



Hon John McVeigh MP
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Reference: 08568/12

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Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
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Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to petition numbers 1989-12 and 2007-12 lodged with the Legislative Assembly on 31 October and 1 November 2012.

The Queensland Government's decision to consolidate the Animal Disease Surveillance Laboratory to the veterinary laboratory facilities at Coopers Plains was a difficult but necessary one given the constraints on the State's budget. The capacity to diagnose pests and diseases of livestock and other animals remains a critical function of Government. However, the maintenance of laboratory facilities and operations is costly and it is no longer feasible to maintain the three existing veterinary laboratories.

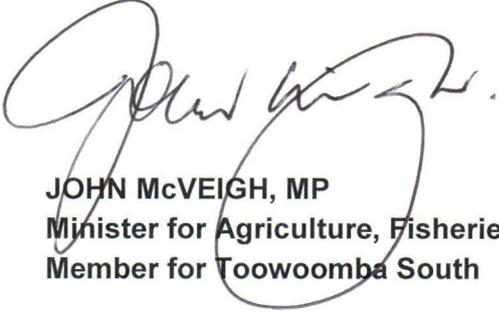
The Queensland Government recognises the value of the Queensland agriculture industry to the State and this decision will not pose any additional risks to Queensland's livestock industries.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (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.

I believe the consolidation to one veterinary laboratory is the most effective and efficient use of available resources. The consolidation coupled with a renewed focus on improved operational services, best meets the needs of the relevant industries in Queensland. In addition, front line DAFF inspectors and veterinarians will continue to ensure that surveillance and field investigations are available across Queensland for detecting exotic and emerging diseases.

The decision to consolidate the laboratories simply means samples taken as part of surveillance work will be sent to Coopers Plains, as is currently the case, for testing for diseases such as the Equine Herpes virus, Hendra virus, Avian Influenza virus, Newcastle Disease virus and botulism.

Yours sincerely



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