

5 February 2026

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry  
GPO Box 858  
Canberra ACT 2601, Australia  
Via: Have your say portal

### **RE: Submission to the Review of Devitalisation Requirements for Cut Flowers and Foliage**

Greenlife Industry Australia welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Review of Devitalisation Requirements for Fresh Cut Flower and Foliage Imports: Draft Report. As the national peak body representing Australia's nursery and green life production sector, we strongly support robust, science-based biosecurity settings that protect plant industries, the environment, and the broader economy.

#### **About Greenlife Industry Australia**

Greenlife Industry Australia (GIA) is the national peak body representing Australia's nursery and green life production sector, encompassing production nurseries, retail nurseries, landscape suppliers, allied businesses, and the broader plant supply chain. The industry contributes billions to the Australian economy each year and underpins essential national priorities including urban greening, biodiversity restoration, climate resilience, and the supply of high-quality plant material to horticulture, landscaping, and environmental markets. GIA works closely with government, research partners, and industry stakeholders to strengthen biosecurity, support workforce development, and ensure the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of Australia's green life sector.

#### **1. Position Summary**

GIA does not support the proposed removal of devitalisation requirements for imported cut flowers and foliage. The draft report concludes that the risk of propagation and biosecurity issues without devitalisation is low, but recent industry feedback and publicly reported concerns indicate that the risk profile is materially higher than the draft assessment suggests. The nursery sector is particularly concerned about the unintended consequences of relaxing controls, including the potential for imported plant material to be diverted into propagation pathways.

#### **2. Evidence of Industry Concern**

Recent reporting highlights significant unease among Australian growers regarding the proposal to discontinue glyphosate-based devitalisation. According to ABC Rural, the federal government's plan to stop treating imported flowers with glyphosate has prompted strong objections from domestic producers, who fear increased exposure to pests and diseases if the treatment is removed. The article notes that devitalisation currently prevents propagation and helps reduce the spread of biosecurity risks, and that growers believe the proposed change lacks sufficient evidence to justify altering long standing protections.

These concerns align closely with those of the nursery industry, which relies on a secure, clean supply chain to protect Australia's \$3 billion green life sector and the ecosystems it supports.

### **3. Risk of Diversion Into Propagation**

The nursery industry sees a significant and credible risk that, if devitalisation requirements are removed, imported plant material could be brought into Australia under the guise of floristry use and subsequently diverted into propagation. This risk is not hypothetical:

- Many imported cut flower species are capable of vegetative propagation if not devitalised.
- The economic incentive to circumvent propagation restrictions is real, particularly for high value or novel varieties.
- Once propagules enter the domestic production system, detection is extremely difficult, and eradication is often impossible.

Such diversion would directly undermine the purpose of Australia's biosecurity framework and expose the nursery and wider horticultural industries to avoidable threats.

### **4. Biosecurity Performance of Current Measures**

Evidence cited in industry commentary indicates that since import conditions were strengthened in 2018, there has been a 70% reduction in the detection of quarantine pests on imported cut flowers and foliage. This demonstrates that the current system is effective and that devitalisation plays a meaningful role in reducing pest incursions.

Removing a measure that has contributed to improved biosecurity outcomes, without compelling evidence that the risk has diminished, would be inconsistent with the precautionary principle that underpins Australia's biosecurity system.

### **5. Alignment With National Biosecurity Objectives**

Australia's biosecurity strategy emphasises prevention, early detection, and risk minimisation. Relaxing devitalisation requirements would:

- Increase the likelihood of exotic pests entering the nursery supply chain.
- Create enforcement challenges for distinguishing legitimate floristry imports from material intended for propagation.
- Shift risk and cost burdens onto domestic growers, state agencies, and the environment.

Given the scale of Australia's nursery and greenlife sector and its role in urban greening, biodiversity, and climate resilience, any increase in biosecurity risk has broad national implications.

### **6. Recommendation**

GIA recommends that DAFF:

1. Retain the current devitalisation requirements for all imported cut flowers and foliage.
2. Undertake further consultation with nursery and greenlife producers, who face unique propagation related risks not fully captured in the draft report.
3. Conduct additional risk analysis on diversion pathways and the feasibility of enforcement if devitalisation is removed.
4. Maintain a precautionary approach until robust evidence demonstrates that removal of devitalisation will not increase biosecurity risk.

## **Conclusion**

The nursery industry supports efficient trade but cannot support changes that increase the likelihood of exotic pest introduction or enable the propagation of unassessed plant material. The current devitalisation requirements are a critical safeguard. Removing them would create unnecessary and avoidable biosecurity exposure for Australian growers, the environment, and the broader economy.

GIA appreciates the opportunity to provide input and would welcome further engagement with DAFF as the review progresses.

To discuss the recommendations outlined in this submission, please contact Sean Cole, CEO at [sean.cole@greenlifeindustry.org.au](mailto:sean.cole@greenlifeindustry.org.au) or on 0435 991 370.

Yours sincerely,



Sean Cole,  
CEO