



## 2017 Environmental Biosecurity Roundtables

### Sydney Summary Report

The 2017 National Biosecurity Environmental Biosecurity Roundtable was held in Sydney, NSW on Thursday, 16 November 2017.

This event was hosted by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources and the Department of the Environment and Energy. The roundtable was the second environmental roundtable held in 2017, with the first held on 29 June in Canberra.

Fifty environmental biosecurity stakeholders attended the roundtable, representing a diverse range of sectors, including environmental non-government organisations, land management and conservation, research organisations and Commonwealth and state governments.

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources and the Department of the Environment and Energy both provided updates on priority environmental biosecurity activities. These included:

- Proposed updates to the live import list under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999
- activities funded under the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper and National Landcare Program (Phase 2)
- the National Environmental Biosecurity Stocktake project
- the development of a National Priority List of Exotic Environmental Pests and Diseases
- the 2017 Priorities for Australia's Biosecurity System independent report
- review of the National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement, and
- the establishment of an Environment and Invasives Committee under the National Biosecurity Committee (NBC).

Participants took part in a range of workshops on the environmental biosecurity stocktake, draft National Biosecurity Statement, an Industry and Community Advisory Group to directly engage with NBC and on future engagement on Environmental Biosecurity next year. In addition to written feedback provided by table groups, participants also took part in live polls using Poll Everywhere.

#### What we heard from participants

The need for clear priorities was a major theme of the day. In a live poll, participants expressed an interest in contributing to the prioritisation of environmental biosecurity issues and risks.

### Presentations

Presentations began with Lyn O'Connell (Department of Agriculture and Water Resources) and Milena Rafic (Department of the Environment and Energy) who provided departmental updates. Dr Angus Carnegie (NSW Department of Primary Industries) presented on the risks and costs of exotic pests to Australian forests and provided an interesting insight into forestry industry preparedness activities and the challenges with engagement. Dr Lori Lach (James Cook University) and Scott Buchanan (Wet Tropics Management Authority) talked about community-led efforts to eradicate yellow crazy ants in the Wet Tropics region; successful initiatives have included a community

champions program and a community taskforce which crowd-sourced funding of \$20,000 towards eradication. Mike Welling (WEJUGO) presented on the environmental footprint and biosecurity risks associated with recreation and tourism; the presentation focused on the potential to use data and analytics to deliver tailored biosecurity messages to travellers.

### Key learnings

- The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources and the Department of the Environment and Energy are working on a number of key activities and projects in relation to environmental biosecurity. These span from prevention and preparedness (*for example, maintaining the live animal prohibited import list and the indigenous ranger program*) to response and eradication (*for example, funding for red imported fire ants eradication*).
- We cannot underestimate the importance of forest biosecurity. Prevention activities and timely intervention are crucial to protect valuable timber production industries.
- Investment in community engagement through the yellow crazy ant eradication program has been very successful and resulted in a reduction in the number of ants.
- Using technology and data analytics to communicate biosecurity messages could help minimise the biosecurity risks associated with increasing recreational tourism.

## Workshop activities

### Environmental Biosecurity Stocktake

Amy Donaldson from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources presented on the National environmental biosecurity stocktake. The presentation outlined its purpose and what data was collected; preliminary findings, including potential gaps; and next steps. Participants were then invited to take part in an interactive session in their table groups to categorise 'activity types'.

An email has been sent to representatives who agreed to participate in the stocktake seeking input on their environmental biosecurity activities. This information will be provided to the National Biosecurity Committee along with the national environmental biosecurity stocktake. If you would like to participate, please email your contact details to: [biosecurityroundtable@agriculture.gov.au](mailto:biosecurityroundtable@agriculture.gov.au)

### Priorities for Australia's Biosecurity System report – draft National Biosecurity Statement

Josephine Laduzko from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources presented on the Priorities for Australia's Biosecurity System report, the result of an independent review of the national biosecurity system and the intergovernmental agreement on biosecurity (IGAB) finalised in 2017. The report listed 42 recommendations aimed at strengthening the national biosecurity system over the next five to ten years. Some of the recommendations were immediately endorsed by ministers – one of which was recommendation 2 – the development of a National Biosecurity Statement. Participants were asked to give feedback in table groups about how they think the statement should be worded. A summary of the comments is below.

- Our engagement needs to be more tailored to the environment sector and the community.
- We need to simplify the language in which we communicate to stakeholders and use, less 'government speak'.
- We need to clearly define what shared responsibility means and what we expect from the environmental sector.

- We need to use images, videos and language that connect with people's emotions/values and describe the dangers and consequences from exotic pests and diseases.

Feedback from the roundtable will be considered in developing a draft statement and participants will also be invited to a biosecurity workshop, to be held in March 2018, to develop a draft statement. Open public consultation on the draft statement will follow, before it goes to the National Biosecurity Committee, industry and community for endorsement. The statement will be released along with a consolidated national response to the Priorities for Australia's Biosecurity System report and new Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity.

### **National Priority List of Exotic Environmental Pests and Diseases**

Sandra Parsons from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources presented on the Priority List of Exotic Environmental Pests and Diseases. The list is one of six recommendations out of the Priorities for Australia's Biosecurity System report directly related to environmental biosecurity. Table groups were asked to think about the purpose of the list and how it would be utilised by them or their organisation.

- Participants acknowledged that the purpose of the list was to help improve our biosecurity preparedness and our capacity respond to an incursion.
- When asked what would define a priority influence to act on a pest, three main criteria were suggested, these were; Impact level, feasibility of eradication/control and risk of spread.
- Participants noted that the list would be beneficial because: it would help focus resources to manage responses or fund research; raise awareness and act as a conduit to communicate with the community; and aid in detection and response.

Attendees and their networks are invited to nominate exotic pests and diseases that their organisation considers as a concern and any relevant prioritisation methodologies that should be considered. Nominations can be sent to [environmentalpestlist@agriculture.gov.au](mailto:environmentalpestlist@agriculture.gov.au)

### **NEBRA review implementation**

Karina Keast from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources talked about the National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement (NEBRA) review that was finalised in early 2017. The independent review made 16 recommendations across four broad themes. Participants were asked to discuss three of the recommendations (5, 10 & 13) and share their thoughts. Below is a summary of their feedback.

- The NEBRA custodian should be able to identify priorities, develop a framework for engagement with stakeholders and provide information to the community on their obligations and contribution.
- Among attendees there was some interest in possible interaction with the NEBRA custodian. Some were also interested in becoming a signatory, however, resources at hand were limited mostly to community outreach, expertise and volunteer work.
- All tables supported the concept of 'transition to management' for NEBRA responses, however many noted that there should be flexibility (longer) for the 12 month timeframe.
- Many groups believed that transition to management activities should be ongoing and focus on ongoing containment.
- Groups could see themselves playing a role in transition to management activities through; research and advice; sampling and surveillance; and engagement and awareness.

## **Future engagement on environmental biosecurity**

Josephine Laduzko from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources led a workshop on future engagement on environmental biosecurity. The session was focussed on getting participants' views on how they would prefer consultation and engagement on environmental biosecurity issues to take place. Opportunities for future engagement will be increased through the formation of a new Industry and Community Advisory Group, which will provide advice to the National Biosecurity Committee. There will also be a change to the existing Invasive Plants and Animals Committee, which will be replaced by an Environment and Invasives Committee (EIC). An EIC will have a clear mandate to include environmental biosecurity issues together with broadened coverage of invasive plants and animals, while maintaining its focus on management of established plant and animal pests.

With regards to the advisory group, participant's feedback indicated that an advisory group should:

- be representative and reflect the views of all sectors within the community
- share information openly and engage with stakeholders
- provide community assurance and source technical advice, and
- set reasonable expectations & terms of reference.

### **Next steps...**

Participants were asked to vote on their preferences for engagement through the environmental biosecurity roundtables next year. The majority indicated that they would like to see two environmental biosecurity roundtables run again next year. In regards to format of the roundtables, 41 per cent voted to have a similar mix of presentations and workshops and 55 per cent voted for more open discussion and question time.

The Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources and the Department of the Environment and Energy would like to thank everyone who participated in the Sydney Environmental Biosecurity Roundtable for their time and contributions. We look forward to working with you in 2018.

**We value your feedback – if you have suggestions about this roundtable or next year's Environmental Biosecurity Roundtable program please email us at:  
[biosecurityroundtable@agriculture.gov.au](mailto:biosecurityroundtable@agriculture.gov.au)**