Strengthening Tasmania's Biosecurity

Andrea Dawkins MP | Greens' Environment spokesperson

Being an island state puts Tasmania in a unique position to have world class biosecurity. Investing now can protect our natural environment, agricultural sector and brand.

In recent years Tasmania has experienced threat after serious threat to our biosecurity.

Climate change, fruit fly incursions, Blueberry Rust and Pacific Oyster Mortality Syndrome are just some examples of threats to our pristine, clean green brand.

This has happened on the Liberals' watch after funding cuts to Biosecurity Tasmania.

These dangers illustrate just how critical biosecurity is for Tasmania, not only to uphold the 'clean and green' image Tasmania trades on but to secure supply chains for producers and food security for Tasmanians as we move further into climate disruption.

Without political will and significant investment we will continue to be on the back foot, reacting to incursions, rather than protecting our island from disease and invasive species.

For every dollar we invest now, the benefits for current and future generations are incalculable.

THE GREENS WILL

- Invest in biosecurity research.
- Invest in frontline biosecurity services, detector dog teams, and education programs.
- Introduce a comprehensive biosecurity bill.

BIOSECURITY RISK MANAGEMENT

Climate change has ongoing and significant impacts on biosecurity. It is critical that we remain up to date on the impacts this will have on Tasmania's biosecurity.

Other risks include growing exports, increasing visitation, and potential international visitation.

The Greens will provide $500,000 in recurrent funding for Biosecurity Tasmania to invest in its research and policy capacity. This will include the immediate production of a public report on current and future biosecurity risks, to be updated every 2 years.

The report will examine required responses, including infrastructure adequacy and staffing requirements.

BIOSECURITY FRONTLINE SERVICES

Biosecurity has three pillars, pre-border, at the border, and post border. We will invest in all three threat entry risk points.

There has been industrial action due to the enormous overtime burden on Biosecurity staff, compounding the significant responsibility which lies with the department to keep the island free of invasive species.

With increased visitation to the island comes increased risk and the department must be staffed accordingly if we are to improve biosecurity outcomes.

Authorised by Andrea Dawkins MP, Parliament House, Hobart.

We will provide an additional $2 million for frontline biosecurity services including 20 biosecurity officers, and equipment.

It is also important to invest in our State's entry sites, including airports and ports. Increased cruise ship visitation and the potential for direct international flights makes the need to invest in border security all the more pressing. We will invest in an additional three detector dog teams to ensure a stronger presence at our ports and airports.

Finally, perhaps the most important component of biosecurity is education. Education is vital for pre-border prevention and post-border incursion reporting. A strong education program means every resident and visitor to Tasmania is potentially a biosecurity asset.

Programs to alert people to risks of biosecurity breaches at our borders, and how to identify and respond to biosecurity outbreaks are an essential part of biosecurity management. We will provide biosecurity with $750,000 per annum in funding for additional education programs and materials.

BIOSECURITY BILL

One of the pieces of legislation the Hodgman government failed to bring to the house before parliament was prorogued was the Biosecurity Bill.

Unfortunately, there were many reasons that this Bill should have been given priority. Among those reasons were Pacific Oyster Mortality Syndrome, Blueberry Rust, Queensland Fruit Fly and numerous biosecurity breaks.

Pacific Oyster Mortality Syndrome crippled the oyster industry when a marine heatwave warmed waters on the East Coast to 18 degrees Celsius. Whilst research is underway to breed POMS resistant oysters or to lower oyster temperatures during crucial phases, this outbreak signalled that climate disruption is affecting Tasmania marine farming with serious economic and social consequences.

Blueberry Rust has thrown a pall over the Blueberry Industry in Tasmania, with small producers believing that the government threw them under a bus in favour of a big producer. The industry has been denied the opportunity to eradicate Blueberry Rust and instead relegated to a management protocol, at the expense of the small to medium producer.

Queensland Fruit Fly is an invasive incursion we have built barriers and systems around to ensure protection. This summer those systems failed and fruit fly was detected on Flinders Island and on mainland Tasmania.

We also experienced breaks in the biosecurity barrier with Myrtle Rust, Norwegian Salmon, Victorian Gecko, a Giant Panda Snail, and German cockroaches.

The Greens will instruct the Department of Environment to review Tasmania's biosecurity laws to ensure adequate protection exists for the marine environment and all public waterway users. Biosecurity laws will consider the impact of introduced aquatic pests and diseases on biodiversity, health, amenity and economic stability.

INITIATIVE COST

Initiative Investment ($m)	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year
Research	0.50	0.51	0.52	0.53
Biosecurity staff	2.00	2.04	2.08	2.12
Detector Dog Teams	0.52	0.53	0.54	0.55
Education funding	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75
Total	**3.77**	**3.83**	**3.89**	**3.95**