

Department of Primary Industries

Regulator Performance Report 2024-25



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The Department of Primary Industries 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 Primary Industries* ("the Department").

The Department's [Strategic Plan 2025-2029](#) outlines the following:

Vision: Queensland's primary industries are profitable, productive and sustainable for future generations.

Purpose: We empower our regional communities to be bold and prosperous.

Objectives:

- Prosperous industry sectors that are competitive, have greater market share in both existing and new markets, and benefit from value-added production, and help drive us towards our shared goal of increasing primary production output to \$30 billion by 2030.
- Resilient Queensland communities supported by data and intelligence sharing that strengthens our ability to predict, prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disasters, climate variability, biosecurity risks and other emerging challenges.
- Optimal policy and regulatory settings are underpinned by stable system settings that make doing business with government easier, provide clarity for investment and enable business viability and fairness across the supply chain to capitalise on market opportunities.
- Strong science, research, development and extension that drives innovation and provides primary industries with options to achieve optimal sector efficiency and outcomes and capitalise on market opportunities.
- Positive and productive relationships building trust with other government agencies, participants in the primary industries sector and the community.
- Empowered, capable and future-focused workforce that embraces fairness, equity, accountability, safety, wellbeing and innovation
- Robust governance systems that underpin accountability, encourage innovation, and enhance our organisational performance.

From November 2024, the Department administered 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

Fisheries Act 1994 (except for Fish Habitat Areas)

Food Production (Safety) Act 2000

Forestry Act 1959 (joint)

Racing Integrity Act 2016

* In November 2024, the name of the Department was changed to the Department of Primary Industries, along with some machinery-of-government changes. The report primarily relates to the eight months after these changes.

Regional Planning Interests Act 2014 (Part 4 Division 2)

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. The Impact Assessment Statement and associated requirements of the [Queensland Government Better Regulation Policy](#) are followed. Consideration is also given to any potential impacts on 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.

Agvet Chemicals and Contaminants

The *Chemical Usage (Agricultural and Veterinary) Control Act 1988* includes mandatory chemical residue reporting requirements. Australia's horticulture industry has significantly increased its use of quality assurance systems for food safety purposes and these systems require annual chemical residue analysis. A three-tier risk-based assessment process has been in place, however with the increase in quality assurance systems, there has been an increase in low-risk chemical residue detections above maximum residue limit (MRL), in the last seven years.

A new set of risk-based assessment criteria was developed and adopted to handle low risk above MRL agricultural chemical residue detections. The new risk criteria and process acknowledges the private quality assurance systems and their corrective action and audit requirements, with only an email sent to the producer of the produce. This has significantly reduced the number of low-risk chemical residue detections above MRL being tasked for investigation and freed up field officers to focus on moderate to high-risk chemical residue detections.

Biosecurity Legislative Reviews

Reviews are underway for several pieces of legislation administered by Biosecurity Queensland including the Biosecurity Regulation 2016 and the Exhibited Animals Regulation 2016; in addition to the review of the prohibited and restricted matter lists under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. Reviews ensure regulation remains fit for purpose, effective and efficient.

Fisheries Compliance Strategy and Risk Assessment Framework

The Department's Fisheries Compliance Strategy and Compliance Risk Assessment framework promotes a balance of regulatory effort between intelligence-led regulation and risk-based regulation to achieve an optimal level of compliance that promotes profitability for industry and supports sustainable fisheries in Queensland. Regulatory effort is prioritised to the fisheries and or activities that pose the greatest risk to the key objectives, obligations and commitments of Government, identified in the [Primary Industries Prosper 2050](#), [Department of Primary Industries Strategic Plan 2025-2029](#), [Queensland Fisheries Compliance Strategy](#), and [National Plan\(s\) of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate, Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing](#).

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 help 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.

Fisheries

In recognition of the importance of education extension, in 2024-25 the Qld Boating and Fisheries Patrol attended 85 fishing-related events with the recreational fishing sector and 28 compliance-related meetings with industry.

Market Access, Surveillance Control and Containment

Queensland representatives worked with counterparts in other jurisdictions via the Subcommittee on Market, Access, Risk and Trade (SMART) to coordinate and harmonise interstate movement restrictions for the movements of Potato mop top virus carriers into Queensland. A least trade restrictive movement control order is expected to be issued in mid-November, while the issue is resolved nationally.

National Fire Ant Eradication Program (NFAEP) Turf Taskforce

Several fire ant incursions outside the fire ant biosecurity zone were detected throughout 2024-25, including cross-border into New South Wales. In most cases, turf was identified as the likely carrier of fire ants. A joint working group, the 'Turf Taskforce', was established between the NFAEP, industry and jurisdictions (Queensland and New South Wales) to review industry practices and risk mitigation measures and develop best practice methods in a consultative manner. Outcomes included the chemical testing of turf produced in accordance with the *Biosecurity Regulation 2016* across a range of farms, a better understanding of technical issues related to effective chemical treatments for fire ants in turf, identification of the need for area-wide suppression of fire ants around turf farms, and agreement on key research questions about improved chemical treatment to be addressed in 2025-26, all with strong industry backing.

Queensland Future Timber Plan

The Department commenced a significant stakeholder engagement process through the initial stages of developing the Queensland Future Timber Plan (QFTP).

The QFTP is being developed in collaboration with the Timber Supply Chain Ministerial Stakeholder Roundtable, consisting of 14 industry members representing a diverse cross section of the timber supply chain. Members will meet regularly with the Department through a series of formal meetings, workshops, and one-on-one meetings.

In early 2025-26, public consultation will be undertaken using a variety of mediums including webinars, surveys, written submissions, and targeted engagement sessions. This will be supported by an extensive social media, local news, and radio campaign.

Establishing and leveraging existing industry relationships, while providing a range of opportunities for public consultation, will ensure the QFTP is developed through a collaborative and robust process, that is informed by a broad range of stakeholders.

Queensland Invasive Plants and Animals Strategy 2025-2030

The Queensland Invasive Plants and Animals Strategy 2025-2030 is a statewide framework that guides the prevention and management of invasive plants and animals in Queensland. The Department continues to work with key partners and other stakeholders to ensure ongoing implementation of the Strategy which is based on a 'shared responsibility'. The Department facilitates several statewide committees and groups to continue meaningful communication and coordination on invasive species management among stakeholders. These engagement activities also provide an avenue for technical advice and support, to celebrate successes and to ensure the Department and our partners are up-to-date, accountable and transparent.

The Queensland Invasive Plants and Animals Committee (QIPAC), represented by industry groups, peak bodies and agencies encompassing conservation, agriculture, state and local governments, natural resource management and community, oversees implementation of the Strategy.

Varroa Mite Innovation and Resilience Initiative

Timed with World Bee Day, the Varroa Mite Innovation and Resilience Initiative hosted a two-day Bee Biosecurity Roundtable, uniting beekeepers, researchers, policymakers, and industry leaders. The event focused on addressing the recent spread of varroa mite in Queensland through collaboration and shared expertise.

Participants developed targeted strategies to strengthen the resilience and long-term viability of Queensland's beekeeping and pollination sectors, including vital input on transitioning a regulated pest to industry management.

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 (e.g. small business) or require specialist advice.

Biosecurity - Backing Local Governments

Local Governments play a critical role in Queensland's biosecurity system and the management of invasive species. To support local governments' functions and responsibilities under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*, last year the Department launched the capacity-building 'Backing Local Governments' project for three years. The project has made significant progress in:

- completing a comprehensive desktop review to assess how local governments are complying with their responsibilities in developing biosecurity plans
- surveying local governments to understand their current needs and capacity gaps to ensure future support material and training opportunities target needs
- developing targeted online training for local government personnel, highlighting the roles and responsibilities of local government in Queensland's biosecurity system
- establishing a SharePoint site hosting support and guidance materials for local government needs.

It is anticipated that the online training and SharePoint site will be available for local government use by the end of 2025.

Biosecurity response communications

During biosecurity events, the Department employs specific communication strategies to keep all stakeholders informed about how compliance actions are adapting in response to changing biosecurity threats. In August 2024, an incident response to the detection of Tomato brown rugose fruit virus (ToBRFV) led to the formation of a ToBRFV Industry Coordination Group to keep national, state and local producer groups and others, including international exporters, updated about Queensland's response to the incident, to share information and knowledge about this emergency plant pest and how to navigate changing market access conditions.

Certification of Forest Management Systems

The Department successfully demonstrated compliance with the Australian/New Zealand Standard 4708:2021 – Sustainable Forest Management (the standard), by completing a surveillance audit in November 2024 with several positive findings and no major non-conformities. The standard is founded on systematic management

and continuous improvement concepts that underpin ISO 14001 – Environmental Management Systems and other related ISO standards.

The Department's systematic management has highlighted a range of business risks that have underpinned an increase in capability and improved practices in areas including Forest Harvesting Safety, Safety in Damaged Forests, Stakeholder Engagement, Worksite Safety Inspections, and Native Timber Harvesting Compliance Monitoring.

These improvements are supporting efficiency gains, improved levels of compliance with regulatory obligations, and are reducing the Department's legal and reputational risks.

Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce Treatment

The Queensland Government-funded Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce (FAST) actively supports community members, primary producers, councils and government agencies in the suppression treatment area to meet their general biosecurity obligation by self-managing fire ants on their land. In 2024-25, to minimise the burden on landholders, FAST supplied landholders with more than 102,000 kg of free treatment to destroy fire ant nests and meet their general biosecurity obligation.

From 1 July 2024, responsibility for treatment of reported fire ant nests detected on government land in the suppression treatment area successfully transitioned from the NFAEP to the landholder, with councils and government agencies responding to more than 6,780 fire ant reports in 2024-25.

Fisheries Compliance Strategy

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 forums 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 to offending.

In 2024-25, 22,068 fisheries inspections were conducted with an overall compliance rate of 92.7%. 843 infringement notices and 1,724 caution notices were issued. 15 matters were successfully prosecuted in the Magistrates Court.

Fishing information and educational materials

The Department provides a range of commercial and recreational fishing 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 *Fisheries Act 1994*. 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 direct letters, 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 200,000 downloads), which has been updated to include more species photos and new information on stocked impoundments and fish aggregating devices. Notifications about closed seasons and changing fisheries management rules are also sent through the app to users.
- the Commercial Fishing App is used to send notifications to commercial fishers when closed seasons are starting and ending and when total allowable catches and efforts have been reached.
- the Department's Customer Service Centre.

Fishwatch hotline

The Department operates a 24-hour, toll-free Fishwatch hotline (1800 017 116) enabling 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.

Forest Harvest Safety Project

Forest harvesting presents a high risk to workers and visitors to timber harvesting areas, and the Department is working closely with timber permit holders to improve safety outcomes of these operations.

The program of work to date has focused on the safety systems and safety planning applying to timber sale areas. The Department has been supporting and collaborating with the timber industry to develop a Template Harvesting Safety Plan that can be used by operators as a basis for identifying the hazards and preparing a Harvesting Safety Plan for each harvest area.

A key feature of this work will see industry taking greater ownership of safety including by inducting their workers, other parties, and departmental staff, into the safety hazards and controls that are identified in their Harvesting Safety Plan.

The new planning and induction process, and other changes to safety arrangements on harvesting areas, will be rolled out during 2025-26.

Native Title and Forestry Act 1959

The Department issues sales permits for state-owned quarry material under the authority of the *Forestry Act 1959*.

The Department is leading Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) negotiations in relation to some quarry sales permits, where required, to provide a consistent approach to ensuring sales permits are granted validly under the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth) and to support permittees in maintaining access to key quarry resources.

The Department continues to work with permit holders to review their quarry needs, and with other Queensland Government departments to ensure consistent messaging to permit holders about access to quarry material outside the *Forestry Act 1959*, to promote compliance with other legislation.

Quarry Material Sales Permits

The Department currently has 183 active and proposed sales permits issued under the authority of the *Forestry Act 1959*. Forty-five permits are issued to Local Government Authorities (LGAs) to access quarry material from multiple sites to meet LGA obligations under the *Local Government Act 2009*.

Where the Department is unable to authorise quarry removals from particular sites, LGAs may access material under the provisions of section 143 of the *Local Government Act 2009* where there is no reasonably practicable alternative option to obtain quarry material needs.

The quarry operations team continues to support LGAs with information and timely consideration of Expressions of Interest for alternative supply options.

Sales permits are audited on a risk-based schedule to ensure compliance with the permit terms and relevant legislative obligations.

Strong dog laws: safer communities

Social media campaigns promoting responsible pet ownership engaged the community and raised awareness about safe dog management practices. These campaigns focused on educating dog owners about their responsibilities and the importance of understanding dog behaviours. To achieve this, the Department partnered with the Animal Welfare League Queensland and RSPCA to promote responsible pet ownership through workshops, social media and educational resources. This partnership leveraged the expertise and reach of these organisations to provide resources and support for dog owners, enhancing overall community safety.

From July 2024, three departmental investigators were appointed under the *Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008* (AMCDA) for the Strong Dog Laws: Safer Communities project to investigate serious dog offences and provide local governments training and, upon request, to offer guidance and support in enforcing the AMCDA. This initiative emphasises collaborative efforts to enhance local government capabilities in managing dog incidents effectively and ensuring community safety.

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.

Agvet Chemicals and Contaminants

In 2024-25 e-learning modules for legislation training and developing chemical spray plans were developed and hosted on the Department's training portal.

Regular reviews of agricultural and veterinary chemical compliance activities, in consultation with stakeholders aims to ensure a risk-based approach to issues whilst reducing the regulatory burden on stakeholders, particularly in the management of chemical spray drift complaints.

Biosecurity - Staff training and up-skilling

Staff from Biosecurity Queensland completed Office of Best Practice Regulation Regulatory Impact Analysis training in 2025. The training will assist officers to apply effective and rigorous regulatory impact analysis as part of policy development processes.

Fisheries Compliance Strategy and Compliance Risk Assessment Framework

The Department's 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 biannually and regulatory activities are published on the Department's website. The Department has further adopted a Senior Intelligence Analyst to promote intelligence-led compliance activities and strategic planning for Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol operations.

Industry-led management of Panama tropical race 4

The Department is supporting the Australian Banana Growers Council on an alternative land use project investigating viable options where it is no longer feasible to grow bananas due to the presence of Panama Tropical Race 4. This important work is supported by departmental risk scientists and is critical to the future of the Tully Valley through easing restrictions where appropriate without creating unacceptable risks to the wider banana industry.

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.

Fisheries

The Department may decide to suspend or cancel an authority issued under the *Fisheries Act 1994* if the chief executive decides it is for the best management, use, development or protection of fisheries resources or fish habitats. In January 2025, the Department implemented the [Policy for compliance-related suspension or cancellation of a licence by the Chief Executive](#) for transparency in decision making. The policy prescribes the grounds for suspension and cancellation of licences to promote accountability of compliance by licence holders who take a public resource for personal gain. The policy further promotes administrative action as an effective compliance approach in lieu of commencing proceedings in the courts.

Invasive Species Reporting

The Department publishes summaries of invasive species research and operational projects online at:

- Operational Highlights - www.dpi.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/biosecurity/invasive-plants-animals/operations
- Research Highlights - www.publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/technical-highlights.

Operational and research activities undertaken are partially funded by the Land Protection Fund, established under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*, through contributions collected from landowners by local governments. The publication of these activities annually provides transparency and accountability in actions, and also meets Act obligations related to reporting.