

RESPONSE TO PETITION

House of Assembly

TITLE OF PETITION:

The petition of the undersigned Citizens of Tasmania draw to the attention of the House:

Listing of foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) as a declared weed.

GOVERNMENT POSITION:

The declaration of foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) as a declared pest under the *Biosecurity Act 2019* and associated *Biosecurity Regulations 2022* (which will soon replace the *Weed Management Act 1999* and *Weed Management Regulations 2017*) is not recommended.

The Government acknowledges that foxglove is a threat to conservation values in Tasmania and that measures need to be implemented to control the further spread of this plant. However, it considers that better outcomes for its strategic management can be achieved without declaration.

Foxglove is a popular ornamental plant that has been in the garden and nursery trade for many years. It is well established in many residential gardens and is widespread in the landscape across many parts of Tasmania. Eradication of foxglove from all parts of the State is not economically feasible at this time.

Declaration can provide some mechanisms to manage weeds, but it does not guarantee that a species will receive more resources for regulation or for control and eradication. Declaration of a species takes into consideration the biology of the plant, its impacts, current and potential distribution and feasibility for eradication and containment. Foxglove poses a challenge for regulation in Tasmania and other jurisdictions. An investment of resources into targeting all foxglove plants (including those in residential gardens where their impact is minimal) may take away efforts from higher priority species. Any resources invested in foxglove should be made in areas where it is having the most significant impact, such as within and surrounding Tasmania's Wilderness World Heritage Area and other areas of conservation value.

It is considered that the strategic management of foxglove can be achieved through a number of mechanisms that can be implemented without declaration. These mechanisms, which are outlined below, include the development of a Biosecurity Program, delivery of an education and awareness program and the potential restriction of sale and trade.

The success of any future management program for foxglove will require the involvement and collaboration between government (both state and local), industry and the community.

Biosecurity Tasmania proposes the following actions:

Development of a Foxglove Biosecurity Program

Part 9 of the *Biosecurity Act 2019* (the Act) provides for the preparation of a Biosecurity Program. This is to provide a framework for the *prevention, elimination, minimisation, control or management of a biosecurity risk or biosecurity impact*. It is proposed that a Biosecurity Program be drafted for foxglove. Biosecurity Tasmania has initiated the development of this document and will liaise with relevant stakeholders in this process. The

Program will aim to set key objectives for the management of foxglove in Tasmania with a focus on developing strategies and implementing measures that address the spread and containment of foxglove and manage infestations in areas where they are having the most impact on Tasmania's natural values.

Part of the Biosecurity Program would be the *identification of Biosecurity Zones*. Under the Act a biosecurity zone may be used to:

- *provide for the long-term management of a biosecurity risk or impact, or*
- *prevent, eliminate, minimize, control, or otherwise manage a biosecurity risk or impact.*

A biosecurity zone may be identified as any place, area, region, or specified part of Tasmania. The current known distribution of foxglove would be used to identify appropriate and priority areas as biosecurity zones. Specific measures would be identified for respective zones, for example hygiene requirements to prevent spread and control and management requirements for infestations.

Implementation of an education and awareness program

The Government proposes the development of guidelines to provide a range of options for foxglove management and also detailed measures to prevent spread. Information has been provided to Biosecurity Tasmania from community groups and land managers detailing outcomes of various control programs. This is valuable, Tasmanian specific, information that will be incorporated into any documentation. An awareness program, using the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania's social media platforms, will also be implemented to improve the broader community's awareness and understanding of the impacts of foxglove, including both its toxic properties and impacts to Tasmania's natural values.

Initiate discussion regarding restriction of sale and trade

Restricting the sale and trade of foxglove is a measure that could be prescribed under the Act. This is regardless of the species being listed as a declared pest or not. Biosecurity Tasmania has had some initial discussions regarding this issue and proposes to further progress this in 2023. This process will require consultation with the nursery and garden industry, local government authorities and other stakeholders and will take some time to implement. It will also require thorough consideration within the Department as restricting sale and trade will require additional regulatory resourcing from Biosecurity Tasmania to ensure compliance.



Hon Jo Palmer MLC
MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND WATER

Date: 9.11.22