Australian Government
Department of Health
Office of the Gene Technology Regulator

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Issue of licence DIR 156 to the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) University for the limited and controlled release of GM buffalo grass

On 25 January 2018, the Gene Technology Regulator invited submissions on the consultation version of the Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan (RARMP) for licence application DIR 156 from RMIT University.

The Regulator has now issued a licence in response to application DIR 156, authorising the limited and controlled release (field trial) of buffalo grass genetically modified (GM) for herbicide tolerance and dwarf phenotype.

The field trial is authorised to take place between April 2018 and April 2019 in Bundoora, Victoria, on a maximum area of 200 m^2 per year. The purpose of the field trial is to assess the agronomic characteristics of the GM buffalo grass. The GM buffalo grass grown in this field trial would not be used for human food or animal feed.

The Regulator's decision to issue the licence was made after consultation on the RARMP with the public, State and Territory governments, Australian Government agencies, the Minister for the Environment, the Gene Technology Technical Advisory Committee and local councils, as required by the *Gene Technology Act 2000* and the corresponding State and Territory legislation.

The Regulator wishes to thank submitters for their contributions. She considered all submissions provided during the consultation process that related to the health and safety of people or the protection of the environment. The comments were considered in the context of current scientific information and used in finalising the RARMP. The finalised RARMP informed the Regulator's decision to issue the licence.

The finalised RARMP concludes that this limited and controlled release poses negligible risks to the health and safety of people and the environment and does not require specific risk treatment measures. However, licence conditions have been imposed to restrict spread and persistence of the GMOs and their genetic material in the environment and to limit the release in size, location and duration, as these were important considerations in the evaluation process.

Appendix A of the RARMP summarises the advice received from prescribed experts, agencies and authorities, and Appendix B the submission received from the public. The appendices indicate how issues raised relating to risks to human health and safety or the environment were considered in preparing and finalising the document.

The finalised RARMP, together with a summary of the RARMP, a set of Questions and Answers on this decision and a copy of the licence, can be obtained on-line from the DIR 156 page of the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator's website or requested via the contacts detailed below.

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