

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
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26 August 2022

Dear Committee,

**RE: Submission on Adequacy of Australia's biosecurity measures and response preparedness**

The Australian Land Conservation Alliance (ALCA) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee inquiry on *Adequacy of Australia's biosecurity measures and response preparedness, in particular with respect to foot-and-mouth disease*.

Please note that ALCA is happy for this submission to be published in full.

### About the Australian Land Conservation Alliance

The Australian Land Conservation Alliance is the peak national body representing organisations that work to conserve, manage and restore nature on privately managed land. We represent our members and supporters to grow the impact, capacity and influence of private land conservation to achieve a healthy and resilient Australia. Our eleven members are:

- Australian Wildlife Conservancy
- Biodiversity Conservation Trust NSW
- Bush Heritage Australia
- Greening Australia
- Landcare Australia
- Nature Foundation
- Queensland Trust for Nature
- South Endeavour Trust
- Tasmanian Land Conservancy
- The Nature Conservancy Australia
- Trust for Nature (Victoria)

ALCA land conservation efforts stretch across over 3 million square kilometres with more than 3,000 landholders. We have over 50,000 supporters and our combined annual turnover exceeds \$200 million. Together ALCA and its members address some of the most pressing conservation issues across the country, including tackling invasive species and managing national environmental biosecurity threats, restoring endangered ecosystems, building the protected area estate, expanding private conservation finance and funding and using nature-based solutions to tackle climate change.

Through their active land management, ALCA member organisations are deeply embedded in rural communities and economies, providing jobs, securing significant regional investment, and safeguarding remaining native habitat, with its many positive spillover effects for community, wellbeing, and food security. We seek to demonstrate the role and value of private land conservation as a cornerstone of the Australian economy.

Some ALCA members are statutory entities; the views expressed in this submission do not necessarily represent the views of the Government administering those statutory entities.

## Summary

Tackling invasive species and managing national environmental biosecurity threats is integral to the efforts of ALCA's member organisations to conserve our Australian biodiversity and is undertaken either through the management of conservation properties directly owned by members, or in partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, farmers, pastoralists, and other landholders.

As highlighted in submissions to the Commonwealth's initial consultation on Australia's National Biosecurity Strategy<sup>1</sup> and on its subsequent draft Strategy<sup>2</sup>, ALCA stresses the importance of elevating environmental considerations in Australia's approach, but also to recognise the considerable role that the private land conservation plays in managing environmental biosecurity threats, including the significant resources that it deploys.

**There is a valuable opportunity to leverage the private land conservation sector to help implement and deliver Australia's biosecurity measures and response preparedness.**

Further, the significant disparity between Government funding dedicated to environmental biosecurity compared to the funding dedicated to agricultural and trade-related biosecurity should be addressed. The establishment of a Chief Environment Biosecurity Officer and Environmental Biosecurity Fund are positive steps in the right direction.

**However, environmental biosecurity still requires substantial additional resourcing to effectively address Australia's considerable environmental biosecurity concerns.**

## Recommendations

### *Elevating the importance of the environment*

1. Australia's biosecurity measures should reflect the deep, inextricable, and interdependent interconnection between managing biosecurity threats to safeguard our Australian environment and the management of biosecurity threats to safeguard our communities and economy. **Crucially, communities and the economy cannot be protected without protecting our environment.**
2. **Australia's approach to biosecurity needs to consider the entire length of the invasion curve** – whilst prevention is clearly the best approach for emerging threats, there must be approaches developed for eradication, containment and long-term management of pests, diseases, and weeds.
3. Metrics that measure the effectiveness of environmental biosecurity management should be proactively developed and tracked.
4. ALCA recognises that a proportion of the Federal Government biosecurity effort is generally applicable to all sectors, especially where there are shared objectives irrespective of land use and tenure. However, there is still a disparity between the funding dedicated to environmental biosecurity compared to the funding dedicated to agricultural and trade-related biosecurity. The establishment of a Chief Environment Biosecurity Officer and Environmental Biosecurity Fund are positive steps in the right direction but require substantial additional resourcing.
5. To improve its efficacy, Australia's approach to biosecurity needs to embed the coordination of key community stakeholders, including representatives from the private land conservation sector.

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<sup>1</sup> See: <https://alca.org.au/alca-submission-to-the-initial-consultation-for-the-national-biosecurity-strategy/>

<sup>2</sup> See: <https://alca.org.au/alca-submission-on-the-draft-national-biosecurity-strategy/>

*Opportunities to leverage private land conservation organisations*

6. Recognising that private land conservation organisations and the landholders with which they engage are critical to national biosecurity outcomes, direct Government support for their ongoing biosecurity management activities should be expanded.
7. In building the capacity of Australia's biosecurity response preparedness, Australia has a unique opportunity that private land conservation organisations provide as an avenue of community engagement, with ALCA members being able to reach many thousands of landholders across over 3 million square kilometres of the Australian landmass. However, these organisations would require support to facilitate community engagement on biosecurity issues.

Thank you again for the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's inquiry on *Adequacy of Australia's biosecurity measures and response preparedness*.

**Australian Land Conservation Alliance**