined, we represent over 100,000 Queensland jobs and injected \$18.09 billion into the Queensland economy across 2022 and 2023.

We write to seek an urgent meeting with you to raise our concerns about the biosecurity partnership and funding model which is now out of balance.

We are concerned that our current partnership models in place to manage complex and multifaceted biosecurity threats to Queensland's biosecurity system are no longer effective.

Emerging and worsening threats to our biosecurity system – like risks of an exotic livestock disease incursion (e.g., Foot and Mouth disease, African swine fever and Lumpy Skin Disease), growing impacts of feral pigs, and the spread of fire and yellow crazy ants threaten our strong agricultural industries and delicate ecosystems.

We are also seeing, through the economic transition of our regions, new considerations and players across the biosecurity system that need introduction to Queensland's biosecurity

system, and partnering with to demonstrate how they can achieve their General Biosecurity Obligations.

Queensland local government, agricultural peak bodies, regional NRM organisations and their communities are seeking greater collaboration with the Queensland Government to develop and implement outcome-focussed regional plans that identify and prioritise pest animal, disease and weed management projects for co-investment, whilst ensuring that the growing costs for delivery are not unfairly shouldered by local governments and their communities.

We want to see more biosecurity funding and collaboration from the State to protect Queenslanders' way of life. We seek, with this letter, the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how we as Queenslanders can work better together to protect our great State.

Our offer is for a genuine partnership with the State Government around our shared priorities – and to ensure that the biosecurity balance is protected through clear leadership and distinction of roles and responsibilities across individuals, industry, community and all levels of government.

Sincerely,



Alison Smith
Chief Executive Officer
Local Government Association
of Queensland



Mary-Lou Gittins OAM
Chair
QWaLC



Chris Norman
Chief Executive Officer
NRM Regions Queensland



Michael Guerin
Chief Executive Officer
AgForce



Andrew Cox
Chief Executive Officer
Invasive Species Council



Jo Sheppard
Chief Executive Officer
Queensland Farmers
Federation



Dan Galligan
Chief Executive Officer
Canegrowers



Rachel Chambers
Chief Executive Officer
Queensland Fruit and
Vegetable Growers



Ian Atkinson
Chief Executive Officer
Nursery and Garden Industry
Queensland

Shared priorities to bring back our biosecurity balance:

Problem	Impact	Solution
The devastating impact of feral pigs on our agriculture and environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large swathes of Queensland risk environmental degradation and a decline in agricultural production. • In 2021-22, Whitsunday Regional Council estimated \$40 million worth of losses from feral pigs <u>in their region alone</u> - to both agriculture and environment. • In recent years numbers of feral pigs have increased dramatically – their management at a regional scale across different land tenures and stakeholders requires enormous effort, coordination, and long-term action. • With Foot and Mouth Disease now endemic in Indonesia, the risk of spreading to Queensland through illegal carrying of infected pigs and produce to Australia's northern shoreline has increased. A feral pig population could contribute to its spread throughout Queensland, devastating the economy. 	<p>Funding certainty from the State Government on the continuation of the Queensland Feral Pest Initiative at \$10 million over four years that focus on delivering regional priorities that are identified in regional biosecurity plans.</p>
The ever-growing impact of high-priority weeds to agricultural and environmental values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weeds cost Queensland an estimated \$70 million annually (using 2016 as a base year), ranging from direct impacts to on-farm productivity to indirect impacts through reduction in ecosystem services delivered to the community. • Several years of wet seasons has contributed to the expansion in infestation size of a number of high priority weed species. • A number of funding guidelines do not provide funds to revisit controlled areas post funding period to embed gains. • Post the approval of a biocontrol agent for distribution, no resources exist to assist stakeholders in the rearing, distribution or monitoring of the agents effectiveness, creating availability gaps in the regions that need it most. 	<p>After an initial funding allocation of \$4 million to the Queensland Feral Pest Initiative (QFPI) by the State in 2016, QFPI funding has now dropped to just \$976,000 in 2022, as well as restricting the delivery of on-ground, operational activities.</p>
The ever-increasing harm caused by feral cats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feral cats threaten the survival of over 100 native species in Australia and have been directly linked to the extinction of several ground-dwelling birds and small to medium-sized mammals. • They also can carry a range of infectious diseases that can be transmitted to native animals, domestic livestock and humans. • In 2015, feral cats were declared nationally at the Meeting of Environment Ministers, yet to date, the impact caused by feral cats 	<p>Fund a statewide responsible pet ownership campaign.</p> <p>Provide financial assistance to councils to enforce cat containment local laws, run local education campaigns on responsible pet</p>

	<p>continues to be felt across Queensland and the nation.</p>	<p>ownership and provide subsidies to resident cat-owners for cat enclosures.</p> <p>Provide \$4 million over four years for subsidised desexing programs, (for councils and animal welfare groups).</p>
<p>De-investment by the Queensland Government towards the delivery of priority pest animal and weed research.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 2011, the Queensland Government has de-invested into the delivery of priority pest animal and weed research activities, with Queensland councils left to burden the shortfalls. • Since 2011, the Queensland Government's Technical Highlights showed that the Queensland Government's base research funds have dropped from \$3.6 million to \$1.6 million, with Queensland councils contributions increasing from \$1.7 million to \$2.3 million. • With funding shortfalls, priority research projects are significantly delayed, resulting in the further expansion of pest animal and weed infestations. 	<p>State Government to re-invest back into priority pest animal and weed research activities so that Queensland has all the tools required to tackle priority infestations.</p>
<p>The spread of fire and yellow crazy ants into delicate ecosystems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red Imported Fire Ants (RIFA) have significant economic implications for Queensland farmers – and our environment. • The cost of RIFA eradication and restrictions on producers' place pressure on these small businesses. • Yellow crazy ants (YCA) currently pose a significant risk to native wildlife and our environmental assets and are contained to a handful of local government areas. • Outside of the Wet Tropics Area, resourcing YCA eradication is largely borne by Queensland councils within their current pest management budget allocations, reducing resources to combat other priority pest animal and weed issues. 	<p>The extension of the fire ant eradication program and an additional \$4 million over four years for local government to manage the threat of RIFA and YCA in affected local government areas – and stop their march into fresh territory.</p>
<p>Preventing the plague of rabbits moving towards Queensland.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The burden to Queensland councils in contributing 100% towards the Darling Downs-Moreton Rabbit Board's fence is impacting the ability for regional councils to allocate committed funds to other priority projects that make their communities more liveable. 	<p>State Government to contribute 50% of funding towards the Darling Downs-Moreton Rabbit Board Fence, similar to the funding arrangements for the Wild Dog Barrier Fence.</p>
<p>A non-shared understanding of the General</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the introduction of the <i>Biosecurity Act 2014</i>, little resources have been invested in pragmatically demonstrating to stakeholders 	<p>State Government, in collaboration with partners, develop tools</p>

Biosecurity Obligation.	how they can meet their General Biosecurity Obligation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="469 405 1023 562">• This resourcing gap has resulted in knowledge gaps across stakeholders and resulting in inconsistent approaches being undertaken across Queensland and its regions.	and resources that assist councils to improve community awareness and introduce pragmatic solutions into their biosecurity plans that demonstrate how stakeholders can discharge their General Biosecurity Obligation.
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