



# **State of Queensland Biological Response Plan**

**An annex of the State of Queensland  
Multi-Agency Response Plan to CBR incidents.**

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## PREFACE

1. The State of Queensland Biological Response Plan (Biological Plan) is an **annex** to the State of Queensland Multi-Agency Response Plan to CBR Incidents (State CBR Plan).
2. Queensland Health is the lead agency for biological incidents (human related) in Queensland. Through Communicable Diseases Branch and Health Protection Branch, **Queensland Health** is responsible for the administration of the *Public Health Act 2005* and the *Commonwealth Quarantine Act, 1908 and Regulations*.

### Aim

3. The aim of the Biological Plan is to outline the responsibilities and arrangements for the preparedness and initial management of biological incidents affecting human health in Queensland, whether the result of accidental or deliberate origin.

### Objectives and Principles

4. The objectives and principles of the Biological Plan are described in the objectives and principles of the State CBR plan.

### Application and activation

5. The Biological Plan applies to Queensland government agencies as identified in the Plan and is supported by agency specific plans, procedures and protocols that detail their roles and responsibilities.
6. In cases of incidents involving deliberate origins, the QPS will decide whether the incident warrants a declaration requiring the incident be coordinated under the State CBR Plan. In such cases the Biological Plan becomes subordinate to the State CBR Plan and is used only in the direct management of the biological component of the incident.
7. The Biological Plan applies to agents which could be associated with a biological terrorist event and are beyond the normal scope of a Public Health Unit investigation. These are referred to as Security Sensitive Biological Agents (Tier 1 and 2) with a list of these established under the *National Health Security Act 2007*. This list can be accessed at <http://www.health.gov.au/ssba#list>.
8. Biological events affecting animal health are addressed under the AUSVETPLAN, a threat specific plan for exotic animal diseases.
9. Surveillance of communicable diseases and the prevention, investigation and control of outbreaks of communicable disease are coordinated through a network of Public Health Units in Queensland and the Communicable Diseases Branch, Queensland Health. Public Health Units routinely monitor disease notifications and conduct disease outbreak investigations with specific biological hazards managed by specific plans such as the Pandemic Influenza Plan or the Ebola Plan.

### Authority

10. The State CBR Plan is a threat specific plan of the SDMP and is authorised under the *Disaster Management Act 2003*.
11. The Biological Plan is noted by the Queensland Counter Terrorism Committee (QCTC).

### Authorisation under the Disaster Management Act 2003

**Assistant Commissioner**  
**Queensland Police Service**  
**Executive Officer Queensland Disaster Management Committee**

# LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK

## Governance and coordination

12. The Biological Plan is coordinated through the Queensland State CBRN committee.

## Agency responsibilities

13. Depending on whether the release is accidental or deliberate will impact on whether an agency will have a lead and/or support role.

14. Each agency has specific roles during the management of a biological incident and is responsible for the safety, protection, training and management of its own personnel.

15. Agency responsibilities have been generally described in the State CBR Plan. Where there is a need to reinforce or provide information about responsibilities specific to the Biological Plan they are included.

## Queensland Health

16. Queensland Health is the lead agency for the implementation of the State of Queensland Biological Response Plan.

17. Under the provisions of the *Public Health Act 2005*, Queensland Health is responsible for preventing, controlling and reducing risks to public health and responding to public health emergencies. Authorised persons are appointed under the Act who have the necessary powers to take any action required to remove or reduce the public health risk.

18. Specific Responsibilities include:

- Public health advice and direction;
- Coordinate health surveillance and monitoring
- Coordinate epidemiological investigation involving multiple local health agencies;
- Assessment of biological hazards with human impact;
- Specialist laboratory services aiding the detection, investigation and management of the biological event;
- Advice on the clinical and medical management of biological casualties or exposed population;
- Advice on actions to protect the population, first responders and the environment;
- Coordinating access to, and distribution of, essential pharmaceuticals;
- Hospital or other health facility based multi-casualty response as required;
- On-site medical teams as required;
- Advice on the storage, handling and disposal of waste; and
- Coordinate the provision of enhanced capabilities for storing and disposing of mass fatalities including infected remains.

## Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES)

19. The QFES Fire Controller in liaison with Queensland Health (Communicable Diseases Branch and Public Health Incident Controller) will be responsible for the identification and establishment of HAZMAT safe operating zones and the safety of personnel including those of other agencies. The Fire Controller is responsible for operations within the HAZMAT control zones. The Fire Controller will:

- establish and maintain hot/warm/cold zones with controlled entry/egress points;
- maintain appropriate HAZMAT Control Procedures;
- Assess and if required decontaminate emergency personnel and the public, and provide off-site decontamination as required;
- control entry operations within the hot zone such as rescue/identification; and
- Provide Chemical/HAZMAT assistance.

20. The QFES Research and Scientific Branch (RSB) may provide the initial response to a biological incident and where this occurs will notify the Queensland Health immediately. The RSB team may also undertake a preliminary radiation and chemical survey as part of its initial incident response procedures.

## Queensland Police Service (QPS)

- 21.** The QPS is responsible for coordination and security of the incident site including:
- establishing and maintaining the Police Forward Command Post including the media centre;
  - making declarations of an emergency situation under the provisions of the Public Safety Preservation Act, as necessary;
  - security support for all involved agencies;
  - facilitating resource supply through the State Crisis Centre (when applicable);
  - the rendering safe of explosive devices;
  - establishing registration of evacuees;
  - establishing victim registration/deceased/alive;
  - controlling entry/egress points from the cold zone and outer cordon;
  - staging and marshalling areas off-site for supporting agencies and resources;
  - coordination of public protection strategies including evacuation and adjacent refuge in liaison with Queensland Health;
  - liaison with QFES/QAS/QH/ Australian Defence Force (ADF) at on and off-site locations;
  - evidence security – where criminal or negligence origins are evident in liaison with Queensland Health; and
  - dealing with the media in liaison with Queensland Health and the QFES HAZMAT/Fire Controller.
- 22.** QPS is the controlling and coordinating authority across all agencies when the incident is the result of terrorist or criminal action and/or in circumstances where a CBR emergency is declared under the provisions of the *Public Safety Preservation Act 1986*. In this capacity QPS maintains plans and capabilities for the control and coordination of the incident and the coordination of response agencies.

## Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS)

- 23.** The QAS is responsible for:
- On-site medical care; and
  - Establishment of casualty collection, initial triage, treatment and transport areas in the cold zone.

## RESPONSE

24. The safe management of a biological incident requires a multi-agency approach between the lead agency and the combatant agency, or agencies as per the authority and responsibility under the relevant legislation as identified in the appropriate Annex.
25. Specific agency response procedures are not covered in this Plan, as this is the responsibility of individual agencies.

## Operational arrangements

26. One of the primary difficulties with biological agents is that there may be no obvious evidence of a release. Hence, the first sign that a biological agent has been released may be the development of cases of the disease in the community. A threat may be recognised through:
  - intelligence information;
  - the discovery or receipt of a package suspected to contain a biological agent;
  - the identification of a disease caused by a biological terrorism agent; and
  - the detection of an unexplained illness or death through gathering and analysis of health surveillance data.
27. The relevant agencies will initially respond to the incident according to the manner in which the incident manifests. As biological hazards are undetectable without appropriate laboratory equipment, in many instances QFES, QPS and QAS may respond first to a biological incident which may only subsequently be identified as such. The incident may also only be recognised as a deliberate or terrorist act after the initial response.
28. Biological terrorism events may be small-scale local incidents. A site response may be required through the discovery of a package suspected of containing a biological agent, suspicious biological materials, or a clandestine laboratory. These events are essentially biological hazardous materials incidents and should be addressed according to the usual HazMat protocols in terms of command and control. They are also crime scenes that must be investigated by police or security agencies.
29. As soon as there is reasonable suspicion that a release, or the threatened release, of a biological agent be the result of a terrorist or criminally instigated action, QPS will be the controlling and coordinating authority for the response across all agencies and the Queensland counter terrorism arrangements activated. Refer to the QCTP for the operational and coordination arrangements.
30. CBR incidents where there is no suspicion of a deliberate or threatened release are to be managed in accordance with the established arrangements.
31. Notification of an incident to Queensland Health can occur through several approaches such as:
  - a. QAS, QFES or QPS (after consultation with QFES) if they are the first responder;
  - b. QFES Research and Scientific Branch;
  - c. A member of the public; and
  - d. Commonwealth or other jurisdictions.
32. Queensland Health will apply a graded approach to emergency response. This may include phone advice, directing the Public Health Unit, or other persons, or officers of Queensland Health who have appropriate experience in that location, to supervise the response actions, or Communicable Disease Branch may respond directly. Alternatively, Queensland may seek advice from other jurisdictions.
33. For large scale responses the Queensland Health casualty management strategy includes four components; mass medication, mass treatment, medical transportation and casualty coordination. These are described in detail in Queensland Health planning arrangements and are supported by fatality management and logistics strategies.

## RECOVERY

34. Determination of when the emergency response phase is completed will be at the discretion of the lead agency. The formal handover of the site or situation to the identified lead recovery agency is dependent on the nature of the incident and whether QPS seeks control of the site to undertake an investigation. The protocols described within the State Hazardous Materials Incident Recovery Plan are applied.
35. The State Hazardous Materials Incident Recovery Plan provides an agreed set of protocols for an efficient multi-agency approach to the recovery phase of a hazardous materials incident where it involves or has the potential to involve a recovery operation that is beyond the capability of a single state government agency.

## REVIEW

36. The Biological Plan will be reviewed every two years or sooner such as an event or other as identified by the State CBRN Committee.
37. Agencies should submit proposed amendments to the State CBRN Committee for evaluation; and following endorsement amendments to the Plan are to be issued to all stakeholders.