

Compliance Strategy

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Date to be reviewed	All strategies are to be reviewed within 6 months of the Ministerial appointment of a new Board. The CEO and compliance officers are to annually review the strategy and report to the Board on any proposed amendments. Strategies may be reviewed at any time, on a needs basis.
Last reviewed	
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Signature (Chair)	

Table of Contents

- 1. Introduction 1
- 2. Compliance Vision..... 2
- 3. Purpose 2
- 4. Our Compliance Approach..... 2
- 5. Compliance Principles 5
- 6. How we manage and support compliance 5
- 7. Our compliance priorities 6
- 8. Monitoring, reporting and evaluating compliance 6

1. Introduction

The Darling Downs-Moreton Rabbit Board (the DDMRB) is an Invasive Animal Board established under the *Biosecurity Act 2014* (the Act). The DDMRB is a statutory body of the Queensland Government and is responsible for taking reasonable steps to ensure the DDMRB area (Figure 1), which includes Ipswich City, Toowoomba Regional, Lockyer Valley Regional, Scenic Rim Regional, Southern Downs Regional, City of Gold Coast, Logan City, and Western Downs Regional Council areas, is free from the impacts of rabbits. The Board meets its responsibilities through the maintenance and upgrade of the 555 km rabbit barrier fence, and the provision of compliance activities. The compliance activities seek to prevent the spread of rabbits through education and awareness raising as well as through the provision of expertise and technical information to assist landholders to control rabbits on their land.

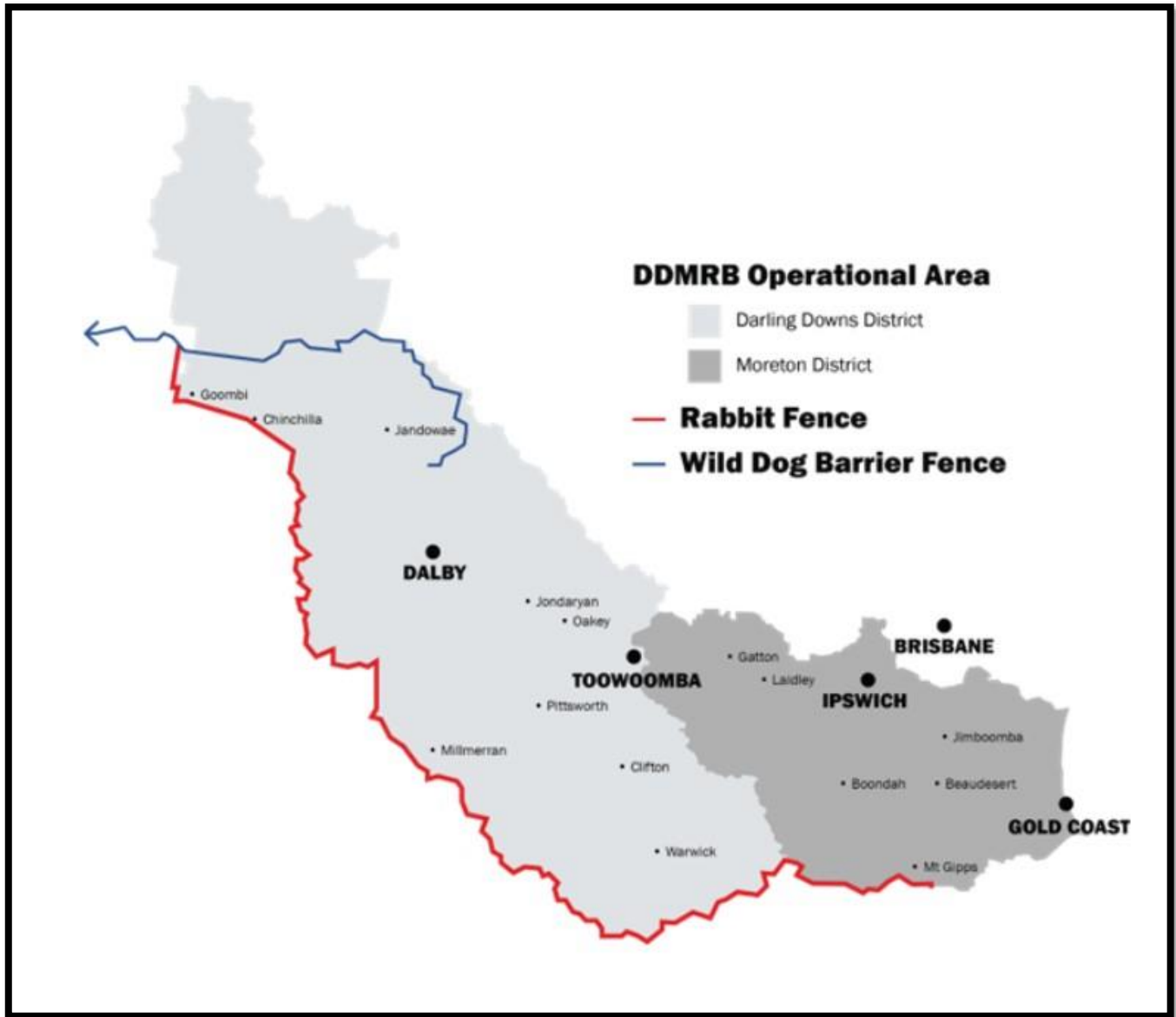


Figure 1: DDMRB operational area.

European Rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) are restricted animals (Categories 3, 4, 5 and 6) under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*.

The Act, and the Biosecurity Regulation 2016 (the Regulation), provides powers for the management of declared pests in Queensland. Specific provisions include powers for the DDMRB to maintain the rabbit fence, and to appoint authorised persons who in turn have the powers to inspect land, require landholders to undertake rabbit control, and to seize rabbits kept unlawfully.

2. Compliance Vision

The DDMRB compliance vision is by enabling land managers with education and expertise effective rabbit control will be achieved.

3. Purpose

This compliance strategy details how the DDMRB approaches and communicates its compliance activities. It aims to build and deliver a robust compliance approach that meets DDMRB's strategic objectives and statutory obligations while growing stakeholder and community confidence in the DDMRB.

This strategy has been developed with reference to and in alignment with:

- *Biosecurity Act 2014* and the Biosecurity Regulation 2016
- Queensland Pest Animal Strategy
- Queensland Rabbit Control Strategy
- National Threat Abatement Plan for Rabbits
- DDMRB Strategic Plan 2021-2025

This strategy has a four year duration and applies from 2023 to 2027, with reviews conducted annually or as required.

4. Our Compliance Approach

Our compliance approach is informed, strategic and consistent across the DDMRB operational area so that our stakeholders and their communities can have confidence in what we do.

Delivering education and guidance, promoting behaviour change and obtaining compliance is the main purpose of our approach.

We address compliance across a continuum from educating and guiding, through to enforcement. We aim to engage land managers early to help them meet their biosecurity obligations as set out in legislation.

Our primary aim is to promote voluntary compliance through a range of educational activities aimed at building the capacity and capability of land managers, including:

- providing site-specific information, resources and tools that clearly articulate obligations and empower action;
- engaging with land managers, stakeholders and their communities to promote awareness of the need for rabbit control, deliver a consistent message on the importance of finding and removing breeding places and harbour, and build their capacity through site visits, meetings and field days;
- engaging with the community to promote awareness of the restrictions regarding the keeping of rabbits
- promoting and reinforcing the benefits of voluntary compliance and the potential consequences of non-compliance; and,
- where voluntary compliance is not achieved, we take a risk-based approach to decide how best to respond.

Our compliance approach includes five strategies that allow us to be consistent in our regulatory activities: inform, educate, enable, monitor and enforce (see figure 2 below).

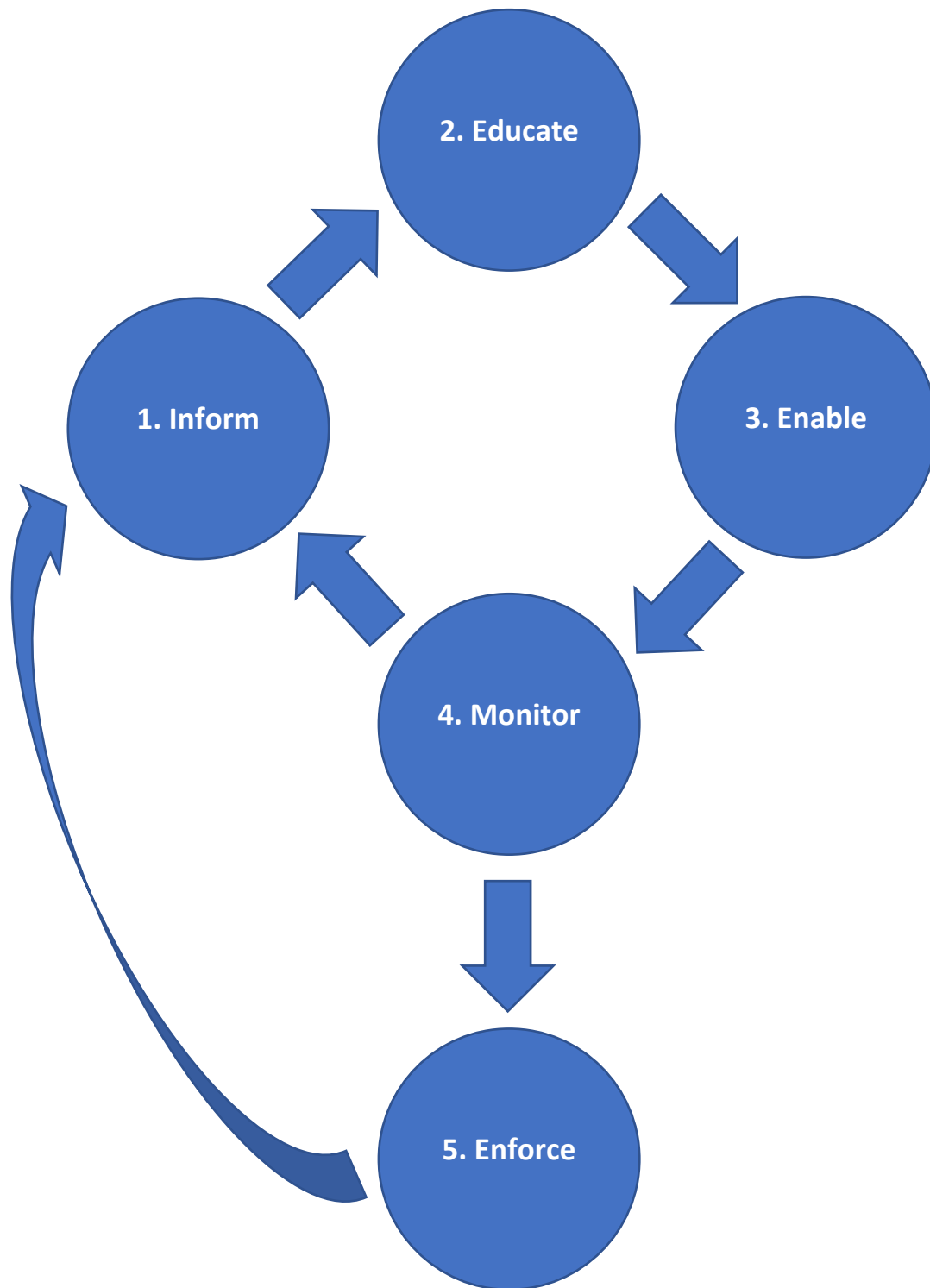


Figure 2: The five strategies employed during compliance activities and their relationships.

We inform, educate, and enable land managers and monitor their progress towards outcomes on an ongoing basis. When these strategies fail to achieve voluntary compliance then enforcement options or interventions are considered.

The table below shows our risk-based approach to enforcement and the things we consider when deciding the best way to respond to instances of non-compliance. We won't hesitate to take strong compliance action where a high-risk non-compliance occurs.



Inform / Educate / Enable	Educate / Enable/ Enforce	Enable/Enforce	Enforce
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rabbits posing a minimal biosecurity risk to neighbours, infrastructure, the environment or broader community ▪ Actions unintentional ▪ Land manager wants to comply ▪ Offer advice and provide options on how to eradicate rabbits/harbour from property ▪ May require formal advice letter ▪ No further compliance action required in most instances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rabbits posing a minor biosecurity risk to neighbours, infrastructure, the environment or broader community ▪ Actions unintentional ▪ Land manager is generally compliant and rectifies issues within requested timeframes ▪ Provide advice and options along with a reasonable timeframe to respond and rectify ▪ Response may include a formal advice letter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rabbits posing a major biosecurity risk to neighbours, infrastructure, the environment or broader community ▪ Land manager has a history of minor non-compliance ▪ Land manager demonstrates a lack of willingness to comply ▪ Change in behaviour required ▪ Provide advice and options along with a reasonable timeframe to rectify ▪ Response likely to include a formal advice and/or Biosecurity Order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rabbits having a major impact on neighbours, infrastructure, the environment and/or broader community ▪ Person keeping rabbit(s) without a permit* ▪ Seriousness of the biosecurity risk may require going straight to enforcement regardless of compliance history ▪ Land managers has an ongoing history of non-compliance ▪ Land manager is wilfully non-compliant ▪ Response likely to use Biosecurity Orders, Penalty Infringement Notices and/or rectification at land managers expense

* The keeping of rabbits without a permit is an offence and as such requires an immediate compliance response to reduce the risk of the animals being relocated or released in to the wild. If a seized rabbit is healthy, it is typically rehomed interstate via the Queensland Animal Welfare League.

Expanding on our compliance strategies:

1. Inform

- communicate our compliance approach, including our priorities and how we monitor and assess compliance
- educate and support land managers and the community to help them understand their obligations and to support compliance, taking a 'no surprises' approach
- help land managers and the community understand the consequences of non-compliance and the range of compliance tools that the DDMRB can employ

2. Educate

- Use a range of contemporary tools to educate land managers and the community on rabbit ecology and impacts, strategies to prevent rabbits establishing, and awareness of the restrictions on keeping rabbits
- Provide site-specific, best practice advice, aimed at achieving the most efficient level of control

3. Enable

- communicate clearly with land managers and the community about what they need to do and build relationships with them
- encourage compliance and use a range of tools to support land managers and the community to comply
- engage with our key stakeholders on compliance and look for avenues for cooperation and support
- have a strong presence, including staff participating in workshops, meetings and field days
- use technology to simplify our reporting and communicate the outcomes to the community

4. Monitor

- use technology to monitor, review and report on compliance
- use the outcomes from our monitoring to inform our compliance planning, priorities and risks
- maintain awareness of up-to-date compliance methods and opportunities to continually improve our compliance approach

5. Enforce

- use a suite of compliance tools and interventions to respond to non-compliance
- respond to issues and any alleged non-compliance as they arise
- use a proactive, outcomes-focused, targeted, risk-based approach for our compliance activities
- consider the nature, impact, severity, circumstance and culpability of the non-compliance when deciding how we respond

5. Compliance Principles

We use the following principles to guide our compliance approach.

1. **consistent and fair:** we have a consistent and fair approach to how we achieve compliance
2. **outcomes and risk-based:** we use a proactive, outcomes-focused, targeted, risk-based approach for our compliance activities
3. **supportive:** we encourage land managers and the community to do the right thing and empower staff to make decisions within our compliance framework
4. **adaptive:** we monitor our progress and adjust our actions as needed
5. **accountable and transparent:** we do what we say we are going to do, are transparent in our decision making and talk openly about priorities, activities and the results of our work
6. **safe and well:** we support the safety and wellbeing of our staff, land managers and the community
7. **responsive:** we are timely in how we communicate about compliance and in responding to non-compliance
8. **efficient:** we provide the full suite of compliance services including a fee for service option, to provide a one-stop shop for landholders, to make our operations as efficient as possible, and provide value for money to our funding partners

6. How we manage and support compliance

The DDMRB aims for compliance activities to be outcomes-based and continually works to ensure the outcomes from compliance activities meet our statutory obligations and the expectations of our stakeholders and broader community. These outcomes inform all elements of our compliance planning process and are what we aim to achieve through our compliance activities.

We aim to remove barriers to compliance for land managers and our stakeholders by providing education and the option for efficient, cost effective, best practice rabbit control on a fee for service basis.

It is critical that our staff have the capability to operate effectively to support the DDMRB's role of effectively managing rabbits in the Board's operational area. We continually enhance our skills and knowledge and have mechanisms in place to build the capacity of our staff.

7. Our compliance priorities

The DDMRB receives reports of rabbit activity from a variety of sources including members of the public, our stakeholders, government agencies and by undertaking landscape scale surveys. We take a risk-based approach to plan where to focus our compliance efforts within the Board's operational area so that we address areas of greatest risk and ensure our responses to non-compliance are targeted and proportionate.

To do that, we consider a range of factors including, severity of impact, proximity to susceptible industries or sensitive environmental areas, habitat suitability and previously acquired data on rabbit activity in the area. The priorities and risk areas will vary across the DDMRB operational area. This approach ensures that the DDMRB is transparent in how it allocates resources to best meet its statutory obligations and stakeholder expectations.

8. Monitoring, reporting and evaluating compliance

We take a proactive approach to how we monitor compliance so that we can quickly respond to risks and impacts.

We use a range of methods to monitor compliance including contact with the community and our stakeholders, a variety of data sources, analysis of satellite imagery, and property inspections. This approach means we know what is happening and can take appropriate action to respond, as needed.

We ensure that we consistently communicate and report our compliance activities and outcomes to our local government partners and other stakeholders. Consistent reporting allows us to track and measure our performance. We use the information gained to establish compliance levels, identify trends, understand areas of risk, and to continually improve.