



Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

NSW Government's response to the Natural Resources Commission Final Report





Acknowledgement of Country

The NSW Government acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live. We pay respect to Ancestors and Elders past and present. We recognise and learn from the strengths of the Aboriginal peoples of New South Wales and their continuing connection to, and unique cultural and spiritual relationship with, Country. We are dedicated to building and sustaining relationships with Aboriginal people and communities across New South Wales.

NSW Government's response to Natural Resources Commission Invasive Species Review

The Natural Resources Commission (the Commission) report, *'Reducing Risk, Securing the Future – NSW Invasive Species Management Review'* provides an overview of the impact of invasive species in NSW and an evaluation of the effectiveness of existing management strategies.

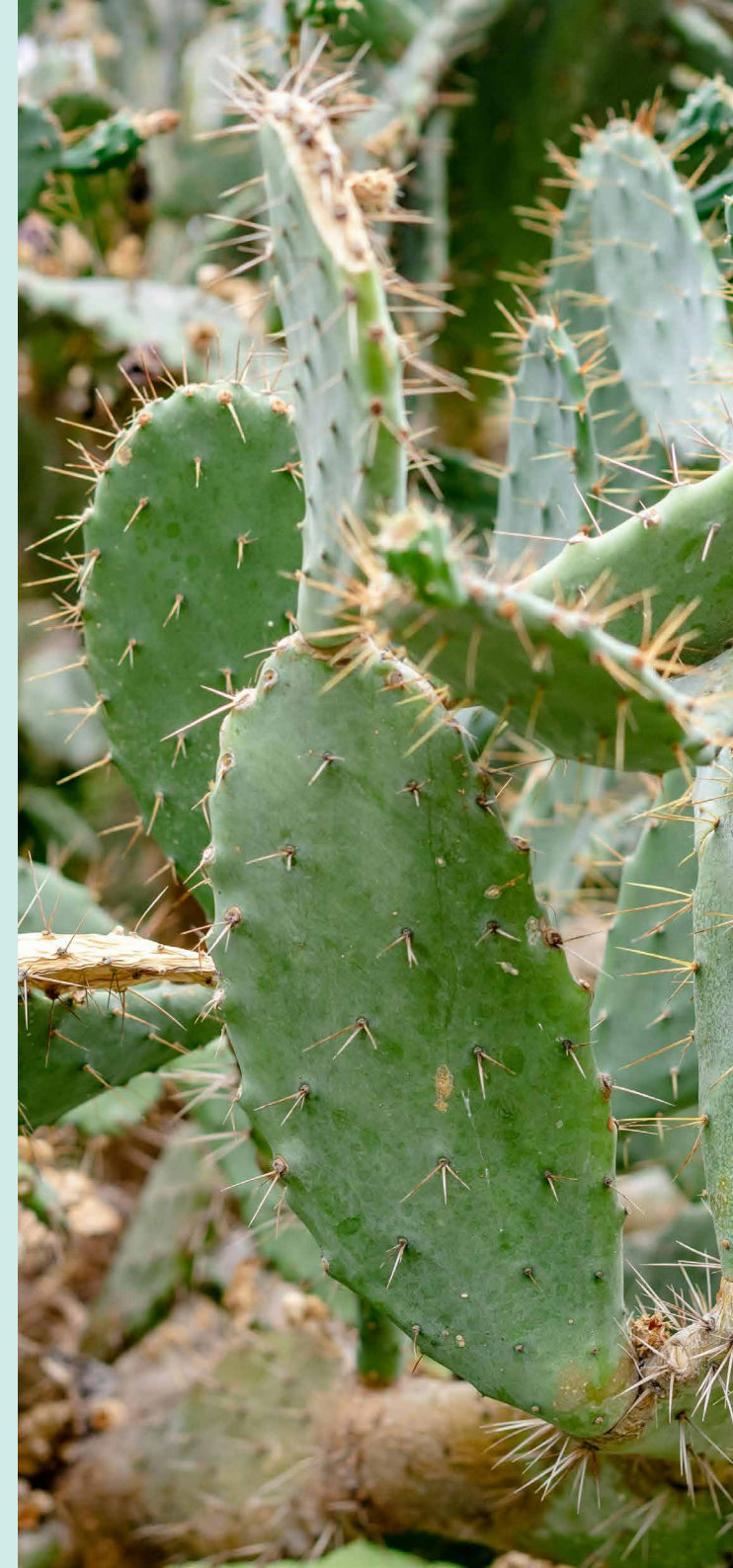
The Commission's Final Report emphasises the need to build on and mature the approach to improve management of invasive species.

Biosecurity is a shared responsibility. The actions of industry, land managers, community groups and other stakeholders contribute to preventing, eradicating, controlling and minimising the impact and spread of invasive species.

With finite resources available to government to manage exotic and established pest, weed and disease risks to the economy, agricultural sector, environmental, social and cultural assets, and communities, it is important that decision making, and programs are strategic and designed to deliver positive outcomes.

The NSW Government Biosecurity Action Plan 2025-2026 sets out the changes we are making to build a stronger biosecurity system, including:

1. Critical surveillance, diagnostics and emergency response to enable swift and effective action in the face of new threats
2. Improving biosecurity compliance by developing a state-wide framework to better align and integrate the work of our key regulatory agencies under the Biosecurity Act
3. Clarifying shared responsibility: helping people, businesses and land managers understand and comply with their biosecurity duties
4. Improving access to knowledge and data, making sure what we do is informed by scientific research and Aboriginal knowledge.
5. Making sure we are prepared for the future by prioritising strategic planning for biosecurity risk reduction at a landscape scale
6. Improving leadership and delivering coordinated cross tenure outcomes across primary industries, environment and health, with land managers, local governments, Aboriginal communities, and our national partners.





Response to recommendations

Recommendation	Government position
Prioritising strategic planning for risk reduction	
<p>DPIRD:</p> <p>1. Develop a NSW Invasive Species Planning Framework that consistently prioritises and resources risk reduction to manage current and future invasive species risks that is:</p> <p>a. Applied in the <i>NSW Invasive Species Plan</i> and aligned regional plans</p> <p>b. Supported by guidance and training for NSW Government agencies and partners to consistently prioritise risk reduction and high rate of return on investment (including market and non-market values) across:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pathways of new incursions and established species spread at a range of geographic scales• Key landscape assets and values (economic, social, Aboriginal, environmental)• Core invasive species management components (for example, prevention, surveillance, eradication/ emergency response, containment, management, data and research, MERI, education and training)• Requirements for invasive species management under both the <i>Biosecurity Act 2015</i> and the <i>Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016</i>.	<p>Support.</p> <p>Development of an invasive species planning framework will be included as part of a new State Biosecurity Strategy, which will include short, medium and long-term priorities to deliver wholistic improvements the biosecurity framework.</p>

Recommendation	Government position
<p>DPIRD:</p> <p>2. Redesign the <i>NSW Invasive Species Plan</i> to focus on strategic risk reduction through defined roles, responsibilities, investment priorities and actions to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Be outcomes driven, rather than activity driven, with associated targets (this needs to include Aboriginal values and outcomes, and biodiversity outcomes, with input from DCCEEW) Identify priority risk pathways (incursions and spread) and include requirements to develop component strategic to mitigate these risks to achieve agreed outcomes Embed a partnership model with system-wide involvement across scales and management components Align requirements for invasive species management under both the <i>Biosecurity Act 2015</i> and the <i>Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016</i> Identify emergency response planning, training and resourcing protocols for incursions of priority new or high-risk established species, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership from DPIRD to deliver coordinated emergency responses and plans following the state and national protocols Provisions for drawing on a broader pool of agencies, staff and authorised officers Establish coordinated state response plans led by DPIRD Agriculture and Biosecurity for priority invasive species with specific objectives and targets for inspection, containment and eradication (where possible) and asset protection (where appropriate). This would include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invasive species identified through control orders or biosecurity zones (for example, cane toads, tropical soda apple) Widespread species with escalating risk profiles (for example, feral pig, deer) Detail specific commitments for state-level programs for compliance and enforcement, prevention and surveillance, eradication and containment, communication, research, MERI, and training Include a plan for resourcing intense reduction of pest animals and weeds from high conservation value regions Detail specific commitments for regional coordination and local delivery Include guidance for more active and targeted use of the existing legislative and regulatory toolkit (for example, general biosecurity directions, authorised officers) Be adapted as a 'living plan' and monitored and reported on through the knowledge strategy (see Recommendation 12) Be approved by the Minister for Agriculture in consultation with the Minister for the Environment. 	<p>Support.</p> <p>DPIRD will work on a new NSW Invasive Species Plan following release of a new State Biosecurity Strategy, and in consultation with DCCEEW, land managers and stakeholders.</p>

Recommendation	Government position
<p>DPIRD:</p> <p>3. Redesign regional-scale plans for invasive species management as cross-tenure partnership agreements to deliver risk reduction through management, surveillance, compliance and emergency responses. They need to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Align with and further detail the <i>NSW Invasive Species Plan</i> at regional scales, including priority risk pathways, statewide programs and targets Be co-designed with partner organisations and regional committees in each region as ‘living’ agreements. This needs to include organisation wide commitment as well as endorsed support at local levels (for example, LCAs) and agreement to collaborate in delivery Identify how Aboriginal people will be engaged in the implementation of the plan Describe how funding will be allocated at the regional scale by partners to achieve risk reduction and asset protection across environmental, economic, social and cultural interests – this needs to consider existing and planned funding commitments and allocating funding at scales and times when programs are most likely to achieve the desired outcomes Identify and map regional priority pathways and programs across both vertebrate and invertebrate pest animals and weeds for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surveillance and incursion responses – inspections and other surveillance and compliance activities based on risk, with detailed response plans for how new incursions will be managed New and emerging species – management priorities for containment and eradication of priority new and emerging species already present in the region Widespread species – management priorities for widespread species based on identified high-value assets. 	<p>Support.</p> <p>Local Land Services will work with land managers and relevant agencies on the development of new regional invasive species management plans following the release of a NSW Invasive Species Plan and development of a planning and prioritisation framework.</p>

Recommendation	Government position
<p>DCCEEW:</p> <p>4. Develop relevant contributions for inclusion in the state and regional plans to ensure biodiversity and Aboriginal cultural values are prioritised, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Key actions for environmental stakeholders and potential risk creators to undertake to prevent the spread of priority invasive species in high value conservation areas, such as hygiene protocols or other mechanisms to combat high risk pathwaysb. Key management actions at the state level to reduce the risk of priority invasive species with potentially high environmental impacts, such as cane toads and bitous bushc. Mapped priority areas for collaborative cross-tenure pest animal and weed programs at the regional level to collectively protect threatened species, other important biodiversity and important Aboriginal cultural sites.	<p>Support.</p> <p>DCCEEW will support state and regional plans developed by DPIRD to ensure DCCEEW expertise, data and programs contribute to a holistic and coordinated approach to deliver biodiversity and Aboriginal cultural outcomes.</p> <p>This will complement DCCEEW programs such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifying priority sites and actions targeting threats to threatened species and ecological communities through the Saving our Species program and the National Parks Threatened Species Framework for Zero Extinctions, working closely with key partners to ensure actions are aligned at the local, regional and state level.• Implementing feral animal and weed management strategies for the control and management of feral animals and weeds on NSW national parks estate.

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<p>DCCEEW:</p> <p>5. Support Aboriginal staff engaged in activities related to invasive species management, both to connect with each other, and with Aboriginal communities by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Providing ongoing support for the development of a network of Aboriginal staff across agencies to drive change, identify and share opportunities, and provide a representative forum to engage with communities and decision makers Including references to invasive species management in the development of initiatives supporting Aboriginal involvement in the NSW Plan for Nature Supporting the establishment of a First Nations Land and Sea Country Commissioner to represent Aboriginal people working in natural resource management, including invasive species management, at relevant senior levels of the NSW Government. 	<p>Support in part.</p> <p>DCCEEW supports actions that enhance Aboriginal engagement in invasive species management.</p> <p>As outlined in the Plan for Nature, the NSW Government acknowledges the wide range of cultural, social and economic interests Aboriginal people have in biodiversity and land management issues.</p> <p>DCCEEW is committed to exploring, in partnership with Aboriginal stakeholders, new and better ways to support Aboriginal people to connect with and care for Country. DCCEEW will undertake tailored engagement with Aboriginal organisations, communities and people to ensure their views, knowledge, values and interests underpin the development and implementation of our actions and initiatives under this response. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> building genuine partnerships to deliver both biodiversity outcomes and benefits for Aboriginal communities recognising the commitment of time and resources by Aboriginal organisations, communities and people seeking free, prior and informed consent respecting Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property rights. <p>It is premature to support the specific recommendation to establish a First Nations Land and Sea Country Commissioner, noting the recent establishment of an Aboriginal Assistant Commissioner role in the Natural Resources Commission.</p>

Recommendation	Government position
<p>The NSW Independent Biosecurity Commissioner:</p> <p>6. Review and makes recommendations on state and regional committee functioning and membership to improve leadership, strategic decision making and accountability, including considering options for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. An overarching NSW Invasive Species Management Committee with decision-making powersb. Oversight and influence from senior executives of key agencies (for example, DPIRD, DCCEEW, the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure and Transport for NSW) on the state committee who have authority to make decisions on behalf of their agencies, with an appropriate Chair (for example, the Independent Biosecurity Commissioner) and secretariat (for example, DPIRD).c. The participation of key stakeholder groups outside of governmentd. Well-defined core functions to ensure consistent, coordinated, strategic planning and resourcing of invasive species management across the statee. Support from interagency pest animal and weed technical specialist working groupsf. Associated regional-level pest animal and weed committees, coordinated by LLS, which align with state committee roles and functionsg. Clear escalation pathways for when consensus cannot be met, and accountability lines for when agency partners do not meet their commitmentsh. Transparency and reporting requirements, including transparent minute taking and annual reportingi. Independent oversight by the Independent Biosecurity Commissioner.	<p>Support.</p> <p>The Independent Biosecurity Commissioner is providing advice on governance structures to support improved invasive species planning and management in NSW as part of a broader biosecurity management framework.</p>

Recommendation	Government position
<p>Identifying resourcing requirements and maximising value for money</p> <p>DPIRD:</p> <p>7. Propose a NSW Invasive Species Investment Program to NSW Treasury that includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A five-year program, as in the current WAP, but with funding allocated in five-year terms Additional funding for aligned pest animal (vertebrate and invertebrate) monitoring and surveillance functions, to be undertaken by LCAs and coordinated by LLS Contractual arrangements for regional coordination and local delivery requirements as in the current WAP Dedicated funding for statewide leadership, regional coordination, and local implementation of core management components (prevention, surveillance, emergency response, containment, data and research, MERI, education and training) A review of existing and planned expenditure against the framework to understand and communicate rate of return and value for money investment A review of potential additional funds, including cost-recovery tools. 	<p>Support.</p> <p>DPIRD will work with NSW Treasury on a proposal for consideration by government in 2026, informed by the NRC recommendations for invasive species management and associated improvements to support the broader biosecurity framework.</p>
<p>Supporting regional coordination and local delivery for improved outcomes</p> <p>DPIRD:</p> <p>8. Resource regional coordinators to deliver regional planning and collaborative programs. These roles must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Be resourced with dedicated funding from the NSW Invasive Species Investment Program (Recommendation 7) for full-time, five-year roles for weed and pest animal functions in each LLS region Be solely focused on invasive species coordination Operate as the secretariat for respective cross-tenure regional committees Lead and coordinate surveillance and inspection programs with LCAs as local delivery partners (for both weeds and vertebrate and invertebrate pest animals) Support the extension activities of local delivery partners (LLS and LCAs) Coordinate high priority collaborative programs for incursion response, containment, eradication and asset protection Work with Landcare NSW and other relevant community groups to maximise the effectiveness of their contribution to priority regional projects Engage relevant stakeholders across the region (public and private land managers, service providers and potential risk creators), including in relevant training Facilitate engagement and collaboration with invasive species researchers Contribute to the delivery of statewide programs. 	<p>Support in principle.</p> <p>Noting this will be subject to a future funding proposal for consideration by government.</p>

Recommendation	Government position
Strengthening regulation, compliance and enforcement for a more reliable system	
<p>DPIRD:</p> <p>9. Establish a dedicated invasive species management compliance and enforcement function in NSW Government to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Support Agriculture and Biosecurity, LLS and LCA staff to deliver a standardised approach across the full spectrum of invasive species management compliance and enforcement actions Assist authorised officers in developing materials for enforcement such as Biosecurity Directions Develop the underlying investigation procedures and evidence collection protocols required to undertake enforcement and deliver associated training for regional and local staff Implement a targeted engagement program with public land managers Support legal cases for prosecution against the <i>Biosecurity Act 2015</i> Support and test more active and targeted use of the existing legislative regulatory toolkit (for example, Biosecurity Directions, control orders and biosecurity zones), including advice to regional coordinators and local delivery partners Provide transparent public reporting on investigations, directions, enforcement actions and prosecutions, including upcoming priority programs Explore and identify options for a supporting compliance and enforcement ‘toolkit’ to implement with landholders (for example, property leases, loans, cost recovery). 	<p>Support in principle.</p> <p>Noting this will be subject to a future funding proposal for consideration by government.</p> <p>Parts of this recommendation will be commenced in 2025-2026 under the Biosecurity Action Plan, including development of a statewide compliance framework and development of regulatory guidance material.</p>
<p>NSW Government:</p> <p>10. Remove regulatory barriers to improve biosecurity outcomes, including to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen the enforceability of the <i>Biosecurity Act 2015</i>, including but not limited to issues surrounding the enforceability of the general biosecurity duty Enable the powers of Local Government authorised officers to include pest animals as well as weeds and allow for other biosecurity functions in emergency situations Amend the <i>Companions Animals Act 1998</i> to enable councils to introduce cat containment policies in their local government area. 	<p>Support in principle.</p> <p>Noting cat containment is currently being considered by a parliamentary inquiry into the management of cat populations in New South Wales.</p> <p>Enforceability of the Biosecurity Act will be improved through new State and regional invasive species management plans, and the development of additional regulatory guidance and extension.</p> <p>Under the Biosecurity Action Plan, DPIRD will continue to work with Local Government alongside other key regulators to better coordinate and integrate compliance and enforcement activities.</p>

Recommendation	Government position
Communicating invasive species risks and impacts to expand reach of the system	
<p>DPIRD:</p> <p>11. Deliver a risk-based awareness and education program to increase public understanding of the importance of invasive species management, shared responsibilities, and how to participate. This must target:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> High-risk pathways and hotspots (for example, the NSW/Qld border, major ports) and potential risk creators (for example, importers, online traders, aquariums, horticulturalists, plant nurseries, developers) 'How' the public can deliver their biosecurity duty responsibilities and participate in partnerships (for example, individually/collectively, methods of surveillance, community reporting apps and online/helpline reporting of high priority incursion species) Socially-smart long and short-term campaigns (for example, quick response campaigns for emergency incursions in specific 'hot spots', well-designed and targeted social media, education on technologies, school-based campaigns) Aboriginal connections to Country, and the importance of managing the land and water holistically for it to be healthy Social and behaviour change research to tailor, monitor and prioritise this investment to align with the risk reduction and value for money framework Delivery through a 'one-stop shop' NSW Government portal on invasive species management and supporting regional coordination and local delivery functions. 	<p>Support.</p> <p>DPIRD will develop this as a part of a wider biosecurity education and extension program, noting implementation of education and extension programs and campaigns will be subject to a funding decision by government.</p>

Recommendation	Government position
<p>Integrating knowledge and oversight to safeguard the system</p> <p>DPIRD:</p> <p>12. Develop a NSW invasive species knowledge system that is smart and responsive, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A dynamic research strategy developed by DPIRD in collaboration with universities, other research partners and end users, and reviewed annually by the NSW Invasive Species Committee, to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify priority research questions for investment over the next three years, focusing on incursions, risk pathways, monitoring, control methods, and future risk (for example, climate change) Detail requirements and standards for research, data and technology Improve accessibility Consistent and standardised data/research collection, mapping and reporting as part of a transparent and connected system to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draw together existing data platforms where possible Provide appropriate access to information, including mapping, on current status of key invasive species, associated management actions and their outcomes Include financial planning and expenditure data. An outcomes-based MERI framework that links to the <i>NSW Invasive Species Plan</i> and regional plans, including provisions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess and identify feasible MERI methods to achieve the outcomes Detail how MERI outcomes will inform decision-making and adaptation Include metrics to value changes in environmental, cultural and social impacts of invasive species, as well as economic costs Guide and train staff across NSW Government agencies and partners to embed consistent outcomes-focussed MERI across the system Identify transparent reporting requirements on outcomes Provide accessible data and reporting (via the NSW invasive species portal) Ensure oversight by state leadership Independent evaluation requirements, including that the Natural Resources Commission conducts regular independent evaluations and audits of NSW invasive species management system plans, performance, MERI and outcomes. 	
	<p>Support in-principle.</p> <p>Noting full implementation of this recommendation will be subject to a funding decision by government.</p> <p>Biosecurity is a key pillar in DPIRD's draft Research, Development & Extension Strategy, and DPIRD will work with the NRC, relevant agencies and key stakeholders on its biosecurity research program to deliver on the strategy including annual reviews to identify emerging issues and priorities for biosecurity.</p> <p>DPIRD will undertake planning and scoping for a data and information system for biosecurity in 2025, to inform a proposal for government's consideration in 2026.</p>

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