

6 July 2008

Mr Roger Beale AO
Chairman, Quarantine and Biosecurity Review
c/- Quarantine and Biosecurity Review Secretariat
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
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Dear Mr Beale

RE: PROPOSAL FOR A BIOSECURITY COUNCIL

At the Animal Health Australia Industry Forum in Melbourne on 29 May 2008, members of your Review Panel (David Trebeck, Jeff Fairbrother and Andrew Inglis) heard a presentation on a proposal for a Biosecurity Council. This same presentation was made to the Cattle Council of Australia on 3 June 2008; the Council adopted the proposal as its policy.

I have attached the model for your Panel's formal consideration.

Those present in Melbourne will note slight changes to the model presented; these have been made in response to the valuable discussion on the day and deliberations by Cattle Council during its meeting.

Additional to the attached schematic presentation, I add the following thoughts, some of which are in response to questions asked by David Trebeck in Melbourne.

1. Chairmanship of the Council

The Council Chairman must be strong and independent. Clearly the Minister is inappropriate as the Chairman (accusations of political interference). The DAFF Secretary is also inappropriate but for a different reason: the Council should have the role of *advising the Secretary* who, after all, must make the final decision along non-political lines; having him/her as the Chair would compromise this procedure.

Who appoints the independent Chair is a matter for thought. A Ministerial appointment would be easiest but again may attract accusations of political interference; one suggestion is that a panel from the membership be established to shortlist applicants, with the total membership selecting the Chair from that list.

2. Chairmanship/Directorship of the Executive Group

The Executive Group is intended as the coupling between the Council and the Working Groups. The Chairman, or perhaps 'Director', needs a sound understanding of process and 'who's who in the zoo'. He/she will need to 'direct the traffic' and maintain an at-times intense workload and reporting responsibility. This could easily be a full-time job.

It seems appropriate for the Council to appoint the Director and for this person to be directly responsible to the Council Chairman.

3. Industry Membership

On the basis of our discussions with a number of AHA Forum members, industry membership must be of the highest level. For agriculture, this responsibility should rest with NFF through which all other representative bodies, whether members of NFF or not, should direct their input. (I'm unsure how Aquaculture and Cargo are structured as industries, but their representation should be analogous.)

This is going to prove a difficult concept to sell; in doing so, we must keep in mind the ultimate goal of developing a high level of across-jurisdictional understanding while at the same time maintaining manageability. Clearly if every sector with an issue sat around the table meetings would need to be held in the Great Hall of Parliament House!

Perhaps timeslots in the agenda could be made for one-off individual industry representation if a matter is topical and a high priority.

4. Potential Overseas Concerns and/or Local Disquiet

David Trebeck raised these legitimate issues during the session with the Forum. I believe preparing for such eventualities is wise and that successful strategies can be devised; Cattle Council would like to discuss these with you if considered of benefit. If widespread and strong in-principle support for this model eventuates, I am sure most negativity can be addressed in a proactive way, built mainly on our positive experiences with, and international views of, SAFEMEAT and AHA that have now been running for eight and 10 years respectively.

5. Legal Entity or Not

As indicated at the Forum in Melbourne, design of the proposed Biosecurity Council model reflects the success of the SAFEMEAT Partnership and AHA Ltd as bodies established to deliver real cross-sectoral and cross-jurisdictional understanding of challenges and ownership of outcomes. This success is recognised internationally. The major difference between these two bodies, however, lies with their legal statuses: the SAFEMEAT Partnership has no legal standing, with its success built on trust and goodwill across participants; AHA Ltd, on the other hand, is governed by Corporations Law, though trust and goodwill are still vital ingredients.

It is Cattle Council's view that, should the Biosecurity Council model be adopted, the SAFEMEAT Partnership is by far the preferred model, particularly given its advisory, rather than decision-making, role.

On Cattle Council of Australia's behalf, I commend this model to you as a potential way forward in developing trust and understanding between 'players' and promoting a culture of joint responsibility for the protection of Australia's excellent biosecurity status.

I am available to discuss this matter with you, though will be out of the country until Thursday, July 10. In my absence please call Cattle Council's Executive Director, David Inall.

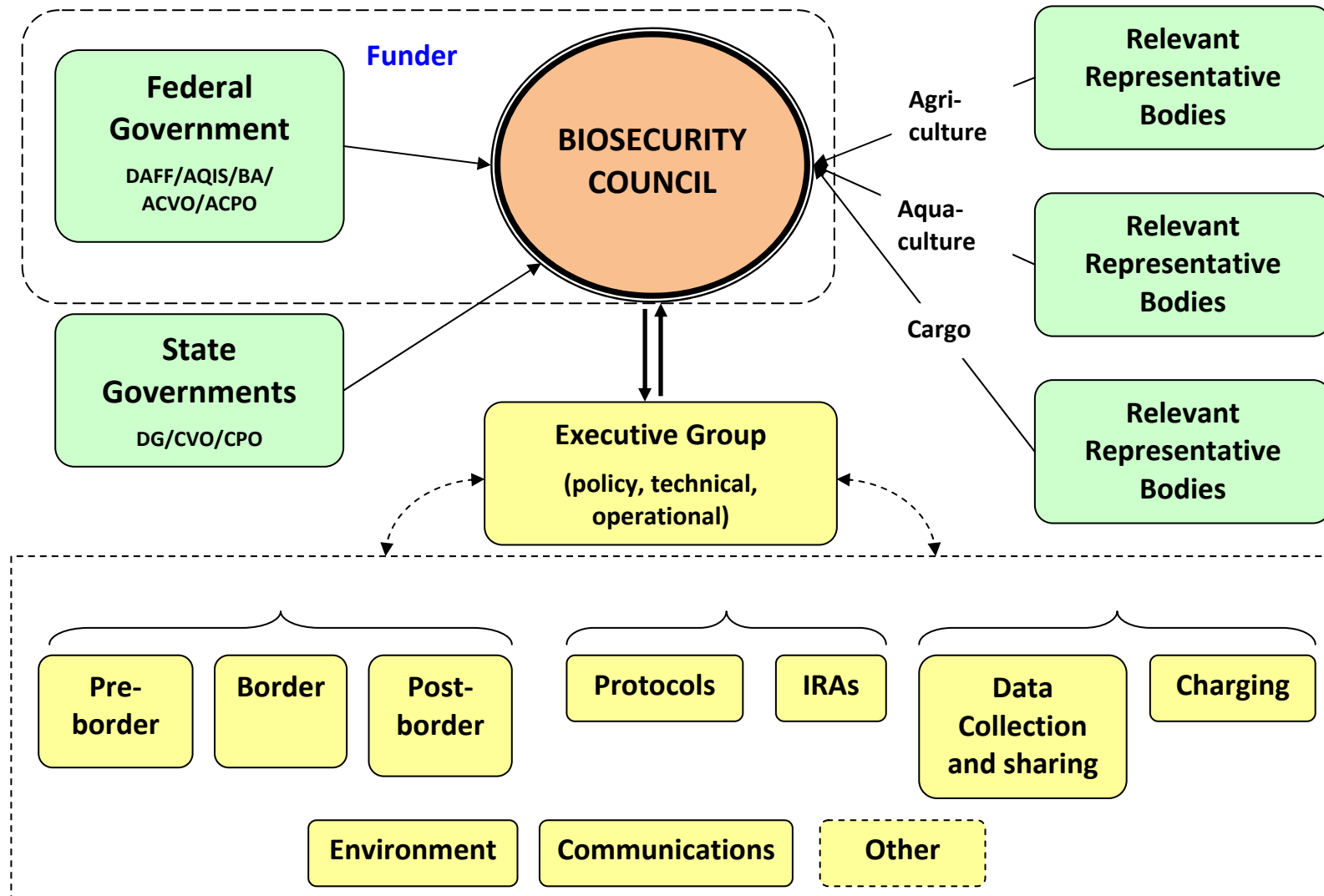
Yours sincerely



Bill Bray
President

Att.

CC Ben Fargher, CEO, National Farmers' Federation



- Addresses: funding of 'continuum' by Gov't; ownership; leadership; joint planning; communications; consultation
- Considerations: size & manageability (Council Chairman / EG Director); overseas reaction; potential antagonists; legal entity or not; proactive/reactive function, or both