



Protecting Primary Production Bill

Submission



## Queensland Murray-Darling Committee Inc.'s Submission on Protecting Primary Production Amendment Bill 2011

4 November 2011

### Submission to:

The Research Director  
Environment, Agriculture, Resources and Energy Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane QLD 4000  
Email: [earec@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:earec@parliament.qld.gov.au)

### Submitting organisation:

Chief Executive Officer  
Queensland Murray-Darling Committee Inc.  
PO Box 6243  
Toowoomba QLD 4350  
Phone: 07 4637 6276  
Fax: 07 4632 8062  
Email: [geoffp@qmhc.org.au](mailto:geoffp@qmhc.org.au)

This submission is presented by the Chief Executive Officer, Geoff Penton, on behalf of the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee Inc. (QMDC). QMDC is a regional natural resource management (NRM) group that supports communities in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin (QMDB) to sustainably manage their natural resources.

### 1.0 Amendments to the *Agricultural Chemicals Distribution Control Act 1966*

QMDC does not support the transfer of the relevant functions to the Chief Executive of DEEDI on the grounds that DEEDI's functions are primarily focused on economic development.

QMDC asserts that greater control of agricultural chemical use should lead to the prevention or minimisation of environmental impacts for the agriculture sector and the environment. Management and control of agricultural chemicals must therefore be considered in terms of effective day-to-day operations associated with agricultural practices, as well as the effectiveness of longer term management of agricultural chemical residues in food chains and the environment.

The aim of this submission is to ensure that the control of agricultural chemicals is appropriate and is carried out by an appropriate authority in order to achieve food and fibre quality and safety, satisfy market access requirements and meet consumer and community needs for human and environmental health.

Reliance on regulation of licensing and inspection by DEEDI is considered by QMDC to not be the most effective way of meeting the objectives of responsible chemical use, although QMDC supports that some form of legislation and government role will always be required, particularly when community or environmental protection is needed.



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Government intervention is supported by QMDC as necessary, for example, when enforcing penalties for non-compliance with industry codes and standards.

QMDC submits that one agency (an agency with appropriate legislative power and technical expertise) should assume the lead control and management role and have the right to call upon other agencies to assist in a technical capacity, as required by the circumstances of the case. The lead agency could be assisted in their role by cross-authorising officers from the other agencies to ensure that these officers had powers of entry and evidence gathering etc.

The communities of QMDB today expect a high level of transparency in government decision-making. QMDC submits that by increasing the membership of the Board to include key stakeholders would enhance the capacity of the Board to fulfil administrative, such as registration and licensing and other responsibilities.

The Board although it is industry driven as it would comprise a majority of industry representatives also must be representative of relevant government agencies, such as DEEDI. The Board would then be able to refer technical issues to the relevant government agency for investigation, who would also be able to prosecute an individual operator for breaches of their legislation.

QMDC recognises that in order for the Board to remain a useful avenue for gauging industry practices, they must not be solely directed by their members independently of the strategic policy direction of the government of the day. In addition, the Board must maintain a focus on industry needs that reflects the needs and aspirations of the wider community.

## **2.0 Amendments to the *Agricultural Standards Act 1994***

QMDC supports the proposed amendments.

## **3.0 Amendments to the *Land Protection(Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002***

QMDC supports the proposed amendments so that this Act aligns with the relevant sections of the proposed Biosecurity Act.

## **4.0 Amendments to the *Plant Protection Act 1989***

QMDC supports the proposed amendments but seeks clarification on the legal definition of pest and whether that is aligned to the meaning proposed by the new Biosecurity Act.

## **5.0 Amendments to the *Rural and Regional Adjustment Act 1994*.**

QMDC supports the proposed amendments.

## **6.0 Amendments to the *Veterinary Surgeons Act 1936***

QMDC supports the proposed amendments that allow for a better coordinated emergency response to a biosecurity threat or incident.