

AQIS Report to Clients



2003-2004



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service

from the Executive Director

As always, the past year provided many challenges for AQIS.

One of the most significant aspects of our work in 2003-04 was the great contribution by the Live Animal Export team to the Australian Government's \$11 million response to the Keniry review into Australia's livestock export trade.

The team made sure the Government's response was based on the best possible information and advice; the team's hard work resulted in AQIS receiving the resources it needs to take the next important steps in achieving the outcomes laid out in the Government's response.

In November 2003 we welcomed staff from the Northern Territory (NT) and Western Australia (WA) as their functions moved to the Commonwealth. A great deal of well rewarded effort went into planning for the transfer of authority, and into achieving agreement from the overwhelming majority of WA and NT staff to transfer to the Commonwealth.

Another notable milestone reached was the conclusion of AQIS' five-year involvement in East Timor, where we played an important role in establishing the new nation's quarantine service.

AQIS' growing involvement in food safety issues also took higher priority in 2003-04, in both import and export disciplines. The agency's work is central to maintaining Australia's food safety standards, to protect Australia's highly favourable animal, plant and human health status and export market access.

Our world leader status in electronic export documentation systems was bolstered during the year with the launch of the E-cert system, giving international border authorities secure Web-based access to AQIS certification data.

It's important to recognise the powerful contribution of all AQIS officers in meeting these challenges, and their skill and dedication in making AQIS the efficient, effective and well-respected organisation it is. This year several AQIS employees were recognised as individuals or as teams for their contributions, with awards of Australia Day medallions, and commendations in a variety of Australian Public Service awards. AQIS Botanist, Ms Barbara Waterhouse was awarded the Public Service Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours list.

The over-arching theme in 2003-04 was the need to keep up the momentum in ensuring our people priorities were met through development and performance management, and to ensure our employees and our stakeholders have the information and relationships they need to do their jobs and to meet the organisation's goals.

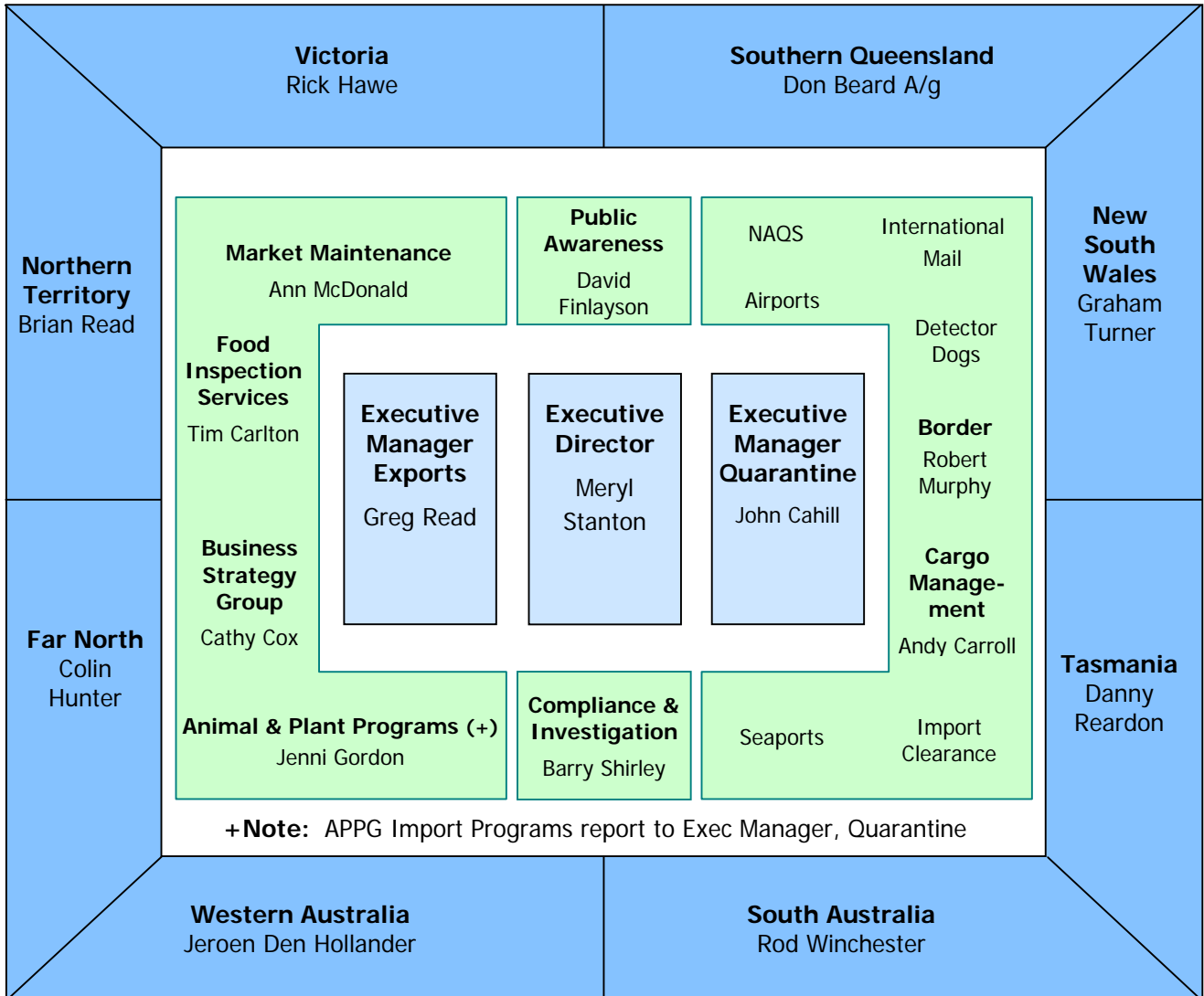
This report chronicles the work done and advances made across many areas of AQIS' activities, marking noteworthy improvements in efficiency and effectiveness in our quarantine and export programs.

I commend this report to you, and in doing so I remind you that AQIS is always reviewing the way we do business. We welcome constructive comment on how we might work even better. We look forward to the challenges ahead, and trust that we can contribute to work closely with our clients for the benefit of all.

Meryl Stanton
Executive Director

AQIS AT A GLANCE

The AQIS organisation chart is designed to be more descriptive than the normal hierarchical diagram. It shows the regions as our front line, our main means of communication with our external stakeholders. There are deliberately no arrows showing reporting lines. The relationships between regions, central office programs and the executive group are dynamic and depend on the issues at hand.



AQIS OBJECTIVES

As outlined in the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's Corporate Plan 2003-06, AQIS' objective is to protect Australia's animal, plant and human health status and maintain market access through the delivery of quarantine and export services. AQIS is therefore working to:

- maintain Australia's quarantine integrity through appropriate border protection arrangements
- assist Australian exports by providing export inspection, auditing and certification services
- raise public awareness of quarantine and export services requirements.

WORKING WITH OUR CLIENTS

AQIS endeavours to improve its service quality, value for money and client focus by working in partnership with industry to recognise clients' needs, increasing staff awareness of our customer service obligations and ensuring the delivery of quality customer services. As a regulatory agency, AQIS is committed to providing our services in ways that consider the impact on our clients, while meeting our important legal obligations.

Through bodies such as AQIS-industry consultative committees and the Quarantine and Exports Advisory Council, we work in partnership with clients to provide programs and services that reflect the needs of industry and the community.

AQIS' clients and stakeholders are:

- our portfolio Ministers, and through them, the Government
- the Australian community

- importers of animals, plants and their products
- exporters of animals, plants and their products
- passengers, owners and importers of goods passing through airports, international mail and air courier facilities and seaports
- industries and their representative organisations, that rely on AQIS to negotiate national and international agreements and protocols aimed at improving market access and trade
- people and entities interested in food safety, the preservation of our natural environment and in human health.

AQIS conducts an annual survey of clients to evaluate their satisfaction with our services. In 2003-04 approximately 1,700 clients participated in the survey. Results indicate that 87 per cent of clients surveyed are satisfied or highly satisfied with the services AQIS provides. AQIS has successfully maintained and improved on the high overall satisfaction benchmark set in 2002.

Of those clients surveyed whose overall satisfaction had improved, close to one in five attributed this improvement to AQIS staff being more approachable and communicating better with clients. Clients also felt that AQIS staff are now better trained, offer more personal service and have improved efficiency.

QUARANTINE AND EXPORTS ADVISORY COUNCIL (QEAC)

QEAC is a non-statutory, independent advisory council that:

- provides advice to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the Director of Quarantine on major quarantine and export certification policy issues and strategic directions for AQIS
- inquires into and provides advice to the Minister on matters referred to it by the Minister
- acts as a focal point to ensure effective consultation between AQIS, industry and stakeholders;
- provides advice on the effectiveness of AQIS' program delivery; and
- assists AQIS in evaluating its performance.

QEAC comprises members with skills in quarantine services, animal and plant health, importing/exporting, business management, the environment and communications. Mr W Murray Rogers, an experienced business leader, now chairs QEAC.

As at 30 June 2004 the members of QEAC were:

- Mr W Murray Rogers AM (Chair)
- Mr John Crosby (Deputy Chair)
- Mr Andrew Inglis AM
- Ms Mary Harwood
- Mr Brian Jeffriess
- Mr Hart Krtschil
- Dr Lyndy Scott

- Ms Meryl Stanton
- Ms Carolyn Tanner
- Mr Michael Taylor

The Council met five times during the year.

CONSULTATION WITH INDUSTRY

AQIS maintains close and regular contact with its industry clients through industry consultative committees (ICCs), ensuring efficient and effective service delivery.

These ICCs are instrumental in AQIS import and export programs. They formulate efficient and practical operational responses to government policy and ensure that business confidence and continuity are maintained in AQIS' delivery of Commonwealth regulatory requirements.

The ICCs are:

- AQIS – Aviation Industry Consultative Committee
- AQIS – Grain Industry Consultative Committee
- AQIS – Industry Cargo Consultative Committee
- Biologicals Industry Consultative Committee
- Dairy Export Industry Consultative Committee
- Export Meat Industry Advisory Committee
- Export Wild Game Meat Industry Consultative Committee
- Horticulture Export Consultative Committee
- Imported Food Consultative Committee

- Live Animal Export Consultative Committee
- Livestock Export Industry Consultative Committee
- Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy Stakeholder Consultative Committee
- Organic Produce Export Committee
- Post Entry Plant Industry Consultative Committee
- Seafood Export Consultative Committee.

Quarantine

QUARANTINE

Intervention levels across all AQIS Border Programs remained very high throughout 2003-04.

Pest and disease protection has increased substantially as a result of the implementation of Government decisions to increase quarantine intervention significantly at Australia's border entry points over a period of four years from May 2001. These decisions have enabled quarantine border intervention to increase to more than 87 per cent at international airports and 100 per cent at other border entry points.

The national intervention level for airports of 81 per cent was exceeded for the entire year. Effectiveness levels for 'higher risk' items at international airports continued to fluctuate due to the growing passenger volumes in Sydney (stretching the limits of infrastructure capacity at peak times) and incomplete infrastructure changes at Melbourne airport. Initiatives to improve these levels include additional training for x-ray screeners at Sydney airport, additional public relations material in departure lounges and announcements in arrivals halls.

The 100 per cent intervention target for international mail was maintained throughout 2003-04, with effectiveness on higher risk items increased to over 83 per cent. Improvements being made to the Sydney gateway facility should ensure this will be maintained for the longer term.

Intervention levels for imported sea containers were at 100 per cent. Improvement has occurred since deploying mobile x-rays and improving data collection and reporting. The effectiveness result for sea cargo containers has continued to increase.

In May 2004 the Seaports Program released a CD 'The Maritime Awareness Kit' containing essential information that enables overseas shippers to comply with Australian maritime quarantine requirements.

The Detector Dog Program, in conjunction with the Airports, International Mail, and Import Clearance Programs, continued to investigate ways to maintain and improve the integrity and delivery of detector dog inspection services. In 2003-04 twenty-three dogs successfully completed the training course and are now operating in the field.

Northern Australian Quarantine Strategy

The Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy (NAQS) includes our work in East Timor. Operations in East Timor over the last six months of 2003-04 maintained an intervention rate of 100 per cent and inspection effectiveness of over 90 per cent for all classes of inspections (military mail, personnel, cargo and break bulk).

2003-04 saw the conclusion of our involvement in East Timor where we provided inspection staff and assisted in the establishment of an East Timor quarantine service.

Border activity in the Torres Strait remains a strong focus of NAQS' work. During 2003-04 officers inspected and cleared luggage from more than 100,000 domestic passengers moving between quarantine zones in the Torres Strait to the Australian mainland.

During 2003-04, as part of ongoing NAQS monitoring, major tropical fruit growing regions in north Queensland were protected from the potentially devastating Asian papaya and New Guinea fruit flies. Both flies were detected in the Torres Strait and subsequent control strategies put in place. Early warning of exotic pests and diseases in our region is an important aspect of pre-border quarantine activities. It ensures Australia has in place appropriate border and post-border strategies to mitigate the risk of exotic incursions.

NAQS officers regularly visit neighbouring countries to share information on pests and diseases and to resolve matters of

mutual concern between Australia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and East Timor. Teams conduct surveys for quarantine pests and diseases in collaboration with their colleagues in neighbouring countries. The information is used by AQIS and Australia's agricultural industries to assess quarantine risks. The pest and disease status of neighbouring countries informs the kinds of quarantine checks in place at Australia's ports. This information is also useful for targeting pests and diseases surveyed on NAQS domestic surveys more accurately.

Exports

EXPORTS

The Live Animal Export Program made a major contribution to the Keniry Livestock Export Review. Following the Government's response to the Review, Parliament passed subsequent amendments to the legislation regulating the live export trade in June 2004. As a result of the inquiry, a qualified and experienced veterinarian is now required onboard all live export shipments to the Middle East to provide daily reports to AQIS on the health and general welfare of the livestock.

Of the 8771 consignments of livestock exported during 2003–04, one consignment was rejected – this consignment was the sheep on board the *MV Cormo Express*. AQIS worked closely with all stakeholders involved in the resolution of the situation.

The Horticulture Exports Program continued to work with Biosecurity Australia and industry associations to improve market access for citrus exports. In April 2004 representatives of the Thai Department of Agriculture visited the citrus export growing districts in South Australia, Victoria and NSW, leading to the reinstatement of the citrus protocol for the 2004 season.

Volumes of export grain have increased due to a bumper harvest in Western Australia and South Australia. AQIS is continuing to work with bulk handling companies and container packing establishments to further reduce the rejection rate.

The Dairy Exports Program began a review of the Dairy Export Inspection and Certification System. The review will clarify the roles of the dairy industry, state dairy authorities and AQIS in the system, and consider options to streamline procedures and improve co-regulation.

The Meat Program continued to ensure market access for Australian meat exports by implementing and maintaining

operational systems that provide an improved level of national consistency in the regulatory control of meat processing across Australia. National consistency is being achieved through the implementation of a comprehensive training strategy, the standardisation of audit checklists within the National Plant Management System and a centralized audit notification process. Auditors from more than 10 countries assessed these systems during the 2003–04 period. In addition, a detailed review has commenced of systems that relate to product integrity, including the EU Cattle Accreditation Scheme (EUCAS) and Halal Program.

The Organic and Biodynamic Program continues to work with seven approved certifying organizations to develop new markets and refine Australian organic and biodynamic standards. Although affected by drought, market growth grew by approximately 10 per cent domestically whilst international trends suggest growth around 30-40 per cent annually. A significant advancement for this co-regulatory system in 2003-04 has been the development and introduction of the AQIS Administrative Arrangements. These requirements – based on International Standard 65 and European Standard 45011 – will provide administrative and operational continuity for approved certifying organisations as well as satisfying importing requirements.

The Export Fish Program has been involved in an extensive review of export legislation in consultation with the seafood industry with the aim of reducing prescription, enhancing integrity of through chain systems underpinning food safety and certification, supporting industry innovation and flexibility of operations and protecting and facilitating market access. The Seafood Export Consultative Committee has agreed to form a range of working groups to assist AQIS in the roll out of new legislation across all industry sectors. SECC's support for the Program has proved invaluable in the past in introducing major change.

Market Maintenance

MARKET MAINTENANCE

Improved market access was negotiated for a number of commodities in several export markets.

Access for Australian dairy products to Chile and Costa Rica was extended following successful reviews of the export dairy program and access conditions for eggs to Singapore have been simplified.

Maintaining market access for meat and meat products during the significant changes brought about by the accession of 10 countries to the EU and the new EU Animal By-Products legislation has been a priority for the AQIS Market Maintenance group. It continues to work with industry and trading partners to gain acceptance of the range of Australian meat production systems. For example, Australia now has access to 18 countries for meat and meat products produced at establishments operating under the Australian Standard and supervised by State Meat Authorities and AQIS. Negotiations with new trading partners on market access for game meat were successfully concluded with Korea and are well advanced with Canada, thus opening these significant markets to a range of game meat species.

Exports of Australian seafood remains healthy despite difficult trading conditions and restrictions imposed by importing countries.

AQIS assisted in the successful reviews of Australia's meat production system by Government counterparts from Russia, Egypt, Canada, Korea, the EU and the USA. AQIS also provided leadership and/or significant input into the Australian delegations to the Codex committees for milk, meat, seafood, residues and inspection and certification systems.

Public Awareness

PUBLIC AWARENESS

AQIS Bulletin

The AQIS Bulletin is the official AQIS journal, providing a range of information on quarantine and export activities of relevance to industry clients and the community. AQIS published the AQIS Bulletin newsletter 11 times in 2003-04. The Bulletin is distributed free of charge in hard copy and electronic form.

Subscriptions can be arranged by calling (02) 6272 5151 or via the AQIS website at www.aqis.gov.au/bulletin.

Quarantine awareness

During the year the well-established Quarantine Matters! awareness campaign continued with national television, cinema and print advertisements featuring 'Crocodile Hunter' Steve Irwin. The advertisements complemented other campaign initiatives including non-English language communications; Internet advertising on- and off-shore; news releases and media events designed to highlight quarantine requirements; airport advertising and signage; displays at travel expos and community events; a range of quarantine information brochures and various other public relations activities.

The campaign was aimed at a range of audiences, including international travellers to Australia (both returning Australians and visitors), cargo importers, international mail recipients, students, the travel industry and rural industries, such as those dealing with animals and horticulture.

Research undertaken in association with the campaign showed it has had a strong impact on key target audiences. More than 90 per cent of the Australian community is aware of the campaign — significantly better than what would normally be considered a good recognition

level for a campaign of this type. Youth audiences, who have traditionally been difficult to target with quarantine messages, are responding to the campaign and are showing a greater awareness of the importance of quarantine.

In addition to the Quarantine Matters! campaign, AQIS continued its targeted Top Watch awareness campaign directed at remote and regional communities in northern Australia, along the coastline from Broome to Cairns, including the Tiwi and Torres Strait islands.

As part of the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy (NAQS) the campaign used outreach visits by staff and a range of information products, activities and promotions to encourage northern residents to look out for and report plant and animal pest and disease risks.

The NAQS News newsletter was published quarterly during the year, featuring a range of information on northern Australia quarantine activities, including the work of NAQS scientists and operational staff. The newsletter is distributed in hard copy free of charge to residents, industry, government agencies and parliamentarians. Copies are also available electronically and on the AQIS website at www.aqis.gov.au/naqs.

Export awareness

AQIS continued to develop and deliver a range of information products and initiatives to inform industry and the community of its export facilitation, inspection and certification services and activities. Export awareness initiatives included information brochures and products, attendance at trade shows and industry events and news releases.

Compliance & Investigations

COMPLIANCE AND INVESTIGATIONS

The Compliance and Investigations Program is a strategic and operational program that reports directly to the AQIS Executive Director. This AQIS Program works in partnership with government and industry stakeholders to achieve compliance outcomes.

The Program delivers a variety of services such as detecting, investigating and prosecuting offenders, the application of integrity standards, educating industry to reduce non-compliant behaviour and the identification and reporting of regulatory risks.

During the year AQIS emphasised actions to achieve a more balanced approach to enforcement. Forty-eight actions were undertaken at AQIS export registered establishments to help AQIS identify risks affecting the export environment. This will continue in 2004-05.

AQIS investigated 852 incidents of suspected/alleged breaches of AQIS legislation and issued 44 letters of warning. Eight matters were referred to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions (CDPP). Prosecutions were successful in four matters. There are five matters currently before the courts.

AQIS also maintains an intelligence gathering and risk assessment capability and routinely applies a commodity-based risk assessment/risk identification methodology (CRAM) designed for use in a co-regulatory environment. A total of 22 CRAMs were conducted during the year.

AQIS REDLINE is a confidential, free-call phone hotline for the receipt of alleged breaches of AQIS-administered laws, and 477 calls were received with 88 calls determined as merit calls (calls the agency may not ordinarily have received). These merit calls are subject to further investigation.

AQIS also introduced a new initiative called 'Industry Compliance Evaluation' (ICE). This initiative is currently in a pilot evaluation stage. An ICE is an informal meeting with a business enterprise to help it evaluate the systems and processes it requires to be compliant with all of its legislative, regulatory and industry practice obligations. Five ICE's have been conducted to 30 June 2004. All have been positively received by industry.

Financial Overview

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

The Commonwealth Auditor General audits AQIS' financial statements and reports his audit findings to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Statements are reported in the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry *Annual Report*, available on the Department's website (www.daff.gov.au) and are conveyed to our clients through AQIS-industry consultative committees. A summary of financial results for the year 2003-04 is provided in the table below.

	Revenue (\$,000s)	Expenditure (\$,000s)	Surplus/ (Deficit) (\$,000s)	Cost Recovery (%) *	Transfer to/from Industry Accounts	Prior Year Results	Accumulated Result	Income Equalisation Reserve	Rebates/ Industry Initiatives
Live Animal Exports	2,571	3,316	(745)	78%	79	-	(666)	-	-
Grain Exports	8,863	7,572	1,291	117%	(1,291)	-	-	757	452
Horticultural Exports	5,523	6,480	(957)	85%	957	-	-	352	871
Dairy	1,436	1,377	59	104%	(59)	-	-	138	145
Fish	3,922	4,005	(83)	98%	83	-	-	20	-
Organics	178	179	(1)	99%	1	-	-	7	-
Post Entry Animal Quarantine	3,762	3,929	(167)	96%	167	-	-	35	-
Import Clearance	82,022	82,302	(280)	99%	280	-	-	5,998	5,844
International Mail	15,489	15,990	(501)	97%	501	-	-	468	-
Post Entry Plant Quarantine	1,612	1,844	(232)	87%	-	(41)	(273)	-	-
Airports	65,335	64,703	632	101%	(11)	-	-	110	-
Seaports	10,072	10,793	(721)	93%	721	-	-	544	-
East Timor	1,851	1,851	-	100%	-	-	-	-	-
Meat	57,214	60,108	(2,894)	95%	2,894	-	-	3,661	-
Total	259,850	264,449	(4,599)	98%	4,322	(41)	(939)	12,090	7,312

* This figure represents the cost recovery per cent of revenue divided by expenditure. AQIS generally aims to achieve 100 per cent cost recovery.

Regional Snapshots

REGIONAL SNAPSHOTS

New South Wales

AQIS New South Wales had 833 full time equivalent (FTE) staff at the end of June 2004. In the continued response to the Increased Quarantine Intervention (IQI) initiative the region recruited and trained 56 additional staff by the end of the financial year.

The region delivered services to all 21 AQIS programs, including issuing more than 40,500 certificates for export meat and inedible products. It inspected 20,851 tonnes of export fruit and vegetables and 2.03 million tonnes of export grain. The region also supervised and inspected 25,931 tons of imported grain into NSW, as a result of grain shortages due to the prolonged drought.

Staff at ports inspected 2,770 overseas vessels, of which 2,079 were first port vessels. The external inspection of 100 per cent of imported sea freight containers was maintained, with more than 1.3 million containers moving through the ports. For break bulk cargo, 223,567 items were cleared at Port Kembla and Sydney while 226,138 metric tonnes of break bulk was inspected at Newcastle.

Screening of all air cargo was maintained along with enhanced screening of high volume, low value air cargo and the external inspection of air cargo containers. Increased screening of cruise ship passengers and day-trippers was maintained.

Staff at the Quarantine Mail Handling Unit and Clyde Mail Centres screened more than 110 million articles of mail.

Airport staff cleared 4,554,925 passengers and 283,145 crew. Eighteen x-ray machines and 16 detector dog teams are now operating at Sydney Kingsford Smith Airport.

Victoria

The Victorian region delivered services for a majority of AQIS programs, including quarantine border protection across a range of operational locations and certifying exports of live animals, reproductive material, meat and meat products, fruit and vegetables, dairy and grain. At 30 June 2004 the Victoria Region had 493 FTE employees.

The Region achieved sustainable performance across effectiveness targets in the quarantine programs. The Port of Melbourne is the largest container port in Australia, processing more than 1.6 million containers in 2003-04 while 35 cruise vessels were processed through the ports of Melbourne and Geelong. In addition, AQIS inspected 186,080 items of break bulk cargo and 25,571 packs of timber. Approximately 9,400 containers were subject to inspection due to the risk of Giant African Snail.

Six AQIS staff are permanently based at the Australian Customs Service container x-ray facility to complement our capacity to respond to issues of quarantine concern either at the facility or in the Port of Melbourne.

Exported from the Region in 2003-04 were over 740,000 live animals, 34,000 tonnes of meat sourced from Victorian slaughter establishments, and over 500,000 tonnes of grain.

The Region manually issued 5,857 EX 28's (Notice of Intention to Export Prescribed Goods) and 3,589 Phytosanitary certificates for the horticulture commodities exported from Victoria. On EXDOC, AQIS' electronic export documentation system, the Region issued 5,220 Requests For Permit (RFP) and 1,443 Phytosanitary Certificates.

Continued growth of international air passenger arrivals through Melbourne International Airport resulted in some 1.8 million passengers and their accompanied luggage being processed and cleared; this

included 577,800 passengers declaring items of quarantine concern.

Melbourne Airmail Transit Centre screened and cleared 33.5 million articles.

South Australia

AQIS South Australia experienced growth in import and export activity across most major programs in 2003-04. The year saw a 10 per cent increase in external container inspections from 2002-03, a 10.9 per cent increase in passengers through the Adelaide International Airport, near record grain exports, increased export inspection activity in the seafood and meat programs and a 7.5 per cent increase in quarantine entries referred by the Australian Customs Service.

The region had 138 FTE staff at the end of June 2004 and a contractor base of 25, on average, at any one time for seasonal and ad-hoc export grain and meat inspection activities.

The region maintained services to 252 Quarantine Approved premises, quality assurance arrangements were managed for nine export dairy registered premises and 126 seafood establishments. The Meat Program provided inspection and certification services to 30 export registered establishments processing beef, sheep, buffalo, horse, goat and poultry products.

Far North

AQIS Far North delivered inspection services for a range of AQIS programs and supplied support for offshore response and inspection activities such as in East Timor, the Solomon Islands, the Middle East, New Zealand and the Corno Express. AQIS Far North employed 164 FTE staff as at 30 June 2004.

Through an investment of more than \$350,000 in new infrastructure, and an increase in staff numbers from six in 1996 to the current level of 15 officers,

Townsville staff moved to new premises in April. Improvements included upgraded information technology infrastructure as well as a new vector laboratory and import/export inspection facilities.

The region also gained extra protection from the threat of mosquito-borne diseases such as dengue fever, West Nile Fever and Ross River Fever for the monitoring of mosquito vectors, through the signing of a new memorandum of understanding between the Commonwealth and regional stakeholders in Townsville.

Cairns International Airport continues to experience growth with international passenger arrivals increasing by more than 37,300 from 2002-03 to 2003-04. Australian Airlines have been the major contributor to this growth with the carrier increasing its aircraft from four to five Boeing 767's. Australian Airlines are now operating flights from Sabah in Malaysia and have increased flights from Singapore. Quarantine intervention levels of 100 per cent for international air passengers and crew have been maintained since February 2004.

Exports in the Far North region continued to grow during 2003-04, with new commodities and export destinations being sourced by local exporters. AQIS assisted with the introduction of a new registered establishment, and provided inspection and certification services for the export of washed potatoes from the Atherton Tablelands. Markets for the potatoes include South Korea, Thailand, Taiwan, Hong Kong and the Philippines.

Southern Queensland

The South Queensland region had 465 FTEs employed at 30 June 2004. The region services clients in the geographical area from Rockhampton in Central Queensland south to Yamba in Northern NSW. All export meat activities for Queensland and the Northern Territory are serviced through the South Queensland region.

Record high passenger arrivals and cargo volumes were experienced in the region this financial year. Full container imports rose 20 per cent above last year's figure to exceed a quarter of a million landed units.

Human health strategies were implemented at airports and seaports in response to threats from SARS and Avian Influenza. The strategies included staff training in safely assessing human health risks, increased intervention, increased reporting from arriving aircraft and ships and increased communication links with State and Commonwealth health authorities.

AQIS facilitated the establishment of a cross agency network with Austrade to provide export clients with continuum of support from market access to export certification. This will assist those clients in the grain, horticulture, fish and meat export trade.

South Queensland management and staff are more involved in provision of AQIS services in North Eastern NSW. Staff based at Coolangatta will now provide quarantine and export inspection services to clients from the border south to the port of Goodwood Island at Yamba.

Staff training remained a priority with Induction, Middle Management and Leadership programs being provided to our people. Scientific services staff in the region also undertook the development of a major technical training program encompassing entomology, plant pathology and scientific procedures. The program was delivered to 440 staff and 33 industry personnel.

Northern Territory

On 20 November 2003 the delivery of AQIS services in the Northern Territory transferred to the Commonwealth, having previously been delivered by staff of the NT Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development under a Memorandum of Understanding with

AQIS. At 30 June 2004, the Territory had 32 FTE staff.

2003-04 saw the conclusion of our involvement in East Timor where, together with the NAQS program, we provided inspection staff and assisted in the establishment of an East Timorese quarantine service.

Military exercises are regularly conducted in the NT during the dry season and during 2003-04 AQIS personnel in Darwin were regularly involved in the inspection and processing of military personnel and equipment from Australia and other participating countries.

The site of the new Darwin regional office was selected during 2003-04. The new office will be located at Darwin International Airport and is due for completion by Easter 2005.

Tasmania

The Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment provided services on behalf of AQIS under a Memorandum of Understanding. Service delivery in southern, northern and north-western Tasmania varies according to major functions, but there is a strong emphasis on continuous improvement in the quality of service delivery and maintaining a high level of client awareness. The region had about 17 FTE staff at the end of June 2004.

The Tasmanian operations function under a Service Charter developed by the State Government. The Charter is reviewed annually to ensure the most efficient and effective service is available to clients, both commercial and non-commercial. The Service Charter also includes the importance of internal customer service (staff to staff) in meeting the needs of external customers.

In the past year a number of important developments were consolidated and extended. The cherry exports to Taiwan protocol was fully tested and Industry

advised that there were no problems experienced either pre-shipment or upon arrival in Taiwan.

A new container clearance system was developed at Bell Bay (the major container port for Tasmania). This resulted in achieving a quick turn-around of containers for our clients and yet maintaining the required level of quarantine security.

The participation in ethnic radio and FM radio stations is proving to be a very good means of delivering on a regular basis any quarantine updates or awareness messages. The radio communication has developed into a two-way feedback activity.

There were some delays to arriving passengers at the busiest time of the year, but public support and understanding was high.

Western Australia

On 20 November 2003 the delivery of AQIS services in Western Australia transferred to the Commonwealth, having previously been delivered by staff of the WA Department of Agriculture under a Memorandum of Understanding with AQIS. The region had almost 300 FTE staff at the end of June 2004.

In December 2003 work commenced on the new regional office for AQIS. Located in the Perth International Airport Precinct, the building is part of the IQI upgrade, and will be open for business in September 2004.

A record grain harvest of approximately 15 million tonnes in 2003 placed extreme pressure on industry and AQIS. The main obstacles faced were the logistics of providing storage, transport, shipping and inspection. Western Australia exported 11million tonnes for the 2003-04 season, which was 55.6 per cent of Australia's total exports over that period.

Western Australia is a key port for arrivals from Asian centres and the threat of avian influenza (AI) kept Airport staff very busy. Efforts at the border were focussed on countries of highest risk, and intervention was raised to just under 100 per cent.