

Good morning

Well, it makes for interesting reading if you are prepared to stick it out to the end – NOT. They could have probably summed it up in half the number of pages.

In summary, there are far too many government departments (from federal to local) all trying to achieve a similar aim (protecting our fauna and flora and the community) and are often crossing over each other's pathways in the process with the end result being that more money and time is spent on looking at the issues than actually spent on the issues.

The commentary on appropriate level of funding (how much is enough) to operate a national biosecurity system says it all! Until all parties, as described above, come together and decide who will be responsible for what along the pathway, then funding is purely a wish list because right now we are double and triple funding for the same things.

Over the past 20 years there has been a talk fest on national biosecurity with over 15 federal and state reviews presented but still we are no further ahead. If anything we have gone backwards with the need to hit the "panic button" when it is found out that the biosecurity pathway/chain has been broken!

The report lists 40 recommendations and 5 feedback requests, with the upshot being that they are looking for a consolidated approach to biosecurity.

This can be simply expressed as DAWR at the top, primarily responsible for international border activities, both import and export, they then delegate specific activities to the states who can then delegate smaller parcels to the local councils.

The reporting chain would therefore work in reverse, and there may actually be cases where a national intervention is not required, it could be as simple as local councils sharing responsibility and state governments supporting each other on interstate matters.

Obviously full reporting back to the top will be required to see if international border management needs to be adjusted but the critical point is communication across all levels and localities. Biosecurity is a NATIONAL issue NOT just confined to one locality. The us against them mentality has to go.

Australia is a country that relies very heavily on imports, be it from a commercial point of view or through the general public buying from overseas themselves.

The international border (tourism and trade will only continue to grow) is therefore an extremely critical point in the supply chain and border processes must be assessed and funding allocated accordingly. Once past the border it is too late, no matter how much money you throw at state and local governments!

Shared Responsibility – a great phrase, a great concept, badly underutilised.

It could be an avenue for governments to save money on resources that are better served by those people who are involved on a daily basis thereby allowing those resources to be better used within the biosecurity system.

The CBFCA has been an advocate of this for many years but it seems that government departments are just not prepared to "let go" (after suitable training programs have been put in place) and allow industry to take on some of the work done within!

There have been cases where once something has been agreed upon as a shared responsibility, all of a sudden there has been an added cost to do this! Why – no one clearly know? Commentary about training, computer systems etc. are actually meaningless as they already exist before industry took on the role. Costs, if not going down, should stay where they are because the government resources are now being used in a different way – there is no need to cost shift, as some people like to comment.

A National Statement of Intent – what the? Either there is a national approach or there is not, if there is an intent, then how long is a piece of string because when there is intent there is no commitment to actually complete the task within a given time period. There is no need for a debate of this as there have already been numerous reviews done which talk about this within their own findings.

Draw up a National Biosecurity Statement and act upon it.

There should be no room for any government body at any level to be given the opportunity to be able to opt out of the system from a national approach – e.g. Tasmania.

It is all nice to feel warm and fuzzy and say “we engaged with industry”! In actual fact industry was only consulted more as an advisory level rather than being allowed to create actual input of ideas which could be taken on board and used.

At the end of the day industry has to work with the requirements and they are therefore best placed to know what can and cannot work and how best to implement things; not someone sitting at a desk looking at statistics!

Biosecurity and trade – yet another report confirms what people know – we export vast amounts of agriculture and mining materials (generally very high quality as that is what is required overseas), yet we are foolish enough to allow in sub-standard goods (even if they are subject to random inspections and testing) and therefore potentially open the gate to biosecurity issues.

Is our trade fair and balanced, unfortunately it is not and hence the need for a National Biosecurity Framework – shared by ALL.

A convoluted trade dispute framework/process has been established since 2010 but has had very little use as numerous parties/authorities fail to utilise it, and I suspect it is simply from a fear of “treading on peoples toes” rather than getting on with things that will allow problems to be rectified and business be allowed to get on with what they are here to do – be a business and not have restrictions in place that are for the most part, pointless.

I note that the recommendations all talk about – should – how about using the word – will ? On that though, I also note that there are many advocating even more panels/committees/review persons – why? Surely these have been done to death already? Why else would so many be listed in the review, or were they just purely a waste of time and money because there was no agreement in place to actually act on the reports raised? The same is just as likely to happen again unless there is an agreement by everyone that things “WILL” be done and NOT should?

Regards

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