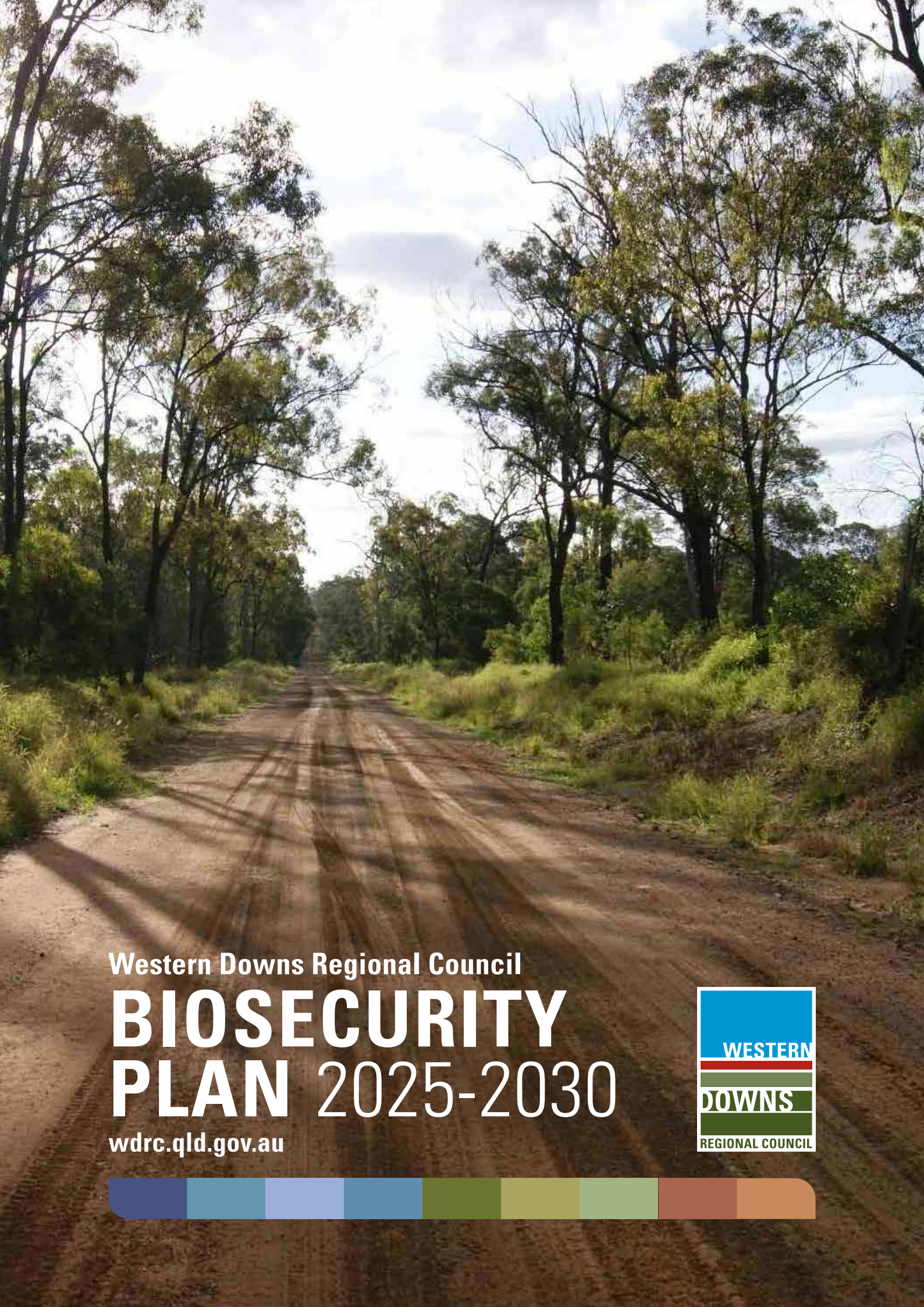

Western Downs Regional Council

BIOSECURITY PLAN 2025-2030

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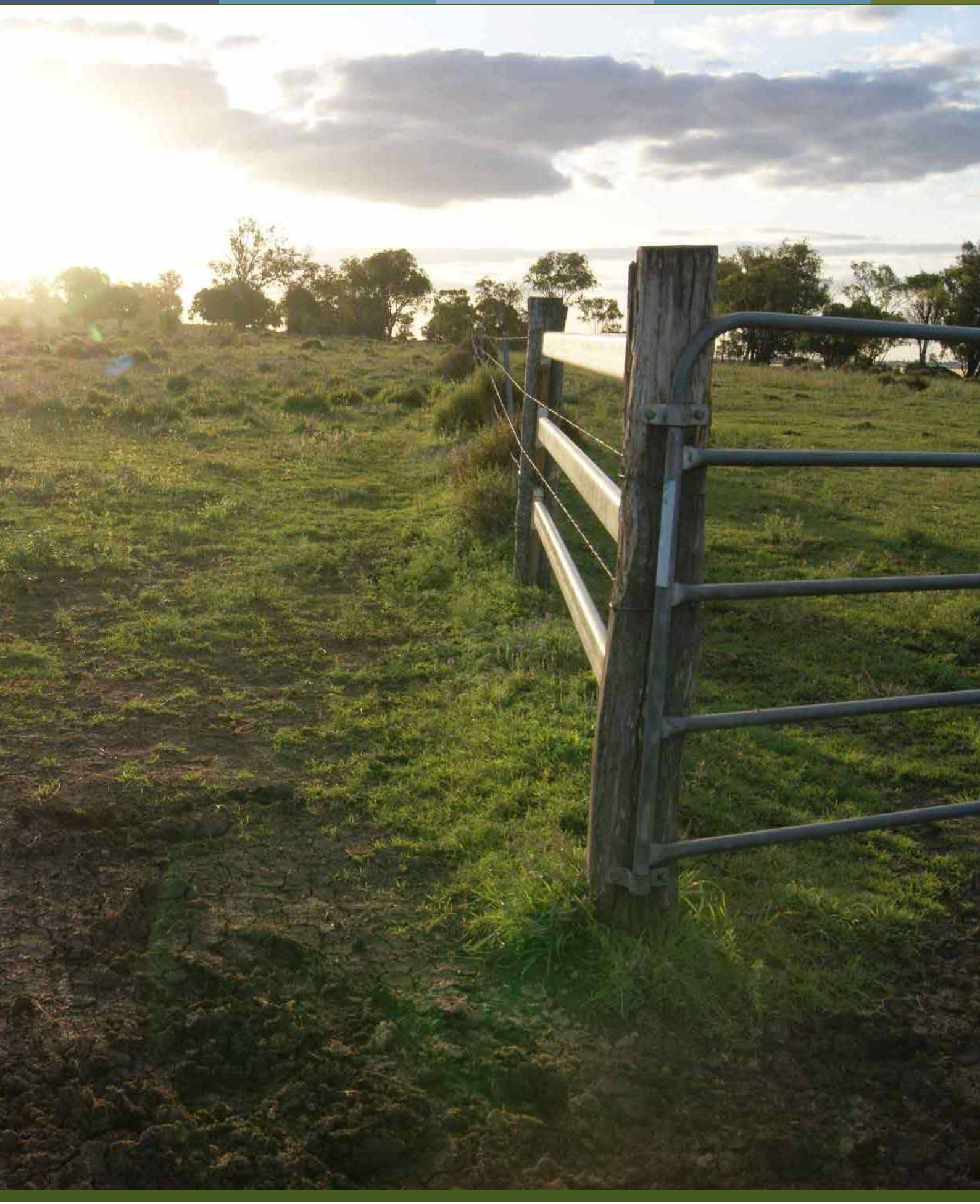
WESTERN DOWNS REGIONAL COUNCIL



Western Downs Regional Council

BIOSECURITY PLAN 2025-2030

For further information, contact Council:

Customer Service

1300 COUNCIL | wdrc.qld.gov.au

WESTERN DOWNS REGIONAL COUNCIL

Executive Summary

The Western Downs Regional Council Biosecurity Plan provides a comprehensive and strategic framework to protect the region's environment, agriculture, and communities from the harmful impacts of pests, diseases, and invasive species. It reflects Council's commitment to not only meeting its obligations under *The Biosecurity Act 2014* but to leading with purpose, innovation, and practical action.

While many aspects of biosecurity management will continue as business as usual, this Plan marks a step forward—a commitment to continuous improvement, forward-thinking practices, and the implementation of impactful strategies that deliver measurable results for our land, people, and industries.

The Plan acknowledges the complexity of biosecurity issues across a region as diverse and productive as the Western Downs. It outlines a clear, adaptable path to achieving a biosecure, resilient, and prosperous future through proactive, collaborative, and informed management.

Key Objectives

1. Prevention and Early Detection

Emphasising the importance of preventing the introduction and establishment of pests and diseases, the Plan outlines practical mechanisms for early detection and rapid response—enabling faster action to protect high-value assets.

2. Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement

Recognising that biosecurity is a shared responsibility, the Plan promotes strong partnerships with government agencies, landholders, industry, and the community. Coordinated efforts and local ownership are critical to success.

3. Education and Awareness

Community understanding is vital. Through targeted campaigns and inclusive education programs, the Plan empowers individuals and organisations to take meaningful action and understand their biosecurity obligations.

4. Risk Assessment and Management

Using a robust and adaptive framework, the Plan prioritises risks and strategically allocates resources to where they will have the greatest impact—ensuring both economic and environmental assets are protected.

5. Innovative Technologies and Research

The Council embraces innovation, supporting the use of emerging technologies, data-driven tools, and applied research to enhance surveillance, control, and prevention efforts. This ensures we remain agile and informed in the face of evolving threats.

6. Regulatory Compliance

The Plan outlines a consistent approach to compliance and enforcement, ensuring that relevant laws and regulations are understood and applied fairly across the region—reinforcing biosecurity as both a legal and community expectation.

7. Emergency Response and Recovery

Through clear contingency planning, the Plan ensures Western Downs is ready to respond to biosecurity incidents swiftly and effectively, minimising their impact and supporting community and environmental recovery.

Our Commitment

Implementation of the Biosecurity Plan will require the active involvement of landowners, Council teams, government agencies, industry bodies, and the wider community. Western Downs Regional Council is committed to providing leadership, coordination, and transparency in this shared responsibility.

We also acknowledge that biosecurity threats—and the tools to manage them—are constantly changing. That's why we've embedded a process of ongoing review, learning, and adaptation into this Plan.

Our goal is clear: to deliver outcomes that are not just compliant, but influential, effective, and long-lasting.

Looking Ahead

Through this Plan, Western Downs Regional Council reaffirms its dedication to continuous improvement, supporting evidence-based innovation, and fostering a region that is biosecure, productive, and sustainable for generations to come.

By aligning our actions with the principles outlined in this Plan, we will continue to protect what makes our region strong—the environment, its people, and its future.

Strategic Priority

Biosecurity (Pest and Disease Management) is a core operation and contributes to Council's Strategic Priorities of achieving Active Vibrant Communities, Strong Economic Growth and Great Liveability. Council's approach to Biosecurity is one of coordination and collaboration with a focus on continuous improvement to minimise the impacts on production, environment and the economy.

Introduction to the Western Downs

The Western Downs Regional Council (WDRC) spans approximately 38,000 square kilometres in south-west Queensland, encompassing a diverse landscape that stretches from the fertile farming plains of the Condamine River catchment to the distinctive rainforest escarpments of the Bunya Mountains. The region includes major centres such as Dalby, Chinchilla, Miles, Tara, Jandowae, Wandoan and smaller rural communities that contribute significantly to Queensland's economy and cultural identity.

Renowned for its strong agricultural foundations, the Western Downs is a powerhouse of primary production. It hosts one of Australia's largest concentrations of intensive livestock operations, including major beef feedlots and sheep enterprises. The region's rich soils and reliable seasonal conditions also support extensive broadacre cropping—particularly wheat, sorghum, barley, and cotton—as well as a growing horticultural sector.

In addition to its agricultural strength, the Western Downs is a key player in the national energy market. The area is home to significant gas extraction and renewable energy projects, including solar and wind farms, that contribute to Queensland's energy security and economic diversity.

Strategically located in Dalby, the Dalby Regional Saleyards stands as a central hub for livestock trade, playing a vital role in the movement and marketing of cattle across the state and beyond. It is one of the largest single-day selling centres in the country, reinforcing the Western Downs' importance in Queensland's red meat supply chain.

The natural beauty of the Bunya Mountains, with their ancient bunya pines and protected national parklands, contrasts with the wide-open productive landscapes that dominate much of the region. This diversity brings with it a range of biosecurity challenges, as land use intensifies, industries evolve, and environmental assets require protection.

The Western Downs is a region of opportunity, resilience and innovation—but its ongoing success depends on strong biosecurity foundations that safeguard its environment, industries, and communities. This Biosecurity Plan provides the roadmap for managing biosecurity risks in a proactive, coordinated, and locally responsive manner.

What We Heard From You: Community Insights on Biosecurity

Over the course of our community biosecurity review, voices from across the Western Downs chimed in—rural residents, primary producers, industry staff, and government employees. Together, they painted a clear and candid picture of what matters when it comes to protecting our region from pest and disease threats.

Top Priorities: It's All About Pests, Weeds, and Prevention

When asked to rank biosecurity priorities, the community placed pest animal control firmly at the top—followed closely by weed management. Disease prevention also drew strong concern, particularly where wild animals or unmanaged domestic pets are involved. Quarantine measures, while still important, tended to rank lower on people's immediate radar.

Feral Pigs and Wild Dogs Lead the Pack

Across nearly every survey response, feral pigs and wild dogs emerged as the key culprits causing stress, stock losses, and land degradation. Many also flagged feral cats, foxes, and even Indian mynas and carp as rising threats to native species, livestock, and waterways.

Weeds That Just Won't Quit

From Mother of Millions to Parthenium, Harrisia Cactus, African Boxthorn, and Giant Rats Tail Grass, there was no shortage of weed species making life difficult for landholders. Many voiced concern about weeds spreading from council-managed roadsides, public land, or neighbouring properties left untreated.

Council Performance: Room to Improve

Community feedback on Council's current approach to pest animal and invasive plant biosecurity was mixed. Many respondents rated pest animal control as "Good", while responses for invasive plant control skewed lower—often "Fair" or "Poor". The message was clear: more action, more visibility, and more consistency are needed, especially on weeds.

What's Fueling the Threats?

Survey respondents pointed to several recurring external factors behind worsening biosecurity risks:

- Lack of education and awareness
- Movement of animals, vehicles, fodder, and people
- Neglected government-owned land
- Grey nomads and travellers
- Complacency and poor coordination

Several warned of fire ants and exotic diseases being just one border away, urging proactive containment and regional awareness campaigns.

What the Community Wants

From helicopter pig shoots to local weed courses, respondents had no shortage of ideas for what should be included in the updated Biosecurity Plan. Suggestions included:

- More washdown facilities
- Grants for landholder groups
- Stricter roadside weed control
- Incentives for weed/pest control
- Clearer communication and community education
- "Boots on the ground" support—not just policies on paper

One landholder summed it up best:

> " We don't just want to be heard, we want to see action."

Legislative Requirements

The Biosecurity Act 2014 (the Act) commenced on 1 July 2016. The Act ensures a consistent, modern and risk-based and less prescriptive approach to biosecurity in Queensland.

The Act provides comprehensive biosecurity measures to safeguard our economy, agricultural and tourism industries, environment, and way of life from:

- pests (e.g. Wild Dogs and Weeds);
- Diseases (e.g. Foot and Mouth disease) and
- contaminants (e.g. Lead on grazing land).

The Act imposes a general biosecurity obligation on persons to prevent or minimise the impact of biosecurity risks on human health, social amenity, the economy and the environment. Decisions made under the Act will depend on the likelihood and consequences of the risk.

Prohibited Matter

Can be diseases, invasive animals and plants, exotic or noxious fish or insect pests that are not currently found in Queensland but would have a significant adverse impact on our health, way of life or the environment. It is the responsibility of all Queenslanders, as well as visitors from interstate and overseas, to be aware and take steps to prevent prohibited matter from entering our state. You will be expected to know about prohibited matter that you may come across in your environment as part of your business or hobby. If you become aware of prohibited matter, you MUST report it immediately to Biosecurity Queensland on **13 25 23**. If in doubt call the Western Downs Regional Council.

Restricted Matter

Can be diseases, invasive animals and plants, exotic and noxious fish or insect pests that are currently found in Queensland and have a significant impact on human health, social amenity, the economy or the environment. You are not expected to know about all types of restricted matter, however you are expected to know about the restricted matter that you could potentially come across as part of your business or hobby. Specific actions are required to limit the spread and impact of this matter by reducing, controlling or containing it. There are seven categories of restricted.

Multiple categories may apply to restricted matter and in such cases, you would need to follow the requirements of all categories for these restricted matter listings. For example, the Act lists feral pigs as category 3, 4 and 6 restricted matters.

Table 1 identifies the 7 categories of restricted matter.

Category 1	Must be reported to Biosecurity Queensland within 24 hours of you becoming aware of its presence. **Includes:** Red imported fire ants, electric ants, Asian Honey bees
Category 2	Must be reported to Biosecurity Queensland or a local government authorised person within 24 hours of becoming aware of its presence. **Includes:** Certain noxious fish, weeds and pest animals such as spotted gar and red-eared slider turtle.
Category 3	You must not distribute this restricted matter. this means it must not be given as a gift, sold, traded or released into the environment unless the distribution or disposal is authoriesed in a regulation or under a permit. **Includes:** Weeds, pest animals and noxious fish such as Gambusia, Dingoes, Yellow crazy ants
Category 4	You must not move this restricted matter to ensure that it does not spread into other areas of the state. **Includes:** Weeds, pest animals and noxious fish such as bitou bush, feral pig or giant cichlid.
Category 5	You must not possess or keep this restricted matter under your control. These pests have a high risk of negatively impacting on the environment. **Includes:** Weeds, pest animals and noxious fish such as Mexican Feather Grass, rabbits and carp.
Category 6	You must not feed this category of restricted matter. Feeding this restricted matter may cause their numbers to increase and negatively impact the economy or the environment. Feeding for the purpose of preparing for or undertaking a control program is exempted. **Includes:** Invasive animals such as feral deer, foxes, rabbits and wild dogs and noxious fish such as carp, gambusia and tilapia.
Category 7	If you have these noxious fish in your possession you must kill the restricted matter and dispose of the carcass by burying the whole carcass (no parts removed) in the ground above the high tide water mark or placing it in a waste disposal receptacle. **Includes:** Noxious fish such as carp, weatherloach, climbing perch, gambusia and tilapia.

General Biosecurity Obligation

Biosecurity is everyone's responsibility, and we must all play a role to ensure we minimise biosecurity risks to protect Queensland's lifestyle, industries and environment from pests and diseases.

All Queenslanders have a general biosecurity obligation (GBO) under *the Biosecurity Act 2014* to ensure you do not spread a pest, disease or contaminant.

This means that everyone is responsible for managing biosecurity risks that are under their control; and to the best of their ability, recognise and minimise biosecurity risks within their industry, home or places they are visiting.

Individuals and organisations whose activities pose a biosecurity risk MUST:

- take all reasonable and practical steps to prevent or minimise each biosecurity risk.
- minimise the likelihood of causing a biosecurity event and limit the consequences if such an event.
- prevent or minimise the harmful effects a risk could have and not do anything that might make any harmful effects worse.

A biosecurity risk exists when you deal with any pest, disease, weed or contaminant. This includes moving an animal, plant, soil, machinery and/or equipment that could carry a pest, disease, weed or contaminant.

A biosecurity event is caused by a pest, disease or contaminant that is, was or may become a significant problem for human health, social amenity, the economy or the environment.

Landholder Responsibilities

All landholders are responsible for taking reasonable steps towards controlling invasive plants and animals on land under their control

Community Responsibilities

Ensuring ownership of pest and disease management throughout the region by contributing towards the awareness, knowledge, prevention and early intervention of pest animals and plants and diseases.

Part A: 'Management Strategy'

Outlines:

Stakeholders and Responsibilities for pest management, Key Objectives, Strategies and Resources required for effective Biosecurity management.

1. Shared Responsibility

Western Downs Regional Council is one of the largest landholders in the region and is committed to leading by example in the delivery of biosecurity outcomes. With finite resources and competing priorities, Council recognises **that strategy is the most effective use of limited capacity**. This means focusing on **targeted, coordinated, and high-impact actions**—delivering the greatest possible value through efficient planning and prioritisation.

While Council will continue to implement and support best-practice biosecurity efforts on its own land, its broader role includes **working alongside community members, landholders, and industry partners** to coordinate pest plant and animal management across tenures. Crucially, Council will also **advocate strongly at state and federal levels**, and with key stakeholders, to **secure external funding, policy support, and resourcing**—ensuring that regional biosecurity challenges are met with the attention and investment they require.

Table 2 – Roles and Responsibilities of Biosecurity Stakeholders

Western Downs Regional Council
• Ensure compliance with *the Biosecurity Act 2014* by managing Prohibited and Restricted pests within the local government area and on Council-controlled land. • Use enforcement and compliance tools where necessary. • Lead local surveillance, planning, mapping, education, and awareness campaigns. • Support and coordinate community-led pest management groups. • Facilitate strategic, cooperative approaches to pest control across private and public land.
Community Members
• Take an active role in identifying and reporting pest threats. • Stay informed about biosecurity risks and contribute to prevention and early intervention efforts. • Help build a region-wide culture of shared responsibility.
Landholders
• Take reasonable steps to control declared pest plants and animals on their own land, as required under *the Biosecurity Act 2014*. • Work collaboratively with neighbours, Council, and pest management groups to achieve strategic outcomes.
Identified Stakeholders
Support or directly manage pest control programs through land management, technical expertise, funding, or coordination. **These include:** • Local governments: Toowoomba (TRC), Maranoa (MRC), Banana (BRC), Balonne (BSC), North Burnett (NBRC), South Burnett (SBRC) and Goondiwindi (GRC) Regional Councils • Biosecurity Queensland • Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry • Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service • Department of Transport and Main Roads • Darling Downs-Moreton Rabbit Board • Natural Resource Management (NRM) bodies • Queensland Rail • Landcare and pest management groups • AgForce • Mining and resource companies • Wild Dog Barrier Fence Management Committe • Wambo River Trust

Together, these groups form a regional biosecurity network that protects our environment, economy, and communities from the impacts of invasive species. Everyone has a role to play – whether through early detection, local action, or collaborative management.

By working in partnership, we can reduce biosecurity risks and create a stronger, more resilient Western Downs.

2. Key Objectives for Effective Biosecurity Management

Western Downs Regional Council is committed to building a proactive, collaborative, and adaptable biosecurity system. The following objectives form the foundation of the Council's Biosecurity Plan, ensuring we are well-equipped to protect the region's environment, economy, and community health.

2.1 Prevention and Early Detection

Objective:

Prevent the introduction and establishment of invasive pests and diseases, and detect incursions early to enable swift response and containment.

Strategies:

- Implement proactive surveillance and monitoring systems across high-risk entry points and vulnerable areas.
- Develop and maintain a regional priority pest list based on local threat levels.
- Establish clear reporting protocols and early warning systems for community and industry use.
- Promote on-farm and property-level biosecurity practices to reduce introduction pathways.

Resources Required:

- Trained field staff and local rangers with mobile surveillance and mapping tools.
- GIS-based biosecurity mapping systems.
- Public reporting platforms and hotlines.
- Access to diagnostic labs and pest identification support.
- Funding for baseline monitoring programs.

2.2 Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement

Objective:

Foster strong partnerships across all levels of government, industry, community, and landholders to achieve integrated and coordinated biosecurity outcomes.

Strategies:

- Establish and support local pest management groups and landholder networks.
- Host regular stakeholder forums to align goals, share knowledge, and build trust.
- Collaborate with neighbouring councils and regional bodies for cross-border biosecurity initiatives.
- Develop formal agreements or Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with key partners.

Resources Required:

- Dedicated community liaison officers or biosecurity coordinators.
- Stakeholder engagement frameworks and communication platforms.
- Meeting and workshop facilitation support.
- Shared databases for cross-agency planning and reporting.

2.3 Education and Awareness

Objective:

Empower individuals, businesses, and communities through education, ensuring they understand their biosecurity responsibilities and can take informed action.

Strategies:

- Deliver community workshops, field days, and school-based education programs.
- Run targeted awareness campaigns using local media, social media, and Council platforms.
- Distribute easy-to-understand materials such as factsheets, guides, and signage.
- Promote *the Biosecurity Act 2014*'s general biosecurity obligation (GBO) in all communications.

Resources Required:

- Graphic design and content creation for educational materials.
- Outreach officers and education staff.
- School and community partnerships.
- Translation and accessibility services for diverse audiences.

2.4 Risk Assessment and Management

Objective:

Identify, assess, and prioritise biosecurity risks using a structured framework to allocate resources efficiently and effectively.

Strategies:

- Conduct regular risk assessments using local data, climate conditions, and land use patterns.
- Integrate biosecurity risk layers into Council's spatial planning systems.
- Develop property-level and landscape-scale management plans.
- Review and update pest risk priorities annually based on new information.

Resources Required:

- Risk assessment tools and templates aligned with state and national standards.
- Access to regional environmental and agricultural datasets.
- Skilled risk assessors and GIS technicians.
- Ongoing funding to support adaptive risk planning.

2.5 Innovative Technologies and Research

Objective:

Support and apply the latest biosecurity research, innovations, and technologies to enhance response effectiveness and long-term management capacity.

Strategies:

- Trial and adopt smart surveillance technologies such as drones, remote sensors, and AI-driven pest recognition.
- Partner with universities, research institutions, and industry bodies on applied biosecurity research.
- Maintain a knowledge bank of emerging pest threats and control innovations.
- Create a regional innovation pipeline for testing and evaluating new tools.

Resources Required:

- Budget allocation for innovation trials and technology investments.
- Research grants and collaborative project funding.
- Technical training for staff and stakeholders.
- Access to digital platforms and cloud-based systems.

2.6 Regulatory Compliance

Objective:

Ensure consistent and fair enforcement of biosecurity legislation and policies, supporting compliance through education and enforcement where necessary.

Strategies:

- Develop and implement Council compliance and enforcement protocols.
- Train authorised officers in inspection, investigation, and enforcement procedures.
- Provide landholders with clear guidance on legal obligations under *the Biosecurity Act 2014*.
- Monitor pest presence and control efforts through regular audits and compliance visits.

Resources Required:

- Qualified biosecurity and compliance officers.
- Legal support and access to up-to-date legislation.
- Compliance tracking and reporting systems.
- Templates for notices, warnings, and education letters.

2.7 Emergency Response and Recovery

Objective:

Plan, prepare for, and manage biosecurity emergencies to minimise disruption and ensure rapid recovery across affected sectors.

Strategies:

- Maintain a regional Biosecurity Emergency Response Plan aligned with state protocols.
- Conduct regular training exercises and simulations with key partners.
- Establish emergency response teams with clear roles and responsibilities.
- Develop recovery strategies that support landholders, businesses, and communities post-incident.

Resources Required:

- Emergency management kits and communication tools.
- Access to emergency response funding and contingency reserves.
- Trained response personnel across Council and partner agencies.
- Community recovery support programs.

Each of these objectives is interlinked and essential to a strong regional biosecurity framework. By integrating strategic action, targeted investment, and community involvement, Western Downs Regional Council aims to safeguard the region from biosecurity threats and build long-term resilience.

Part B: 'Priority Pest Species and Diseases'

Outlines:

Restricted Pest Plants
Diseases
Non-Declared Pests
Restricted Pest Animals
Locally Declared Pests

1. Priority Pest species and diseases

Part B of the Council Biosecurity Plan serves as a practical and strategic tool for landowners, stakeholders, Council staff, and the broader community. It underpins pest surveillance, monitoring, and control activities by clearly identifying the region's priority pest animal and weed species, and by defining appropriate, achievable responses to manage them effectively.

Recognising the reality of finite resources, Council and its partners are committed to making informed, prioritised decisions to ensure that effort and investment are directed where they will have the greatest impact. This strategic approach is grounded in the use of high-quality, regionally captured data and intelligence to guide the selection and support of control methods and management practices for both pest animals and weeds.

For pest animals specifically, Council will prioritise coordinated programs that demonstrate clear, evidence-based reductions in population levels. These programs will be supported over and above the standalone development, construction, or maintenance of pest exclusion fencing, ensuring that investment is focused on actions that directly reduce pest animal impacts on the environment, agriculture, and community.

All pest species—both animals and weeds—are assessed against key criteria, including:

- Impact on agriculture, environment, infrastructure, and public health
- Current and potential distribution across the region
- Feasibility of effective control or eradication

Each species is then assigned a priority level—**High**, **Medium**, or **Low**—and a corresponding management goal to guide coordinated action.

Eradicate, Reduce, Contain, or Monitor

This prioritisation framework allows Council to manage biosecurity risks strategically, directing resources toward the most pressing threats while remaining responsive to emerging issues, new incursions, or demonstrated control successes. Pest listings are reviewed and updated annually to reflect evolving conditions and improve regional outcomes.

2. Invasion Schedule and Strategic Actions

Figure 1 (Generalised Invasion Schedule) illustrates the level of resource investment required based on the pest's stage of invasion.

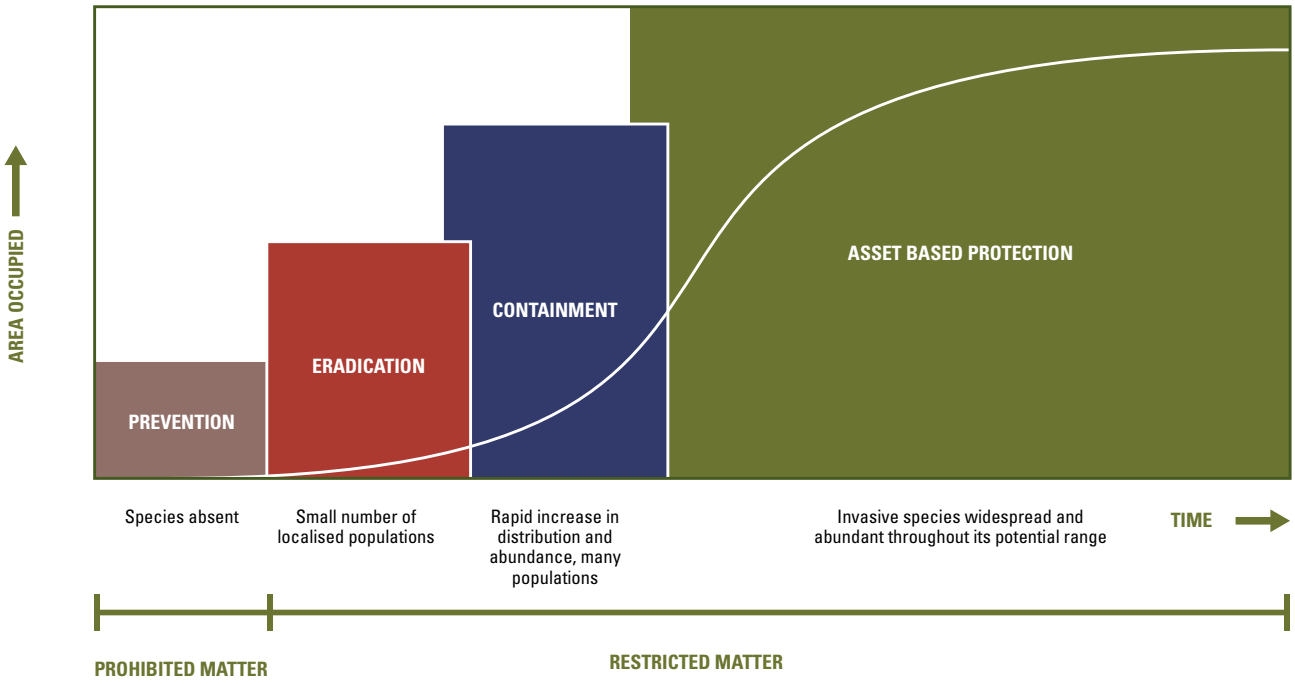


Table 1 (below) outlines the strategic actions recommended for each stage.

Table 1. Strategic Actions by Invasion Stage

Stage	Strategic Actions
Prevention	Education, risk assessments, legislation, targeted communication, community awareness, and rapid response.
Eradication	Strategic eradication programs, monitoring and evaluation, targeted education, and applied research. (e.g. Salvinia Eradication Program)
Containment	Integrated control (herbicide, physical, mechanical, biocontrol), mapping, joint investment, community engagement, surveillance.
Asset-Based Protection	Planning around key environmental or productive assets, stakeholder co-investment, coordinated efforts, capacity building, new and biocontrol methods.

3. High Priority Pest Plants and Animals

These species pose significant threats to agriculture, native ecosystems, or the economy. They are actively targeted through Annual Action Plans (AAPs), which define clear control methods and expected outcomes.

Table 2. High Priority Pest Species

Pest Plants

Goal: **Eradicate**

Giant Parramatta Grass	*(Sporobolus fertilis)*
Giant Rats Tail Grass	*(Sporobolus pyramidalis)*
Hymenachne	*(Hymenachne amplexicaulis)*
Parkinsonia	*(Parkinsonia aculeata)*
Parthenium	*(Parthenium hysterophorus)*
Salvinia	*(Salvinia molesta)*
Water Hyacinth	*(Eichhornia crassipes)*
Water Lettuce	*(Pistia stratiotes)*
Coolatai Grass	*(Hyparrhenia hirta)*

Goal: **Reduce**

Madeira Vine	*(Anredera cordifolia)*
Cats Claw Creeper	*(Macfadyena unguis-cati)*
Lantana	*(Lantana camara)*
African Boxthorn	*(Lycium ferocissimum)*

Goal: **Contain**

Harrisia Cactus	*(Harrisia martinii)*
Mother of Millions	*(Bryophyllum delagoense)*
Tiger Pear	*(Opuntia aurantiaca)*
Velvet Tree Pear	*(Opuntia tomentosa)*

Pest Animals

Goal: **Eradicate**

Feral Deer	*(Cervus elaphus, Dama dama, Axis axis)*

Goal: **Reduce**

Feral Pigs	*(Sus scrofa)*
Wild Dogs	*(Canis familiaris)*

Western Downs Regional Council will **prioritise pest species with an assigned management goal of *Eradicate or Reduce* above all others**, focusing resources where the greatest impact can be achieved. These species represent the most urgent threats and the highest potential return on investment in terms of long-term control or elimination.

Pest species categorised under *Containment* will only be elevated in priority where **clear criteria are met**—including:

- Demonstrated **local landholder collaboration and coordinated control efforts**
- A r**isk to environmentally significant assets**, such as native habitats, waterways, or protected ecosystems
- An infestation present on a **Primary Stock Route**, where pest spread may directly affect large-scale land movement and access
- An **isolated infestation** where localised **eradication is still feasible**, and rapid action could prevent further spread

If these criteria are not met, containment species will be deferred to medium or lower priority, allowing Council to focus its limited resources on pests where the likelihood of effective control and community benefit is highest.

This prioritisation framework ensures Council resources are directed strategically and supports the broader goal of delivering **measurable, high-value outcomes** across the region.

4. Medium Priority Pest Plants and Animals

These pests represent a moderate threat, often seasonal in behaviour or restricted in range. Control actions focus on monitoring and rapid response when thresholds are met or localised outbreaks occur.

Table 3. Medium Priority Pest Species

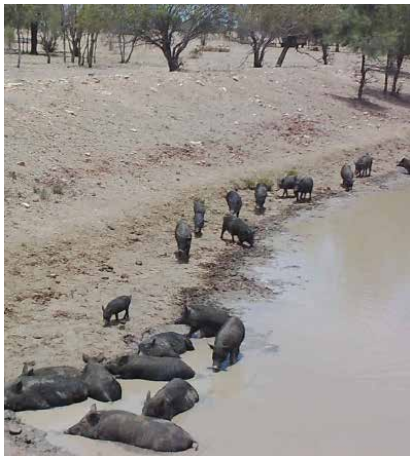
Pest Animals

Goal: **Reduce**

Foxes	*(Vulpes vulpes) – Reduce*
Rabbits	*(Oryctolagus cuniculus)*
Feral Cats	*(Felis catus)*

Goal: **Monitor**

Locusts	*(Austracris guttulosa, Locusta migratoria)*
Plague Mice	*(Mus domesticus)*



5. Low Priority Pest Plants and Animals

These species are typically well established, widespread, or of lower threat. Control efforts are situational and may occur when:

- An infestation is isolated and can be eradicated
- The pest threatens an environmentally significant area
- A coordinated community-led effort is in place

Table 4. Low Priority Pest Species

Pest Plants

Goal: **Contain**

Green Cestrum	*(Cestrum parqui)*
Mimosa Bush	*(Acacia farnesiana)*
Prickly Pear	*(Opuntia inermis)*
African Lovegrass	*(Eragrostis curvula)*
Lippia	*(Phyla canescens)*

Pest Animals

Goal: **Monitor**

Feral Horses	*(Equus caballus)*
Cane Toad	*(Rhinella marina)*
European Carp	*(Cyprinus carpio)*
Indian Myna	*(Acridotheres tristis)*

6. Emerging Pest Plants and Animals

Table 5. Emerging Pest Species

Non-Declared Pest Plants

Leucaena	*(Leucaena leucocephala)*
Willows Cactus	*(Cereus uruguayanus)*

Restricted Pest Plants

Bunny Ears Cactus	*(Opuntia microdasys)*
Chilean Needle Grass	*(Nassella neesiana)*
Cape Honeysuckle	*(Tecoma capensis)*

7. Locally Declared and Non-Declared Pests

Locally Declared Pests

Council may declare pests at the local level to address emerging or place-specific threats not currently listed under state or federal legislation. These are managed under Council Local Laws and should be treated with equal priority when declared.

Examples: To be reviewed annually – updated in consultation with landholders and pest management groups.

Non-Declared (Emerging) Pests

These species may not yet be declared but are:

- Under observation due to increasing impact
- Listed for community reporting and mapping
- Candidates for future prioritisation

Landholders and stakeholders are encouraged to report unusual pest sightings or impacts to Council for early assessment and potential inclusion in regional plans.

Conclusion: Using the Priority Pest List

This section of the Biosecurity Plan should be used as a decision-making tool for anyone undertaking pest-related activities. It enables:

- Clear prioritisation of effort and funding
- Community-wide consistency in pest response
- Rapid alignment with changing pest threats

By staying informed and working collaboratively, we can minimise the spread of harmful species and protect the health, productivity, and biodiversity of the Western Downs region.

Part C: 'Weed Seed Prevention'

Outlines: Washdown Facilities

The Western Downs region is a major hub for agriculture, mining, energy, and civil development. While these industries underpin local prosperity, they also increase the risk of spreading weed seeds and other biosecurity threats across landscapes.

Weed spread presents an ongoing risk to **primary industries**, **natural ecosystems**, **biodiversity**, and **community amenity**. Vehicles and machinery are key vectors of weed seed dispersal—often unknowingly transporting seeds from infested areas to clean sites.

Seeds can lodge in tyre treads, chassis frames, radiators, grilles, floor mats, and wheel arches, and can be carried **hundreds of kilometres** before dislodging. To limit these risks, **competent, consistent vehicle and machinery cleaning practices are essential** across all sectors.

1. Legal Obligations

Under *the Biosecurity Act 2014*, all landholders, operators, and machinery users—including contractors and government agencies—must take all reasonable steps to prevent the spread of Restricted Matter.

- Reproductive material, including seeds, bulbs, rhizomes, tubers, and plant fragments, must be removed before transporting machinery or equipment on public roads or between properties.
- It is an offence to move or transport contaminated equipment or vehicles unless the contamination is contained.
- Under the Land Access Code, resource authority holders must provide washdown records to landholders upon request prior to accessing properties.

This legal duty forms part of each individual's General Biosecurity Obligation (GBO)—a core principle of the Biosecurity Act.

2. Sources of Weed Contamination

Weed seeds can be transported via:

- Heavy construction or agricultural machinery (e.g. dozers, graders, loaders) carrying soil or plant material in tracks and attachments.
- Farm vehicles and equipment, including tractors and four-wheel drives contaminated in infested paddocks.
- Harvesters and crop headers, which can collect seeds in augers, bins, and compartments.
- Implements such as ploughs, slashers, post-hole diggers, and mulchers.
- Mining and energy sector machinery, particularly in areas of land disturbance or soil movement.
- Livestock transport vehicles, which can carry weed seeds via manure, feed, or bedding from infested holding yards.
- Cars and light vehicles used for off-road travel in areas containing weed infestations.

Proper hygiene and regular washdowns are necessary to break this cycle of spread.

3. Washdown Facilities in the Western Downs

To support weed seed prevention efforts, Western Downs Regional Council has invested in three permanent, all-weather washdown facilities located in key regional centres. These are designed to support industry, landholders, and contractors in meeting their biosecurity obligations.

Washdown facilities offer a safe, controlled environment to remove soil, mud, plant material, and weed seeds before travelling to new areas.

Important Principles

- Temporary on-road washdowns are not supported, due to the high risk of creating new infestations.
- On-property (on-farm) washdowns should only be used if the contamination occurred on that property—not as a pre-entry hygiene measure.
- All users are expected to follow site signage and safety procedures. Failure to properly clean vehicles or misuse of facilities may result in liability for damages.

4. Washdown Facility Details

Fees and Access

- Washdown facility access is available from the Chinchilla Customer Service Centre on payment of a fee in accordance with Council's schedule of fees and charges.
- Facilities are open 24/7, with periodic closures for maintenance.

General Specifications

- Surface: Reinforced concrete
- Hose System: Supplied on-site
- Vehicle Size Limitations:

  Height: No restriction

  Width: No restriction

  Weight: Vehicles exceeding 30 tonnes must remain on floats or tyres to avoid surface damage

User Responsibilities

- Report all damage or misuse immediately to Council
- Clean up after use—mud and debris must be fully removed from the surface to avoid hazards
- Follow signage and rules posted on-site

4.1 Chinchilla Washdown Facility

Location: Chinchilla Saleyards – Slessar Street, Chinchilla

Vehicle Types Allowed:

- Resource and civil vehicles

  Note: Livestock vehicles are not permitted (no effluent treatment capacity)

4.2 Dalby Washdown Facility

Location: Dalby Saleyards – Yumborra Road, Dalby

Vehicle Types Allowed:

- All vehicle types, including livestock, resource and civil vehicles

4.3 Wandoan Washdown Facility

Location: Wandoan Saleyards – Windeyer Road, Wandoan

Vehicle Types Allowed:

- All vehicle types, including livestock, resource and civil vehicles

5. Recommendations for Users

To maximise the effectiveness of washdowns:

- Inspect all vehicles before entry and after washdown, including underbody, wheel arches, radiators, and attachments
- Keep a washdown record log for audit and access purposes (especially when entering private land)
- Dispose of any collected soil, plant material or washdown debris according to local guidelines
- Include weed hygiene procedures in all contractor and service provider agreements

6. Summary: Prevention is Key

Washdown facilities are a vital line of defence against weed seed spread in the Western Downs. Whether you're a farmer, miner, contractor, or government worker, using these facilities helps protect the land you work on and travel across.

By fulfilling legal obligations and practicing good biosecurity hygiene, we can maintain the productivity, environmental health, and amenity of the Western Downs region.

Part D: Monitoring and Landholder Pest Management Groups

Outlines:

Vertebrate Pest Monitoring Program

Coordinated Pest Management

Smart Surveillance | Strategic Response | Stronger Outcomes

Effective biosecurity relies not only on timely response but on early insight, coordinated planning, and informed decision-making. Monitoring and Coordinated Control are critical components of the Western Downs Regional Council (Council) Biosecurity Plan, providing the foundation for targeted action and lasting results.

Western Downs Regional Council is committed to continuous improvement and innovation, investing in technologies, partnerships, and programs that go beyond business as usual. Our goal is to not only meet expectations but to lead by example—delivering impactful strategies that reduce pest impacts, build resilience, and support community and industry wellbeing.

1. Vertebrate Pest Monitoring Program – Technology-Driven Insights

The Council's Vertebrate Pest Monitoring Program is a central component of our broader pest management strategy. Its primary focus is the identification and tracking of high-priority pest animals, including:

- Wild Dogs *(Canis familiaris)*
- Feral Pigs *(Sus scrofa)*
- Feral Cats *(Felis catus)*
- Foxes *(Vulpes vulpes)*
- Feral Deer *(Cervus spp.)*

However, our monitoring capacity extends far beyond this core list. The tools and systems we are using are capable of detecting a wide range of vertebrate species, including emerging pest animals, as well as native fauna. This positions Council to gain valuable insights not only into pest distribution and behaviour, but also into broader ecological dynamics across the Western Downs.

Through the use of cutting-edge technology, such as:

- Remote camera networks and passive sensor arrays
- Drone surveillance with thermal and visual detection
- AI-assisted species identification
- Predictive modelling based on environmental conditions and movement patterns
- Community-based reporting via mobile apps and online portals

These technologies support faster identification of pest activity, improved understanding of movement patterns, and enhanced capability for data-informed decision-making.

Council is developing a powerful data-rich foundation to support biosecurity, conservation, and land management outcomes.

1.1 Beyond Pests: Understanding Ecological Interactions

One of the most exciting aspects of this program is its ability to detect and monitor non-target species, particularly native wildlife. This opens up opportunities to:

- Identify trends or declines in native species, potentially linked to pest activity or environmental change
- Draw correlations between pest presence and the behaviour, abundance, or movement of native wildlife
- Assess the success or unintended consequences of control programs on broader ecosystems
- Support broader conservation efforts by supplying real-time ecological data

This integrated approach supports smarter, more sustainable decision-making—not just in biosecurity, but in landscape health and biodiversity stewardship.

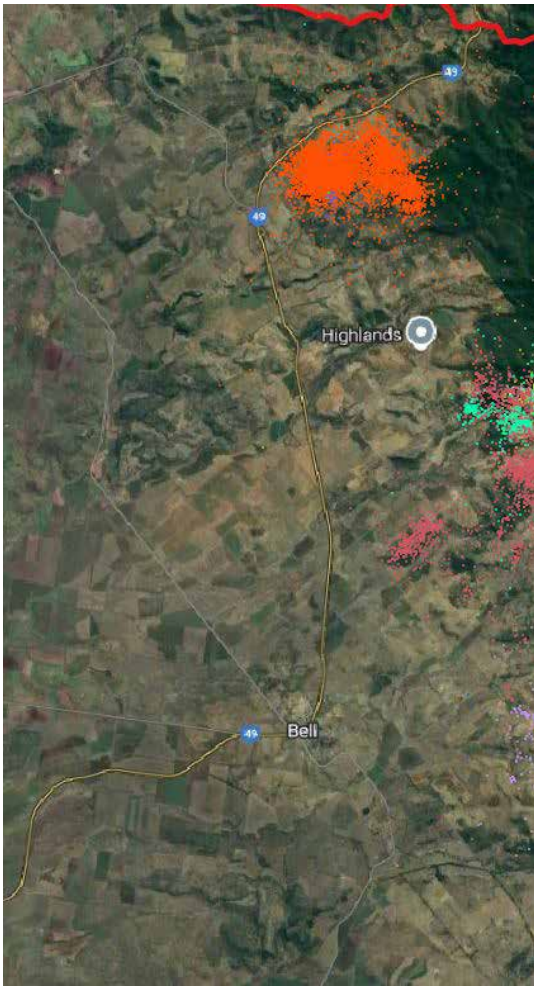
2. Coordinated Control Programs – Collective Impact

Surveillance alone is not enough. Coordinated control ensures that pest management efforts are effective across landscapes, rather than fragmented across individual properties.

Western Downs Regional Council places strong emphasis on landscape-scale, multi-stakeholder control programs, particularly for high-priority vertebrate pests. These efforts are most successful when landholders, industry, government and community groups work in unison—sharing knowledge, aligning timing, and pooling resources.

Key Features of Coordinated Programs:

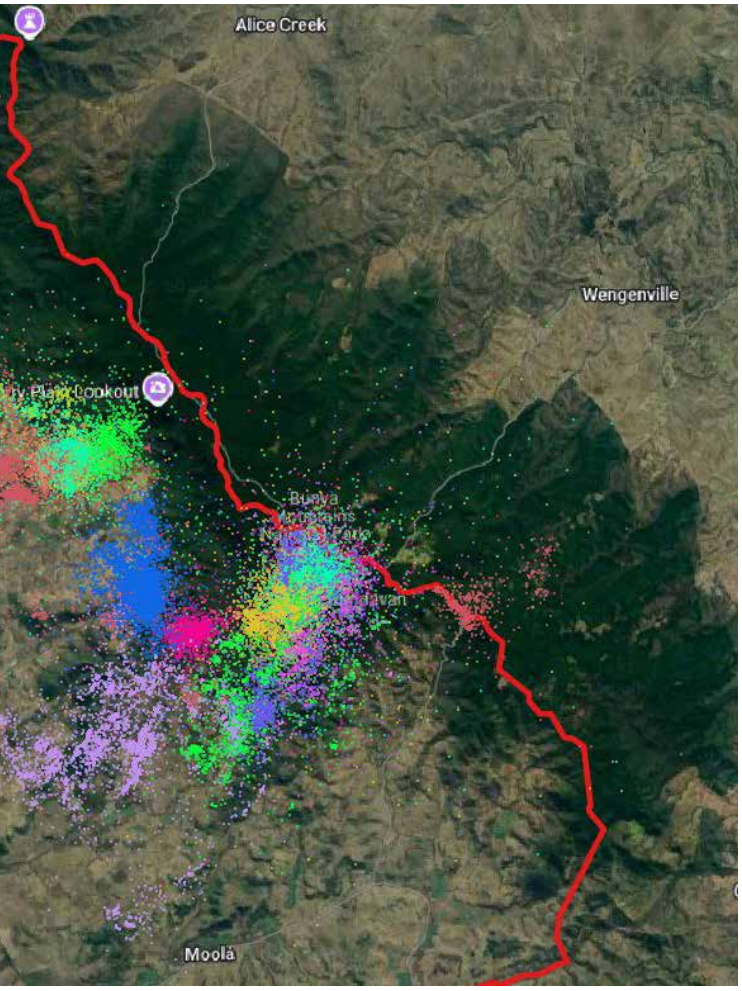
- Shared control schedules and campaign windows (e.g. baiting programs, trapping blitzes)
- Integrated methods (baiting, trapping, shooting, exclusion fencing, and biological control)
- Cross-tenure collaboration, including private, public, and leased land
- Support and facilitation by Council, including technical guidance, community engagement, and cost-sharing where possible
- Monitoring and evaluation to track effectiveness and adjust strategies



3. A Commitment to Smarter Pest Management

Western Downs Regional Council's approach to pest management is grounded in continuous improvement, innovation, and intelligent land stewardship. Through smart monitoring and coordinated control, we are not only reducing the impact of pest species, but also gaining valuable ecological insight—enhancing our understanding of how pests interact with the broader environment.

By investing in people, partnerships, and technology, Council is delivering real-world, on-ground outcomes that support healthy ecosystems, sustainable productivity, and the long-term liveability of the Western Downs. This is more than pest control—it's forward-thinking, integrated land management designed to protect our region now and into the future.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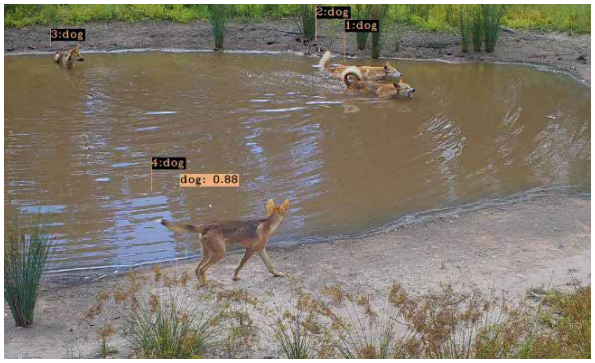
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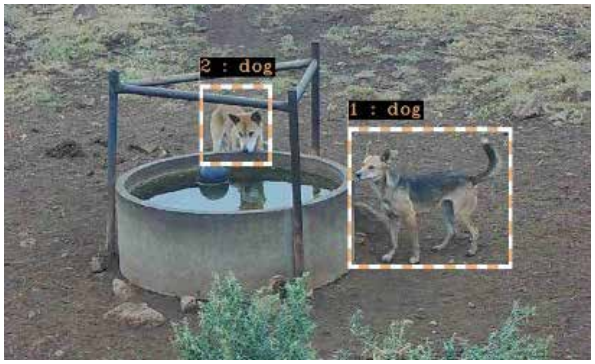
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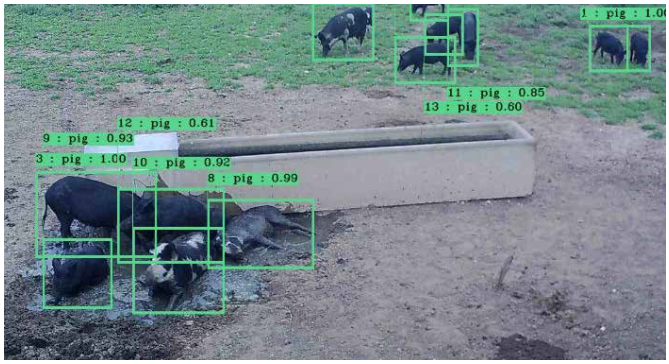
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Part E: Emergency Response to Biosecurity Threat

Biosecurity emergencies can arise suddenly and vary significantly in scale, severity, and potential impact. These threats may range from the emergence of a new invasive weed species in the Western Downs to the incursion of high-consequence animal diseases such as Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) or African Swine Fever (ASF), or the detection of dangerous invasive pests like Red Imported Fire Ants (RIFA).

In any biosecurity emergency, Western Downs Regional Council is committed to acting swiftly, strategically, and in collaboration with lead authorities, to reduce harm and ensure the safety, productivity, and environmental health of the region.

1. Risk-Based Emergency Response

Not all biosecurity incidents require the same level of response. Council's approach will be proportionate to the level of risk, considering:

- Impact on human health or safety
- Potential economic losses, particularly to agriculture or industry
- Environmental consequences, including loss of biodiversity or spread of invasive species
- Speed of spread and ease of containment
- Geographic extent and rate of detection

Each biosecurity emergency will be classified based on its level of risk to the community, economy, and environment, and appropriate response measures will be implemented accordingly.

2. Coordination with Lead Agencies

In all emergency scenarios, Western Downs Regional Council will take direction from lead response agencies and state/federal regulatory authorities, including but not limited to:

- Biosecurity Queensland – for plant and animal pest/disease incursions
- Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF)
- National Emergency Animal Disease Response arrangements
- National Plant Biosecurity Incursion Response protocols
- Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) – where human safety and disaster management protocols are triggered
- Other authorities as relevant to cross-border and interstate emergencies

Council may play a supporting or coordinating role, particularly in areas such as:

- Community engagement and public information dissemination
- Surveillance and on-ground reporting
- Local logistics and resource mobilisation
- Stakeholder coordination and access facilitation
- Liaising with landholders and industry groups

3. Example Scenarios and Response Types

THREAT TYPE	Example	Council Role	Lead Agency
	Environmental Emergency with Biosecurity Implications		
	Flooding or fire leading to weed seed dispersal	Assessment of emerging threats, recovery planning	QFES, Biosecurity QLD, Council (support role)
	High-Risk Animal Disease		
	Foot and Mouth Disease detection in livestock	Emergency communications, support to property access restrictions, local liaison	DAF, National Emergency Animal Disease Response
	Exotic Insect Pest		
	Red Imported Fire Ants detected in Western Downs	Assist with access and treatment logistics, awareness campaigns	Biosecurity Queensland, Fire Ant Eradication Program
	Environmental Emergency with Biosecurity Implications		
	Flooding or fire leading to weed seed dispersal	Assessment of emerging threats, recovery planning	QFES, Biosecurity QLD, Council (support role)

4. Preparedness and Planning

Western Downs Regional Council recognises that strong preparedness is essential to minimise the impact of biosecurity emergencies. Council maintains a Biosecurity Emergency Response Protocol, which outlines internal roles, communication pathways, and response procedures aligned with state and national biosecurity frameworks.

This protocol is supported by:

- Defined communication channels with lead agencies
- Internal response team roles and responsibilities
- Public alert processes and community messaging templates
- Local logistics, access, and support planning
- Integration with Council's broader Disaster Management Plans and Local Recovery Planning

As part of our forward-thinking approach, Council also recognises the elevated risks posed by intensive livestock operations such as feedlots and piggeries, particularly in the event of serious animal disease outbreaks (e.g. Foot and Mouth Disease, African Swine Fever). These facilities can experience rapid transmission and substantial economic loss due to high animal densities and movement volumes.

To strengthen local resilience, Council will:

- Encourage and support the development of site-specific biosecurity action plans for intensive animal enterprises
- Promote participation in industry-led preparedness initiatives
- Advocate for regulatory improvements, including mandatory exclusion fencing around high-risk facilities to reduce wildlife and pest animal incursion
- Work with state agencies and peak industry bodies to improve access to rapid response resources and decision-making tools in the event of an outbreak

By identifying and addressing vulnerabilities within high-priority production zones, Council aims to reduce both the likelihood and severity of impacts from biosecurity threats, safeguarding the region's livestock sector and broader agricultural economy.

5. Community Engagement During Emergencies

In the event of a biosecurity emergency, Council will:

- Disseminate clear, timely and accurate information to residents, landholders, and businesses
- Promote compliance with containment, eradication, or movement restriction protocols
- Act as a trusted source of updates and support in coordination with lead agencies
- Provide feedback mechanisms to assist in post-response evaluation and community recovery

6. Building Resilience

By maintaining strong relationships with response agencies, investing in preparedness, and fostering an informed and engaged community, Western Downs Regional Council aims to strengthen regional resilience to biosecurity threats—minimising their impact and ensuring the region can recover quickly and effectively.

Council remains committed to adaptive, forward-thinking biosecurity management—and will continue to review and enhance emergency response strategies as new risks and lessons emerge.

Part F: Wild Dog Fences

Western Downs Regional Council (WDRC) does not support the continued public funding of the Wild Dog Barrier Fence (WDBF) or the Wild Dog Check Fences.

WDRC is one of the few public agencies actively collecting and analysing pest population data. While many entities rely on anecdotal evidence, WDRC has adopted a data-driven approach to inform policy decisions. Since 2018, Council has deployed a regional network of monitoring cameras on an approximate 20 km grid. These cameras, combined with AI-based image classification, have enabled the identification of emerging wild dog hotspots.

The data is unequivocal: wild dog prevalence is consistent on both sides of the WDBF and Check Fences. The historical concept of a 'clean' versus 'dirty' side is no longer valid. The installation of private exclusion fencing on the 'clean' side—such as in the Crowders Creek Moonie area—further supports this conclusion. These private fences, often located near the Check Fence, demonstrate that the public infrastructure offers limited pest management value.

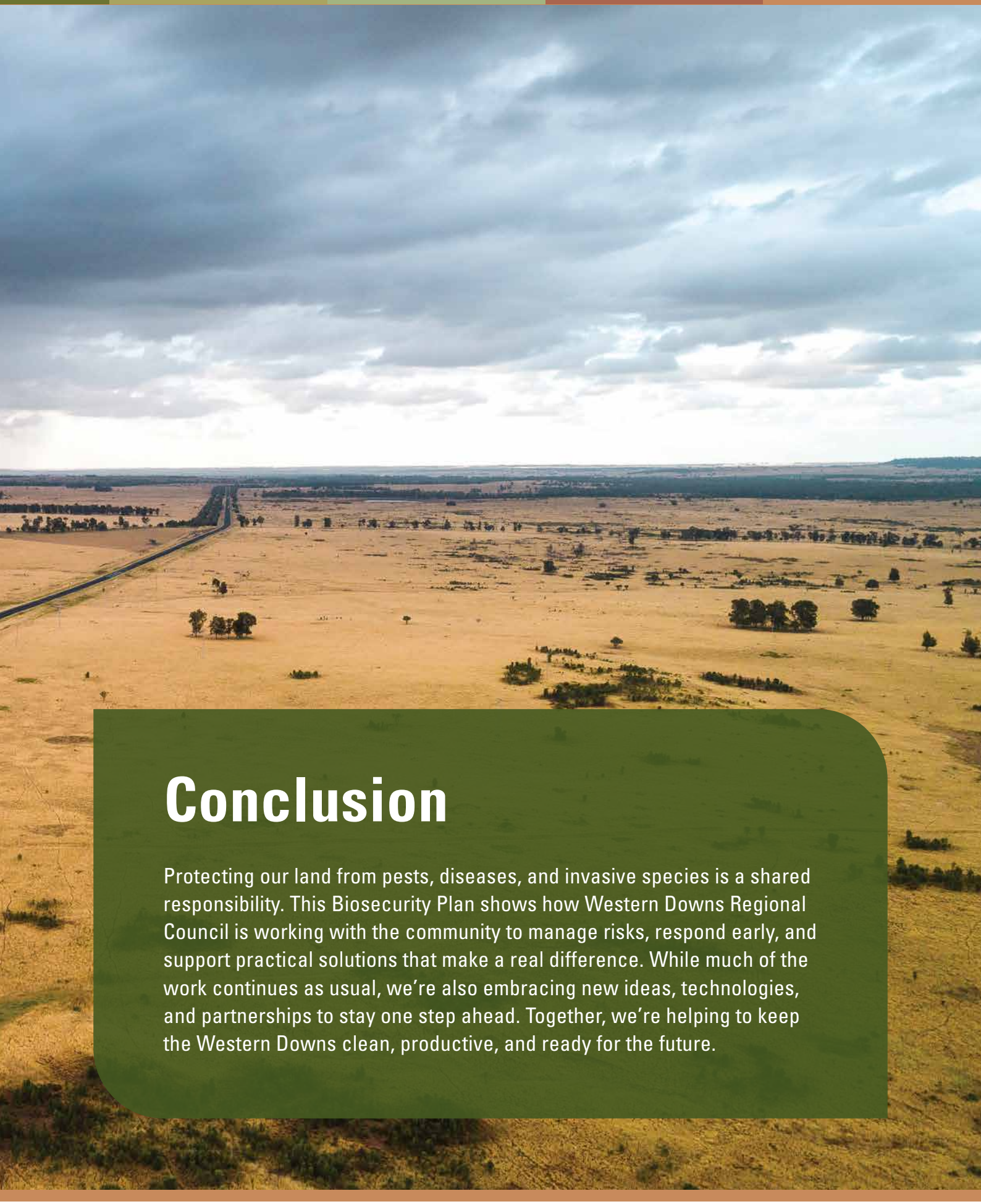
Importantly, these fences do not reduce wild dog populations. While well-maintained fences may restrict individual animal movement, they do not contribute to population control. The benefit of these fences is largely private, typically accruing to adjacent landholders who gain a publicly funded perimeter fence. However, these landholders do not contribute additional funding—such as through a special rate—despite receiving direct benefit.

The condition and maintenance of these fences also pose a financial risk. During the 2025 flood event, approximately 20 km of the WDBF was destroyed, with a further 20 km significantly damaged. According to the Wild Dog Barrier Fence Operational Report (Nov 2024 – May 2025, p.12), replacement costs range from $31,000 to $68,000 per kilometre, equating to a potential cost of $622,000 to $1.36 million for 20 km. In the Miles area, landholders have reported long-standing breaches in the WDBF, rendering it ineffective.

Further, the 2023 bushfires in Western Downs caused extensive damage to the Tara Check Fence. Fire control measures, including the creation of firebreaks, have led to significant erosion along the fence line. Remediation of this erosion alone may cost up to $110,000.

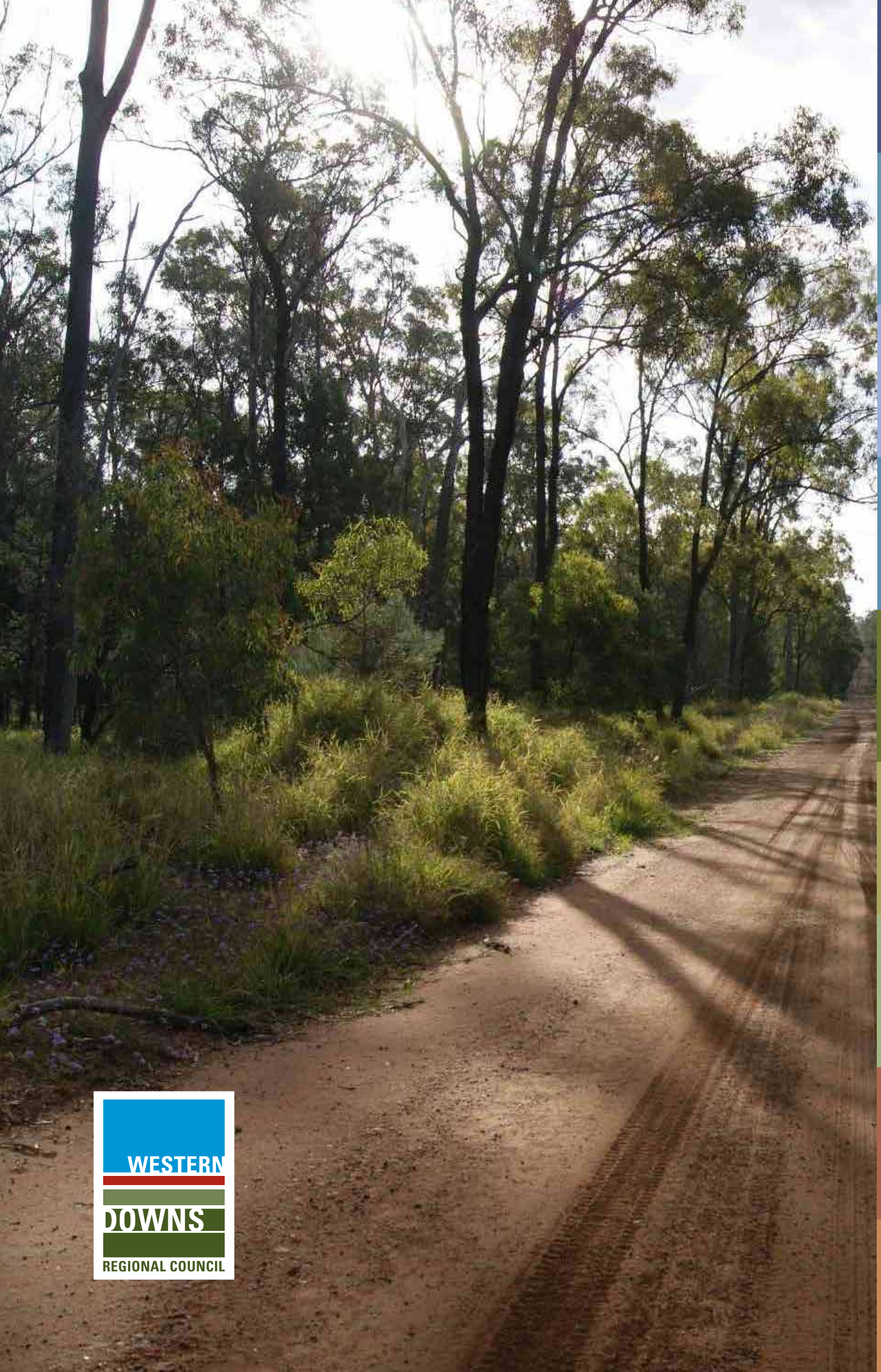
Given the lack of demonstrable pest management benefit and the escalating maintenance costs, Council must question the appropriateness of continued public investment in these fences.

Accordingly, WDRC advocates for the transition of the WDBF and Check Fences to privately maintained infrastructure. These fences should become conventional perimeter fences, maintained at the discretion and expense of adjacent landholders. Should Council no longer be required to contribute financially—via the annual precept or maintenance budgets—those funds will be redirected to targeted, on-ground pest management initiatives. Council will work collaboratively with landholders and pest management syndicates to implement programs aimed at reducing wild dog populations across the region.



Conclusion

Protecting our land from pests, diseases, and invasive species is a shared responsibility. This Biosecurity Plan shows how Western Downs Regional Council is working with the community to manage risks, respond early, and support practical solutions that make a real difference. While much of the work continues as usual, we're also embracing new ideas, technologies, and partnerships to stay one step ahead. Together, we're helping to keep the Western Downs clean, productive, and ready for the future.



WESTERN DOWNS REGIONAL COUNCIL