



WA Farmers Biosecurity Review Submission

RURAL AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS AND TRANSPORT

REFERENCES COMMITTEE

WA Farmers is the peak body for broadacre grains and livestock in Western Australia.

This submission will focus on only one aspect of the complex array of policy levers that impact biosecurity and that is the level of state funding (in particular Western Australian government funding) that goes into supporting our biosecurity system.

Recent State and Commonwealth government reports including the November 2020 CSIRO *Australia's Biosecurity Future* has found our biosecurity system needs to be enhanced to handle the growing threats, otherwise we risk being exposed to significant social, ecological and financial consequences.

In Western Australia in the 1990s the Department of Agriculture had around 2000 FTEs with 400 on the ground working in the Agricultural Protection Agency (APC).

Today the WA Ag Dept has been rolled in with Fisheries and Regional Development and has 1600.

WA has lost the 400 specialist biosecurity staff who did frontline protection control and eradication.

Thirty years of cuts to the Department of Agriculture and more recently DPIRD has seen the States ability to address biosecurity issues seriously eroded, which in part has forced the move to off load responsibility onto the community with the establishment of Regional Biosecurity Groups (RBCs).

It is clear the RBCs lack the funding and expertise to manage the growing list of pests and the Department lacks the capacity to manage the growing biosecurity risks.

WA State Budget funding for biosecurity 2022-23 is \$95m up but only rising to \$96m in forward estimates in 2025-26. That is a \$1m increase over 4 years.

Given CPI is 8% this means a real reduction of the State biosecurity budget, such an outcome is contrary to the 2017 Cralk Intergovernmental Biosecurity Agreement.

Benchmarking of the various State government budget allocations since 2017 in respect to the intergovernmental agreement should be included in the Committees report.