



9 January 2017

Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
PARLIAMENT HOUSE QLD 4000

Dear Research Director

INQUIRY INTO THE IMPACTS OF INVASIVE PLANTS (WEEDS) AND THEIR CONTROL IN QUEENSLAND

Rockhampton Regional Council refers to the inquiry into the *Inquiry into the Impacts of Invasive Plants (Weeds) and their Control in Queensland* and provides the following comments.

- 1 The responsibilities of local governments in relation to the control of prohibited, restricted and invasive plants imposed under s.48 of the *Biosecurity Act 2014* are reasonable, and local governments are meeting those obligations**

Council provides the following comments:

- With the recent adoption of the *Biosecurity Act 2014*, a number of Class 1 pest species under the former *Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002* have been reclassified as 'restricted matter' resulting in the shifting of responsibility from the State to local government for managing these species. Whilst Rockhampton Regional Council will manage these species, with limited resources the ability to manage the increase in the number of species is a concern.
- Council is concerned that the current model for calculating Land Protection Fund payments is not appropriate. Over the years local government have received a reduced level of service from the State Government for pest management issues with a shifting of responsibility to local government in areas. The reduction in service includes reduction in available extension material available to local government, the reduction in Biosecurity Queensland Officers and their availability of officers and reduction in the management of invasive plants on State land. Financial contributions to the Land Protection Fund have not reflected this.

Council believes that the current model for calculating Land Protection Fund payments should be reviewed to reflect the level of service that local government receives from the State Government.

- Council's regulatory functions could be enhanced by amendments to the *Biosecurity Act 2014* allowing authorised persons the power to enter a place to ascertain if there is a biosecurity risk. Currently consent to enter is required unless the action is under an approved inspection program, which impedes the ability to investigate matters.



Rockhampton Regional
Council proudly supports
the CQ NRL BID

[Redacted]
[Redacted] | Web www.irc.qld.gov.au

- Currently there is one offence under the *Biosecurity Act 2014* in which an infringement notice can be issued. Council's regulatory functions and associated enforcement action would be enhanced by the ability to issue infringement notices for a wide range of offences including non-compliance with a Biosecurity Order.
- The introduction of the *Biosecurity Act 2014* has greatly increased the amount of paperwork associated with investigations and enforcement, especially in relation to general biosecurity duty, resulting in increased costs and greater workload and less time officer have to manage invasive species on Council land.

2 Programs for the control of weeds on Crown land administered by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines are effective

Council provides the following comments:

- Council feels that the management of Crown land within its local government area has not been effective to date, with Council being required to commit resources to managing invasive species on Crown land within the region.

Of particular concern is the management of aquatic weeds including water lettuce, salvinia, hyacinth and hymenachne on the Fitzroy River. These weeds are fast growing and at times blanket the river and tributaries impacting on the ecology of the river, recreational use, infrastructure and potentially the reef in high flow events with vegetation being released into the marine ecosystem. The extent of the issue, associated management costs and required resources significantly limits the management activities Council undertakes. As this land is State land, it would be preferable for the State to manage the invasive weeds or appropriately fund local governments to manage invasive weed species on the Fitzroy River.
 - As Crown land borders private land, the lack of weed management on Crown land:
 - Impacts on the success of management activities on private land bordering Crown land especially if the same weed is present,
 - It creates issues when Council takes enforcement actions under the *Biosecurity Act 2014* on neighbouring private land.
 - As Crown land borders Council land, the lack of weed management on Crown land impacts on the success of management activities on Council land bordering Crown land if the same weed is present.
 - Whilst Council may, under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*, issue a Biosecurity Order to a State government agency, given the apparent lack of State human resources, Council feels that little action would be undertaken Council has limited options for enforcement.. Council believes that the State allocation of additional resources for invasive weeds management and the reflection of Councils Biosecurity Plan action in any DEHP weed management program would be of greater benefit to stakeholders.
 - The above comments also relate to invasive animals especially deer, wild dogs and pigs that move in and out of National Parks.
- ## 3 Biosecurity Queensland's weeds programs, including biological controls and new technologies, are adequately funded and effective at controlling weeds

Council provides the following comments:

- In recent years Biosecurity Queensland's role in invasive weeds management has transitioned from a program which had a greater 'on-ground' focus to one which is more policy driven. Council believes that this has resulted in the State government having less knowledge of local invasive species and the management of those species, especially on Crown land.

- Council believes that invasive weed research needs to be targeted at high priority weeds which are of greatest threat to Queensland's economy, social and environmental values.
- Council acknowledges that Biosecurity Queensland will be implementing the 'Invasive Plant and Animals Co-investment Model, however Biosecurity Queensland needs to communicate more regularly with all stakeholders, including local government, to ensure that research investment is reflecting current communities concerns.

4 Environmental programs administered by Department of Environment and Heritage Protection impact favourably on weed control programs administered by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and local governments

Council provides the following comments:

- Council believes that weed management activities undertaken by DEHP are not consistent with other stakeholder activities in the region. As mentioned previously this impacts on the success of Council's management activities on land bordering Crown land and causes conflict when Council undertakes enforcement actions under the *Biosecurity Act 2014* on neighbouring private land.
- Whilst Council may, under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*, issue a Biosecurity Order to a State government agency, given the apparent lack of State human resources Council feels that little action would be undertaken and Council has limited options for enforcement. Council believes that the State allocation of additional resources for invasive weeds management and the reflection of Councils Biosecurity Plan action in any DEHP weed management program would be of greater benefit to stakeholders.

5 Federal, state and local government weeds programs are coordinated to maximise their achievements and to have a whole of government approach.

Council believes that communication between all levels of government for the management of invasive weeds needs to be improved to maximise achievements and have a whole of government approach resulting in consistent policy and on ground action.

For any further correspondence, please liaise with Catherine Hayes, Co-ordinator Health and Environment on [REDACTED]

Yours faithfully

[REDACTED]
Evan Pardon
Chief Executive Officer