



Hon John McVeigh MP
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Reference: 09168/12

12 DEC 2012

Mr Neil Laurie
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Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 15 November 2012 concerning petition 1995-12 received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly.

The Queensland Government's decision to consolidate the Tropical and Aquatic Animal Health Laboratory at Oonoonba to the veterinary laboratory facilities at Coopers Plains was a difficult but necessary one.

The former Government had set in train a process by which the Oonoonba laboratory was to be closed in order to accommodate residential development under the former Government's Urban Land Development Authority (ULDA). Unfortunately, they went on to make a commitment to James Cook University (JCU) to establish a new laboratory at their Townsville campus that was not fully funded. Funds for the new facility were not a component of any Smart State Initiative but were based on the need to sell other properties. Some of these remain unsold. Consequently, as the incoming Government, we were left with the planned closure of the old laboratory and insufficient resources with which to establish a new one.

The Queensland Government recognises the value of the Queensland agriculture and aquaculture industries to North Queensland and the State and this decision will not pose any additional risks to industry.

The decision regarding the veterinary diagnostic laboratory will not affect the provision of other biosecurity services in North Queensland. Operational staff will remain in place and will continue to address issues such as Hendra virus. This decision simply means diagnostic testing will be done in Brisbane as is currently the case for diseases such as Hendra virus.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) is also currently finalising options to maintain aquatic animal services, including the potential for a number of Townsville based laboratory staff to continue to provide on-property services, including field investigations, to industry.

DAFF is dedicated to achieving the Queensland Government's goal of doubling Queensland's food production by 2040. However, under the current fiscal constraints, it is essential that we rethink the way we deliver our services in order to make best use of the resources available to us.

If you require any further information regarding this matter, please contact Bruce Mills, Chief of Staff in my office on 07 3239 3000.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John McVeigh', written in a cursive style.

JOHN McVEIGH, MP
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Member for Toowoomba South