



Nursery & Garden Industry

Australian Nursery Industry Summary Paper The Future of Post Entry Quarantine

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Nursery & Garden Industry Australia (NGIA) is the peak national industry body representing producers, retailers and allied traders involved in the production of plants across all states and territories of Australia. In partnership with state and territory peak bodies, NGIA is responsible for overseeing the national development of the Australian nursery industry. The nursery industry is a significant sector of the Australian horticultural industry and employs over 45,000 people in more than 20,000 small to medium sized businesses with a combined supply chain market value in excess of \$15 billion annually.

The Australian nursery industry has had a historically long and close relationship with Biosecurity and Quarantine agencies across Australia, particularly in relation to the interstate movement of plant material. High volumes of plant material, valued in the millions of dollars, are moved across all Australian jurisdictions on a daily basis and consequently, the industry is reliant upon robust, cost effective, efficient and reliable biosecurity and quarantine resources.

The Australian nursery industry is a significant user of Post Entry Quarantine (PEQ) facilities across Australia. The industry imports new germplasm (in various forms including vegetative cuttings, seed, whole plants, etc) to support a diverse range of crops in the food, fibre and foliage industries.

The Australian nursery industry supports the need for PEQ facilities located in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia. These facilities must be aligned to AQIS as either an AQIS managed facility or managed by a state/territory government contracted as an AQIS service provide. The industry further supports “Approved Facilities” for private providers excluding material designated as high risk.

The following are a range of issues and points that have been considered leading to the current position of the nursery industry on the future of PEQ in Australia.

Nursery Industry Considerations:

Post Entry Quarantine is a government responsibility based on commonwealth and state legislation with limited input from stakeholders.

- PEQ has a “public good” component therefore government must contribute alongside the beneficiary
- The diagnostic expertise and skill base predominantly resides within government (pathologists, entomologists, etc) and private access will be complicated and expensive
- The potential exists for the reduced responsibility of AQIS (the regulator) in biosecurity breaches if PEQ is privatised

- High costs and poor access to PEQ services will lead to a system failure through the illegal introduction of regulated material resulting in increased risks to primary producers via emergency pests or limited access to new genetic material
- This potentially enhanced exposure to emergency plant & animal pests will have significant ramifications on industries aligned to the plant and animal biosecurity needs (EPPRD & EADRA)

Exclusive privatisation of PEQ will drive up costs through:

- multiple facilities (infrastructure costs)
- potential under utilisation (poor return on investment)
- increasing AQIS auditing fees
- Accessing relevant expertise (pathologists, entomologists, etc)

NOTE: Full privatisation provides AQIS with an opportunity to divest itself of key scientific expertise in pathology, entomology, etc forcing industry to rely on state agencies – this is an area already significantly under funded and under resourced or very limited private providers.

Nursery Industry Position:

- Maintenance of the status quo whereby both government & private facilities (excluding high risk material) exist
- Do not support a single “mega” facility due to the unacceptable risks associated with one entry point for high risk material (no back-up). Risks include:
 - Possible major pathogen outbreak
 - Natural disaster
 - Man made incident (e.g. terrorism, etc)
- Australia has diverse climatic conditions therefore PEQ facilities must be capable of accommodating high risk material relevant to the production systems in these zones e.g.
 - Tropical – Brisbane
 - Sub-tropical – Sydney
 - Temperate - Melbourne
- Primary Industry (plant/animal production) has relevance to particular states/territories
 - The relevance of local expertise residing in departments of agriculture can be accessed e.g. Banana’s in Qld
- Cropping diversity across Australia requires PEQ’s be close to the relevant production areas

Future PEQ Facilities and Industry Best Practice

The Australian Nursery & Garden Industry recommends that any future PEQ facility must operate in accordance with the Nursery Industry Farm Management System. The Farm Management System (FMS) will provide these facilities with a systematic based approach to improve business outcomes whilst proactively addressing environmental, natural resource and biosecurity responsibilities, both short and long-term. It will allow these facilities to analysis these identified risks (production, environmental and biosecurity) within the supply chain and implement an action plan to address and guide them through cycles of change and technology adoption. The Australian Nursery & Garden Industry will support the implementation of the Nursery Production FMS in each jurisdiction through technical on-site assistance.

The Nursery Production FMS includes 3 key programs:

- **NIASA (Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme, Australia)** – based on industry best practice this scheme will ensure these facilities maintain a benchmark standard and assists with change management under a cycle of continuous improvement. Key areas covered by this program include Crop Hygiene, Crop Management, Site Management and Water management.
- **EcoHort** – this is an Environmental Management System designed specifically for the Australian Nursery Industry that will demonstrate these facilities demonstrate sound environmental stewardship and natural resource management.
- **BioSecure HACCP** – this on-farm biosecurity program designed specifically for the Australian Nursery Industry will complement AQIS biosecurity measures and provide the tools and resources to assist these facilities better manage biosecurity risks for both imported and exported material.

The Australian Nursery & Garden Industry strongly believes that these programs should be mandated in future PEQ facilities.

For additional information and assistance with any of the above matters, please contact:

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