

Hon Damien O'Connor

MP for West Coast-Tasman
Minister of Agriculture
Minister for Biosecurity
Minister for Land Information
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Rt Hon Simon Upton
Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment
Email to: Kelly.Halvey@pce.parliament.nz

Dear Simon

Thank you for your correspondence of 13 February about the future of the National Wilding Conifer Control Programme.

I was pleased to be able to boost funding for the Programme in Budget 2019, and again in 2020 through a large injection of funding for a fixed period to accelerate control activities and provide assistance to regional economies to support covid recovery. As you identify in your letter, annual baseline funding for the Programme is locked in at \$10 million per year from 2024/25. This is a higher level of baseline funding than was previously available.

Budget 2020 allocated \$100 million to the Programme. This funding was front loaded into years one and two with around \$65 million spent on controlling highest priority infestations. Years three and four have funding allocations of \$25 million and \$10 million respectively.

Biosecurity New Zealand is currently working with regional Programme partners to undertake operational planning for the 2023-24 year. The operational plans will focus on delivering high priority scheduled maintenance control to remove seedlings germinating in previously controlled areas. The outcome of this process will provide an accurate picture of the work that will be delivered over the coming year and work that will need to be deferred until it can be resourced.

The Programme has proven to be highly successful, in large part due to the collaborative approach and involvement from all parties doing what they can to prevent the spread and remove infestations. I can confirm that my officials are in the process of exploring future opportunities to increase other sources of funding for the Programme to complement the need for ongoing Crown investment.

I will continue to advocate strongly for the importance of this successful programme and the need for ongoing resourcing from the Crown and other parties.

Yours sincerely

Hon Damien O'Connor
Minister for Biosecurity