

Question on Notice

No. 324

Asked on 26 March 2019

MS C LUI ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise what financial support has been allocated to biosecurity risks in the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for the question.

Countries to Australia's north, including Papua New Guinea and Indonesia, have a range of biosecurity threats including pests, diseases, weeds and invasive animals which could have a significant impact on agricultural productivity and trade, human and animal health, and may damage our environment and way of life.

In recognition of these biosecurity threats, and the need to manage them in partnership with local people and many different regional stakeholders, the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Biosecurity Executive Group and the Biosecurity Working Group (BWG) have been established.

Led by the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) in partnership with the Australian Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, a range of regional stakeholders, other Queensland and Federal Government departments, local land management groups and local councils are also involved.

The Biosecurity Working Group has collaboratively developed the *Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area Regional Biosecurity Strategy*. The Strategy provides a framework and an ethos for how all regional stakeholders, including three levels of government, traditional owners, local residents and visitors to the region can manage biosecurity threats. These principles align directly with the *Queensland Biosecurity Strategy* which was released in March 2018.

DAF has also developed the *Far Northern Biosecurity Initiative* which includes a range of measures designed to increase the department's footprint in the region and to address specific biosecurity issues relevant to Cape York and Torres Strait.

The Far Northern Biosecurity Initiative has a total value of \$1.733 million over three years and creates local employment including:

- a Senior Officer position to be based in far north Queensland;
- a Biosecurity Coordinator position that would ideally be based on Thursday Island;
- Indigenous biosecurity traineeships offering employment opportunities in remote locations;
- extending the operating hours of the Cape York Biosecurity Centre at Coen through the employment of local residents;

- engagement of a communications specialist to develop culturally appropriate education materials; and
- engagement of an education specialist to develop a ‘just-in-time’ training package that will enable DAF to more effectively engage local people and Indigenous ranger groups in future biosecurity responses in the region.

I am confident that this initiative will strengthen the biosecurity systems in far north Queensland and provide protection for Queensland agricultural industries and the communities who live in Torres Strait and northern Cape York.