

**SUBJECT: IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL RISKS.
THE NEED FOR TREATMENT OF QUARANTINEABLE WASTE FROM
OVERSEAS VESSELS AND
SUGGESTED TREATMENT FACILITY**

An effective quarantine service is needed to prevent the entry and establishment of exotic pest and disease that can affect human, animal and plant life, as well as maintain an overall productive and healthy environment. To this end we need an efficient and safe treatment method to process quarantineable waste to help protect our citizens, agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries from escape of these pests and disease organisms. Particularly when this waste is under AQIS direct control and responsibility, under the Quarantine Act 1908.

In addition to the value of food production for local markets, it is reported that the value of our agricultural exports would be around some 30 billion dollars this year. This food production, also supports good living standards in regional and country areas. Should a disease, such as FMD, escape our border control, there will be a significant change in the standard of living in affected communities. In a very competitive food production and supply market, with other countries having cheap labour and basic lower living standards we can ill afford to overcome the additional costs to control further disease and pest incursions – and remain – competitive, as well as retaining our present living standards. The total cost of the loss of animal blood lines and terrible amounts of stock destroyed in the UK that year amounting to many millions of pounds, is an example of the problems Australia must consider and face should an exotic disease enter and become established. Other local examples currently are the Black Sigatoka disease outbreak in bananas, the Imported Fire Ant establishment and the associated costs to control the pest. This particular pest must be controlled to prevent the loss of good land to Australia.

Therefore, to help maintain a good disease and pest free status in comparison to other countries the Quarantine Services needs to support effective waste disposal facilities, Australia wide, particularly at first ports of call, where overseas vessels are handled. Due to AQIS responsibility of human quarantine, hospital infectious waste disposal should also be included in the feedstock to the facility.

Other Commonwealth, State and Regulatory Authorities that require to destroy or dispose of “security” waste could contribute to the running costs of these facilities. The present waste disposal processes include the following:-

1. Deep Burial – in prescribed local council land as land fill. The main disadvantage could be that infectious and biological material and good will lay in the ground for many years. This is due to the lack of breakdown conditions, such as high water tables or suitable bacteria, etc, and the method of presentation to the waste trench.
2. Incineration – this process was the most popular up to recent years. The EPA requirements now prevent this process in most places, for very good reasons. It would be only under the most urgent and emergency conditions that incineration would be used for disposal of quarantine material (eg. FMD outbreak control, such as the field burning or burial of livestock in UK and Europe recently).
3. Very High Temperature – this process is available to destroy special chemicals and the like. It would not be suitable for ongoing quarantine waste treatment.