

A new approach to managing invasive pests at the local government level

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Summary Southern Downs Regional Council (SDRC) has approved and is implementing an innovative invasive pest management policy through adoption of its Invasive Pests Control Scheme (IPCS).

Council expects all land owners to control invasive pests, so as to reduce their spread and the impacts they may impose to other lands and the owners of those lands. If those landholders who don't control pests are allowed to continue to do so, pests keep spreading and those doing the right thing will continue to have to address the impacts made by others' complacency.

Traditional invasive pest compliance processes have been resource intensive – often Council's enforcement costs will exceed the cost of control work – and, by and large, have been ineffective in reducing the impacts of invasive pests.

The IPCS introduces a levy on all rateable land within certain differential general rating categories – approximately 6000 properties. The levy is calculated according to unimproved land value, with a minimum set at \$500. Council grants an upfront 100% rebate of the levy at rates issue. Owners of relevant land are required to submit invasive pest control plans and carry out documented control works, or their levy concession is revoked via issue of a supplementary rates notice.

2017/2018 is the first year of the IPCS but Council is very pleased with results achieved thus far. A 90% return rate of control plans by landowners, an unprecedented amount of invasive pest control work occurring across the region and stimulation of the local contract market and other related industries all point to success.

Keywords Invasive pests, compliance, levy.