Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) response to ACIL Allen evaluation of the Biocontrol Research for Weed Management (Stage 1&2) Program

#	Project	ACIL Allen recommendations	CSIRO response
1.	**Biocontrol Research for Weed Management (Stage 1&2) Program**	Future biocontrol research projects should incorporate comprehensive lifecycle planning from the outset that explicitly addresses implementation pathways, including integration with existing weed control methods, monitoring protocols, and post-control site rehabilitation requirements, even if full implementation funding is not initially secured.	We acknowledge the importance of incorporating comprehensive lifecycle planning into biocontrol research projects from the outset. We agree that planning should consider implementation pathways, integration with existing weed control methods, monitoring protocols, and post-control site rehabilitation requirements, especially for promising candidate agents. However, we must emphasise the high-risk nature of biocontrol research. A significant proportion of candidate agents do not meet the stringent host-specificity requirements for release in Australia. Therefore, investing substantial resources in detailed implementation planning for every candidate agent, before its safety and efficacy are established, would be inefficient and could lead to unrealistic expectations among stakeholders. Instead, we propose a phased approach to lifecycle planning. Initial planning will focus on feasibility and risk assessment, including preliminary considerations of implementation pathways. Once a candidate agent demonstrates sufficient promise and progresses towards release, we will then develop detailed implementation plans in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, ensuring integration with existing management practices.

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2.	**Biocontrol Research for Weed Management (Stage 1&2) Program**	Future biocontrol research projects should retain flexible funding mechanisms that allow rapid redirection of resources when initial approaches prove unsuccessful, supported by clear decision triggers for continuing or terminating specific research pathways.	We fully support the recommendation for flexible funding mechanisms that enable rapid redirection of resources when initial approaches prove unsuccessful. We recognise the dynamic nature of biocontrol research, and the importance of adapting strategies based on emerging scientific findings. Our current project management practices already incorporate mechanisms for flexibility, including the ability to utilise contract variation processes with the Trust. These processes allow us to adjust project scope and resource allocation in response to unforeseen scientific challenges or when initial research pathways prove less promising. Furthermore, we are committed to strengthening our decision-making frameworks by explicitly defining clear triggers for continuing or terminating specific research pathways. For example, our host-specificity testing follows a tiered approach, with Tier I and Tier II phases. Transition from Tier I to Tier II is contingent upon demonstrable host-specificity of a candidate agent to only a limited subset of the highest priority (at-risk) non-target plant species. This clear decision point ensures that resources are directed towards the most promising candidates, while preventing unnecessary investment in agents that do not meet rigorous safety standards.

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3.	**Biocontrol Research for Weed Management (Stage 1&2) Program**	The prioritisation framework developed in this project should be adopted as a model for future biocontrol initiatives, with emphasis on maintaining its adaptability to incorporate new evidence while providing clear decision-making criteria.	We wholeheartedly agree with the recommendation to adopt and adapt the prioritisation framework developed in this project as a model for future biocontrol initiatives. We recognise its value in providing clear decision-making criteria while maintaining the necessary flexibility to incorporate new evidence. To ensure the framework remains dynamic and responsive, we propose the following enhancements. First, we will work with NSW DPI to regularly update the list of 266 environmental weed species in NSW. This will ensure that emerging species are incorporated into the analysis, maintaining the framework's currency. Second, we will expand the framework to explicitly incorporate criteria that address the impacts of weeds on the biocultural values of Aboriginal peoples in NSW. Finally, where resources allow, we will conduct annual reassessments of the prioritisation analysis. This will provide timely insights to inform each new implementation plan, ensuring that our biocontrol efforts are strategically aligned with the most pressing weed management needs.