



Communique

Meeting 99 – 14 November 2024

The DAFF Cargo Consultative Committee (DCCC) Meeting 99 convened at Ai Group, Level 5, 441 St Kilda Road, Melbourne, and virtually.

DCCC Meeting 99 was the first meeting chaired by Monica Collins, the new First Assistant Secretary, Biosecurity Operations Division.

The Chair opened the meeting with thanks to the Ai Group for hosting the meeting; an acknowledgement of country provided by Holly Buckle; and introductions to new DCCC departmental executive member Martin Moseley, Assistant Secretary, Audit and Assurance Branch, Compliance and Enforcement Division.

The chair then acknowledged the strong contribution of her predecessors, Andrew Patterson and Tina Hutchison, in leading the DCCC over the past few years, and reiterated BOD's commitment to the DCCC and the close partnerships it has developed.

The minutes from DCCC meeting 98 were accepted and all action items agreed as having been addressed, either through inclusion in the DCCC meeting 99 agenda, sharing of papers and presentations, or discussions being taken offline and addressed as agreed.

The Chair updated DCCC members on developments under DAFF's 'One DAFF' transformation agenda and the Biosecurity uplift program of work. There is an ongoing focus on biosecurity sustainable funding, with the government committing to a sustainable funding model, enabling long term planning to ensure DAFF has the capability and capacity to address the ever-shifting trade patterns and volumes and emerging biosecurity risks. Through this work the Biosecurity Operations Division (BOD) is focusing on:

- Enhancing our regulatory practice
- Uplifting our digital and data maturity
- Strengthening our policy leadership capability
- Investing in innovation and continuous improvements
- Further developing our people, to support workplace culture
- Actively managing and uplifting workplace health and safety.

An overview was then provided on the department's establishment of the Office of the Chief Regulatory Officer and reforms to DAFF business systems through the Take Farmers to Market and Simplified Targeting and Enhanced Processing System (STEPS) programs.

Regulation is a core responsibility of the department. The Office of the Chief Regulatory Officer is one of the priority changes under DAFF's Organisation Design project, designed to uplift regulatory maturity and performance across the department through a coherent and robust approach to regulatory stewardship. While DAFF has a large professional regulatory workforce, with complex and challenging work, an opportunity exists to improve regulatory delivery and build a culture of continuous improvement.

Both the Take Farmers to Market and STEPS programs of work have begun to deliver reforms to digitise, modernise and improve the reliability of biosecurity and export systems and will continue this journey over the coming years.

Meeting discussions then turned to the strategic priorities for operational biosecurity risk management with updates provided on; the low value cargo pathway review; strategic industry engagement and development of a BOD landing page; and compliance-based schemes, including the compliance-based intervention scheme (CBIS), the highly compliant importer scheme (HCI) and the Class19 Approved Arrangement.

An update was then provided to the group on the recently released Commonwealth Biosecurity Funding and Expenditure Report. The report was an outcome of the Australian Government's 2023-24 Budget commitment to providing greater transparency and accountability in biosecurity funding and expenditure. This first version, of what will become an annual report, covers the 2023-24 financial year. The report marks the first time that more detailed information on biosecurity finances has been made available to the public, offering more comprehensive data than existing departmental reports such as the Portfolio Budget Statement and corporate plan. The report highlights the programs of biosecurity work being delivered with this funding.

A cargo operations update was provided to the group confirming continued high volumes of entry lodgements and an elevated inspection activity workload, with both expected to increase in the lead up to the traditional Christmas peak. The department anticipates its ability to meet the client service standards timeframes for the inspection of non-urgent commodities will come under further pressure in the short to medium term. A range of strategies are being implemented to assist with the increased workload, including, recruitment, cross training of existing staff, encouraging increased take up of automation arrangements, and ongoing review of intervention levels.

Agenda items raised by Industry members were discussed, including delays in imported seafood inspections and options for DCCC members to assist DAFF to reduce volume in the document assessment and inspections channels. Utilisation of the strategies outlined in the cargo operations update were further encouraged.

The meeting concluded with reports tabled on:

- Biosecurity Cost Recovery Arrangements – Financial Performance for FY 2023-24
- Compliance Activity Snapshot
- Compliance Audit Report
- Approved Arrangement Update
- Imported Food Trial Update.

In closing, the Chair thanked members for their high level of engagement and noted the next DCCC meeting was DCCC 100, with the department planning on marking the occasion appropriately.

DCCC Industry representative attendees

- Carolyn Macgill, Food Importers Group
- Dianne Tipping, Export Council of Australia
- Bradley Leonard, International Forwarders and Custom Brokers Association of Australia
- Paul Bagnall, Conference of Asia Pacific Express Carriers
- Sal Milici, Freight and Trade Alliance
- Peter Van Duyn, International Cargo Handling Coordination Association
- Melwyn Noronha, Shipping Australia Ltd
- Sally Glover, Australia Post
- Bianca Flint, Freight and Trade Alliance
- Suzanne Fosbery, Ports Australia