




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to take note

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (12.22 pm): I rise to speak to report No. 42 of the Agriculture and Environment Committee, *Consideration of the Auditor-General's report 12: 2016-17—Biosecurity Queensland's management of agricultural pests and diseases*. The Auditor-General's report examined whether the department, through Biosecurity Queensland, has been achieving its agricultural pest and disease management outcomes. The Audit Office focused its inquiry on how efficiently and effectively Biosecurity Queensland detects, responds to and manages significant agricultural pests and diseases.

Biosecurity in Queensland's agricultural sector is of vital importance. We rely on stringent and comprehensive biosecurity detection, response and management of biosecurity issues to ensure our plants and animals are protected from disease and attack. The Panama TR4 outbreak in our banana industry in the north, which my colleague the member for Hinchinbrook will talk about shortly, white spot disease in prawns and wild dog management are just some of the biosecurity issues which are either still prevalent or have occurred in the past 12 months.

The degree of risk that biosecurity threats pose to industry and the economy cannot be underestimated. There are significant costs associated with biosecurity management, but what price do we put on the protection of our flora and fauna? The total value of Queensland primary industry commodities for 2016-17 is forecast to be almost \$20 billion. There are approximately 26,000 farm businesses across the state employing 59,400 Queenslanders which underpins many regional and rural communities. I must admit to some concern when reading the audit findings. Of particular concern are these statements from the report—

Biosecurity Queensland is delivering on the activities and outputs it has committed to in most cases, but it cannot always demonstrate it has successfully achieved the ultimate aims or outcomes of its programs.

Where Biosecurity Queensland shares responsibility for managing pests and diseases with other government and non-government entities, the effectiveness of its contributions is not always clear or easy to measure.

I note the audit recommendations, in particular that the department continue to develop an appropriate number of specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely key performance indicators of each of Biosecurity Queensland's key activities or initiatives; improve quarterly reporting processes by not only reporting on inputs and activities for key biosecurity initiatives but also reporting on risks and progress towards achieving objectives and outcomes to support strategic management decisions; ensure when Biosecurity Queensland participates in pest and disease management strategies which share responsibilities with other entities it clearly determines its roles and responsibilities compared to the other entities involved, the key performance indicators used to assess its contribution to the strategy, which entity is best placed to monitor performance of the strategy and evaluate it at appropriate intervals; monitor and report on the input costs over time for each of Biosecurity Queensland's key outputs, activities or initiatives to identify further efficiency improvements; and consider options to implement the efficiency improvements identified during the planning of the biosecurity information management system program and which are now not within scope.

It concerns me that this government has not seen fit to replace the agriculture minister, particularly when we consider the vital role that agriculture plays across this state. A part-time agriculture minister is not good enough for our state and it is certainly not good enough when we consider the issues raised in the Auditor-General's report and the need to ensure that we have appropriate detection, response and management protocols in place. I call on the Premier to appoint an agriculture minister and for that person to come back to this parliament and give an assurance that all of the issues identified in the Auditor-General's report have been addressed.