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Stakeholder Category: Natural Resource Management

Comments: Southern Gulf NRM operates in the Southern Gulf NRM region in North West Queensland. Our primary interest in biosecurity is in supporting land managers in dealing with weed and pest animal infestations that threaten the sustainability and viability of rangeland grazing systems and environmental values. This submission is structured to address questions presented in the discussion paper.

Q1. Collaboration between the Australian and State/Territory Governments through an arrangement like IGAB is important as a basis for coordinated national responses. The priority areas remain relevant.

Q2. We can be confident that the IGAB system is effective in the face of serious risks to plant or animal industries (for example the recent comprehensive response to Panama Disease in the NQ banana industry) but it has proven to be slow and ineffective in response to some incursions that create primarily environmental risks (Myrtle Rust is an example).

Q4. The goals and objectives of the biosecurity system remain relevant and useful.

Q5. The White Paper on Developing Northern Australia correctly notes biosecurity risks associated with further development in the region but frames this mainly in the context of quarantine. Further intensification of land management increases the risk of spread of established pests and weeds. A higher priority and increased resources need to be given to management of established incursions in the region.

Q9. The Queensland Government has recently reformed its biosecurity legislation (a positive development) and addressed the issues of roles and responsibilities. Regrettably, there is an element of wishing and hoping in defining these roles. For example, in Queensland, local government has an important role in the enforcement of biosecurity regulations but seems to lack the commitment or resources (or both) to effectively discharge its responsibilities.

Q.10 A very practical action to improve involvement of community stakeholders, especially agricultural land managers, would be to more fully involve Australia's established system of NRM organisations. Most are already involved in biosecurity issues to some extent. All have

established systems for community engagement but most are poorly resourced. The Local Land Services system in NSW demonstrates one way of more completely engaging NRM organisations in biosecurity.

Q.11 It is hard to argue against the IGAB investment principles but their application does not seem to be generating sufficient investment in biosecurity. For example the loss of funding for Weeds of National Significance is inconsistent with the principles. Further, in the case of established pests and weeds, it is difficult to see how to capture funds from 'risk creators' (for example a negligent land manager who fails to control weed infestations) and there is chronic underinvestment in management of these risks.

Q.12 Any biosecurity official in any jurisdiction will be able to cite examples of public investment driven by political imperatives that depart from the investment principles.

Q.19 While research into new technologies is useful and important, the most important asset in our biosecurity system is the vigilance and skills of well-trained government officials, NRM organisations, and land managers. This asset needs to be better supported.