

Biosecurity protection for the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area



Photo from Sea Swift

The Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area is a very special part of Queensland—and we need your help to keep it that way.

Why is this important?

In February 2021, the Queensland Government introduced stricter controls to reduce the risk of movement of pests and weeds from the mainland and between islands.

With the increase in movement of people and freight in the Torres Strait region, there is also an increased risk of invasive ants, toads, rats and weeds being introduced to island communities. These are usually 'stowaways' in things like cars, pot plants, soil or building materials.

What has changed?

Biosecurity Queensland has introduced a program under the *Biosecurity Act 2014* called the Prevention and Control Program for High Priority Invasive Plants and Animals in the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area.

This program targets a set of invasive pests and weeds which are found in parts of Queensland but have not spread to the Torres Strait region. It also covers the cane toad which is found in Cape York and a few islands but are absent from the rest of the Torres Strait.

Residents of the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area, together with contractors temporarily working there, visitors, and people sending freight to this area all have a General Biosecurity Obligation (GBO) under the Biosecurity Act 2014 to make a concerted effort to ensure pest and weed spread is minimised.

What do you need to do?

Examples of the changes you need to make include:

- Thoroughly cleaning all vehicles, machinery and equipment before delivery to sea and air freight companies on the mainland, or when moving between islands.
- Check everything you are freighting to ensure there are no stowaways. This may include rats, mice, toads, insects

(ants, spiders, termites, bugs), geckoes and weed seed.

- Ensure all your clothes, footwear and other personal gear is weed seed and soil free. Clean your soles and laces, Velcro, socks, pockets and other locations which may have soil or weed seed attached.
- Purchase plants from reputable nurseries which have pest and disease free potting mix and plants.
- If moving plants between islands, make sure there are no pests or diseases on the leaves, and soak the pots in insecticidal soap and water for one hour to treat ants and other insects in the soil.
- If you are moving to the Torres Strait from a different part of Queensland (or from interstate), please find someone to leave your plants with before you move. This will reduce the risk of unintentionally spreading pests and diseases.

Contractors working in the region also need to be biosecurity aware, as they may be shipping large quantities of equipment and building material to the Torres Strait. You should:

- Clean all utes and building equipment before shipping.
- Check all materials are clean and pest or weed free, including raw materials such as sand and mulch.
- Ensure all heavy equipment is cleaned thoroughly before shipping.
- Check timber products and pallets for insects such as termites or borers. Replace this timber before shipping.



Biosecurity Declaration

Once you have removed all biosecurity risks from your freight items, you will need to fill in a Biosecurity Declaration as evidence that you are meeting your General Biosecurity Obligation.

This Declaration will need to be provided to the freight company when delivering high risk freight. This form is available from freight companies, Island Councils and Biosecurity Queensland.

Who will be checking?

Biosecurity Queensland (BQ) inspectors will be checking sea freight before it leaves Cairns to determine whether these requirements are being followed.

To avoid delays in shipping freight, please ensure you follow these new procedures.



More information

For more information about the program contact Biosecurity Queensland.

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Remember—Biosecurity is everyone's business.