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 Our reference ECM9550276  
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# **Ipswich City Council**

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The Research Director  
 Agriculture and Environment Committee  
 Parliament House  
 BRISBANE QLD 4000

18 February 2016

Dear Mr Hansen

Re: Inquiry into Barrier Fences in Queensland

I refer to your correspondence addressed to Ipswich City Council Mayor, Paul Pisasale, dated 16 November 2015 regarding an inquiry into barrier fences in Queensland. Thank you for allowing Ipswich City Council to have the opportunity to comment on this matter and the Darling Downs-Moreton Rabbit Board (DDMRB).

It is understood that pursuant to the *Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002*, Local Governments have the responsibility to manage pests within their area. Currently under Section 183 (2) of the Act, where a pest exists within an Operational Board, the Board takes over the responsibility of Local Governments. This service is paid for through a precept payment.

The following points are provided in relation to the inquiry:

1. **Ipswich City Council has previously raised concerns about the precept payment made to the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.**
  - a. **Concern:** Council believe that it could provide an improved level of service to the community by retaining the component of the precept payment made to the DDMRB and thereby internally fund the control and management of rabbits within the Ipswich City Council area. Previous measures of control undertaken by Council Officers resulted in a greater impact on rabbit populations primarily due to the regular presence of staff within the known areas of rabbit infestation. As often is the case, Council Officers have to intervene and follow up identified issues as the level of on the ground service by the DDMRB is lacking. An example of service to the community by the DDMRB where Council had to intervene is provided below. The example highlights that it is often Council who have to drive

the DDMRB into action over protracted periods of time and this is not an isolated example:

- April/May 2013 – Local resident contacts the DDMRB in regard to rabbit sightings and requests assistance;
- November 2013 – Local resident contacts Ipswich City Council in regard to rabbit sightings and requests assistance. The resident claims that they received little support from the DDMRB previously;
- November 2013 – Council Officers report the matter to the DDMRB;
- Mid December 2013 – Council Officers receive further calls from local residents regarding the ongoing rabbit problems in the area. Council Officers inspect the area resulting in 50-60 rabbits being sighted. Ten rabbits are destroyed by a Council Officer and photographs are taken and provided to the DDMRB;
- 30 December 2013 – DDMRB advise that Officers fumigate 6 rabbit burrows along the roadside;
- 8 January 2014 – DDMRB advise that Officers collapse 2 rabbit burrows;
- 9 January 2014 – DDMRB advise that cage trapping is commenced in the area with the intent to release a virus;
- 11 January 2014 - DDMRB advise that 2 rabbits were captured and were injected with Rabbit Calicivirus Disease (RCD) and released in the area;
- 13 January 2014 – Ipswich City Council send a letter to the DDMRB in regard to this matter and highlight dissatisfaction with the action being taken and the inconsistency in advice provided by the DDMRB at the time;
- 21 February 2014 - DDMRB send Officer's reports to Council. The Rabbit Compliance Officer's report indicates that trapping, fumigation and inspections continue in the area until early February 2014;
- 22 May 2014 - DDMRB send Officer's reports to Council. The Rabbit Compliance Officer's report indicates that spotlighting, trapping, fumigation and inspections continue in the area from February – May 2014;
- Further reports received from the DDMRB indicate that the Rabbit Compliance Officer continued to work in the area.

- b. **Concern:** Pest rabbits and wild dogs are wide spread within the State of Queensland and it is recommended that alternative methods of collecting funds for a precept payment should be considered. An alternate method would be that the funding costs be shared by all Local Governments within Queensland or that these services be fully funded by the State Government.
- c. **Comment:** Council understand the importance of research into the control of pests and support the continuation of a contribution into research. Alternate methods of funding this research should be considered as mentioned above.

## 2. Management of barrier fences.

- a. **Concern:** It is clear that significant numbers of wild dogs and wild rabbits are located to the north of the barrier fences. Pest rabbits and wild dogs are wide

spread within the State of Queensland and the current method of collecting funds for precept payments may not be the most appropriate (as mentioned above).

- b. **Comment:** Ipswich City Council does not have any land which is directly protected by the barrier fences so it is difficult to comment on the benefits or negative impacts of these barrier fences in regard to the control of rabbits or wild dogs.
- c. **Comment:** The barrier fences are a historical approach to controlling these pests and other methods of control appear to be more effective (e.g. Myxomatosis with regard to rabbits).

The opportunity to comment on this matter and the Darling Downs-Moreton Rabbit Board (DDMRB) is appreciated and should you require any further information in regard to the above points, please do not hesitate in contacting me on (07) 3810 7524.

Yours faithfully



Sean Madigan  
Chief Operating Officer  
Health, Security and Regulatory Services Department