

Agriculture and Fisheries and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023

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Submission to the Agriculture and Fisheries and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023

This personal submission only relates to the Bill's proposed amendments to one of the 14 Acts, the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. Biosecurity has been the main focus of my forty-year career, especially research, extension and policy relating to weeds, invasive pests and farm biosecurity. I recently retired from the workforce and retain a keen interest in agricultural policy and biosecurity.

This submission relates to two queries in the Amendment Bill 2023, in relation to the *Biosecurity Act 2014*.

1. Amendment of Section 43 (Distributing or disposing of Category 3 restricted matter).

Clause 86 of the Amendment Bill 2023 propose to exclude Category 3 invasive plants restricted matter from the *Biosecurity Act 2014*'s disposal requirements by regulation, permit, by an authorised officer, or for seeking identification (as per Section 43 of the Act <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2014-007#sec.43>). Distribute or dispose includes selling or trading restricted matter (Section 43 (3)).

Recommend Clause 86 of the Bill clarifies if Category 3 Restricted Biosecurity Matter and other Matter defined under local government local law can be sold or traded, if an alternative cost-effective use is found which poses no biosecurity risk.

Examples include:-

- Biofuel for renewable energy, such as prickly acacia.
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/rural-news/2022-03-17/transforming-invasive-weeds-into-renewable-fuel/100917064> and
<https://www.flinders.qld.gov.au/news/article/113/flinders-shire-exploring-project-to-convert-woody-weeds-into-renewable-fuel>
- Compost from weeds. Water weeds as compost for soil health. Promoted by NQ Dry Tropics NRM Group and funded by Queensland Government Natural Resource Investment Program
<https://www.nqdrytropics.com.au/aquatic-weeds-to-compost-improves-soil-health-and-crop-yield/> and <https://www.northqueenslandregister.com.au/story/7789499/burdekin-growers-trial-turning-invasive-weeds-into-nutrient-rich-soil-compost/>.
- Deer meat products for niche markets.
- Deer hunting.

- Game meat from feral animals such as feral pigs, feral goats, deer and rabbits.
 - Woody weed hardwood for niche markets (e.g. chinese apple, camphor laurel).
2. **Recommend the Bill clarifies if the *Biosecurity Act 2014* is applicable to defence land, defence personnel, traditional owner land and First Nations custodians.** (Part 3, Sections 6 to 9 <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2014-007#ch.1-pt.3>)

In the event of an outbreak of prohibited biosecurity matter such as foot and mouth disease, avian influenza or screw-worm fly, it is essential that DAF's authorised officers can check, inspect and impose movement orders over every land manager within biosecurity zones. The Act would benefit from clear, unequivocal guidelines that everyone and every place could be affected by inspections, movement records and other traceability requirements.

Section 6 currently defines the scope as "land and waters **of the State** and dealings with biosecurity matter or carriers" (<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2014-007#sec.6>). Section 6 is not clear about operation of the Act on **federal land** (e.g. Department of Defence) and/or **land subject to native title**.

Australian defence force ships and other country defence force ships are exempt from the *Biosecurity Act 2014* (as per Section 8 (3)). Defence lands and defence ships are a major risk pathway for biosecurity and vectors, considering the increased movement of personnel and equipment into Shoalwater Bay and Greenvale, due to the Australia-Singapore Military Training Initiative from 2016 to 2041 <https://www.townsvilleenterprise.com.au/key-projects/recent-achievements/australian-singapore-military-training-initiative/> and <https://www.defence.gov.au/programs-initiatives/australia-singapore-military-training-initiative> . These two training areas occupy over 420,000 ha.

Invasive weeds such as *Sida ciliaris* and *Indigofera vohamerensis* were first recorded at Shoalwater Bay in 2011, as suspected contaminants of military equipment¹.

Any priority prohibited biosecurity matter entering Queensland from northern shores will require cooperation and assistance from native title entities spanning Cape York and northern Queensland. The Cape York Biosecurity Facility at Coen was closed in June 2023, partially due to the facility being on land subject to native title <https://arr.news/2022/09/20/biosecurity-blunder-coen-facility-faces-the-chop-from-state-govt/> .

DAF's Chief Veterinary Officer Dr Allison Crook has not responded to previous questions about the scope of authorised biosecurity officers to access defence land or native title land, which was raised at the National Feral Pig Conference in Cairns in June 2023. The scope of operation needs to be clarified and defined in the Act, before any urgent biosecurity response is needed to a new incursion of priority and notifiable biosecurity matter.

Please contact me if you require further information or clarification regarding this submission.

¹ Waterhouse B.M. and Mitchell A.A. 2012. Weeds of tropical Australia: how do they get here?. 18th Australasian Weeds Conference. pp. 9-12. <https://caws.org.nz/old-site/awc/2012/awc201210091.pdf>

Yours sincerely,

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