



# National Environmental and Community Biosecurity Research, Development and Extension Strategy

A submission to the draft strategy

Invasive Species Council

July 2021

## Document details

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## About the Invasive Species Council

The Invasive Species Council was formed in 2002 to advocate for stronger laws, policies and programs to keep Australian biodiversity safe from weeds, feral animals, exotic pathogens and other invaders. It is a not-for-profit charitable organisation funded predominantly by donations from supporters and philanthropic organisations.

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## General comments

Overall, we strongly endorse the draft strategy and have only a few recommendations.

As everyone recognises – and as was illustrated by the failure of the previous strategy – the main challenge is to engender the commitment and funding for implementation. This strategy should be accorded an extremely high priority in the biosecurity system. It would be worth articulating more clearly in the strategy why that is so. From a conservation perspective, Australian biodiversity will continue to decline and extinctions will accelerate unless we develop the ecological knowledge, technologies, and economic and social strategies to prevent new and emerging invasive species and reduce the impacts of entrenched invasive threats. It would be worth including a section in the strategy about the foundational importance of environmental and community biosecurity research and providing a couple of case studies to demonstrate that (feral cats and red fire ants would be two excellent foci for a case study).

## Scope

We agree that ‘displaced’ native animals should be part of the scope – if their displacement is due to human actions – but not that ‘overabundant’ native animals should be. The likes of bell miners, noisy miners and black-spined urchins are not a biosecurity problem, but sugar gliders in Tasmania and rainbow lorikeets in Western Australia are because they were shifted to these new locations. But why only animals? Native plants like Cootamundra wattle and pathogens that have become invasive when shifted to new locations should also be included. Invasive native species could be included as part of the first category:

All exotic aquatic (marine and freshwater) and terrestrial vertebrates, invertebrates and plants (weeds and algae) and diseases, including Australian species outside their native range, ...

One minor point about the scope is that the list of organism categories does not include the likes of fungi or protists except if they are diseases. So, there should be a catchall – ‘and other organisms’ to account for them. We also suggest changing ‘diseases’ to ‘pathogens’ and ‘parasites’, so as to indicate the organism rather than the consequence.

## Key drivers

Note that the Kearney et al paper did not include marine species. The text could be modified in this way:

*Over 80% of nationally threatened terrestrial and freshwater plants and animals are impacted by invasive species.*

## Facilitating investment – objective 2.1

This is the critical objective, on which all other objectives rely. We recommend bolstering action 2.1.2 ‘Assist in the development of business cases’ to ‘Build the overall case for greatly increasing investment in biosecurity research, including the potential environmental, social and economic benefits’. Given our times and the political necessity to justify funding in economic terms, there needs to be a strong focus on the potential returns on investment that would likely result from a

much expanded focus on biosecurity research. The environment and community biosecurity sector is at a major funding disadvantage compared to the industry biosecurity sectors and needs to prosecute a strong public interest case for much greater government funding.

We recommend an additional action under objective 2.1 to 'Investigate new options for funding environment and community biosecurity research'. There is currently much focus on new ways of attracting investment for biodiversity and those charged with implementing this strategy should consider all options.

We also recommend an additional action to 'Seek funding for innovative research, which may require a preparedness by funders to take risks' – long-term grants for promising ideas without a guarantee of success.

## Outreach – objective 3.2

As with funding, outreach to engender much greater support for biosecurity research and action is foundational for strengthening biosecurity. Therefore, we strongly endorse action 3.2.3. However, it doesn't fit well under objective 3.2 as currently worded. We therefore recommend developing a new objective – eg 'Engender greater community support for environment and community biosecurity research and action' – that includes the outreach action and an additional related action to 'Investigate ways to inspire and support community-led biosecurity research and action endeavours'.

## Editing

We recommend the text is proofed by a professional editor as there are some grammatical and punctuation errors.