

Fire Ant Program Review

City of Gold Coast

October 2024

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Vector, Urban Pest and Biosecurity Services

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2023 Review

Why did we need a review?

- Independent perspective, improvement, funding.
- Fire ant team informed review
- Justification for building capacity

Review of Fire Ant Eradication on the Gold Coast

Dr Ron Glanville

November 2023

14 Recommendations

List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1. The suggested aims for the Council of the City of Gold Coast in relation to RIFA are:

1. To support the national fire ant eradication program through suppression of fire ant infestations within the Gold Coast Council area prior to eradication.
2. To maintain social amenity within the Gold Coast through active surveillance and control of fire ant infestations in public spaces.
3. Support the Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce (FAST) in its efforts to encourage reporting and treatment of infestations on privately owned land.
4. Support the NFAEP more generally as it progresses fire ant eradication on the Gold Coast.

Recommendation 2. Council of the City of Gold Coast should work with the NFAEP and FAST to develop appropriate processes that enable better identification and risk management of new land developments or land disturbances that create RIFA risk.

Recommendation 3. Council of the City of Gold Coast should work in partnership with the NFAEP and FAST to ensure an efficient public information program to support RIFA suppression and eradication.

Recommendation 4. Council of the City of Gold Coast should resist any suggestions from the NFAEP that Council should distribute fire ant baits to households.

Recommendation 5. When planning fire ant suppression treatments on Council owned land, neighbouring landowners should be advised and also encouraged to treat their own land at the same time.

Recommendation 6. Council of the City of Gold Coast should, where possible and appropriate, take an area-based approach to suppression activities and work in partnership with FAST to achieve this aim.

1. Objectives:
 - a) general suppression
 - b) protect high value assets
 - c) support FAST re private land matters
 - d) support NFAEP
2. Development site risks
3. Comms and Marketing
4. GBO focused
5. Coordination
6. Risk assessment

14 Recommendations

Recommendation 7. Council of the City of Gold Coast should appoint an overall coordinator for RIFA activities on the Gold Coast, with a virtual team established and reporting to the coordinator along functional management lines.

Recommendation 8. Council of the City of Gold Coast should place a high priority on forming effective working relationships with NFAEP and FAST managers (as well as managers with other relevant organisations – Councils, support companies etc) and encourage the establishment of relevant information exchange processes, for example, a regular forum for operational staff.

Recommendation 9. Council of the City of Gold Coast should impress upon the NFAEP the importance of improved reporting systems, including better information sharing between the Program and Councils.

Recommendation 10. A budget submission for additional RIFA operational resources of at least six full time equivalents, plus one person to engage and assist Council owned business areas, should be made to Council as soon as possible.

Recommendation 11. Council of the City of Gold Coast should consider establishing separate operational teams focussed on suppression and protection of public amenity.

Recommendation 12. Council of the City of Gold Coast should maximise the efficient utilisation of available RIFA staff resources through tactical decision making and leveraging other Council resources.

Recommendation 13. The Council of the City of Gold Coast RIFA function should maintain close liaison with the NFAEP to ensure that the most appropriate technologies are being used for suppression and protection of assets from RIFA.

Recommendation 14. The Council of the City of Gold Coast RIFA function should consider leading the establishment of a southeast Queensland technical forum to identify and share ideas between local governments and the NFAEP / FAST.

7. Appoint Coordinator

8. Forum

9. Coordinate reporting

10. Additional staff (x6)

11. Team structure

12. Leverage other areas of Council

13. Innovation

14. Technical forum

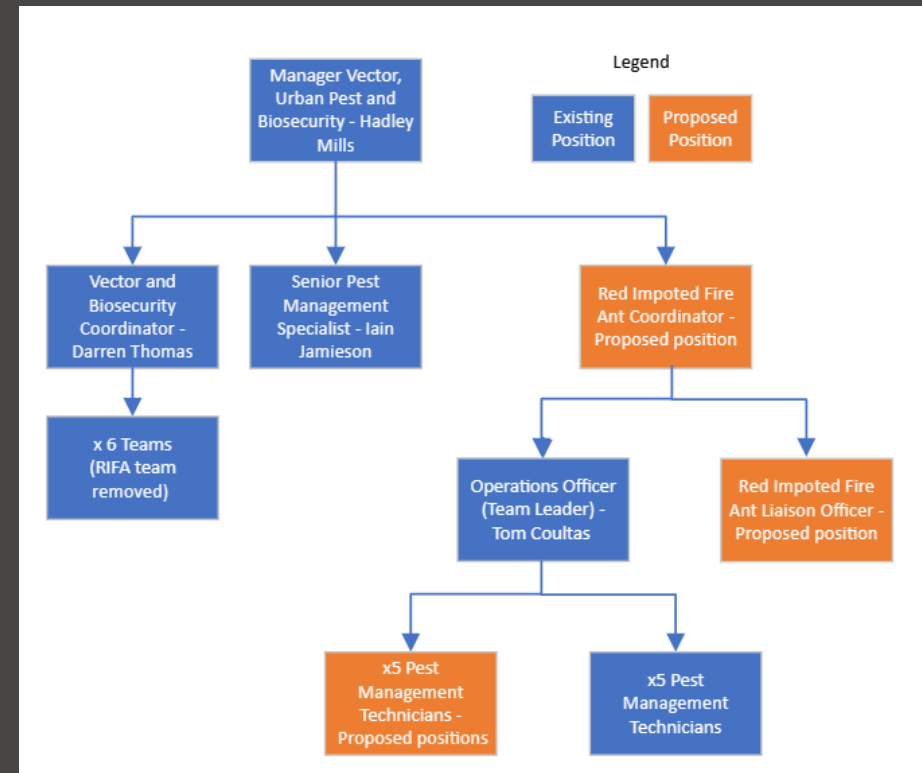
Prioritisation

- Determine top priorities from 14
- Build capacity first
- DG GBO letter + independent review + impacts focused paper = Funding
- Impacts - public health, tourism and environmental risk
- U.S figures suggest the cost to Gold Coast tourism could be \$176m p/a if fire ants become established



Building the team

- Initially - 5 fixed term PMT's and 1 supervisor
- Funding Paper referenced independent review and proposed a new fixed term structure
- Funding paper approved
- Appointed Coordinator
- Appointed Liaison Officer
- Last 4 field roles in recruitment



PMP

- Strategic document between Corporate Plan and operational plans
- Assessed progress against independent review



Engagement

Engagement, Comms and Marketing activities help maintain social licence:

- 6 engagement events in 2024 inc:
 - Monster Machinery Day
 - Mudgeeraba Show
 - Nerang Family Funanza
 - GC Botanic Gardens stall
- Internal comms include eLearning module, video, one pager
- Clarity of treatment zones →
- External comms and marketing plan

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR

FIRE ANT TEAM

Our goal is to be Fire Ant free on the GC.



FAQ

What does the City of Gold Coast Fire Ant team do?
The CoGC team support the National Fire Ant Eradication Program (NFAEP) by conducting ongoing treatment of Fire Ants on council land in the Suppression Zone. This includes parks, playgrounds and roadsides but not private property.

What if Fire Ants are on your work site, or nearby?
Report Fire Ants to the NFAEP and do not move materials that may carry Fire Ants. Fire Ant Awareness e-learning is available on ProcapLus and further training can be accessed via the NFAEP website. For further advice please contact the Fire Ant team.

Are the treatments used for Fire Ants safe?
Yes. All treatments used by the team are supplied by the NFAEP. They are safe for people, pets and the environment and have been approved by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA).

What are your obligations?
Every Queenslander has a legal obligation under the Biosecurity Act and Regulation to report Fire Ants, and not to move them.

FIRE ANT FEATURES

- vary in size from 2mm to 8mm
- Copper/brown coloured with dark abdomen
- swarm when disturbed

FIRE ANT NESTS

- have no obvious entrance holes
- often appear on the edge of paths and other infrastructure
- can be mounds or appear like loose patterns of soil



RESPONSE PLAN MAP

The Fire Ant team operate in the suppression zone on council land.



- Suppression zone
- Eradication zone
- Surveillance zone



Report fire ants
P 13 25 35
W fireants.org.au

For further advice please contact fireants@goldcoast.qld.gov.au or Fire Ant Liaison Officer Liz Friend on 0420 819 230.

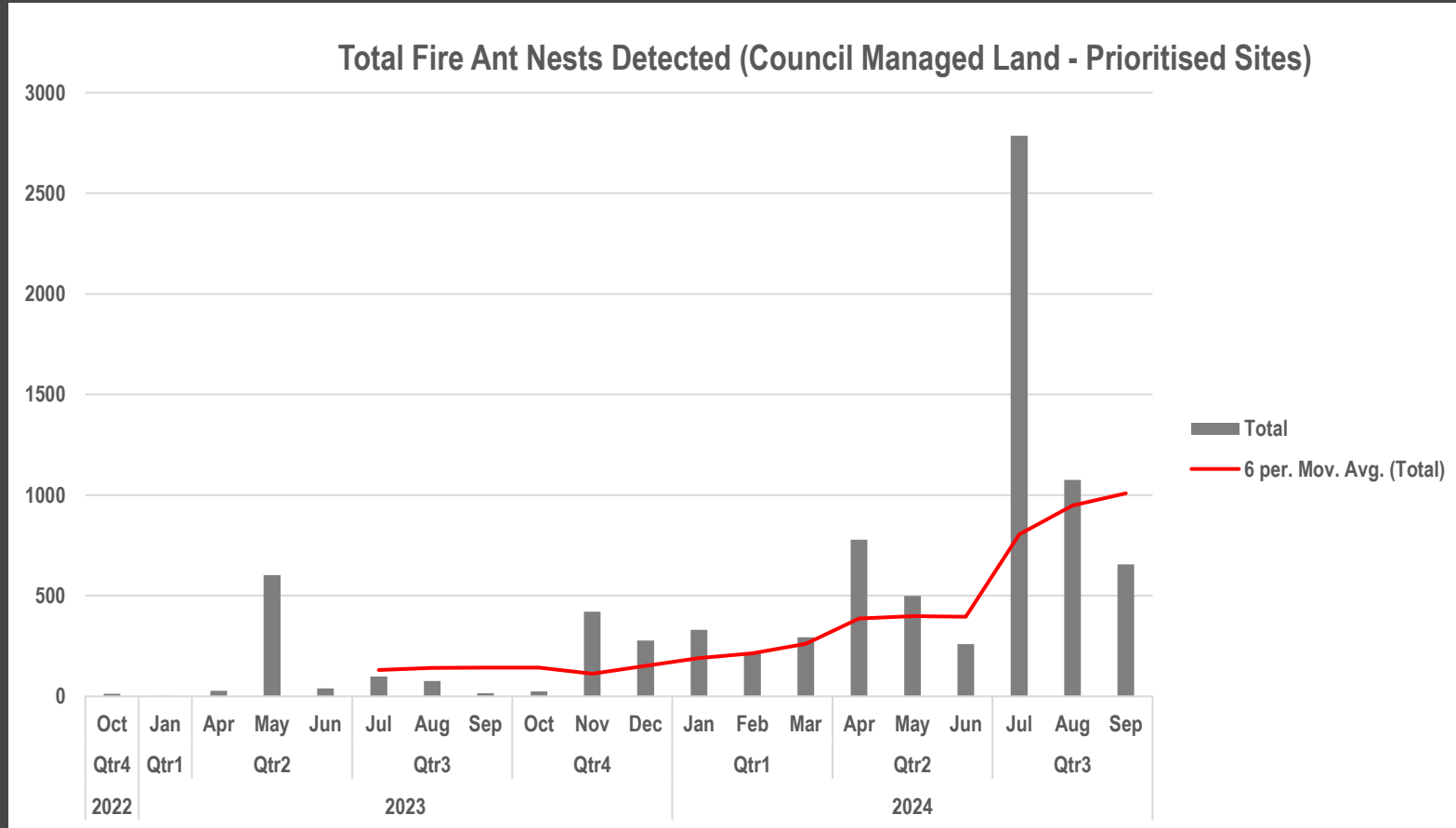
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Challenges

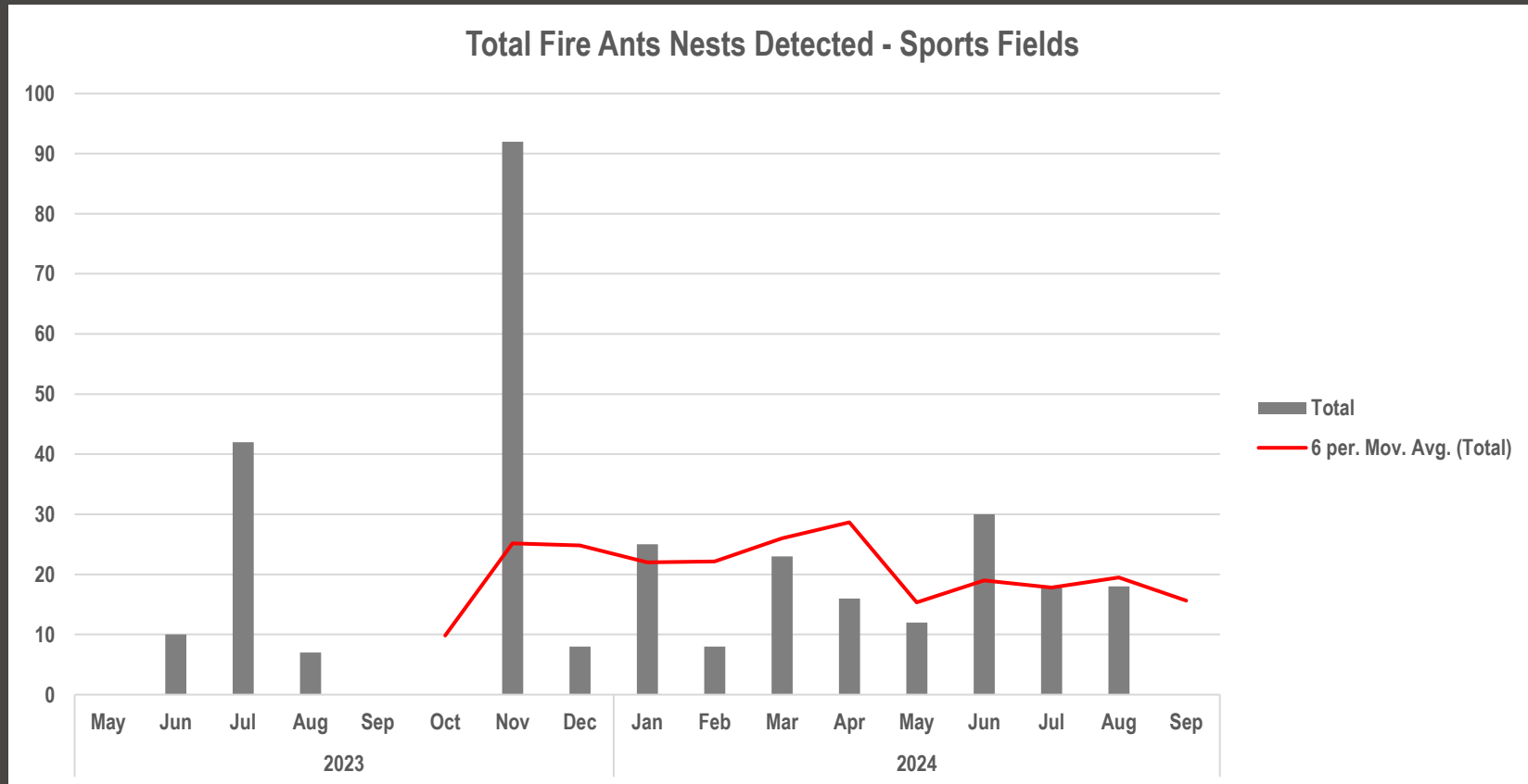
- Disinformation / misinformation.
- WHS / OVA – Safety of staff in public
- Promoting the “why” with staff
- Over commitment
- Reporting impact - telling the story.
Detections vs treatments
- Governance is important



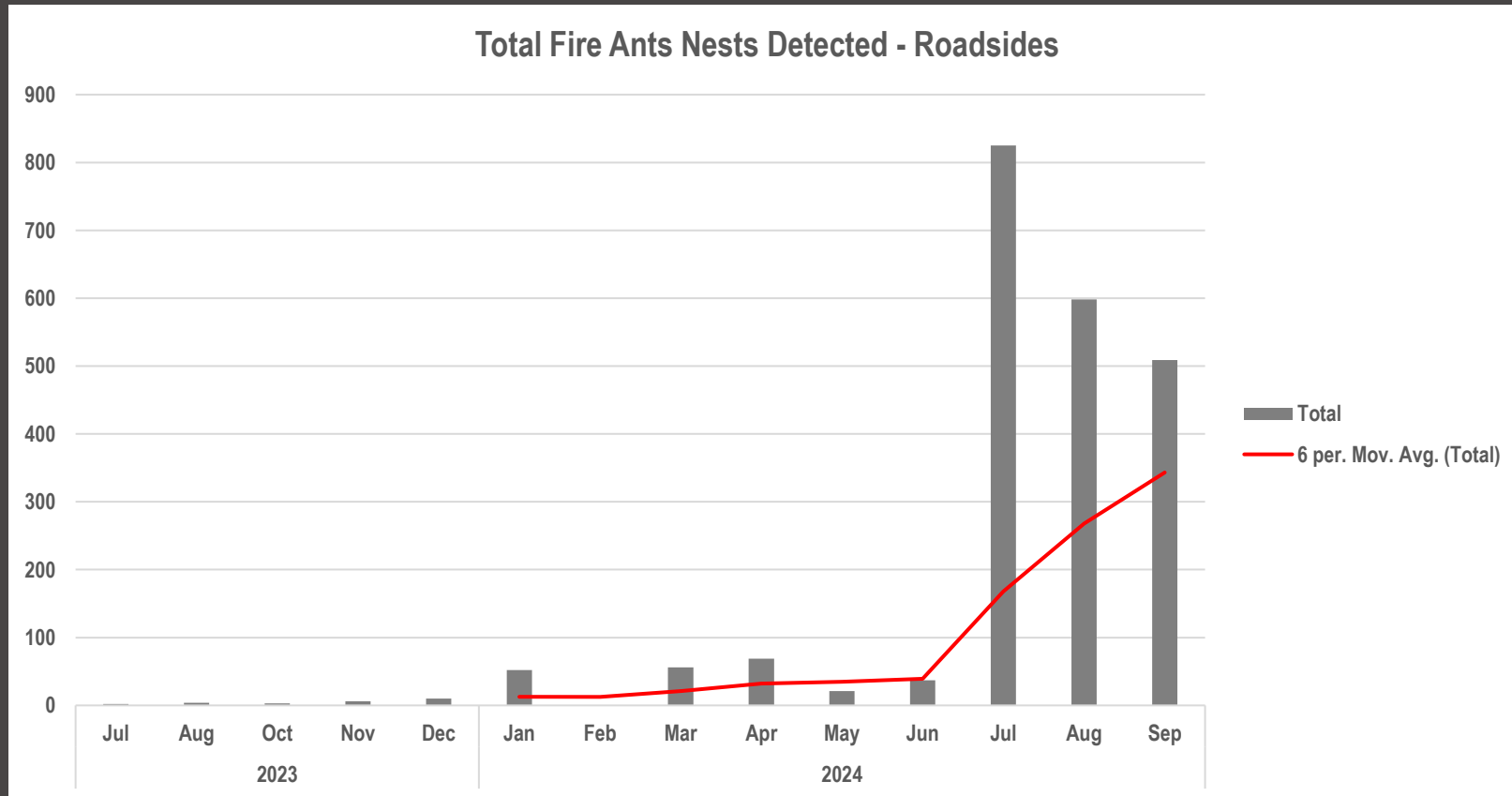
Reporting impact



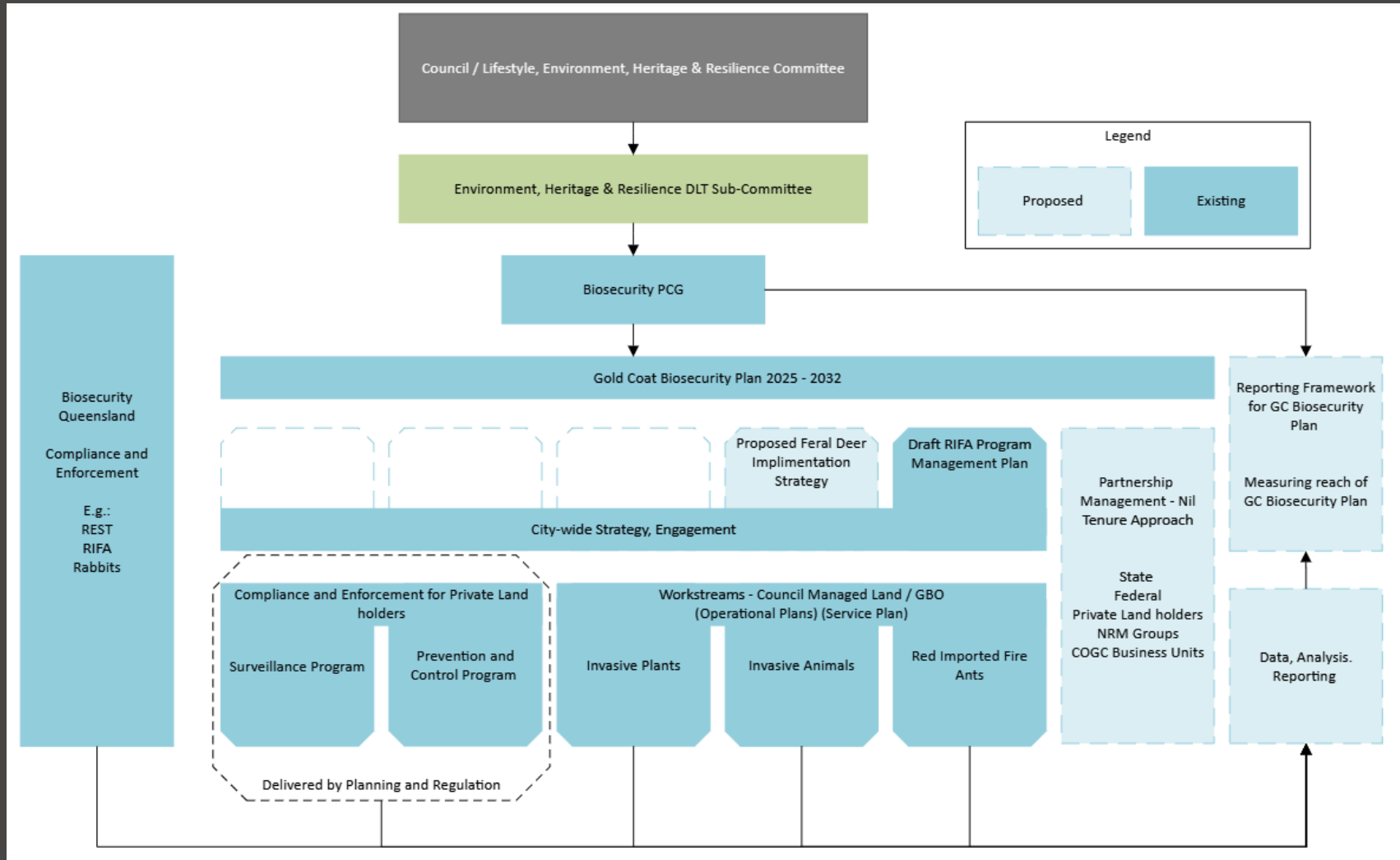
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Reporting impact



Governance



Recommendations – where are we at?

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1. Objectives = Fire Ant PMP
2. Development risk = NFAEP C&E relationship
3. Comms and marketing = Fund comms and marketing plan
4. GBO focused = Relationship
5. Coordination = Letter drops
6. Risk assessment = Risk Matrix

Recommendations

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7. Appoint Coordinator = Resourcing
8. Forum = Working groups Relationships
9. Coordinate reporting = GIS
10. Additional staff = Resourcing. Liaison officer + 6 staff
11. Team structure = Dynamic
12. Leverage other areas of Council = Clear roles
13. Innovation = Drones, verge spreaders. AI?
14. Technical forum = Future



QUESTIONS?



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