

**Consideration of the Auditor-General's  
Report 12: 2016-17**

***Biosecurity Queensland's management  
of agricultural pests and diseases***

**Report No. 42, 55th Parliament**

**Agriculture and Environment Committee**

**August 2017**

## **Agriculture and Environment Committee**

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### **Acknowledgements**

The committee acknowledges the assistance provided by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Queensland Parliamentary Library.

## Contents

<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Chair's foreword</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Role of the committee	1
1.2 Referral of the Auditor-General's report	1
1.3 Inquiry process	1
<b>2 The Auditor-General's report</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1 Audit findings	2
2.2 Audit recommendations	3
<b>3 The implementation of audit recommendations</b>	<b>4</b>
3.1 Audit recommendation 1	4
3.2 Audit recommendation 2	5
3.3 Audit recommendation 3	5
3.4 Audit recommendation 4	6
3.5 Audit recommendation 5	6

## Abbreviations

BIMS	Biosecurity Information Management System
the department	Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
QAO	Queensland Audit Office
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timed

## Chair's foreword

This report presents a summary of the Agriculture and Environment Committee's examination of the Auditor-General's Report 12: 2016-17 - *Biosecurity Queensland's management of agricultural pests and diseases*.

On behalf of the committee, I thank the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for its assistance with the committee's examination.

I commend this report to the House.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe Kelly', written in a cursive style.

Joe Kelly MP

Chair

## Recommendations

**Recommendation 1** **1**

The committee recommends the House note the contents of this report.

**Recommendation 2** **7**

The committee recommends that the Minister report to the House in six months regarding the implementation of all recommendations in the Auditor-General's report.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Role of the committee

The Agriculture and Environment Committee (the committee) is a portfolio committee of the Legislative Assembly which commenced on 27 March 2015 under the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001* and the Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly.<sup>1</sup>

The committee's primary areas of responsibility are:

- Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Economic Development
- Environment and Heritage Protection, and
- National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef.

According to s 94(1)(a) of the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*, the committee has responsibility within its portfolio areas for:

The assessment of the integrity, economy, efficiency and effectiveness of government financial management by:

- examining government financial documents, and
- considering the annual and other reports of the Auditor-General.

## 1.2 Referral of the Auditor-General's report

Standing Order 194B provides the Committee of the Legislative Assembly shall as soon as practicable after a report of the Auditor-General is tabled in the Assembly, refer that report to the relevant portfolio committee for consideration.

A portfolio committee may deal with this type of referral by considering and reporting on the matter and making recommendations about it to the Assembly.<sup>2</sup>

On 9 May 2017, the [Auditor-General's Report 12: 2016-17 Biosecurity Queensland's management of agricultural pests and diseases](#) (the Auditor-General's report) was tabled and referred to the committee for consideration and report.

## 1.3 Inquiry process

For its consideration of the Auditor-General's report, the committee:

- received a private briefing on 16 June 2017 from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (the department) on the audit findings and the government's implementation of recommendations, and
- wrote to the department on 27 June 2017 seeking further written advice on the government's implementation of recommendations. A response was received from the department on 7 July 2017.

### Recommendation 1

The committee recommends the House note the contents of this report.

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<sup>1</sup> *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*, section 88 and Standing Order 194.

<sup>2</sup> *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*, s 92(3).

## 2 The Auditor-General's report

The Auditor General's report examines whether the department, through Biosecurity Queensland, has been achieving its agricultural pest and disease management outcomes. To assess this, the Queensland Audit Office (QAO) focused its inquiry on how efficiently and effectively Biosecurity Queensland detects, responds to, and manages significant agricultural pests and diseases.

The audit objective was addressed through the following sub-objectives:

- Biosecurity Queensland's detection, response, and management initiatives and activities achieve their objectives, and
- Biosecurity Queensland measures, reports on and improves the efficiency of its detection, response, and management initiatives and activities.

The QAO specifically audited the Panama program, wild dog management, and state-funded surveillance activities.

The Auditor-General's report noted that due to the complexity of biosecurity management and risk that biosecurity threats pose to industry and the economy, and the significant costs associated with biosecurity management, the community must have confidence in Queensland's biosecurity system. To maintain this confidence and demonstrate value for money, Biosecurity Queensland must be able to measure and report on its effectiveness in managing biosecurity risks.

### 2.1 Audit findings

QAO found that Biosecurity Queensland cannot always demonstrate the benefits from or value of its investments into biosecurity measures and programs:

*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.*

And:

*Where Biosecurity Queensland has shared delivery 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.<sup>3</sup>*

In the main, these concerns reflect the following QAO audit findings:

- Biosecurity Queensland was not effectively setting objectives and performance measures for all its programs, and where documented strategies were in place, performance indicators often were not specific, measurable, achievable, relevant or timed (SMART).
- Biosecurity Queensland was not collecting data consistently across all programs to enable performance measurement, program evaluation or to inform decision making. Biosecurity Queensland's internal reporting arrangements, mainly focused on outputs or actions performed, and therefore are not helpful in informing senior management about program effectiveness.
- Biosecurity Queensland has not adequately focused on evaluating the success of its activities.
- In the absence of performance management and reporting systems/processes, Biosecurity Queensland is not able to assess and/or improve its operational efficiency.

The QAO found this to be the case with the wild dog management activities, in particular.

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<sup>3</sup> Auditor-General of Queensland, Report 12: 2016-17 *Biosecurity Queensland's management of agricultural pests and diseases*, p 3.

Although Biosecurity Queensland was found to have met most of its commitments in the strategy, limited data had been collected and no evaluation of the strategy completed by Biosecurity Queensland to determine if the program had been successful in achieving its aims or outcomes. In the case of state-funded surveillance activities, the audit found there to be no specific strategy or operational plan in place so Biosecurity Queensland was not able to measure or assess effectiveness of delivery.

The report noted however that the Panama program is still in ‘containment stage’, meaning Biosecurity Queensland is still leading the response to the panama disease outbreak and not yet passed any key milestones for monitoring or evaluation. In the main however the QAO found Biosecurity Queensland had adequate planning, measurement and evaluation processes in place for its Panama containment activities. Whilst the disease cannot be eradicated, Biosecurity Queensland’s containment measures have so far succeeded and Biosecurity Queensland continues to work with the banana industry to develop long term management strategies.

The QAO report noted that Biosecurity Queensland has recently committed to implementing a number of new systems and frameworks which will go some way towards addressing the identified deficiencies across Queensland’s biosecurity management system.

## **2.2 Audit recommendations**

The Auditor-General’s report made five recommendations:

*We recommend the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries:*

*1. continue to develop an appropriate number of specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timed key performance indicators for each of Biosecurity Queensland’s key activities or initiatives (Chapter 2). In doing so, it should:*

- *plan how Biosecurity Queensland will collect and analyse data to monitor these key performance indicators*
- *collaborate with industry and other stakeholders where appropriate on the collection of data to support performance monitoring*
- *evaluate the success of key activities or initiatives in delivering the desired outcomes*

*2. improve quarterly reporting processes by not only reporting on inputs and activities for key biosecurity initiatives, but also on risks and progress towards achieving objectives and outcomes to support strategic management decisions (Chapter 2)*

*3. ensure that 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 that will be 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 (Chapter 2)*

*4. monitors and reports on the input costs over time for each of Biosecurity Queensland’s key outputs, activities, or initiatives to identify further efficiency improvements (Chapter 3)*

*5. considers options to implement the efficiency improvements that were identified during the planning of the Biosecurity Information Management System program and are now not within scope (Chapter 3).<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>4</sup> Auditor-General of Queensland, Report 12: 2016-17 *Biosecurity Queensland’s management of agricultural pests and diseases*, p 6.

### 3 The implementation of audit recommendations

The Auditor-General invited the department to respond to a draft of the report. A copy of the full responses received by the QAO is available in Appendix A of the Auditor-General's report. In its response, the department agreed with the five recommendations and set out a series of actions and milestones for their implementation.

#### 3.1 Audit recommendation 1

*1. continue to develop an appropriate number of specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timed key performance indicators for each of Biosecurity Queensland's key activities or initiatives (Chapter 2). In doing so, it should:*

- *plan how Biosecurity Queensland will collect and analyse data to monitor these key performance indicators*
- *collaborate with industry and other stakeholders where appropriate on the collection of data to support performance monitoring*
- *evaluate the success of key activities or initiatives in delivering the desired outcomes*

The department's response to the QAO notes the following series of actions and milestones in relation to this recommendation:

- **March 2017:** impact maps that describe the expected outcomes of all Biosecurity Queensland programs
- **March 2017:** performance plans for 2016-17 across all programs
- **June 2017:** performance monitoring plans for 2017-18
- **December 2017:** whole of department evaluation framework and tools
- **December 2017:** rolling schedule of evaluation of key Biosecurity Queensland activities
- **March 2018:** evaluation of implementation of Wild Dog Management Strategy 2011-2016
- **March 2018:** monitoring and evaluation requirements included in wild dog funding agreements, and
- **June 2018:** final project data evaluations.<sup>5</sup>

In written advice to the committee, the department stated that the Panama TR4 Program Operational Plan is currently under development with a focus on Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timed (SMART) key performance indicators. The department said that quarterly reports will be developed to focus on inputs and deliverables.<sup>6</sup>

In relation to the actions above with a milestone of March 2017, the department stated that these had been completed:

*Biosecurity Queensland completed first year rollout of the Impact and Investment Framework, encompassing development of Impact Maps and Performance Measurement Plans for the four Biosecurity Queensland Business Units by March 2017. Biosecurity Queensland has also captured information on all activities for 2016/17. The Impact Maps, Performance Measurement Plans and activity information will be further updated for 2017/18 by the end of September 2017.<sup>7</sup>*

<sup>5</sup> Auditor-General of Queensland, Report 12: 2016-17 Biosecurity Queensland's management of agricultural pests and diseases, p 56.

<sup>6</sup> Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, correspondence dated 7 July 2017, p 1.

<sup>7</sup> Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, correspondence dated 7 July 2017, p 3.

### 3.2 Audit recommendation 2

*2. improve quarterly reporting processes by not only reporting on inputs and activities for key biosecurity initiatives, but also on risks and progress towards achieving objectives and outcomes to support strategic management decisions*

In its response to this recommendation, the department advised the QAO that it would extend Biosecurity Queensland Leadership Team's Quarterly Strategic Business Meeting Reports to address progress and risks to achieve objectives and outcomes by June 2017.<sup>8</sup>

In written advice to the committee, the department stated:

*All major change programs within Biosecurity Queensland adopt the PRINCE2 risk management procedures which incorporate risk registers that capture and report on threats and opportunities for the programs. Biosecurity Queensland has amended quarterly reporting templates to extend this approach to reporting on risks to achieving objectives for each major strategy and project.<sup>9</sup>*

### 3.3 Audit recommendation 3

*3. ensure that 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 that will be 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*

The department advised QAO of the following series of actions and milestones to implement this recommendation:

- **June 2017:** Panama TR4 2017-18 Operational Plan will document the roles and responsibilities of all program stakeholders
- **December 2017:** Queensland Biosecurity Strategy and Action Plan will achieve broad agreement and understanding of roles and responsibilities of everyone in the biosecurity systems, and
- **March 2018:** Wild Dog Strategy will include formulation of SMART performance indicators and baseline targets that will be used to assess Biosecurity Queensland's contribution to wild dog management.<sup>10</sup>

The department advised the committee:

*Theme 2 of the Queensland Biosecurity Strategy is Every Queenslanders Plays Their Part. The action planning process for this theme will achieve agreement on the roles and responsibilities of all entities and include development of a monitoring and reporting framework, including a public scorecard, which will help us ensure the outcomes are achieved.*

*The 2017-2018 Panama disease Operation Plan includes a whole of Program independent evaluation to determine the costs/benefits of continuing a long-term control and containment*

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<sup>8</sup> Auditor-General of Queensland, Report 12: 2016-17 *Biosecurity Queensland's management of agricultural pests and diseases*, p 57.

<sup>9</sup> Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, correspondence dated 7 July 2017, p 1.

<sup>10</sup> Auditor-General of Queensland, Report 12: 2016-17 *Biosecurity Queensland's management of agricultural pests and diseases*, p 57.

program, with options on how such a program might be delivered, funded and developed and recommendations on a forward plan for the ongoing management of the disease in Queensland.<sup>11</sup>

### 3.4 Audit recommendation 4

*4. monitors and reports on the input costs over time for each of Biosecurity Queensland's key outputs, activities, or initiatives to identify further efficiency improvements*

The department's response to QAO on this recommendation stated that a department wide system was being implemented that aligns inputs to activities and expected impacts. This system will underpin measurement of efficiency and cost-effectiveness and will be updated each financial year. The department indicated that this system would be implemented by June 2017. The department also advised that an E-timesheet had been implemented.<sup>12</sup>

The department's advice to the committee stated:

*The department has completed implementation of an online tool (called TADPOLE) that will allow users to quickly and easily record their daily work activities. This tool will provide comprehensive breakdowns of time and costs associated with the provision of biosecurity services and inform resource allocation and the efficiency of achieving program outcomes. It will enable the monitoring and reporting on input costs over time as recommended by the [Auditor-General's] report. The tool also includes a built-in organisational workflow to store timesheets securely, removing the need to maintain paper timesheets. This will reduce administrative overheads and additional time spent in the office manually processing timesheets.<sup>13</sup>*

### 3.5 Audit recommendation 5

*5. considers options to implement the efficiency improvements that were identified during the planning of the Biosecurity Information Management System program and are now not within scope*

In response to the QAO on this recommendation, the department advised that, by December 2017, the Biosecurity Information Management System (BIMS) program elements taken out of scope would be re-considered as part of the Better Intelligence Systems feasibility analysis being undertaken for the Queensland Biosecurity Strategy and Action Plan.<sup>14</sup>

The department advised the committee:

*Theme 6 of the Queensland Biosecurity Strategy is Better Intelligence Systems. Stakeholders are currently being consulted in detail on information system enhancements through an action planning process. This theme is about the tools, systems and methodologies that underpin sound decision making in biosecurity and the information needs of those managing it. The action planning process will bring together the key intelligence experts from within government ... to examine efficiency improvements from technology. Our partners across the biosecurity system in Queensland have indicated that more predictive technologies and web-based analytic systems such as the International Biosecurity Intelligence System can trawl the internet for newly published pest information and predictive systems can help automate our horizon scanning. Future alert systems to help translate information about increased future biosecurity risk into*

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<sup>11</sup> Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, correspondence dated 7 July 2017, pp 1-2.

<sup>12</sup> Auditor-General of Queensland, Report 12: 2016-17 *Biosecurity Queensland's management of agricultural pests and diseases*, p 58.

<sup>13</sup> Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, correspondence dated 7 July 2017, p 2.

<sup>14</sup> Auditor-General of Queensland, Report 12: 2016-17 *Biosecurity Queensland's management of agricultural pests and diseases*, p 58.

*active notifications will also be examined. The BIMS program elements taken out of scope will also be re-considered as part of this process.*<sup>15</sup>

#### Committee Comment

The committee notes the department's response to the QAO and the advice that the department has provided the committee at the private briefing and in further written material. The committee is satisfied with the progress of the department, to date, in implementing the recommendations in the Auditor-General's report. As the recommendations are addressing deficiencies in the State's biosecurity management system, the committee believes it would be appropriate for the Minister to provide an update to the House on the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries' implementation of all recommendations in six months.

#### **Recommendation 2**

The committee recommends that the Minister report to the House in six months regarding the implementation of all recommendations in the Auditor-General's report.

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<sup>15</sup> Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, correspondence dated 7 July 2017, p 2.