

SERVICE DELIVERY – WHAT DO OUR CLIENTS THINK?

Key findings from the recent JTAA review into DPI&F services

Service Delivery Review – We have listened

The Queensland Government wants to improve its service delivery and to move from a 'service-centric' to a more client focused approach. To this end, the Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries (DPI&F) engaged Jan Taylor and Associates Australia (JTAA) to ask our clients and staff about the current service delivery environment and how it can be improved to better meet the needs of our clients into the future.

It is clear from the results of JTAA's review that DPI&F clients and staff want change. Industry want change to ensure services enable them to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Staff want improvements to the current service delivery environment and to be able to adopt more modern approaches into the way they deliver services. Above all, everybody agreed that the existing service delivery problems can be fixed and that we need to work collaboratively to address these challenges.

The following summarises the key findings of the review.

Expectations of DPI&F's clients

On behalf of DPI&F, JTAA spoke to over 400 people statewide ranging from small to large agribusinesses, financial institutions and agribanks, peak bodies and staff. Through this process, it is clear that the service expectations amongst different groups vary considerably. For example:

- ▶ **Small agribusinesses** predominantly want support from DPI&F at a direct production level, particularly agronomy services like those provided in the past.
- ▶ **Medium to large agribusinesses** want leadership on more industry level issues (i.e. market access) and greater cross government coordination and efficiencies.
- ▶ **Staff** want to use more innovative and modern modes of service delivery but feel restricted due to current policies and technology blockages.
- ▶ **Agribanks** stated DPI&F must maintain high biosecurity standards because of the potential risks to market access (and profitability).
- ▶ **Peak bodies** want DPI&F to maintain strong science research complemented by modern extension services but the department must not return to the hands-on extension of the past.

The challenge for DPI&F is to provide the right balance of direct and indirect services to better meet our various client and stakeholder competing needs.

Participant's perception of DPI&F's role

All participants acknowledged the change in role and positioning of DPI&F as an economic development agency. However, JTAA reported there is widespread confusion and uncertainty about what this means in practice. Staff and industry believed DPI&F was trying to meet the needs of a broad client base, as it used to, but without the resources or expertise.

Participants were asked to discuss what they thought DPI&F's role was - the dominant response was that DPI&F had six distinctive roles:

- ▶ **Biosecurity** – all participants were unequivocal about biosecurity being a pivotal role for DPI&F and saw it as a non-negotiable role for the government.
- ▶ **Strategic analysis** – DPI&F was seen to have a significant role in identifying and contributing to knowledge, best practice and innovation. In this role DPI&F should be a commodity analyst alongside industry bodies, and investigate where the transfer of techniques and knowledge might add to profitability elsewhere.
- ▶ **Strategic R&D** – participants all agreed that DPI&F should have a sound science base and actively invest in science in a strategic and visionary way. DPI&F should also do more benchmarking of commodity production standards.
- ▶ **Strategic interventions** – DPI&F has a role in leading cross-government responses to sector crises and reducing 'red tape' and inconsistencies between jurisdictions. Participants also suggested new roles, such as promoting careers in agriculture and redressing the shortfall in available labour.
- ▶ **Market development and resource management** – participants expected the DPI&F to scan markets and the environment to assess strategic opportunities.
- ▶ **Industry champions** – industry want DPI&F and the Minister to provide advocacy and leadership across government - DPI&F should be a 'champion' for primary industries.



Service delivery expectations

Clients were generally positive about their experiences with individual DPI&F officers however, focus group participants reported that DPI&F is no longer close to its traditional client base and therefore out of touch with the needs of clients.

There is a strong view both internally and externally that there are significant gaps in service delivery and expectations in terms of levels of service, mode of delivery, access to research, etc are not being met. The following summarises some of the key focus group discussions on the matter:

- ▶ **Service delivery environment** – participants questioned whether DPI&F really knew what its service role should be in a free market environment, and whether clients really know what they can expect of government in today's marketplace.
- ▶ **Previous roles and standards** – service delivery expectations seem to be shaped largely by what clients received in the past. Some staff claimed that hands-on extension provided by DPI&F in the past have conditioned both industry and staff to see this as a critical role for government.
- ▶ **Competing requirements** – participants criticised DPI&F's role as a *de facto* emergency services department when natural disasters occur. Often the most basic, and critical services were unavailable as staff were assisting with natural disaster requirements. Participants reported this happened regularly and yet DPI&F had no long term arrangements to manage such situations.

Current Service Environment

In order to improve services, DPI&F need to better understand what services were being accessed, by whom and how? JTAA reported the following:

- ▶ **Who and how people contact DPI&F**
 - Most DPI&F staff contacts are with individual primary producers (41%).
 - Over 75% of communication is by telephone or email.
 - About 15 to 20% of staff communication with clients is by face to face.
 - Most DPI&F clients own and use a mobile, have internet connection and email.
 - However, only 63% of those with internet connection use the DPI&F website.
- ▶ **Who calls the Call Centre and why?**
 - From 1 January 2006 to 31 December 2007, the Call Centre received 251,991 contacts (Householders 27%, Primary Producers 24%, Business People 20%).
 - 57% of calls related to plant and animal biosecurity and fire ant matters.
 - Contacts about fisheries matters (10%) were also common.

Preferred and future methods of contact

Participants were asked what service delivery methods they preferred and what technology they saw as being beneficial in the fast, efficient delivery of DPI&F services. Below are the key mechanisms identified by industry and staff:

- ▶ **On-farm** - Field days, meetings and demonstrations.
- ▶ **Regional service hubs** - with outreach through mobile offices.
- ▶ **Call Centre** - essential to have one number call centre to receive information, be referred or conduct simple transactions quickly.
- ▶ **Website** - updated in 'real time'; providing up to date news and information.
- ▶ **Web technology** - cross-over of web formats and capability into 'next generation' mobiles.
- ▶ **Face to face** - in some circumstances, face to face service delivery given by someone with credibility is only effective mode.
- ▶ **SMS** - the readily mobile nature of SMS, as opposed to computers, was cited as a favourable technology, particularly in emergencies.
- ▶ **Social Networking** - such as blogs and 'Facebook' for communication with interest and producer groups effectively.
- ▶ **Other Media** - distribution of DVD and CD media in lieu or along with live demonstrations.

The Way Forward

The recurrent and key message that was given to us by you is there needs to be a fundamental change in the way DPI&F does business. DPI&F has heard you and will begin to implement change so that we:

- ▶ Better address our client needs.
- ▶ Transition our services to be more modern and 'client-centric'.
- ▶ Ensure the delivery of services is complementary and more integrated.
- ▶ Balance client expectations by providing an appropriate blend of direct and indirect services.
- ▶ Communicate more effectively DPI&F's direction, focus and intentions so that client's have a better understanding of what they can expect now and in the future.