

Mr Andrew Cox
Chief Executive Officer
Invasive Species Council
PO box 166
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Dear Andrew

Thank you for your letter and providing the opportunity for the Palaszczuk Government to respond to the 2017 Invasive Species Council Queensland election questionnaire.

The Palaszczuk Government has always understood the need for a strong biosecurity capacity in Queensland. Queensland's position as a front line state means it has heightened exposure to introduced pests, weeds and diseases.

Following its election in 2015, the Palaszczuk Government commissioned an independent review of the biosecurity system in Queensland. This was with a view to restoring Queensland's biosecurity response capability to world's best practice. The Biosecurity Capability Review was an election commitment by the Palaszczuk Government aimed at restoring Queensland's biosecurity after the 26 per cent staffing cuts by the Newman-Nicholls Government.

In response to the findings of the review, the Palaszczuk Government allocated an additional \$10.8 million to bring to \$30.2 million the total funding commitment to achieving the goals set out in the review.

As part of this response, the Palaszczuk Government has initiated the process of developing a biosecurity strategy. A draft of this strategy, *The Queensland Biosecurity Strategy: Our Next Five Years (2017-2022)* has been released for public feedback and consultation, and is near finalisation. This is intended to operate as the key framework of Labor's vision for world-leading biosecurity. A re-elected Palaszczuk Government will finalise and implement this Strategy as a priority.

Labor also welcomed the July 2017 review of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity. In many ways it functioned as a companion to the Palaszczuk Government's 2015 Biosecurity Capability Review. Following the release of the report, the Palaszczuk Government engaged with stakeholders on the report and the proposed recommendations. Some of these recommendations are a matter for the Commonwealth Government in terms of funding and delivery, but Labor strongly supports a stronger biosecurity framework for Australia.

The Palaszczuk Government has continued its commitment to working with the Commonwealth and other State Governments on the \$400 million National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program. As you would be aware the eradication efforts in Queensland were recently boosted with the entering into long-term contracts with bait, labour and air charter suppliers. A re-elected Palaszczuk Government will remain committed to the Program.

In 2012 the Newman-Nicholls Government ended the yellow crazy ant eradication program, which had been fully funded from 2007. In contrast, our government has worked with the Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) on its plan for the eradication of yellow crazy ants from the World Heritage Area. This plan is supported by both Commonwealth and State Government funding, with the state contributing \$3 million.



Complete eradication of yellow crazy ants from Queensland can only be achieved with strong border protection, an issue for the Commonwealth. Since 1985 there have been more than 160 interceptions of yellow crazy ants at the national border. As long as new cross-border incursions are a risk, they will have continue to have severe impacts on management programs.

Our government has supported Townsville City Council in delimitation work on the Nome yellow crazy ant infestation. A re-elected Palaszczuk Labor Government will make a determination on the future response at Nome on the completion of delimitation, expected at the end of April 2018.

Through Phase Two of the Palaszczuk Government's Queensland Feral Pest Initiative, funding was allocated to the Cassowary Coast Regional Council specifically for Koster's Curse weed management. The release of the Queensland Biosecurity Strategy will further guide our responses to weeds such as Koster's Curse into the future.

Labor continues to support the presence of Queensland conservation groups on the Biosecurity Queensland Ministerial Advisory Council as important contributing voices to the discussion around maintaining world-class biosecurity. The Queensland Government works with industry and Commonwealth entities in conducting research and identifying potential responses for invasive pests and weeds. A second-term Palaszczuk Government will continue to support research and development to respond to future biosecurity threats.

The planned release of the Biosecurity Strategy will address elements of the general biosecurity obligations, and identification of sustainable resourcing. The focus of the Palaszczuk Government will be to empower the right people across the biosecurity network of industry, governments and the community including in the prevention, response, ongoing management and recovery of pest incursions.

Following the slashing of Biosecurity Queensland staff under the Newman-Nicholls Government there remains important work to do in rebuilding our biosecurity capacity. A re-elected Palaszczuk Labor Government will continue to build on its first-term agenda of restoring and strengthening our State's biosecurity.

Sincerely



**JACKIE TRAD MP
DEPUTY PREMIER**

**Minister for Transport and
Minister for Infrastructure and Planning**