



Regulator Performance Framework Report 2023-24

Department of Primary Industries*

December 2024



© State of Queensland, 2024

The Department of Primary Industries proudly 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.

The Queensland Government supports and encourages the dissemination and exchange of its information. The copyright in this publication is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) licence.



Under this licence you are free, without having to seek our permission, to use this publication in accordance with the licence terms.

You must keep intact the copyright notice and attribute the State of Queensland as the source of the publication.

For more information on this licence, visit creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0.

The information contained herein is subject to change without notice. The Queensland Government shall not be liable for technical or other errors or omissions contained herein. The reader/user accepts all risks and responsibility for losses, damages, costs and other consequences resulting directly or indirectly from using this information.

Contents

Summary	1
Model practices	3
1. Ensure Regulatory activity is Proportionate to Risk and Minimises Unnecessary Burden	3
Biosecurity.....	3
Animal Welfare.....	4
Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals.....	5
Fisheries.....	5
2. Consult and engage meaningfully with stakeholders	6
Biosecurity.....	6
Animal Management	7
Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals.....	8
Fisheries.....	8
Forestry	9
Racing Integrity	10
3. Provide Appropriate Information and Support to Assist Compliance	11
Biosecurity.....	11
Animal Management	11
Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals.....	12
Fisheries.....	12
Native Title and <i>Forestry Act 1959</i> Quarry Material Permits	14
Forest Industry Capacity-Building	14
Glider protection measures.....	14
4. Commit to continuous improvement.....	16
Biosecurity.....	16
Animal Management	17
Animal Welfare.....	17
Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals.....	17
Fisheries.....	18
Certification of Forest Management Systems	18
<i>Farm Business Debt Mediation Act 2017</i>	19
<i>Rural and Regional Adjustment Act 1994</i>	19
5. Be transparent and accountable in actions	20
Biosecurity.....	20
Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals.....	20
Fisheries.....	20

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 2023-2027 \(2024 refresh\)](#) outlines the following:

Vision: Queensland is prosperous and resilient, leading global food security and sustainability.

Purpose: We GROW and protect Queensland’s economy, environment and way of life.

Objectives:

- Great relationships - Our stakeholders trust us to be courageous, collaborative and capable to deliver on the best interests of Queensland.
- Resilient communities – Queensland communities prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disasters, climate variability and change, biosecurity risks and other emerging challenges.
- Opportunity for industry - Queensland’s food and fibre industries are empowered to innovate, diversify and grow sustainably and safely.
- Walking with First Nations Queenslanders – First Nations knowledge, wisdom and connection to land, waters and sky is honoured and embraced.

In 2023-24, 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
Farm Business Debt Mediation Act 2017⁺
Fisheries Act 1994 (except for Fish Habitat Areas)
Food Production (Safety) Act 2000
Forestry Act 1959 (joint)
Racing Integrity Act 2016
Regional Planning Interests Act 2014 (Part 4 Division 2)
Rural and Regional Adjustment Act 1994⁺
Sugar Industry Act 1999
Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984
Veterinary Surgeons Act 1936

* For the period covered by this report, the Department was known as the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. This was changed to the Department of Primary Industries, along with some machinery-of-government changes, in November 2024. These changes do not impact on the content of this report.

⁺ Responsibility for these Acts was transferred to the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development in November 2024.

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.

Biosecurity

The *Biosecurity Act 2014* (Biosecurity Act) provides a framework for managing biosecurity risks that allows for risk-based decision-making approaches to be incorporated with the precautionary principle. This allows for timely responses to biosecurity risks and proactive measures to prevent a biosecurity event. The Biosecurity Act generally places limits on the exercise of powers to instances where there are reasonable grounds or where action is warranted. In these instances, the seriousness or potential seriousness of the biosecurity issue and its impact or likely impact are the guiding factors.

The Department has continued to adapt its responses to evolving biosecurity risks, one such response being the **Varroa mite detection** in New South Wales. Following a detection of varroa mite in the Riverina and Sunraysia regions, a new Movement Control Order (MCO) was put into place to those beekeepers returning to Queensland from the 2023 almond pollination event in Victoria where Surveillance Emergency Zones had been established. Biosecurity Instrument Permits (BIPs) were issued authorising non-compliance with the MCO, where the risks associated with movements of carriers were acceptable. Current varroa mite biosecurity zone provisions remained in place as *Varroa destructor* transitioned from eradication to management in NSW.

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 bees and varroa mite carriers into Queensland. As risk assessments progressed, conditions for a BIP for moving bee-related material from states where varroa is present have been developed. This continuous revision of BIP conditions has ensured that the risks of human assisted spread of varroa mite into Queensland have been managed without placing unnecessary restrictions on beekeepers.

In 2023-24, the **National Fire Ant Eradication Program** (the Program) implemented its inaugural *Compliance and Enforcement Strategy* which detailed an intelligence-led/risk-based approach to regulation. The Strategy laid the platform for the implementation of a targeted compliance approach which utilises information, data and intelligence, to establish the likely existence of high-risk activities which may lead to human assisted movement of fire ants. Firstly, the identification of high-risk activities facilitates the allocation of compliance resources to those high-risk activities which enhances effectiveness and efficiency of allocated resources. Secondly, it supports the reduction of burden on industry by re-directing resources away from lower risk. This re-direction may take the form of an alternate regulatory response from on-site audits to remote assessments or self-assessment as initial regulatory engagement.

The Program also developed a dedicated Strategy and Intelligence team to identify, collate and analyse multiple information sources to develop timely intelligence to support the broader eradication strategy of the Program. The review, re-design and updating of systems and programs will enhance

the Program's capability to effectively and efficiently deploy its resources to maximise outcomes. A further key advantage to the team's development is its ability to develop and deliver crucial intelligence to enhance the safety of Program staff, and where necessary, inform other government agencies on emerging regulatory safety issues.

During the period, the Program commenced a review to amend the *Biosecurity Regulation 2016* to better reflect the intent of the Act, reduce ambiguity for users and improve understanding of the General Biosecurity Obligation (GBO). Increasing comprehension of the relevance of the GBO would improve understanding by businesses and residents of their responsibility to manage fire ants on their properties.

The Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce (FAST) has also undertaken several initiatives to reduce regulatory burden upon landholders and primary producers within the suppression area. A pilot project of fire ant self-management for primary producers in the Upper Logan River Catchment commenced in May 2024 and will be rolled out progressively to all eligible primary producers in the suppression area. The initiative aims to help producers manage fire ant numbers on their properties while awaiting eradication treatment. Farmers will need to treat all production areas themselves in compliance with the regulation however, treatment products will be supplied for non-production areas of the farm. FAST has also been preparing for a significant change in treatment of fire ant reports on private property. From 1 October 2024, FAST will mail free fire ant treatment products to properties who report fire ants to the National Fire Ant Eradication Program. Residents will then be able to self-treat their properties to suppress fire ant numbers, thus meeting their GBO, and assisting to reduce fire ant densities prior to the eradication treatment area moving inwards. Each of these initiatives have sought to reduce regulatory burdens upon those within the fire ant biosecurity zone by ensuring that the individuals and businesses who have addressed the risks appropriately are not burdened with unnecessary restrictions.

The **regulation of cattle tick** under the Biosecurity Act provides a flexible, cost effective, and equitable risk-based framework. The framework enables industry and producers to equitably share the responsibility for cattle tick management whilst allowing for business to operate without unnecessary interruption. Accredited certifiers play an important role in mitigating the risks of cattle tick spread. They are trained and authorised by legislation to certify the cattle tick status of livestock and may be used when moving livestock between cattle tick zones or verifying the effectiveness of an eradication program in the free zone. To become an accredited certifier a person needs to complete training and have the necessary expertise and experience to be appointed. Accredited certifiers are granted accreditation by the Chief Executive of the Department. Department staff train the accredited certifiers and conduct regular audits to ensure they are acting in accordance with their legal responsibilities. This system has been effective for many years, providing industry with a range of flexible options, including on-property inspection and treatment and certification that allows efficient livestock movements.

During 2023-24, the Department worked to revise biosecurity risk assessment and planning tools for local government. The tools will provide guidance to support a consistent, risk-based approach to biosecurity planning and risk management across Queensland. Once complete, the tools will be made publicly available to support local governments and other stakeholders with their biosecurity planning.

Animal Welfare

The fee structure for exhibited animals was reviewed in 2023-24. The revised fees are designed to enhance the welfare and care of animals in public exhibitions while ensuring compliance with regulatory standards. The revised fee schedule reflects a comprehensive assessment of the costs associated with maintaining high-quality living conditions for exhibited animals, including veterinary care, habitat maintenance, and enrichment programs. By aligning fees with the operational needs of

facilities, this will promote responsible animal management and foster a greater commitment to animal welfare across all exhibitions. Stakeholders were engaged to ensure transparency and understanding of the rationale behind these fee adjustments.

Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals

The use of agricultural and veterinary chemicals is regulated to minimise risks to health, the environment and trade. Regulatory approaches utilised by the Department to investigate adverse chemical residues and provision of educational information are conducted in accordance with a risk-based approach. This support is organised into three levels of risk. Tier A and Tier B are low and moderate risks and can be conducted by phone where possible; Tier C covers high risks and requires field visits. This tiered approach to risk and prioritisation ensures activities are proportionate to the residual risk.

Fisheries

In 2023, the Department implemented a new Fisheries Compliance Strategy and Compliance Risk Assessment framework. The new framework promotes a balance of regulatory effort between intelligence-led regulation and risk-based regulation to achieve an optimal level of compliance that supports sustainable fisheries in Queensland. Regulatory effort is prioritised to the fisheries and or activities that pose the greatest risk to achieving the goals outlined in the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017-2027, Fisheries Queensland Strategic Plan 2021-2025 and the Queensland Fisheries Compliance Strategy.

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 helps 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.

Biosecurity

The Department engages in both formal and informal consultation and engagement mechanisms to ensure stakeholder input is incorporated into Government decision-making. One way this is done is through the **Biosecurity Queensland Ministerial Advisory Council (BQMAC)**. BQMAC comprises independent industry and community members, and the Queensland Chief Biosecurity Officer. BQMAC provides advice to the Minister regarding strategic oversight and direction on Queensland's priorities within the national biosecurity system, the prioritisation and implementation of actions under the Biosecurity Strategy, including the importance of sustainable funding. BQMAC also works in partnership with stakeholders, supporting discussion and consultation and disseminating information across industry channels.

A key focus of BQMAC during 2023-24 was the development of the **Queensland Biosecurity Strategy 2024–2029** which builds on the previous five-year Strategy (2018-2023). The refreshed Strategy was released by the then Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities on 14 May 2024. It was co-developed by the Queensland Government, industry and other partners across the biosecurity system. Under the Strategy, the Department and its partners have committed to collaboration. The goal is a partnership approach that allows all partners to contribute meaningfully to the governance structure, system design and decision making. The Strategy has been instrumental in achieving increased biosecurity awareness, a common language and narrative and enhanced collaboration between stakeholders. This Strategy is the foundation for a refreshed strategic approach which will guide Queensland's biosecurity system for the next five years.

BQMAC emphasises the importance of measuring the success of the refreshed Strategy and provides advice about monitoring and evaluation. Although difficulties exist in developing measures of effectiveness and efficiency in biosecurity, BQMAC will continue to work with the Department and external experts to guide the development of high-level measures of the Strategy's performance.

The Department's Invasive Plants and Animals (IP&A) unit continues to engage meaningfully through representation on multiple committees including the **Queensland Invasive Plants and Animals Committee (QIPAC)**. Engagement with QIPAC facilitated the finalisation of Queensland Invasive Plants and Animals Strategy 2025-2030 (released in September 2024). QIPAC is comprised of representatives of industry groups, peak bodies and agencies encompassing conservation, agriculture, state and local governments, natural resource management and community. The Department prepared the strategy document whilst QIPAC oversaw the development of the Strategy and provided further input. QIPAC acknowledged the quality and openness of the consultation process undertaken with all partners.

Fire ant incursions outside the fire ant biosecurity zone were detected throughout 2023-24. As part of the overall regulatory response by the Program, tracing and investigative activities were undertaken to determine source of origin. Turf, amongst other carriers, was identified as the likely carrier of fire ants. Due to the complex nature of detection tracing to origin, the Program established formal communication lines with the turf industry to address identified risks. Broad industry engagement occurred including the establishment of a joint industry/Program working group to review practices and risk mitigation measures with the intent to jointly develop future best practice methods in a consultative manner to mitigate human assisted movement. The Department worked closely with local, state and federal government landowners during 2023-24 to enable them to move to self-management of fire ants on land they own or manage in the suppression area by 1 July 2024. The Department supplied free treatment products, equipment, field training and technical advice to enable government partners to transition to self-management strengthening collaborative relationships and increasing the effectiveness of the Program.

The Department meets with **the Queensland Beekeepers Association** on a fortnightly basis on a range of topics including the national varroa mite response and Queensland-specific messaging. The program also directly engages with recreational beekeepers by attending group meetings and field days which provide opportunities to discuss varroa mite management and ensure messaging is consistent with both the commercial and recreational beekeeping sectors. To increase participation with the recreational beekeeping industry a “Biosecurity Champions” network has been created which includes 22 representatives from 15 respective recreational beekeeping groups throughout Queensland. The network is used to deliver consistent messages to a dedicated group of bee enthusiasts who meet monthly and form an important contact point for all beekeepers to share concerns, questions of requests for support.

Animal Management

In April 2024, tougher dangerous dog laws were enacted by way of amendment to the *Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008* (AMCDA). The legislation aims to promote responsible dog ownership and protect Queensland communities from dangerous dogs. The changes came after a review of the Act and recommendations of a taskforce including the Department, participating local governments, the Local Government Association of Queensland and RSPCA Queensland. In response to public consultation, thousands of Queenslanders lodged formal submissions or completed surveys backing a tougher approach.

To ensure that a genuine understanding of the experiences of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples is embedded within this policy, consultation was undertaken during the reporting period and is ongoing with First Nations communities to ensure their challenges, cultural considerations and community needs are considered. This engagement focuses on understanding community-specific concerns related to dog management and safety. The Department is looking to prepare a report to the Premier by end of 2024 providing an overview of the challenges and recommendations for dog management in First Nations Communities.

The Department is the administrative agency for AMCDA. However, most of this legislation is enforced by local governments. Consultations with local governments are also ongoing for the effective implementation of changes to the AMCDA. These discussions aim to provide information on the AMCDA changes, the Strong Dog Laws: Safer Communities project initiatives, and the Enforcement Guideline, Roles and Responsibilities Guideline and Destruction Order Guideline. Consultation has been effective to identify local challenges, and training needs across 77 local government areas.

An Animal Management Taskforce (the Taskforce) consisting of elected local government representatives, the Local Government Association of Queensland and RSPCA was established in 2022. The Taskforce is supported by a Technical Working Group (TWG) made up of officers of local

government, LGAQ and departmental officers. The focus of the Taskforce and TWG in 2024 following AMCDA amendments has been to support the implementation of the AMCDA changes and provide feedback on draft guidelines. The Taskforce and TWG will continue to meet to advise on implementation and future policy changes as necessary. The Taskforce and TWG have enabled collaborative and cooperative relationships to be established between the Department and local government, thereby ensuring the regulatory framework is efficient and consistent.

Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals

Biannual meetings are held with leading industry peak bodies such as Cotton Australia, Berries Australia, Agforce Grains and Canegrowers to provide an avenue for the Department to hear industry advice and concerns, provide an update on government activities and to seek input into decision-making. This includes discussions on industry's request for monitoring of chemical users' activities in specific catchments.

The Department has built and maintains a cooperative and collaborative relationship with Queensland Police Service regarding the licensing framework for industrial cannabis under Part 5B of the *Drugs Misuse Act 1986*. The Department has also built and maintains a collaborative relationship with the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA), as well as NSW Department of Primary Industries on chemical registrations and agvet chemical residues and contaminants.

Officers in the Reef team work diligently in developing and maintaining relationships with local grower groups, chemical resellers, spray contractors, industry agronomy groups, productivity boards and harvest groups to improve knowledge and understanding of the responsible and legal use of herbicides in Great Barrier Reef Catchments. This has built trust between the stakeholders and regulators and has resulted in improved industry practices. The efforts of the Department to engage with industry groups, foster inter-agency cooperation, and educate stakeholders have led to more informed decision-making and enhanced compliance with biosecurity measures.

Fisheries

In recognition of the importance of education in enforcement, in 2023-24, the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol undertook more than 261 **education and engagement activities** with industry and 115 educational presentations to stakeholders.

An important part of fisheries management to ensure fisheries resources are managed in a sustainable and responsible manner is stakeholder engagement through **Fishery Working Groups**. Fishery working groups provide Fisheries Queensland with operational advice on the management of our fisheries. Fisheries Queensland facilitated the following fishery working groups in 2023-24:

- Sustainable Fisheries Expert Panel – meetings on 19 September 2023, 7–8 December 2023 and 13 March 2024
- Cape York special fisheries working group – meetings on 9–10 August 2023, 22–23 November 2023, 28–29 February 2024 and 27 May 2024
- Crab fishery working group – meetings 15 September 2023 and 30 March 2024
- Freshwater fisheries working group – met 22 May 2024
- Gulf of Carpentaria inshore fishery working group – met 5–6 September 2023 and 12 March 2024
- Shark Control Program scientific working group – met 6 June 2024
- Spanish mackerel fishery working group – met 18 April 2024
- Spanner crab fishery working group – met 11 April 2024
- Stocked Impoundment Permit Scheme advisory committee – met 23 May 2024
- Trawl Fishery working group – met 27-28 November 2023.

In April 2024, the *Fisheries Act 1994* was amended to establish a framework for **independent onboard monitoring** (IOM) requirements. As part of an onboard camera field trial, a Technical Focus Group (TFG) has been established with field trial participants. The TFG allows industry members participating in the trial to provide input into technical components of the field trial and contribute to the evaluation of trial outcomes. The TFG has met on 5 occasions since commencement of the field trial in mid-2023.

The Department continues to attend and present at fishery working groups of high-priority fisheries for IOM, including the Gulf of Carpentaria inshore fishery working group, Trawl Fishery Regional Harvest Strategy Workshop (Northern & Central and meetings held as part of the establishment of the NX fishery in Cairns, Bowen, Gladstone, Mackay and Hervey Bay.

Commercial and recreational fishing apps are increasingly used to improve fishery management services. In 2023-24, the Department engaged in 84 face-to-face sessions to provide support to 162 commercial fishers to transition to digital logbook and quota reporting using the Qld eFisher commercial fishing app. Feedback from fishers in these sessions has driven enhancements to the Qld eFisher app throughout this time to improve user experience and compliance with reporting requirements.

In 2023-2024, a focus group of 40 recreational fishers was engaged to assist with providing feedback for the development of recreational catch reporting enhancements for the Qld Fishing 2.0 recreational fishing app. This feedback helped to shape the design and delivery of the reporting functionality and ensured that user experience with the app enhancements would be quick, easy and beneficial for users. As at 31 October 2024, there have been 12,507 downloads of this app.

In 2023-24, education activities were undertaken for commercial fishers on **Threatened, Endangered and Protected** (TEP) Species with collaboration and participation from several other agencies including the Department's Agri-Science group, the Fisheries Research Development Corporation, CSIRO, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and the Department of Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water. These included face-to-face and online workshops for trawl and net fishers focused on species identification, best practice handling techniques, and first aid and risk management for fishers when experiencing TEP species interactions. Additionally, the Department engaged with commercial fishers to discuss and improve awareness of TEP interaction reporting requirements and the use of the Qld eFisher app to simplify this reporting for fishers.

Feedback received from fishers about these sessions has helped to identify and guide future education activities including app enhancements for increased and improved TEP interaction reporting, additional face-to-face species handling and first aid workshops for fishers and the production of other resources including how-to factsheets, identification materials and posters to assist with reporting.

Forestry

The Department has significantly enhanced its engagement capability and has commenced a proactive program of engagement in relation to its timber and quarry programs. Part of that engagement program is the establishment of a Native Title Agreements team to work with native title holders to secure agreements around the issue and variation of quarry sales permits.

The Department commenced regular Quarry Native Title Update meetings to share information about the Native Title Quarry project and inform local government which comprises the bulk of permittees for state-owned quarry material.

The Department has also reviewed its forestry web presence, as the first point of contact, to enhance information on quarry materials and native title, how selective native timber harvesting is undertaken in Queensland, the environmental considerations, and the operations controls that are in place to

ensure its sustainability. The Department has also been proactively engaging with a number of conservation stakeholders who have historically been critical of selective native timber harvesting operations.

Racing Integrity

The *Racing Integrity Act 2016* aims to maintain public confidence in the racing of animals in Queensland for which betting is lawful, ensure the integrity of all persons involved with racing, and to safeguard the welfare of all animals involved in racing.

2023-24 was the first full year of operation of the new Racing Appeals Panel as an independent statutory body to provide quick, accessible, and fair reviews of stewards' decisions for all codes of racing in Queensland. These reviews aim to ensure racing decisions are finalised within prescribed timeframes and are made in accordance with the law and the Rules of Racing to maintain the integrity of the racing industry in Queensland. The Panel acts independently, impartially, and fairly, observes the rules of natural justice and is not subject to direction or control by any entity, including any Minister, when performing its functions or powers.

During 2023-24, 59 applications for a review of decisions made by stewards were lodged. As at 30 June 2024, 42 applications had been decided, and 15 had been withdrawn. Stewards' decisions had been confirmed in 18 of cases, varied in 12 cases and set aside and substituted in 11 cases.

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 (eg, small business) or require specialist advice.

Biosecurity

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.

During February 2024, an incident response to the detection of *Varroa jacobsoni* in a sentinel bee hive at the Port of Brisbane was implemented. Subsequently, an MCO was implemented under the Biosecurity Act to prevent the movement of carriers within suburbs in a 10km area from the detection site. All MCOs for the *Varroa jacobsoni* response were published and gazetted to ensure stakeholders and the public were aware of the emergency response and conditions associated with the MCO. In addition, industry and community stakeholders were also made aware through multiple channels such as Department e-alerts, social media, pest factsheets and workshops with recreational beekeeping clubs.

Within the **fire ant response**, human-assisted spread of fire ants poses the single largest threat to the fire ant eradication effort. Despite years of increased awareness around fire ant movement controls, some sectors continue to spread fire ants with little regard to the impacts of their actions. To combat this, the Department delivers a large-scale education program targeting these high-risk stakeholders, increasing awareness and understanding of movement controls, and the risk that non-compliance could pose to their business. The Department has implemented a holistic communication program which encapsulates generic information of emerging regulatory issues which may form part of the Program's regulatory focus. This program utilises a range of media and communication platforms including online tools, newsletters, social media posts and engagement activities with peak industry bodies.

The Department coordinates quarterly council and Industry meetings to allow timely updates as well as feedback on current and emerging issues related to fire ants. During 2023-24, the Department began an extensive review of the National Fire Ant Eradication Program webpage to ensure usability and relevant information to make it easier for industry and the public to gain the necessary information to manage the risk posed by fire ants. The Department will continue delivering a targeted communication and engagement plan that will educate industry about fire ants and the importance of following fire ant-safe practices when handling materials like soil, hay, potted plants and turf.

Animal Management

The amendment of the AMCDA has required numerous forms of communication with various stakeholders across Queensland to ensure that information is accessible and tailored for the target audiences. All communications related to changes in the AMCDA are being systematically disseminated to ensure local governments and the community are informed about the changes. These communications highlight key changes and their implications for local governments and community members.

Development of an education and communication toolkit began in 2024 for local governments to enhance their capacity to manage changes to the ACMDA and the promotion of responsible pet ownership. This toolkit will provide essential resources, including educational materials, aimed at fostering informed decision-making and promoting community awareness. A review of all Department Animal Management webpages is underway to provide accessible and relevant information regarding changes to the ACMDA, responsible dog management and information for local government. These updates aim to enhance public awareness and provide local governments and community members with easy access to essential resources and information.

Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals

Reef project officers provided clear and consistent messages during field days, stakeholder meetings and one-on-one meetings with stakeholders to help canegrowers comply with the requirements of the *Chemical Usage (Agricultural and Veterinary) Control Act 1988*.

Regulatory approaches with the management of Hormonal Growth Promotants are risk-based and include the provision for compliance to be conducted by phone to support regional and rural graziers to comply with legislation. This ensures that information and guidance is accessible to all stakeholders regardless of their location, saving stakeholders' time as well as the regulator's resources.

The APVMA is currently undertaking a review of numerous agvet chemical registrations to determine if the chemicals still exceed human and environmental safety levels. The Department has worked closely with the APVMA in communicating agvet chemical registration changes within the Department as well as with peak bodies such as Cotton Australia, AgForce Grains, and Berries Australia to ensure that advice given by the Department aligns with that from other regulators.

Fisheries

In 2023-24, the Department implemented the \$100 million **Fisheries Structural Adjustment Package** to phase out large mesh commercial gillnet fishing on the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) and a \$25 million impact mitigation package for changes to the Great Sandy Marine Park (GSMP) Zoning Plan. The Structural Adjustment Package included:

- Financial assistance scheme for holders of fishing authorities, and their employees, who are affected by the reforms
- Removal of fishing authorities that impact upon the GBR and GSMP:
 - Removal of gillnet fishery symbols (N1, N2, N4) within the GBR
 - Implement new temporary NX gillnet fishery symbol
 - Expanding the list of regulated fish that may be taken under line fishery symbols
 - Removal of quota authorities for key fish species in the GBR
 - Introducing a new Net Free North
 - Netting restrictions in dugong protected areas
 - Prohibiting the take of all hammerhead sharks
- Implementation of new gillnet-free areas in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

In implementing these changes, the Department:

- Engaged with representatives of the commercial fishing sector, recreational fishing advocates and environmental organisations through the Future Fishing Taskforce
- Invited community comments through the Department's eHub, with more than 100 submissions received
- Held InfoHub sessions in Mackay, Cairns, Bowen, Gladstone and Hervey Bay to inform affected fishers of all changes for the GBR region
- Released a 'Gulf of Carpentaria inshore fishery consultation on gillnet-free areas and fishery reforms - Discussion paper'

- Held InfoHub session in Karumba to inform affected gillnet fishers of changes related to new gillnet-free areas in the Gulf of Carpentaria
- Met with the Gulf of Carpentaria Inshore Fishery working group and the Sustainable Fisheries Independent Scientific Expert Panel regarding the implementation of gillnet free areas in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

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 fora 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 of offending.

In 2023–24, 22,806 fisheries inspections were conducted with an overall compliance rate of 88.4%. 944 infringement notices and 1,700 caution notices were issued. 18 matters were successfully prosecuted in the Magistrates Court.

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.

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.

The Queensland Government launched the **Women in Recreational Fishing Network (WIRFN)** Queensland in June 2022. This network was established to encourage women of all backgrounds, skill levels and ages across Queensland to participate in recreational fishing activities, and feel comfortable sharing knowledge and tips without gender bias. The WIRFN Leadership Program promote, educate and encourage women to participate in recreational fishing. After two years, the network has increased the profile of women in fishing and led to greater diversity on the Moreton Bay and Gulf of Carpentaria Working Groups, and eFisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) Advisory Panel. The Network is also expected to attract a stronger pool of potential recruits to the business teams within the Department. A WIRFN Qld Facebook group has been established to

keep members up to date with events, workshops, and other information relating to fishing in Queensland. The Facebook community has approximately 2,000 members and is growing week on week.

In 2023-24, face-to-face and online sessions were provided to support and guide commercial fishers across Queensland to use the **Qld eFisher app** for digital logbook and quota reporting, and to understand the requirements and process for TEP species interaction reporting. Sessions were tailored to individual fishers and their operations and delivered with consideration of the digital literacy levels and needs of each fisher.

Sea snake handling and first aid training workshops were also provided for trawl fishers to support improved handling and reporting of these TEP species interactions as well as safety and risk management needs for fishers. Similarly, TEP species identification and handling training was provided to net fishers to improve fisher confidence in both correctly reporting their species interactions and handling the animals to ensure the best possible outcomes for the affected species along with fisher safety.

Native Title and Forestry Act 1959 Quarry Material Permits

In mid-2023, the Department established a dedicated Native Title Agreements team within the Forestry business unit to engage with native title parties and permittees around the issue of permits for state-owned quarry material under the *Forestry Act 1959*.

This work program was established following a series of challenges to the Department's application of the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth). Consequently, the basis on which some sales permits were issued for state-owned quarry material was examined and resolved by agreement – specifically by seeking native title holders' consent through Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUA).

The Department has continued to work with permit holders to review their quarry needs and with native title parties to discuss continuity of quarry material supply. The Department is leading 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 and meeting their obligations under other legislation.

Forest Industry Capacity-Building

The Department has continued to support a Timber Industry Capacity Building Project through a joint initiative with the state's peak industry body, Timber Queensland.

The Capacity Building Project is addressing gaps in the capabilities of native timber industry participants to interpret and implement regulatory requirements, especially in relation to the selective harvesting of State-owned timber. Training delivery has included koala spotter requirements pursuant to the Queensland Government Nature Conservation (Koala) Conservation Plan 2017, interpretation of watercourse provisions in the environmental code, and compliance with protected plant provisions in the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*. Guidance materials that have been developed are available via a dedicated website.

The project aims to enhance industry compliance with the complex suite of regulatory obligations associated with selective native timber harvesting.

Glider protection measures

In July mid-2022, the Federal Government changed the status of the two glider species in the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1992* (Cwlth) (EPBC Act):

- the greater glider's status was changed to 'endangered';

- the yellow-bellied glider's (south-eastern subspecies), status was classified as 'vulnerable'.

The conservation status of both species was also reflected in Queensland's *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

In response to the changed conservation status, the Department commissioned a Glider Risk Assessment, which underscored the vital role played by State forests in conserving gliders and their habitats and identified opportunities to improve on the measures that have been protecting gliders in these forests for the last 25 years.

Based on this advice, the Department introduced new Glider Protection Measures for the greater glider and the yellow-bellied glider to meet the Queensland Government's ongoing commitment to future-focused responsible management that is ecologically sustainable and protects the environment.

The Department's approach involves a range of strategies to implement the new Glider Protection Measures, designed to not only to ensure the protection of gliders but also to underpin long-term conservation of many other forest-dwelling species and their habitats in State forests. These strategies, introduced in 2023-24, were embedded in the Department's selective native timber harvesting operations and include:

- retaining all live hollow-bearing habitat trees
- increasing the number of large trees retained
- increasing the number of recruitment habitat trees retained, and
- better selecting trees that are likely to form hollows as recruitment habitat trees.

The Department is continuing to work with the Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation on other longer-term actions that require more detailed analysis before implementation.

These measures enhance existing controls applied in State-owned forests and detailed in the Code of practice for native forest timber production on Queensland's State Forest Estate 2020, which jointly support Queensland's native timber industry to meet its legal obligations to protect threatened species.

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.

Biosecurity

The Department regularly conducts **surveillance and emergency biosecurity responses** in many locations within the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula. This work often requires prior approval of the local governments and/or traditional owner groups. Granting of access is built on good relationships, and demonstration of culturally appropriate behaviour. The Far Northern Biosecurity Initiative team, in partnership with the Biosecurity Response Preparedness team, developed a cultural awareness induction package, for use by government staff visiting the region. The information package discusses topics such as how to organise and conduct meetings, appropriate dress, language and information about the various key stakeholders and communities, each with their own unique culture. This package will support staff to effectively, efficiently and consistently perform their duties in ways that are culturally appropriate. The training will be made available to all Department staff through the My Learning Online (MyLO) platform.

Private veterinary practitioners play an integral role in early disease detection and general animal health surveillance, providing expertise in the conduct of significant disease investigations and provision of advice on animal health conditions with significant economic, environmental, social and/or human health implications. Supporting the knowledge, skills, resources and government relationships with PVPs is an essential part of ensuring that significant disease events are adequately evaluated, clinically investigated and reported.

The Department has designed a two-day workshop to refresh and increase the knowledge in the detection and diagnosis of significant and reportable animal diseases. The workshop, which is run free-of-charge for accepted participants, is aimed at private veterinarians working in mixed and large animal practices and brings together speakers from private veterinary practices, livestock industry, Queensland's veterinary schools, Commonwealth government and Departmental representatives (including policy, operational and laboratory veterinarians). The primary objective for the workshop is to strengthen private veterinary practitioners' knowledge and skills in the identification, investigation and reporting of significant animal diseases.

The workshop is held twice yearly, in collaboration with the Queensland veterinary schools; one in the north and the other in the south of the state. The workshop is designed to allow all participants to update their knowledge of important emergency animal diseases that may pose an increased risk to Australia including, but not limited to, foot and mouth disease, lumpy skin disease, African swine fever and African horse sickness as well as zoonoses situations (globally, nationally and locally) and refresh their skills in disease investigation, post-mortem and sample collection through hands on experience. These training workshops ensure that these practitioners have the necessary training and support to respond to potential biosecurity incidents effectively, efficiently and consistently.

In addition to training opportunities, the Department has utilised technological innovations to ensure that regulatory activities remain best practice. The Department launched a new data dashboard, making it easy to trace and manage **varroa mite** risks in Queensland. Using data from the Biosecurity

Incident Permit system in Biosecurity Online Resources and Information System (BORIS), the dashboard plots both the origin and destination for each varroa mite carrier permit application. It was put to immediate use on the day of its release as brand-new Emergency Eradication and Surveillance Zones were established around Kempsey, NSW. The Varroa Mite Prevention and Preparedness Program (VMPPP) team used the dashboard's mapping capabilities to quickly identify movements relevant to the newly created zones.

The program has incorporated varroa mite monitoring data provided by beekeepers into a new "Hot and Cold" map. Data is de-identified so the map is available to the public and will aid beekeepers in making data-driven decisions in managing their apiaries. This will be especially important once *Varroa destructor* is detected in Queensland.

Future upgrades to the Bee123, a data management platform for beekeepers to enter their varroa mite testing results, will include data on "mite loads" to enable both government and industry to provide insight as to how quickly the mite is establishing and spreading in Queensland.

Under community self-treatment transition, FAST will provide **fire ant bait** to residential properties who report fire ants. Residents will then be able to self-treat their properties to suppress fire ant numbers. FAST is also engaging with land holders and all other government (local, state, federal) to treat fire ants on the lands they own or manage. Where land parcels owned by local and state government entities have fire ants reported, the Program will engage with the landowner or manager eg, local council, state government, federal government and arrange for bait to be supplied and the relevant government agency will be responsible for treatment.

Animal Management

Efforts are underway to support capability uplift among all local governments by providing essential AMCDA forms, investigative documentation templates, and an investigator manual. Additionally, the Department has provided an Enforcement Guideline and is working to finalise additional support documents including Roles and Responsibilities and Destruction Order Guidelines specific to the AMCDA. This initiative aims to streamline processes, provide process standardisation and enhance the effectiveness of investigations.

Animal Welfare

The Department is currently amending the *Exhibited Animals Regulation 2016* following consultation and feedback to adopt the Australian animal welfare standards and guidelines—exhibited animals (Standards)—as codes of practice under the Regulation. Development of the Standards was led by the NSW Department of Primary Industries in collaboration with federal, state and territory government agencies and representatives of the exhibited animal industry. The Standards were created to provide a nationally-consistent approach for addressing security and animal welfare needs for native wildlife and non-indigenous species used for exhibit. Adoption will ensure a consistent, nationally-agreed approach is applied to the daily care and management of animals kept for exhibition and further support monitoring and compliance functions under the *Exhibited Animals Act 2015*.

Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals

In 2023-24 a targeted legislative training package was delivered to enable the understanding of legislation provisions and the appointment of Inspectors under the *Chemical Usage (Agricultural and Veterinary) Control Act 1988* and the *Agricultural Chemicals Distribution Control Act 1966*. As a result of the training, seven officers have recently been appointed under both statutes and can now perform field work legally as they have achieved competencies in understanding and applying legislation. This training is moving to e-learning training modules to be also available with annual refresher training for all appointed inspectors.

In addition to upskilling the Department inspectors, agricultural and veterinary chemical compliance activities are regularly reviewed. These reviews involve consultation with stakeholders and aim to ensure a risk-based approach to issues whilst reducing the regulatory burden on stakeholders, particularly in the management of chemical spray drift complaints.

Fisheries

The Department's new **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 is currently undertaking an **Independent On-Board Monitoring (IOM) field trial** with the trawl industry. The field trial ends in December 2024. The outcomes of the trawl field trial will be used to inform public consultation on key policy principals required support further design of an IOM program. Outcomes of consultation and development of key policy principals will be used to guide the drafting of a regulatory framework, supporting approved IOM amendments to the *Fisheries Act 1994*. Re-purposing of the field trial's Technical Focus Group is underway to seek targeted industry input and consultation on the design and establishment of operational components of the IOM program.

The Department is committed to progress the implementation of the **aquaculture authority** following assent of the *Agriculture and Fisheries and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024*. Regulatory changes are being progressed to implement the framework required for the aquaculture authority. The aquaculture authority is expected to benefit aquaculture farmers, support a growing aquaculture industry and improve management of aquaculture operations in Queensland by ensuring development approval processes are streamlined and ongoing operating requirements are more effectively managed, including a more responsive ability to address situations like an emerging biosecurity risk.

In 2023-2024, the Department appointed a **Senior Training Officer** to operate within the QBFP to ensure inspectors have required skills and knowledge to competently perform their role. The Senior Training Officer coordinated a training package for on-boarded staff inclusive of training in legislation, WHS, Investigation (including a Cert IV in Government Investigation), general knowledge and processes within Fishery sectors. The Department further adopted training to promote inspector safety through QGATE's Positive Interactions & Self Preservation Fundamentals Course and maintain skills of licenced drone pilots.

Certification of Forest Management Systems

The Department successfully adapted to the revised Australian/New Zealand Standard 4708:2021 – Sustainable Forest Management to maintain its Responsible Wood certification, with numerous positive findings and no major non-conformities. The new standard is founded on the 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 a major increase in capability, including in the areas of resource assessment, digital systems, native title, engagement and communications, and the due diligence processes to maintain ecological and cultural heritage values. These resources are supporting efficiency gains, improved level of compliance with regulatory obligations and reducing the Department's legal and reputational risks.

Farm Business Debt Mediation Act 2017*

Following a Review of the Act in 2022, the *Farm Business Debt Mediation Act 2017* was amended in 2024 to require an Act Review every ten years.

Rural and Regional Adjustment Act 1994*

The *Rural and Regional Adjustment Act 1994* established the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA) primarily to administer assistance schemes that foster the development of a more productive and sustainable rural and regional sector in Queensland.

A Review of the Act was completed in 2024 following publication of an Issues Paper and stakeholder forums. The Review concluded that the Act is meeting its objectives and its provisions remain appropriate. Notwithstanding the positive review findings, some issues were identified for further consideration in relation to improved customer service, appeal rights, recovery of assistance, and streamlined processes. These recommendations are subject to consideration by Government.

* Responsibility for this Act was transferred to the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development in November 2024.

* Responsibility for this Act was transferred to the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development in November 2024.

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.

Biosecurity

As part of continuous improvement, increased collaboration with scientists and subject matters experts in the field of chemical regulation has resulted in improved outcomes for tracing. Examples of this are the positive matchings of fire ant colonies to property of origin, chemical residue for comparison against chemical application records and sample selection techniques from detection sites to enhance the opportunity to obtain fire ant matches. These improvements have facilitated, several detections where the initial incursion occurred up to two years earlier, being DNA matched back to a property of origin for the incursion. Work continues to occur to expand chemical degradation research to support assessment of application records against residue volumes and further inform best practice across industry groups.

Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals

Compliance decisions are communicated with persons of interest, as part of investigations and in accordance with organisational policies and standard operating procedures. The information provided to persons of interest include reasons for the decision, ways to achieve compliance and are communicated to provide timely advice to individuals.

A new Compliance Strategy for Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals and Contaminant management was developed and finalised in 2023-24. The compliance strategy allows for response, proportionate, accountable, consistent, transparent, impartial and fair, legal, efficient and effective and prioritised decisions and actions to be taken and recorded. Consideration will be given to provide this compliance strategy as an externally-focussed document that allows stakeholders to understand the Agvet chemical and Contaminant compliance approach.

Fisheries

The process for undertaking stock assessments has been continually improving. In the past 12 months the Department has engaged with industry representatives as part of the stock assessment process through the project teams. The stock assessment project teams ensure each project is completed in a transparent and evidence-based way. Terms of Reference for a project team is published on the Department's webpage. This early engagement has proved valuable in understanding historical and current fishing practices as part of the stock assessment analysis. Stock assessment reports are available through the Department's webpage.