



Security Sensitive Biological Agents Regulatory Scheme

SSBA – Fact sheet 1 – Overview

October 2014

Security of Biological Agents in Australia

The deliberate release of harmful biological agents such as viruses, bacteria, fungi and toxins has the potential to cause significant damage to human health, the environment and the Australian economy.

The Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) *Report on the Regulation and Control of Biological Agents* 2006 (the Report) identified that existing regulations were focused on safety rather than security; and that there was a need to regulate the secure storage, possession, use and transport of biological agents to minimise the risk of use for terrorism or criminal purposes.

Before the Security Sensitive Biological Agents (SSBA) Regulatory Scheme, there were few controls governing the security of biological agents in Australia.

Background

In December 2002, COAG agreed to a national review of the regulation, reporting and security around the storage, sale and handling of hazardous materials. The review was conducted in four parts covering ammonium nitrate, radiological, biological and chemical materials.

The review was one of several government initiatives in the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) security domain and formed a part of the broader National CBRN Security Strategy. The Australian Government and state and territory governments continue to work together to limit the likelihood of a terrorist act occurring, while simultaneously increasing our response preparedness.

On 13 April 2007, COAG considered the recommendations of the Report and agreed to the establishment of a national regulatory scheme for biological agents of security concern. The Report recommended that the most effective and efficient means of minimising security risks posed by security sensitive biological agents (SSBAs) was to establish a national regulatory scheme that has:

- a two-tiered list of SSBAs;
- a body to administer the legislation;
- a National Register;

- registration and reporting requirements;
- transport requirements; and
- education and awareness raising activities.

The SSBA Regulatory Scheme

The aim of the SSBA Regulatory Scheme is to limit opportunities for acts of bioterrorism or biocrime to occur using harmful biological agents.

The regulatory scheme was developed using risk management principles to achieve a balance between counter-terrorism concerns and the interests of the regulated community. The regulatory scheme aims to maintain full access to SSBAs for those with a legitimate need.

The administration of the SSBA Regulatory Scheme resides within the Australian Government Health portfolio. The scheme is built around a two tiered List of SSBAs and requires all entities and facilities handling SSBAs to comply with the *National Health Security Act 2007*, the *National Health Security Regulations 2008* and the SSBA Standards.