



Regulator Performance Framework Report 2022–23

Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

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The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries proudly acknowledges all First Nations peoples (Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders) and the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the country on which we live and work. We acknowledge their continuing connection to land, waters and culture and commit to ongoing reconciliation. We pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

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Summary

Under its Regulatory Performance Framework, Queensland Government regulators whose regulatory activities impact business, particularly small business, are required to publicly report annually on their regulatory performance. This document is the report of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (“the Department”).

The Department’s [Strategic Plan 2023-2027](#) outlines the following:

Vision: Queensland is prosperous and resilient, leading global food security and sustainability.

Purpose: We GROW Queensland.

Objectives:

- Great relationships - Our stakeholders trust us to be courageous, collaborative and capable to deliver on the best interests of Queensland.
- Resilient communities - Communities are prepared to respond to and recover from natural disasters, climate change, biosecurity risks and other emerging challenges.
- Opportunity for industry - Queensland’s food and fibre industry is empowered to innovate, diversify and grow sustainably and safely.
- Walking with First Nations – Queenslanders First Nations knowledge, wisdom and connection to land, waters and sky is honoured and embraced.

The Department administers the following Acts:

Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Queensland) Act 1994
Agricultural Chemicals Distribution Control Act 1966
Animal Care and Protection Act 2001
Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008
Biological Control Act 1987
Biosecurity Act 2014
Brands Act 1915
Chemical Usage (Agricultural and Veterinary) Control Act 1988
Drugs Misuse Act 1986 (Part 5B)
Exhibited Animals Act 2015
Farm Business Debt Mediation Act 2017
Fisheries Act 1994 (except for Fish Habitat Areas)
Food Production (Safety) Act 2000
Forestry Act 1959 (joint)
Racing Integrity Act 2016
Regional Planning Interests Act 2014 (Part 4 Division 2)
Rural and Regional Adjustment Act
1994 Sugar Industry Act 1999
Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984 Veterinary Surgeons Act 1936

To achieve regulatory settings that are proportionate to risk and avoid unnecessary burden, the Department develops regulation that:

- is evidence-based using statistical data and other evidence
- is based on research and considered analysis
- is developed in consultation with all applicable stakeholders.

Rigorous policy analysis is undertaken to fully identify all policy options, prior to advocating for and progressing any legislative amendments. Understanding the role of government and careful prioritisation of activity are critical elements of this analysis.

The level of analysis is also commensurate with the complexity of the problems requiring resolution and includes systematic analysis of potential impacts on stakeholders. This includes the consideration of any potential impacts of human rights that may arise from the regulatory activity and the inclusion of appropriate safeguards to minimise any adverse impacts. All amendments are supported and informed by thorough stakeholder consultation and, where possible, data analysis.

Model practices

1. Ensure Regulatory activity is Proportionate to Risk and Minimises Unnecessary Burden

Supporting principles:

- a proportionate approach is applied to compliance activities, engagement and regulatory enforcement actions
- regulators do not unnecessarily impose on regulated entities
- regulatory approaches are updated and informed by intelligence gathering so that effort is focused towards risk.

Biosecurity

The *Biosecurity Act 2014* (Biosecurity Act) provides a framework to manage biosecurity risks, such as animal and plant diseases and pests. It also manages risks of contaminants in carriers and ensures the safety and quality of animal feed, fertilisers and other agricultural inputs. The Biosecurity Act expressly provides that one of the primary ways that its purposes are to be achieved is by allowing for risk-based decision-making on approaches to the management of, and response to, biosecurity risks while incorporating the precautionary principle in risk-based decision-making to allow for timely responses to biosecurity risks or to prevent a biosecurity event. It generally limits the exercise of powers to where there are reasonable grounds or where action is warranted and requires the decision maker to have regard to the seriousness or potential seriousness of the biosecurity issue and its impact or likely impact.

New training on risk-based decision making was released to Biosecurity Queensland staff in 2022-23 to implement a recommendation of a review of the Biosecurity Act completed in 2019. A survey of staff, conducted in the context of that review, indicated that a significant majority of authorised officers were using risk-based decision making when conducting an investigation. There was a high confidence in risk-based decision making, with 83% of respondents rating themselves as reasonably to very confident. However, 17% reported low to no confidence in its use, and 11% of these officers were not using risk-based decision making approaches when conducting an investigation. The new training released in 2022-23 will support these authorised officers to gain confidence in the use of risk-based decision making and further promotes making decisions that are proportionate to risk.

Restrictions on the movement and storage of fire ant carriers have been implemented under the Biosecurity Act for some years. However, there can be situations where the risks associated with movement of a carrier could be mitigated to an acceptable level despite not meeting the requirements prescribed by regulation. In these circumstances, the National Fire Ant Eradication Program uses biosecurity instrument permits (BIPs) to enable fire ant biosecurity zone residents to undertake the movement or storage of fire ant carriers that is incompatible with the regulations. This ensures risks are managed without unnecessary restrictions on individuals and businesses who have addressed the risks appropriately.

During 2022-23, an amendment regulation was made to establish the whole of Queensland as a varroa mite biosecurity zone and polyphagous shot-hole borer biosecurity zone, with restrictions imposed on movement of carriers into Queensland to ensure Queensland remains free from varroa mite and polyphagous shot-hole borer. BIPs were issued authorising non-compliance with the biosecurity zone regulatory provisions, where the risks associated with a particular movement of carriers were acceptable. The standard BIP conditions were continuously revised to align with changes in the risk environment, such as changes in the zones reflecting distribution of varroa mite in NSW.

To inform regulatory decisions in response to the risk of varroa mite detection interstate, the Bee123 form was created on an app to enable data collection from the community. Beekeepers are encouraged to test their own hives and submit their results, even if mites are not found. The Department uses this information to understand the number and health of beehives in Queensland and to prepare for the potential entry of varroa mite into Queensland. It also enables better visualisation of interstate hive movement and hence risk assessment. Since August 2022, over 1,375 surveillance submissions have been made using the Bee123 survey form. This equates to the reporting of over 110,00 hives and testing of over 23,200 hives in Queensland. All were negative for varroa mite. Since varroa mite is no longer considered eradicable in Australia and likely to spread, this information will be used to generate external heat mapping to demonstrate mite population density allowing beekeepers to make risk-informed decisions about future movements as the mites begin to spread.

To reduce regulatory burden on the highly mobile European honeybee industry, and in consultation with the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council, all mainland southeastern states agreed to deregulate bee louse after it's detection in Victoria in August 2022. The risk minimisation measures included in the amendments to the Biosecurity Regulation 2016 allow the government to maintain Queensland's commitments to least restrictive interstate trade. To further reduce regulatory intervention for bee louse and bee louse carriers under the Biosecurity Act, a requirement for persons to report symptoms of the pest only remains in legislation. This is because of the similarity of bee louse to varroa mite, which could lead to misidentification if the pest was not reported.

In January 2023, an investigation conducted by Queensland Health into a small cluster of Salmonella Enteritidis food poisoning cases identified a single egg farm as the likely source of some of the infections found in the reported human cases. Trace investigations revealed that the incident was contained to one farm and triggered the requirement for the farm operators to ensure the infection remained contained to the site and to take further measures to control and reduce the biosecurity risk. Best practice processes resulted in swift identification of affected farms and focused effort towards highest risk.

Cattle tick regulation under the Biosecurity Act continues to provide flexibility for all stock owners through a cost effective and equitable risk-based framework. The framework provides mechanisms to limit the spread of cattle ticks and minimise the impact on the cattle industry in the cattle tick free zone. It also allows industry and producers to get on with business in less prescriptive ways with more equitable sharing of responsibility for cattle tick management.

Accredited certifiers assess the risk from the movement, apply inspections and treatment protocols and issue a certificate stating a person has met their general biosecurity obligation. The accredited certifier system has been shown to be robust and given industry increased flexibility for market access while still providing strong protections for the tick free zone. Biosecurity Queensland officers conduct annual audits of accredited certifiers to ensure the system is robust. If deficiencies are detected, appropriate action is taken.

The regulatory framework includes investigation of cattle tick infestations in the cattle tick free zone. Departmental staff work with landowners to investigate livestock movements and implement a cattle tick eradication program by applying the necessary livestock movement restrictions under the Biosecurity Act and contacting at-risk neighbouring properties to advise of the increased biosecurity risk. Tracing livestock movements from affected properties is also undertaken, including certification activities.

The Department uses the Biosecurity Online Resources and Information System (BORIS) to manage biosecurity information and prioritise regulatory activity in relation to biosecurity matter that poses the highest risk. Risk assessment tools have been developed by the Department to support State and Local Government authorised officers to prioritise high risk invasive species management. The Department utilised the regulatory mechanism provided under section 52 of the Biosecurity Act to

seek a written report from a local government in Queensland about how they are performing their function under the Act to manage invasive biosecurity matter for their area. This action was taken to ensure invasive biosecurity matter is effectively managed in the area, minimising biosecurity risks. This compliance activity resulted in the local government agreeing to perform their function as stated in the Biosecurity Act.

Animal Management

Some of the risks originally managed by regulation of brands and earmarks are now addressed by the National Livestock Identification System. The legacy *Brands Act 1915* is one of Queensland's oldest statutes and had not been significantly amended in decades. A consultation regulatory impact statement (RIS) for the future regulation of brands and earmarks in Queensland was released for public comment in late 2022. It presented a range of options for the future of branding and earmarking of livestock in Queensland to provide a more proportionate response to current circumstances than currently provided under the *Brands Act 1915*. The preferred option was to provide choice about branding under a streamlined system with a renewal fee. This option would represent a significant reduction in the burden of regulation. Two sub-options provided more choice about branding cattle and pigs. Option 2A included giving owners an option of an exemption from mandatory branding of cattle or pigs (opt out model), whilst Option 2B included giving owners an option of voluntary branding of cattle or pigs (opt in model). For earmarking, Option 2 included retaining registration of earmarks but removing earmark districts and Option 3 included allowing earmarking but not registering the earmarks at all. Public consultation on the RIS provided intelligence that could be used to inform decision making about the benefits and risks associated with the proposed options; therefore ensuring future regulation was more proportionate and focused on risk/s.

Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals

The Department amended the process for applicants to apply for an Aerial Distribution Contractor licence for Unmanned Aerial Vehicles in 2022-23. The *Agricultural Chemicals Distribution Control Act 1966* requires that a person applying for certain aerial kinds of licences must hold Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) approvals. New conditions were placed on the licence that made those CASA requirements the responsibility of the licensee thereby removing the need for assessment by the Department. The new process was developed to ensure activities were proportionate to the assessed risk. This resulted in reduced administrative burden on applicants when applying and renewing their licences. A risk assessment was completed to ensure the new process managed risk proportionately.

Fisheries

In 2023, the Department implemented a new Fisheries Compliance Strategy and Compliance Risk Assessment framework. The new framework promotes a balance of regulatory effort between intelligence-led regulation and risk-based regulation to achieve an optimal level of compliance that supports sustainable fisheries in Queensland. Regulatory effort is prioritised to the fisheries and or activities that pose the greatest risk to achieving the goals outlined in the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017-2027, Fisheries Queensland Strategic Plan 2021-2025 and the Queensland Fisheries Compliance Strategy.

2. Consult and engage meaningfully with stakeholders

Supporting principles:

- formal and informal consultation and engagement mechanisms are in place to allow for the full range of stakeholder input and Government decision making circumstances
- engagement is undertaken in ways that helps regulators develop a genuine understanding of the operating environment of regulated entities
- cooperative and collaborative relationships are established with stakeholders, including other regulators, to promote trust and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the regulatory framework.

Biosecurity

The Queensland Biosecurity Strategy 2018–2023 (the Strategy) is a five-year plan to build the framework for Queensland's biosecurity system. It was co-developed by the Queensland Government, industry and other partners across the biosecurity system. Under the Strategy, the Department and its partners have committed to collaboration. The goal is a partnership approach that allows all partners to contribute meaningfully to our governance structure, system design and decision making. The Strategy has been instrumental in achieving increased biosecurity awareness, a common language and narrative and enhanced collaboration between stakeholders. The current strategy is the foundation for a refreshed strategic approach which will guide Queensland's Biosecurity System for the next five years from 2024 – 2029.

The Biosecurity Queensland Ministerial Advisory Council (BQMAC) comprising independent industry and community members and the Queensland's Chief Biosecurity Officer. BQMAC provides advice to the Minister regarding strategic oversight and direction on Queensland's priorities within the national biosecurity system. BQMAC also works in partnership with stakeholders, supporting discussion and consultation and disseminating information across industry channels. BQMAC met three times over the 2022-23 year, in December 2022, March 2023 and June 2023.

In March 2023 the Department held the Queensland Biosecurity Partners Forum with more than 80 stakeholders in attendance. The forum was focused on the renewal of the Queensland Biosecurity Strategy for 2024 – 2029. Results of a vote on progress against the five shared values of mutual trust, purpose, role clarity, empowering responsibility and collaboration showed the health of the partnership dipping slightly. This decrease could be attributed to the robust discussion around the transition to a new biosecurity strategy and the need for that to provide clarity on how Biosecurity Queensland and the partners move forward.

In 2022-23, the National Fire Ant Eradication Program established community partnership groups (CPGs) for each local government area where treatment and surveillance work occurs under the program. The CPGs comprise eight to 10 local influential community and industry members who meet regularly with program officers to build a better understanding of the fire ant eradication strategy and co-design solutions for local issues, using their networks to build trust in the program. CPGs have been established in the Gold Coast and Scenic Rim local council areas. A third will be established in the Lockyer Valley by the end of 2023.

The National Fire Ant Eradication Program has also undertaken extensive consultation with the local cotton industry to assess the risk posed by the growing and processing of cotton within and near the fire ant biosecurity zones. Area planted with cotton in Southeast Queensland has increased over recent years.

The Department meets with the Queensland Beekeepers Association on a fortnightly basis, ensuring consistent messaging during the NSW varroa mite incursion. The program directly engages with recreational beekeepers by attending annual field days which provides opportunities to discuss varroa mite. The program completed Autumn and Spring blitz communication campaigns to encourage beekeepers to submit alcohol wash data to determine negative surveillance vector mite infestation. The Department had a target of 15,000 hive checks within a 16-week period to support Queensland's area of freedom status.

Following a detection in Western Australia in 2021, Movement Control Orders were issued as an interim emergency measure preventing the introduction of polyphagous shot-hole borer and its carriers from a state or territory of Australia where it is known to occur. Despite the urgency, key stakeholders were consulted prior to making the Movement Control Orders via the Subcommittee on Market Access, Risk and Trade national plant biosecurity forum, including Greenlife Industry Australia, Nursery and Gardens Industry Queensland and other Australian state and territory jurisdictions, including the Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

The Biosecurity Act includes requirements to consult before taking certain regulatory actions. There is a requirement for consultation with industry or community groups where measures to prevent, control, eradicate or manage biosecurity risks under a proposed surveillance program or prevention and control program may have a significant effect on members of their respective groups. In 2022--23 the Department consulted extensively on three biosecurity programs.

The Biosecurity Act also requires the Department to consult with local governments in Queensland on the use of the Land Protection Fund. The Statewide Oversight Group is the mechanism that is used to gather local government views on the use of the Land Protection Funds and enables the State Government to consider local government views about the suitability and priorities of the proposed activities. The committee met twice in 2022-23. Additionally, the Department utilises the Queensland Invasive Plant and Animal Committee, the State Land Pest Management Committee and the Queensland Dog Offensive Group to consult with stakeholders on invasive biosecurity matter issues that affect them and support the implementation of various invasive pest strategies.

Animal Management

A Consultation RIS on future regulation of brands and earmarks in Queensland was available for a period of nine weeks from 7 November 2022 to 15 January 2023. Stakeholders were able to provide feedback by completing a survey and/or making a written submission. An explanatory video and one page infographic accompanied the Consultation RIS. Twelve peak bodies were invited to attend a webinar, and departmental representatives met separately several times with representatives of the Queensland Farmers' Federation, the pork industry, and AgForce Queensland, during the consultation period. At the request of AgForce Queensland, departmental representatives attended two webinars for their members in January 2023 to provide an overview of the consultation and answer questions. The webinars were attended by more than 230 people. In total, 356 stakeholders made submissions during the consultation process.

The Department is the administrative agency for the *Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008* (AMCD Act); however, most of the AMCD Act is enforced by local governments. An Animal Management Taskforce (the Taskforce) consisting of elected local government representatives, the Local Government Association of Queensland and RSPCA was established in 2022. The Taskforce identified the areas for review, consistent with previous meetings with the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities. A targeted review of the AMCD Act was completed in 2022-23 focused on issues identified as being of concern to local government elected representatives. The Taskforce was supported by a technical working group of local government members providing stakeholder policy and operational input into the review process and ensuring existing relationships are supported and local government experiences. The working

group was supported by the Local Government Association of Queensland and departmental officers. Following consultation with the Taskforce, the Queensland Government released the *Strong Dog Laws: Safer Communities* discussion paper on 25 June 2023 seeking public feedback on a suite of proposed measures to promote responsible dog ownership and better protect the community from dangerous dogs.

Animal Welfare

The Department has been leading a review of the 2012 Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for the Land Transport of Livestock for the suitability for horses. The project delivers on some of the recommendations made by the *Independent inquiry into the management of retired racehorses* (the Martin Inquiry).

Recognising the horse industry is made of many and varied interest groups, the Department completed extensive stakeholder mapping and worked with animal welfare regulatory agencies across Australia to release consultation materials. A Consultation RIS was released in September 2022 and was open for six weeks to gather feedback. Stakeholders, the community, and state and territory government agencies were able to comment on the benefits and impacts of proposed policy options. Sixty-three submissions were received from across Australia. The Department also met directly with key organisations.

The Department finalised a Decision RIS in September 2023. Proposed amendments better reflect recent advances in scientific understanding of horse welfare and incorporate the practical expertise of those who work with horses daily. National endorsement by all agricultural ministers, and implementation by states and territories is planned for 2024.

Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals

The Department holds biannual meetings with leading industry peak bodies such as Cotton Australia, Agforce Grains and Canegrowers to listen to industry advice and concerns, provide an update on government activities, and to seek input into decision making. In 2022-23, prompted by industry requests, these included discussions for monitoring chemical users' activities in specific catchments.

The Department has been doing regulatory extension for agricultural chemical use with the sugarcane industry. Departmental officers have worked with local grower groups, chemical resellers, spray contractors, industry agronomy groups, productivity boards and harvest groups to improve knowledge and understanding of the responsible and legal use of herbicides in Great Barrier Reef Catchments.

The Department has built and maintains a cooperative and collaborative relationship with Queensland Police Service regarding the licensing framework under Part 5B of the *Drugs Misuse Act 1986*.

Fisheries

In recognition of the importance of education in enforcement, in 2022-23, the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol undertook more than 140 engagements with industry and 99 educational presentations to stakeholders.

Forestry

The Department has significantly enhanced its engagement capability and has commenced a proactive program of engagement in relation to its timber and quarry programs. Part of that

engagement program is the establishment of a Native Title Agreements team to work with native title holders to secure agreements around the issue and variation of quarry sales permits.

A Quarry Native Title Working Group was also established to share information about the project and inform local government which comprises the bulk of permittees for state-owned quarry material.

The Department has also reviewed its forestry web presence, as the first point of contact, to enhance information on how timber harvesting is practiced in Queensland, the environmental considerations, and the operations controls that are in place to ensure its sustainability. An engagement hub is also being enhanced to support improved engagement with the community on progress towards ceasing timber harvesting in the South East Queensland Regional Plan Area. The Department has also been proactively engaging with a number of conservation stakeholders who have historically been critical of timber harvesting operations.

Racing Integrity

The *Racing Integrity Act 2016* aims to maintain public confidence in the racing of animals in Queensland for which betting is lawful, ensure the integrity of all persons involved with racing, and to safeguard the welfare of all animals involved in racing.

A review of the Act in 2019 concluded that the Act was operating well, but recommended changes to the arrangements governing appeals against stewards' decisions under the rules of racing in response to concerns raised by stakeholders.

New arrangements to establish the new Racing Appeals Panel as an independent statutory body were provided for in the *Racing Integrity Amendment Act 2022* which was passed in the Queensland Legislative Assembly on 25 October 2022, alongside a number of other amendments to improve the operation of the Act. The Panel came into operation on 31 March 2023 with former judge Mr Kerry O'Brien AM as chairperson of the inaugural panel. The new arrangements replace existing internal and external review processes and set statutory time frames within which the review of a steward's decision under the rules of racing must be determined and improve integrity of the racing industry.

3. Provide Appropriate Information and Support to Assist Compliance

Supporting principles:

- clear and timely guidance and support is accessible to stakeholders and tailored to meet the needs of the target audience
- advice is consistent and, where appropriate, decisions are communicated in a manner that clearly articulates what is required to achieve compliance
- where appropriate, regulatory approaches are tailored to ensure compliance activities do not disproportionately burden particular stakeholders (eg, small business) or require specialist advice.

Biosecurity

Human assisted spread of fire ants poses the single largest threat to the fire ant eradication effort. Despite years of increased awareness around fire ant movement controls, some sectors continue to spread fire ants with little regard to the impacts of their actions. To combat this, the National Fire Ant Eradication Program delivers a large-scale education program targeting these high-risk stakeholders, increasing awareness and understanding of movement controls, and the risk that non-compliance could pose to their business.

The National Fire Ant Eradication Program also developed an online Fire Ant Compliance Tool that allows industries to check whether a planned movement of fire ant carriers would be compliant with requirements prescribed by regulation or whether a BIP is required.

The Department updated the *Biosecurity rules for Queensland bees and beekeepers* factsheet to align with the new regulatory policy for distribution to clubs. The Department updated and provided new collateral encouraging beekeepers to alcohol wash during blitz campaigns. The program also identified a gap in stakeholder knowledge on movement requirements under the Biosecurity Act and designed and distributed a beekeepers Movement Record Keeping book to address the gap.

Stakeholders were advised via the Department's biosecurity alerts about the reasons for deregulating bee louse and ongoing reporting requirements if the pest is found due to the potential for varroa mite to be misidentified as bee louse. The Biosecurity Manual and the bee pests and pest bee webpages on the Department's website were updated to reflect the changed bee louse reporting requirements.

The Department provides extension material to support understanding of the Biosecurity Act's defined general biosecurity obligation and biosecurity matter categories applicable to people dealing with biosecurity matter. This extension material includes species-specific printed material such as fact sheets that explain the required regulatory information to support compliance. The Department has undertaken a significant number of investigations with prohibited and restricted matter dealings and assisted local governments to monitor compliance with the Biosecurity Act.

To ensure stakeholders and the public were aware of Movement Control Orders issued for polyphagous shot-hole borer, the Movement Control Orders were published and gazetted. Industry and community stakeholders were also made aware through multiple channels including industry alerts (including e-alerts), social media, pest factsheets (including online pest content) and other pest-specific materials.

Animal Welfare

Following a review of the *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001* (ACP Act), amendments were considered by Parliament and commenced on 12 December 2022. The Department established a suite of implementation plans for each change, mapping stakeholders according to need, from

'informed' to 'actively engaged'. The implementation plans established key messaging and identified communication channels for the various stakeholders. Channels included direct communication (eg, by email, phone or meeting), updates to material on the Department's and Business Queensland websites, e-news and social media. Documents to assist stakeholders to comply were provided. For example, a model Veterinary Certificate was provided to all veterinarians via the Veterinary Surgeons Board to use when certifying regulated procedures. A standard email format for livestock slaughter facilities to report the imminent arrival of horses was agreed with the major horse slaughter facility. Face-to-face meetings and direct correspondence enabled AgForce Queensland to prepare an application for their cattle procedures accreditation scheme, which was subsequently approved under new provisions in the ACP Act.

Fisheries

The Department's Fisheries Compliance Strategy promotes voluntary compliance and creates effective deterrents to illegal fishing activities. The compliance program acknowledges the primary means of achieving compliance is through community support for laws. Program principles include establishing partnerships with stakeholders, including other government agencies, to maximise compliance; fostering community support for fisheries legislation by continued communication and provision of information through a variety of fora including social media; and ensuring enforcement is undertaken in a fair, impartial, consistent, transparent, lawful and cost efficient manner, with the degree and type of enforcement action taken commensurate with the nature and severity of the offence. Compliance activities continue to be prioritised according to the assessed risk of offending.

In 2022–23, 20,544 fisheries inspections were conducted with an overall compliance rate of 87%. 950 infringement notices and 1,568 caution notices were issued. 123 offences were prosecuted in Magistrates Court.

The Department provides a range of information and educational materials to inform fishers on rules relating to size and possession limits, apparatus restrictions, closed waters and other requirements and obligations under the Act. These materials are provided through a suite of delivery channels including:

- direct advice to clients
- formal and informal presentations to community and industry groups and fisheries-related retail businesses
- written communications such as media releases and responses, fishing forums and industry publications
- the Department's website
- social media channels of the Department, industry and partner agencies
- the Queensland Recreational Fishing App (over 100,000 users)
- the Department's Customer Service Centre.

Fisheries Queensland operates the 24-hour, toll-free Fishwatch hotline (1800 017 116). This allows the community to assist in identifying suspected illegal fishing activity. Also, a Fishwatch online form is available on the Fisheries Queensland Facebook page for the community to report suspected illegal fishing.

Native Title and *Forestry Act 1959* Quarry Material Permits

In mid-2023, the Department established a dedicated Native Title Agreements team within the Forestry business unit to engage with native title parties and permittees around the issue of permits for state-owned quarry material.

Previously, some native title parties had challenged some aspects of the *Forestry Act 1959*, as well as the interpretation of some of the State's native title work procedures. Consequently, the basis on which some sales permits were issued for state-owned quarry material was examined and resolved by agreement – specifically by seeking native title holders' consent through Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUA).

During 2023, the Department has worked with permit holders to review their quarry needs and with First Nations people to discuss continuity of quarry material supply. The Department is leading the engagement with relevant native title parties about negotiating ILUAs to ensure consistency and to support permittees to meet their obligations under the Federal Native Title Act 1993 and other legislation.

Forest Industry Capacity-Building

The Department has been supporting a Timber Industry Capacity Building Project through funding and in-kind support to Timber Queensland, the state's primary forest and timber industry body.

The Capacity Building Project has been delivering training to industry on protection of koalas, interpretation of watercourse provisions in the environmental code, and compliance with protected plant provisions in the Nature Conservation Act 1992. The project has also developed comprehensive guidance material that is available via a dedicated website. The project is helping to enhance industry compliance with the complex suite of regulatory obligations associated with timber harvesting.

4. Commit to continuous improvement

Supporting principles:

- regular review of the approach to regulatory activities, collaboration with stakeholders and other regulators to ensure it is appropriately risk based, leverages technological innovation and remains the best approach to achieving policy outcomes
- to the extent possible, reform of regulatory activities is prioritised on the basis of impact on stakeholders and the community
- staff have the necessary training and support to effectively, efficiently and consistently perform their duties.

Biosecurity

Under the Queensland Biosecurity Strategy 2018–2023, the Department and its biosecurity system partners have committed to fostering a culture of continuous learning and continuous improvement of the biosecurity system. Feedback collated from stakeholders who attended this year's Partners Forum highlighted their commitment to continuous improvement across the biosecurity system. In addition, the Partners Forum generated strong engagement. For example, strong stakeholder engagement/participation occurred in the Queensland On-farm Biosecurity Summit. This Summit brought stakeholders together to discuss major barriers and challenges for on-farm biosecurity and share learnings around successful practices at peak body and producer levels.

The National Fire Ant Eradication Program reviewed the relevant biosecurity zone regulatory provisions of the Biosecurity Regulation 2016. Work commenced on amendments to clarify how individuals must discharge their general biosecurity obligation to reduce the risk of fire ant infestation. The program also commenced preparing guidelines to assist the community while the regulatory amendments are being progressed.

New Biosecurity Act training was released in early 2023 that includes modules on legislative fundamentals and risk-based decision making for authorised officers.

The Department expanded the Bee123 hive check dashboard to incorporate information about Biosecurity Instrument Permits to save time and effort in managing the risk of varroa mite potentially entering Queensland through commercial movement. This integrated system enables mapping of permitted transits from source location to destination, saving Departmental officers time by combining data from various sources and ensuring risks are managed more efficiently.

In 2022-23, training programs were provided to local government officers who are authorised under the Biosecurity Act. This training supports continuous improvement of regulatory activities and the alignment of regulatory practices between State and local government. The Queensland Wild Dog Management Strategy 2021-2026 utilises key performance indicators (KPI) reviewed annually to support continuous improvement. QDOG reviewed these in 2022-2023 and provided a report following stakeholders surveys.

Animal Management

DAF is currently undergoing consultation for adoption of the Australian animal welfare standards and guidelines – exhibited animals (Standards), as codes of practice under the *Exhibited Animals Regulation 2016*. Development of the Standards was led by the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries in collaboration with federal, state and territory government agencies and representatives of the exhibited animal industry. The Standards were created to provide a nationally consistent approach for addressing security and animal welfare needs for native wildlife and non-indigenous species used for exhibit. Adoption will ensure a consistent, nationally agreed approach is

applied to the daily care and management of animals kept for exhibition and further support monitoring and compliance functions under the *Exhibited Animals Act 2015*.

Animal Welfare

Under the ACP Act, all persons wishing to use animals for scientific purposes are required to register with the Department and pay the associated fee. Previously, this process required an applicant to download the PDF form, manually complete it and submit a scanned copy by email. Upon receipt of the form, the Department would arrange for payment to be taken over a secure telephone line. In 2022, the Department investigated and confirmed the feasibility of converting the existing non-editable PDF form into an online, smart form with BPoint capability. Following approval, development and testing, the new smart form was published on the Business Queensland website in September 2022. Applicants can now apply online for registration, attach any relevant documentation, and use their credit card to pay the associated application fee through the secure BPoint facility. The introduction of the smart form has made the application and payment process significantly faster for the client and more efficient for the Department.

In 2020, the Department engaged a full time learning and development officer to lead the establishment of a program for all departmental and RSPCA animal welfare inspectors appointed under the ACP Act. The program is now fully established and includes 10 compulsory core modules and four optional modules that can be delivered face to face or online. The program won a Department of Agriculture and Fisheries Achievement Award in 2022. In 2022-2023, a key enhancement to the program was the introduction of an ongoing professional development (OPD) component. This requires Inspectors to participate in a variety of learning and development opportunities to acquire OPD points, including internal webinars, external workshops, training and conferences related to either animal welfare and/or best practice regulation. Inspectors also complete an annual quiz to encourage revision of module content and work practices. In 2023, the Department embedded the core modules of the learning and development program in legislation, prescribing modules 1 to 10 of the Department's training as approved training under section 121A of the ACP Act, requiring those modules to be completed within three months after being given access to the training.

Fisheries

The Department's new Fisheries Compliance Strategy and Compliance Risk Assessment Framework adopts key risk indicators to monitor compliance trends and changes in the risk environment. The compliance risk assessment and compliance plans are reviewed biannual (6-monthly) and regulatory activities are published on the Department's website.

The Department has invested in innovative technology such as, drones and vessel tracking, and is consulting on the imposition of independent onboard monitoring (on board observers and video cameras) to increase effectiveness and efficiency of regulatory activities. The Department has further committed to advancing officer training through appointment of a permanent Training Officer.

Certification of Forest Management Systems

The Department successfully adapted to the new Australian/New Zealand Standard 4708 – Sustainable Forest Management to maintain its Responsible Wood certification, with numerous positive findings and no major non-conformities. The new standard is founded on the systematic management and continuous improvement concepts that underpin ISO 14001 - Environmental Management Systems and other related ISO standards.

Forestry's systematic management has highlighted a range of business risks that have underpinned a major increase in capability, including in the areas of resource assessment, digital systems, native title, engagement and communications, and the due diligence processes to maintain ecological and cultural heritage values. These resources are supporting efficiency gains, improved level of compliance with regulatory obligations and reducing DAF's legal and reputational risks.

Rural and Regional Adjustment Act 1994

The *Rural and Regional Adjustment Act 1994* establishes the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA) primarily to administer assistance schemes that foster the development of a more productive and sustainable rural and regional sector in Queensland.

A Review of the Act commenced in 2023 with the publication of an Issues Paper and stakeholder forums. When finalised, the Review report will be published on the Department's website.

5. Be transparent and accountable in actions

Supporting principles:

- where appropriate, regulatory frameworks and timeframes for making regulatory decisions are published to provide certainty to stakeholders
- decisions are provided in a timely manner, clearly articulating expectations and the underlying reasons for decisions
- indicators of regulator performance are publicly available.

Biosecurity

Under the Queensland Biosecurity Strategy 2018–2023, the and its partners in the delivery of the biosecurity system have committed to consistency, openness and honesty in their dealings. The Department has an online engagement hub aimed at supporting two-way engagement across the biosecurity partner cohort.

The Biosecurity Act includes publication requirements to provide transparency about the exercise of functions by the chief executive or their delegate. There were several Movement Control Orders made in 2022–23, and notification of these, along with where to obtain a copy, were formally published in the Queensland Government Gazette. In addition, the details of these emergency response measures were communicated widely across the Department's website, newsletters, social media channels and other engagement tools to build awareness across the public including affected stakeholders. Similarly, the creation and updating of biosecurity programs is publicly communicated by notification within statutory timeframes. These are made available through the Department's website or from nominated offices. Biosecurity maps which define biosecurity zones identified under the Biosecurity Act continue to be published on the Department's website.

The Biosecurity Act provides for the issue of prohibited matter and restricted matter permits. A public register of current prohibited matter and restricted matter permits exists, providing transparency to these regulatory activities.

In the context of movement restrictions on hives and other carriers to minimise the risk of varroa mite entering Queensland, the Department implemented a business continuity policy to ensure any pauses in permitted movements were minimal. Compliance investigations and decisions to implement biosecurity orders followed approved procedures; permit decision dates were integrated into the Bee123 Varroa mite carrier applications tab.

Fisheries

The process for undertaking stock assessments has been continually improving. In the past 12 months the Fisheries Science team has engaged with industry representatives as part of the stock assessment process. This early engagement has proved valuable in understanding of historical and current fishing practices as part of the stock assessment analysis.