

Andrew Cox
Invasive Species Council
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Victoria

16 November, 2017

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for contacting the Queensland Greens about our approaches to biosecurity. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Invasive Species Council for their invaluable advocacy and policy work to reduce the threat of invasive species that threaten our environment.

Stopping the incursion of exotic pests and diseases is critical to conserving our unique environment and wildlife. Protecting biosecurity can prevent further extinctions, and make it easier for threatened species to adapt to climate change.

We look forward to continuing to work with the Invasive Species Council as we elect our first Greens MP's to Queensland parliament in the forthcoming state election.

2017 Invasive Species Council Queensland election questionnaire

Fire Ants

Q1. Recently state, territories and Commonwealth governments agreed on a ten-year fire ant eradication program. If elected will your party continue Queensland's support for the ten-year fire ant eradication?

A1. Yes.

Queensland's biosecurity future

Q2. Queensland – and in particular far north Queensland – is at the front line for many new invasive species. What steps will your party take to better prepare Queensland for new introduced pests, weeds and pathogens?

A2. We will strengthen the legislation for protection against and management of invasive species and adequately fund implementation programs.

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Adequate resources, recognition and support should be delivered to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, landholders, Queensland Government agencies, industry groups and other peak organisations, community groups and others, managing and restoring Queensland's biodiversity and environment This includes resources to prevent new ecologically invasive threats, management of weeds, feral animals and diseases, improving grazing land management and the phasing out of inappropriate fire regimes.

Biosecurity has been under-resourced at all levels of government for far too long. This must end.

At a federal level the Greens will establish a

- National Biosecurity Authority, as an independent, national regulator for biosecurity,*
- Centre for Invasive Species Solutions to develop new pest management tools and strategies through research and development.*
- Environment Health Australia, a national body to improve coordination and collaboration between community, government, research and business stakeholders on approaches to reduce environmental harm from invasive species*

<https://greens.org.au/national-biosecurity>

Q3. How do you see Queensland's future role as a national leader on invasive species prevention and response?

A3. Invasive species threaten our biosecurity, native species and primary production. Adequate resources, recognition and support should be delivered to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, landholders, Queensland Government agencies, industry groups and other peak organisations, community groups and others, managing and restoring Queensland's biodiversity and environment This includes resources to prevent new ecologically invasive threats, management of weeds, feral animals and diseases, improving grazing land management and the phasing out of inappropriate fire regimes.

Habitat loss and fragmentation, together with the spread of invasive species, exacerbated by climate change, are major threats to the biodiversity of the planet.

Yellow Crazy Ants

Q4. Yellow crazy ants are a pervasive invasive species in several areas of Queensland – there is currently localised control and eradication work taking place in Cairns, Townsville and Brisbane and a new infestation has been identified at Hervey Bay. What role should a Queensland state government play in leading and resourcing a response on yellow crazy ants?

A4. The state Government should commit a greater proportion to ongoing funding of the highly successful community-based eradication program proposed by experts in the field.

In the north, the World Heritage area is a major tourist drawcard for Far North Queensland, and the longer funding is delayed, the greater the risk the incursion will spread.

As well as stamping out individual infestations, we also need tougher measures to help our biosecurity system stop new incursions of yellow crazy ants and other tramp ants.

By safeguarding the Wet Tropics we will protect both environmental biodiversity and tourism.

Q5. Will you support the ten year eradication plan for yellow crazy ants in the Cairns region?

A5. Yes. Ongoing funding would be \$2.5 million per year until the project is complete.

Q6. The state has provided a small amount of financial support to Townsville City Council to conduct delimitation work on the Townsville yellow crazy ant infestation. Will you support funding to control or eradicate yellow crazy ants in Townsville?

A6. Yes

Koster's Curse

Q7. Koster's curse is an introduced weed found at Julatten north of Cairns and parts of Wooroonooran National Park south of Cairns. The community has been working to eradicate and stop the spread of Koster's curse. What vision does your party have for future environmental weed responses, particularly those that threaten national parks? What response will you deploy specifically to eradicate Koster's curse?

A7. While Koster's curse is slow growing it remains a significant threat and funding for its eradication has run dry in that region to stakeholder community groups. We would restore directed funding to National Parks as well as appropriate stakeholders like the Mitchell River Watershed Management Group and others to eliminate it from Wooroonooran National Park and adjacent private properties, and to prevent Koster's curse spreading via waterways.

Research

Q8. Would you support an expanded role for the Queensland government to support research and preparedness for new invasive species? If so, what role? If not, where should this work take place?

A8. Yes. A dedicated biosecurity department should be established for this purpose, separate from the Dept of Agriculture

National biosecurity review

Q9. In July 2017 a review of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity was delivered to state and federal agriculture ministers that contained 42 recommendations for the future of our country's integrated, cross-jurisdiction biosecurity system. Which recommendations would your party support?

A9. We would give in principle support to recommendations 7-10, but would require more time to provide a considered response to the entire review.

We would support a whole of government approach to biosecurity and increased funding to facilitate co-operation and coordination between levels of government and departments to ensure an integrated approach to securing Queensland's environmental biosecurity, and we thank the Endangered Species Council for their vital work in this area.

Q10. The biosecurity review report recommended a greater focus on environmental biosecurity. How would you ensure that Queensland does more to advance environmental biosecurity?

A10. This could be enabled by the establishment of a dedicated environmental biosecurity department.

Q11. The biosecurity review report specifically recommended a Chief Community and Environmental Biosecurity Officer be appointed at a national level. Would you appoint a state level environmental biosecurity officer?

A11. We would support this. Biosecurity requires intervention at state, and even local level, not just an appointment in Canberra.

Responsibility for environmental biosecurity

Q12. What role do you plan for the Queensland environment department to have in relation to biosecurity matters into the future?

A12. The environment department should have a greater role and more funding to enable a stronger focus on social and environmental risks posed by dangerous new invasive species

We would support the resilience of Queensland's wildlife and natural places against climate change by expanding the protected area estate to 20% by 2020, including 15% in national parks. Ensure additions are based on the Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) reserve system principles and are strategically targeted to re-connect fragmented wildlife corridors and establish climate refugia (e.g. continue the buy-back of the Daintree).

We would amend the Vegetation Management Act to protect endangered, near threatened and high conservation value regrowth vegetation, all remnant and high value regrowth vegetation in urban areas, and vegetation in riparian and wildlife corridors.

Q13. Biosecurity is equally an agricultural and environmental issue. Since biosecurity is currently administered within the agricultural portfolio, this downplays the importance of environmental biosecurity. Would you support the creation of a ministerial portfolio Minister for Biosecurity to oversee all Queensland government biosecurity activities?

A13. Yes.

Funding

Q14. Funding for Queensland government biosecurity activities has significantly declined over the last ten years. Would you support an increase in state government expenditure on biosecurity?

A14. Yes.

Q15. The national biosecurity review recommended that state governments utilise land-based levies for properties at least two hectares or greater to support currently underfunded biosecurity activities such as monitoring and surveillance, research and innovation and environmental biosecurity. Would you support implementing such a scheme, and if not, how do you think biosecurity should be resourced at a state level into the future?

A15. Yes.

Capability review

Q16. In September 2015, an independent panel completed a capability review of Queensland biosecurity and made 14 recommendations. Which recommendations of the Queensland biosecurity capability review would you implement?

The Queensland Greens agree in principle that 13 of the 14 recommendations should be implemented. We suggest Recommendation 7 requires further consultation with the Veterinary Surgeons Board and other stakeholders to sort out cost-recovery tensions.

We would highlight Recommendation 9 - Establish a preparedness and response unit. This recommendation is important and should be acted on immediately as a Biosecurity Emergency Response unit is needed so that labour and expertise is readily available to help with biosecurity emergencies.

Community

Q17. How would you resource implementation of the 'general biosecurity obligation' under the Queensland Biosecurity Act to ensure non-government organisations, community groups, and individual citizens can participate and meet their obligation?

A17. Adequate resourcing, political support, improved accountability for the relevant government agencies and legislative reform are all necessary to ensure politically resilient, effective and robust environmental protection and monitoring.

Q18. The Feral Pest Initiative and the Environmental Conservation grant rounds have facilitated a high level of grassroots activity on environmental conservation and early invasive species responses. Would your party ensure that these grants are directed to supporting community action towards responding to the early stages of invasions by environmentally damaging weeds, pests and diseases?

A18. Yes.

Q19. Local government and regional natural resource management groups bear considerable burdens in responding to invasive species. In what ways would the Queensland Government better support local partners in the most cost-effective biosecurity response work - combating early stage invasive species?

A19. Increased, targeted funding and training for these groups so they can run effective education and eradication programs and campaigns.

Q20: The Biosecurity Queensland Ministerial Advisory Committee provides strategic advice to the Minister for Agriculture about managing biosecurity risks and facilitates a collaborative approach to biosecurity. Would you maintain a Biosecurity Queensland Ministerial Advisory Committee that includes a nominee of Queensland conservation groups?

A20. Yes – as long as there is an increased focus on environmental biosecurity in addition to agricultural biosecurity.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Penny Allman-Payne', written in a cursive style.

Penny Allman-Payne
Convenor, Queensland Greens