**Lunch with Paul Burke, facilitated by Monica Collins**

Monica Collins:
Well, thanks everyone for joining today.

The second lunchtime leadership series, and today we're honoured to have Paul Burke come and speak to us before we kick off, though I'd just like to start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land that we're meeting on, which for me I'm in Canberra, so I'm in the land of the Ngunnawal people and I acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region. And I extend that recognition to the traditional custodians on all other lands for the participants that are gathered today and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were attending today's session just a couple of housekeeping things.

One is you might have noticed that this lunchtime leadership series is being recorded, and so the idea is that they'll be made available on the website. And for those of us who attended the first lunchtime leadership series with Cathy McGowan, I believe that's very close to going live on the website, so keep an eye out for that.

And just secondly, if you can stay on just at the end of the seminar, we'd like to just ask you to participate in a survey which is just a short five minute survey providing feedback on the seminar.
So if you can fit some time in for that at the end, that would be greatly appreciated.

Before I introduced Paul, Anne just asked me to give a bit of an introduction on myself. And so Anne being very, very resourceful, is giving you extra value for your money and making the most of the opportunity, so I'll tell you just very briefly a little bit about myself and then pass over to Paul who's the main event.

For me I'm currently first assistant secretary for the biosecurity plant and Science Services Division in Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. It's a role that I absolutely love.
I've got more than five hundred people located all around Australia, so quite a few people in Canberra, but a large number of people out in the cities and really in remote and regional Australia, including in the Torres Strait and across Northern Australia.

We conduct a range of scientific and technical work on biosecurity. We look after seven laboratories around the country and the post entry quarantine station.

We've got teams who are conducting regulation, so we're regulating the import of plants and plant products and so fruit and vegetables and right through to timber, furniture and anything related to plant.
We've got people who can, who conduct the import risk analysis, so that's a technical requirement that makes sure that things are safe to be imported to Australia and we're applying measures where necessary to make sure that we're managing biosecurity risks.

We also participate on international trade negotiations because as you know, trades are two way street. We also look after the Indigenous Ranger biosecurity program, which many of you on the call no doubt will be also familiar with and that's a critical part of our biosecurity protection, particularly across northern Australia where we look after what we call unregulated biosecurity risks, which are the sort of things that can blow in on monsoon winds or arrive just on the way.
So really important work in that space.
In biosecurity, we're facing quite an increase or an acceleration of biosecurity risks and some of you might be familiar with our strategic document Biosecurity 2030, which is publicly available on the website and it talks about increasing pressures on the system that include climate change, increasing volume of.

Paul Burke:
You just muted yourself, Monica. Sorry.

Monica Collins:
Can you hear me now?

Paul Burke:
Yes.

Monica Collins:
Uh, brilliant. That I must have been talking too much because it automatically muted me.
So in increasing complexity and supply chains and a range of exotic pests and diseases occurring at our near neighbours and at our trading partners, so it's quite a challenge to continue to safeguard Australia and Australia's plant health status to achieve and expand our market access, whilst also protecting our agriculture environment and economy from biosecurity risks.

For me, I started out getting a science degree, so I've got an Applied Science degree. I've worked both in the NSW government and in the Commonwealth government across science related sectors of environment and agriculture. I've got a strong regulatory background and I like that combination of regulation and science and I always seem to find myself working in complex, often highly contested spaces. So with a range of, I guess wicked problems and big issues to try and resolve or work with people to resolve. I really like to work at the big picture scale, and I guess that's what led me really into leadership roles.

Uh, what's important for my team right at the moment? I think the things that are cutting across are number one is bringing a digital mindset to the work that we do.
And so that's about how can we use data technology and innovation to do things smarter.
So as we're growing in volumes and complexity, how can we do things smarter? And I think bringing a digital mindset presents us with a real opportunity to make quite a big difference in the way we do things, and we're already starting to see some of that.
The second thing that's cross cutting for me at the moment in the area that I work is really about cultivating collaborative partnerships. We do a lot of work collaborating with partners, but it's really for me, I think in that sort of broader context, how can we do more in terms of leveraging industry know how and best practices and enhancing our capacity to regulate that growing biosecurity risk.

I'll just finish off with two thoughts. One, Anne asked me to think about what I wish I'd known probably earlier on in my career. And probably the big thing for me would be I wish I'd known much earlier, about reaching out to leaders and colleagues that you respect. Both for support, but bouncing ideas off, learning from their experience and relating with.
And what I found is that since I discovered this, and it seems an obvious thing, people are really, really generous with their time and, you know, sharing experiences and expertise.

I think that's one thing that's really important. And I suppose one key message. I think the leadership roles really do take a commitment and so I think as you're entering into leadership roles, understanding, you know it is a responsibility. You're directing people and you're delivering for government. You're delivering what government sees as part of their most important programs.

I think it's really important to understand what drives you in your leadership journey.
What are you passionate about? For me, you heard me talk about science fields and dealing with complexity and wicked problems, so I'll tend to, you know, be attracted to jobs that have that great deal of diversity, the opportunity to deal with a range of stakeholders. And so, yeah, I suppose choosing roles where you where you feel you can make a real difference.
So all stop talking about me now and just in introducing Paul, I did meet Paul recently, we were talking just earlier. I had a trip to Darwin with our former Secretary, Andrew Metcalfe late last year and had the opportunity to meet Paul when we were looking at some Vietnamese farming activities and the work that we jointly done just South of Darwin.
But Paul recently started his own business, North Australia Consultancy Specialists.
He seeks to influence key decision makers to support responsible agriculture developments, bespoke project solutions to industry issues and support a wide variety of agriculture opportunities in the north. Paul has extensive experience in agriculture. He's been working in government and non-government roles, advocating and supporting the agriculture sector. He's worked in AG Force Queensland as the state operations manager and was the Chief Executive Officer for NT Gentlemen's Association, CEO of NT Farmers, CEO of the Forest Industry Association, and was the Director of Infrastructure Assets and Major Projects for the Northern Territory Government Department of Primary Industries and Resources. Paul currently serves as the independent chair for the Research Institute and for Northern Agriculture at Charles Darwin University, founding Board member of the Northern Drought Hub and public officer for the Northern Cotton Growers Association.

So welcome, Paul. And we look forward to hearing your story. Thank you.

Paul Burke:
Thanks, Monica, and thanks Anne for the opportunity to talk today.
So what I'm going to talk a little bit about is, I just give a little bit of an introduction that you won't see on a website which is a bit of my history and how I've got to be in what I call the centre of Australia, which is Darwin. And then talk a little bit about my management journey and how I've got to where I've got to. And then I'm going to try and tie that back to some biosecurity experiences that I've had and how those management skills have been really important. And hopefully that runs in a fairly logical and succinct manner because I can go off on a tangent. So, umm, we'll kick off.

Originally I'm from Tasmania, so Tasmania for me growing up as a kid was in a small farming community. We were predominantly a dairy farming town population of about 300 people and a school that had grade one to three and grade three to six.

I think one of the greatest things about my growing up was we were always around different age groups and people at different levels of their journey in learning. It sort of opened you up to be a lot more in tune with the way that others think. From there I went through high school, went studied business and worked in the hospitality and tourism sector all over the world.
From the UK, South of France, Turkey, New Zealand and back in Australia, both in Queensland and Tasmania, in fairly senior jobs looking after, for example, my last job I had roughly three hundred staff in a really diverse operation. I think dealing with people all day, every day is a skill that we do undervalue, and that skill is so transferable. It doesn't matter whether you're pulling beers and selling beers, or you're selling chemicals in, the agriculture sector or you're sharing knowledge in the ag sector.

I think those skills around people management are critical to getting any success. And when I look back, the job of a hotel manager or the job as a general manager in a hotel, you are often dealing with conflict from the moment you walk in the door. You know Papua New Guinea is a great example where you know theft is rife and it is high and you're often dealing with people that have had computers stolen out of their room or the like.
So from the moment you walk in, you're actually dealing with people's problems, and you don't have a relationship with them. You're having to navigate that from the start and I think that's going to be a real focus of what I want to talk about today, is how you actually bring those skills to bear. And those transferable skills are not just limited to people. With any complex problem and biosecurity, I think, is a really complex area, you need to be able to make decisions and you need to be able to justify those decisions.

 And I think for a long time, if we don't make decisions, it becomes a vacuum. And when there's a vacuum, there's no decision. That's when problems really start, so we need to take people on a journey and actually get a decision. Now people may not like the decision all of the time, but you've got to be able to actually justify your decisions at work as well. I think that's really, really important and those relationships should build. Build them in peacetime. There's nothing harder than actually trying to build a relationship when you're in the midst of a really big issue.
And for me, I've had to deal with some fairly large incursions in the biosecurity space.
In the NT we've had banana freckle, citrus canker and I think when you look at that whole ecosystem of grower, regulator, industry body - the growers, the one that's whole business is in jeopardy at that time and we don't pay enough value to those emotions when we're dealing with those really complex issues. You know at some point someone's going a say we're going to come through and we're going to remove all of your banana trees or all of your citrus trees. That's an extremely traumatic time for that person on the ground and I think that's where we talk about biosecurity being a shared problem or a shared vision. That's government is regulator, grower as the person that's producing the produce but it's also industry an industry association that's got to be there to support that person right through the process. Having dealt with citrus canker and banana freckle, I've seen it firsthand how those things can go really well in a really complex environment and emotionally charged environment but really poorly if we haven't invested early enough with building those relationships. I think one of the really big learnings from that was at times industry has a real lack of knowledge on how a deed works, what the entitlements of the deed are. I think we need to be investing in that capacity building all of the time and by doing that we are creating a relationship.

I think for me one of the biggest takeouts in dealing with conflicts issues is build your relationship in peacetime and maintain your relationship in peacetime because when you really need those relationships and you need those key decision makers to be able to be available for you, that is when you really go back to ‘I invested all of this time and effort and it seemed like a lot of work at the time but you've actually built a rapport and a level of trust’ and I think that trust is really really critical.

I think as a regulator, you need to be able to have trust in industry─that industry is giving you the right advice. The up-to-date advice. I think as an industry player, we need to be confident that we’ve being given the full picture all of the time during incursion. And not being drip fed information and that can often - you can often feel that way. And at times there will be things that can't be shared, for various reasons. But I think you need to have an open relationship that you can actually say, there's more to this, we'll get it to you as soon as you can, we're working through it.

But I think unless you got those relationships and you're talking in a meaningful manner on a daily basis, in those times of crisis those relationships will become tested. I have seen in the past in other sectors, where industry will have information that it’s not particularly sharing well, or they'll be conscious of a decision that government’s made that they may think was inappropriate, that they'll hold back having that conversation, hoping to trip someone up further down the track. And I think that's really dangerous, because what we're actually trying to do is create that environment of trust, that environment of goodwill, that when it's really, really going to the wall, we're all actually working to a common goal. And for me, the reason we have regulation in the first place is to protect industry.
It's there to support industry. It shouldn't be there to, hamper or delay industry. Those safeguards are there to support the industry.

I think we really need to focus on understanding what the personalities we're dealing with in the first instance, how we best manage those personalities, and you don't have to like someone to have a professional relationship. You don't have to like someone to get a good outcome. As long as you trust that person and they trust you, then I think you can actually have a two-way conversation. And I think it becomes very dangerous when either industry or government’s waiting for the other one to make a mistake and not supporting each other through that process.
And I think when we're at our best, is when we're working together and whilst it's, and for me this came as a bit of a shock that a lot of the movement restrictions during COVID were actually done through the Biosecurity Act. And one of my first jobs that I had when I started working for Ag Force was to do some work reviewing the Biosecurity Act and providing comment from an industry perspective. Not in my wildest dreams reading that piece of legislation, did I ever think that it would be used in the way it did. To control movement of people in Australia. And I don't think any of us in our wildest dreams thought that was why the Biosecurity Act was actually written, but it actually was.

And one of the greatest outcomes that I've ever had in in my entire professional career was born out of the COVID crisis. And that was when all levels of government, so the NT government, the federal government and industry worked together to bring seasonal workers in from overseas while the borders were still closed. And what I saw in that experience, was the very best of people working together with a common goal. And I think unless you know where you want be, you'll never know you've got there. And I think for us it was really simple. We needed to bring 5 or 600 workers into Australia while the international borders were closed, while returning Australian residents couldn't even get back into the country. And I think when you talk about complex issues and we start to unpack that, that was the most complicated thing I've ever had to work through. But when you know this is my outcome, and this is the date (because we needed to bring them in for mango picking) and we know roughly when the season is, so working backwards, it's like how do we do this?
And you know all day every day because we couldn't meet face to face, all of the work that I've done in the previous five to ten years of building relationships and knowing that when I said something people could trust in the fact that I was giving them the level of detail that I had myself, it was factual. Now, we didn't agree through that process, a lot of times there were the roadblocks that we didn't expect. And I'll talk about one of those towards the end. Because we had a relationship, and because we would have formal meetings where we had 20 people on a web call, and then the follow up, the relationship management…What more can I do? Who do you need me to talk to?
And industry is driving this, you've got to remember, and government is supporting this whole process and trying to get pathways in, and trying to find quarantine facilities.
A lot of what has to happen in those cases is industry is acting as a conduit between different government departments, and we've always talked about how government can work in silos.
This is an occasion where both silos just disappeared. There was a level of goodwill right from a minister, ministerial level right through the department and I think you know, that's something that you can be, everyone could have been really proud of that was involved in that, and it all came back to the people management. Understanding what the outcome and the date we were trying to achieve, and everyone pulling in the same direction. And I'd often be sitting there, and we'd have growers on, so growers could actually talk and put a face behind it. Trying to build that level of empathy of …why are we actually doing this?

And this is why.. because my business is on the line, I can't pick the fruit, I don't have the staff. Trying to build that empathy and, you know, often the growers would get off the phone and high level ranking bureaucrats sitting in their offices would say ‘that was awesome, I actually know why I'm doing that now’. And I think days like today is about bringing the people from industry and the personalities into the offices in Canberra, into the offices in Darwin to where the decisions are made.

I think that this is really valuable to be able to start to build that ecosystem in that network right across the north.

I think that maintaining a relationship. When that first plane came in, it was a celebration. There's a there's no denying and at that stage, unlike Victoria, and most of the rest of Australia, the pubs were still opened up here and there was a fair group of us that went out and had a few celebratory drinks that that night. But it wasn't just the industry guys, it was really important that all of the government people and all of the people that possibly could get there, and we could actually celebrate that together because that was a victory for the entire industry.
But it was also a victory for the entire government, because that tested the rehabilitate, the returning home of Australian citizens as well. It created a lot of pathways to actually kickstart travel back into Australia.

I think everyone should be really proud when you have those victories, and I know going through citrus canker for me was a super stressful time for industry up here. But it gave me a great deal of confidence that we had been through a banana freckle outbreak that hadn't particularly gone well right the way through, to actually then go through a citrus canker outbreak where we'd actually learned the lessons from previously. Like we're going to make mistakes, we all make mistake, we are human. But if you're not learning from those mistakes and you're replicating, then that's when the frustrations from industry and frustrations from stakeholders come from. But it was really evident that in the process from three years before with banana freckle, to where we got to with citrus canker, it was poles apart and it was equally as complicated.

I think, that continuous learning journey, that building a relationships and maintaining them in peacetime, serve you well when there's a crisis. And I guess the other part of that is, is surround yourself by great people. And what I mean by that is, you don't necessarily need to work with those people in the same department or the same business. Surround yourself with people that inspire you and make you want to be the best form of yourself. And you know I've always had a strong mentorship network, right through my career, people that I can rely on, people I can ring and bounce ideas off and they can say ‘you're a lunatic’ before I go and actually say it publicly.

And I think that becomes really, really important in those crisis times when you're thinking, one of the most, answered phone call I used to get during those times would be the media, and the media wanting comment on different things and different components. And that messaging is really valuable, but it can also destroy a relationship and goodwill in a minute. And at times we jumped too quickly to the media to try and get our message out there, when we actually should be having the conversations around a table or over the phone with the people that can make make a difference.
There is a time that you do need to signal as an industry advocate through the media, but I think there is also a communication component in that, outside of the media that the people you're signalling are aware of what you're going to be signalling in the media so they don't get ambushed.
No one likes to be ambushed, and I think once you get ambushed, once you became very gun shy very quickly and it's very hard to get that relationship back on track and in some cases it's impossible.

So I think everyone would respect there's times to play things through the media, and sometimes that's industry talking to their growers and their members. Sometimes it's signalling to government that we want to head in a different direction. But that should come as no shock to those decision makers, because you've already had the conversations with them. They're not going ‘Ohh where did this come from?’
You're actually saying, we're going to actually start to engage with industry through the media, and these are going to be our key messages and making sure that goes right through the organisation.
So you know if you're going to be sending a signal, make sure those people that you're actually trying to signal are aware and not going to be feeling like, ‘Oh my God, I can't believe he just threw me under the bus’. And we've seen that so often in the history of Agri-politics, because it can be a pretty brutal game. That if you don't get that messaging right, it can have tremendous damage for a long period with those industry bodies or with those government departments that takes a hell of a long time to fix. I think that, that communication is critically important to maintaining those relationships. And when we talk about their mentorship network, it is having those trusted, smart, logical people that you can ring and say hey, this is what I'm thinking and knowing that you can trust that person. That person is not going to take that information and give it anywhere else. But is actually going to give you the advice you need and… ‘have you really thought that through Paul?’, ‘maybe you don't want to be saying that in the media quite yet, because if you do, that's your last opportunity’, once it gets to there, there is no more elevation. So I think the for me during that COVID period, it was actually a time to be building up those relationships and talking about how positive the dialogue had been and actually signalling to the government departments that we were dealing with, and it was, you know, DFAT, it was Border Force, it was Northern Territory Police, it was Migration NT, it was immigration federal level. So it was a cast of millions, but it was a good way for us to be actually signalling we were heading the right direction and we were really engaged in the process and we're really supportive of the rigor that was in the process and that was actually, well, really well received by those stakeholders because they were actually they were front and centre, and the ultimate decision makers were government. You know we could influence the outcome by giving the information and giving our time, but ultimately that decision was a government decision.
So we had to get government really comfortable that we could deliver on what we were saying.
And one of the requirements to do that was that the government only wanted to deal with one person. So NT Farmers at the time where I was CEO, we actually had to foot the bill to bring all of those people in, pay their quarantine, charter, the planes and that was, you know, upwards of one and a half millions dollars for a small industry association to come up with.
So in the background, we're negotiating all of this and trying to get all of our money in a line that, if it did come off and we were able to do it, that we could actually afford to do it.
So I think you know, it is probably the best success I've ever had as an industry advocate and I just want share the last little bit of the jigsaw that I hardly ever tell this story.
But we were right at the end, we had all of the visas, we had the whole lot ready to go. We chartered a plane, which was an Air Vanuatu plane. And we'd never considered that Air Vanuatu would never had landed a plane in Darwin before. There was some Cassa approvals that we required, to actually have a new airline land on a runway that they'd never landed before. And all of that happened in the last 48 hours when we had already paid for the plane, we had everyone heading to the airport, but all of a sudden we didn't know whether we could land the plane.
And again, that relationship management and being able to turn that around in 48 hours was phenomenal.
And when you're talking to the growers back in the paddock and saying, ‘yeah, we're nearly there, we just need one last approval because we've forgotten about Cassa and landing a plane’.
They just couldn't understand why any plane couldn't land there. It’s that two-way conversation.

I think we all learnt a lot in those, and for me, I certainly learned a lot. That I need to rely on my mentors, I need to rely on my relationships and my networks cause they're critical to whatever I do. And I need to be able to take, to be taken seriously and to be trusted by the highest levels of government, so that when I pick up the phone, I'm actually asking succinctly and clearly what I need to have delivered. And you know, sometimes that answers ‘no, that's not possible’. And then it becomes a negotiation. And I think that relationship is really, really important.

The last thing I wanted to touch on is, in relation to government investment and industry capacity and they are so closely interlinked, it's not funny.

I often used to go to meetings and there might be half a dozen to a dozen people from government sitting in that room and myself from industry. Industry runs on the smell of an oily rag. We are, there's not a lot of us. There is not a lot of resources, so we are, we have to be a Jack of all trades.
And I think the investment we're seeing into biosecurity and especially into northern biosecurity is really timely. I know this series is around plants and more of the, but if we look at lumpy skin, we look at FMD, we're all interlinked and I think one of the beauties of what governments trying to do by creating these networks across the north is, if we did have a lumpy skin disease, if you're qualified in a biosecurity response in plant, it's pretty easy to transfer those skills across to the animal sector quite quickly.
If you've got no biosecurity experience, then you've actually got to learn about biosecurity before you can transfer it across. I think the investments at the moment are really timely and it's really exciting to see we're thinking outside the square.
We're not saying we're going to run the trainings, or we're going to run this and do this this way because that's the way we've always done it. We're actually looking at Ranger programs, we're looking at a whole different way to actually get biosecurity messages out to people in, you know, a range of different places. As an industry advocate, I spend a lot of time working with Charles Darwin University around their Research Institute of Northern Agriculture, and saying, you know, these are the professorships I think we need... I think we need someone to work in the animal world, someone to work in the plant world, someone to work in the fish world. But we need someone to work in biosecurity, so to have a biosecurity professor in a northern agriculture institute is awesome.
And I think that will lead to some over there over the hill sort of blue sky thinking. And I think that would be really valuable. But that also has all of the main industry bodies and sectors on it so we're actually creating people talking to people, working in the same fields, and that's something that that we can never do enough of. And I think we should be proud of what we we're achieving with the resources we've had in the past.

And the last piece of that puzzle was, you know, as a founding member of the Northern Hub, to have the Northern Hub be able to react quickly so when lumpy skin and foot and mouth disease, with right on our shores and was starting to move down through, you know, Indonesia and we're starting to get worried of where that's going to end up, that we're able to react really quickly and fund projects and bring people from Indonesia to the Norther Territory, so that we had our regulators actually creating networks and working together . And you know that hub became a really valuable piece of the ecosystem and I think those hubs can actually grow to be a centre of excellence for a lot of different government programs. And in those disaster times, they've got networks of people right across the territory - like there's eight extension officers, there's you know, nearly as many extension officers working through the hub and through their nodes as there is through government departments. Let's work out how we utilise that to get the best outcomes.
So I think that's sort of my story and my management ethos is - all your skills are transferable, they’re all valuable, doesn't matter whether you’ve pulled beers all your life, if you're a good people person, you're a good people person.

That your relationship management needs to be built in quiet times and in peace times and maintained through crisis.
You need a strong mentorship network because you learn from all of those people.
And as an industry, we need to keep feeding into government to say ‘this is how you get better bang for your buck. This is where you need to be investing. This is where we see that going.’ And knowing you have the trust of those decision makers because you've built that up over a long period of time in peacetime.

I think they're my key takeouts. And I am lucky living in the Norther Territory, and I know people in Southern states get really jealous of this, but I'll say it. We get more access to ministers in Darwin than anyone else does in Australia because we are not competing against 20 different industry associations and 10 different areas. Whenever the Minister comes to town, we get to have one on one time with them. So, you know, I think that's really valuable in the north, because there's not many of us.
So when they come to town, they want to be seen to be actually communicating. So I think you know, we actually do punch above our weight in terms of getting the message out there.
So I think that's a bit of a summary Anne. And Monica, thanks for the introduction and happy to take any questions or not.

Monica Collins:
Brilliant. Thank you very much Paul. You can really see the wealth of your different sort of experiences that you brought to that discussion, so I really thank you for sharing that with us.
I think people are welcome to join and ask any questions, probably through the chat, but I might just kick it off to begin with and Anne, I'll pass to you next.

You sort of reflected a bit on mobilising people to get things done and to that fantastic example of the ability to bring Ag workers into the country, not only while we're in lockdown, but while borders were closed. And in the background, you were, you were mobilising people to make sort of things happen from the Northern Territory end. I just wondered, that in relation to this NAPCaRN network, is there any tips that you could provide around─and we're sort of seeing it in response to floods and fires and a range of different emergencies as well─any tips for mobilising people in in relation to how you know things that we might be able to apply to NAPCARN?

Paul Burke:
I think that the learnings are what is sort of coming into place now, which is creating that ecosystem and knowing who to speak to. A lot of days I'll get phone calls and people say, ‘oh, who do I talk to about this?’. And having those experienced heads that have a corporate knowledge that go, ‘you need to talk to this person, I'll send you the number’.
So I think having been present in industry to actually meet the people, you need to meet. Because one of the things when you've got a flood, fire, whatever it is, a crisis situation, the quicker you can get in touch with the people, you need to talk to the better. And I think that's where this network, where it can be one phone call and it and it can be that central person to say, ‘listen we've got a problem, we've got a flood, we've got a fire or we've got a biosecurity outbreak and who do we speak to. And how do we mobilize that as quickly as we possibly can?’ Because we do know that in all of those situations, time is of an essence. I think that that network and that everyone together is really critical.

Monica Collins:
Thanks, Paul. Anne, do you want to jump in there?

Anne Walters:
Thanks, Monica, and thanks, Paul. That was fantastic.
Just obviously you're really well versed in making connections and contacts, but I'm just wondering for maybe people online, I just wonder how you go about, you know, making contacts and creating those relationships in the first place, because that's something I guess that a lot of people might find quite challenging or difficult and you know where to start and how did you go about doing that?

Paul Burke:
It's a really good question Anne and, I can talk to anyone. I'm really lucky that I actually really enjoy talking to people and I love yarning. For me to meet people is really easy, but there is a discipline to it as well. Once you meet someone, you need to actually record that phone number and that that and have some follow up. You are actually starting a relationship, and you mightn’t know where it's going to go, but I'll often have a meeting, I'll save the person's phone number, at the same time I'll shoot him a quick text and say ‘hey, that was that was awesome, that was great, love to keep talking about that’. You're keeping those communication channels open. The other thing that I find really valuable is when I'm putting something into my computer, and into my email contacts, actually writing who they are and what they do. Because often you go ‘oh, that person, you know that person’, and you just can't remember, so you need some triggers as well around, you know, oh, that was a biosecurity person or that was a land development person.
So having some of those key triggers. I was in a meeting this morning and I've got roughly 11,000 phone numbers in my phone. When someone says ‘oh do you know such and such?’, the chances are I do which is fine because I can look them up by name. But they say ‘do you know anyone in water security?’. Well, I probably do, but without some sort of prompts, I can't find that person, so I think it's really valuable to actually spend that little bit of time, and it takes 30 seconds, to actually save those numbers and start a communication journey.

Anne Walters:
Fantastic

Monica Collins:
That's brilliant. And a really good tip in terms of the contacts, you do find. You do come across people who like, have got a memory and they'll remember all eleven thousand, but for most of us, that's not the case.
Just picking up in a question from Steven in the chat around you mentioned before that no one likes to be ambushed. Have you had a situation where you felt you've been ambushed and how did you deal with that?

Paul Burke:
And I certainly have, I I've got to be honest. When I was younger. And less experienced, I probably have done that to people as well, but I've learned from that and I'll make sure I never go there. Never go there again.
But I had been working in Cape York for about five and a half weeks, working up there with pastoralists at the time. Getting them accredited to go through with the best management practice regime, which was part of the Queensland Government's response to reef quality and water quality on the reef. The very first property we accredited. I won’t name the name of the property, but we'd finished doing it.
We've done the big celebration, and we did the social media story and we're sitting on the back of the ute having a beer. Drove out of his property, was out a mobile phone range for couple of hours and ended up in Mareeba and had the ABC on the call and he'd just been charged with illegal land clearing.
Now I would have been on that property, I was unaware of any illegal activities. We haven't even talked about that we had celebrated how he was our first best management practice person to go through the scheme and then to get ambushed on the ABC, wasn't particularly enjoyable experience, but one that you’ve just got to deal with. And yeah, I was pretty peeved about it, and you know who do you yell at? Cause at the end of the day, that's where I was. It's a little bit of grin and bare it sometimes.

Monica Collins:
Yeah, exactly. All right. I'm just going to keep an eye out for questions. People use the chat line or feel free to put your hand up. But just in the meantime Paul, you mentioned, I'll just go back to the COVID experience because I think right across wherever we worked in COVID, it was a chance to learn a lot about how we work, and I think government in particular has from my experience, has shifted in places. But is there anything that you come across in your experience during that time, perhaps looking at government or looking at the sector more broadly about things that worked well in COVID that perhaps we should look at carrying forward?

Paul Burke:
That's an awesome question.
And so at the time Alister Trier was the chief executive of the Northern Territory, and at that stage I think it was still DPIR. Two days in, borders started to close, Alistair called us all in and he said, listen, ‘we're going to be building a car over the next month, and we're going to be building it while we're driving it at one hundred miles an hour because I don't know what's going to happen.
I don't know that you know what's going to happen, but there's going to be a lot of changes, and we're going to have to work together. And actually, be as adaptable as we possibly can’. And I think that's a really good analogy for what we were actually trying to do.
There was all of this. All of these rules and laws coming down from the top in from the top and from the Northern Territory government and in the Northern Territory we got a lot of vulnerable people.

A lot of communities. We were having internal roads closed and all of that was happening while everyone still trying to run a business. And for us, we had people that were just starting to pick different varieties of fruit and had their workers stuck at Kununurra, couldn't get across the border or and we were able to generally navigate all of those, those things quite well.
Where we did trip up was I think we gave people too much information at times that it became overwhelming and we're sending out updates twice a day to say these roads are closed and this is happening and this is happening and this is happening and by the way you got to go and get vaccinated or you know there was a whole range of things happening and people were getting bombarded and I think we really struggled because we had too much information to give.

Monica Collins:
Yeah, that's interesting reflection, Paul. I think it's a combination of dealing with the overwhelming, but also the ability to just make things happen. So yeah, it's quite a good reflection.

Paul Burke:
And that really succinct messaging is ‘the road’s closed’. Don't try and justify. Don't try and have a conversation about it. This road is closed. We’ll update you when it’s open.

Monica Collins:
Yeah, exactly. Right. I can see Darren Peck has got a hand up. Darren, do you want to jump in there?

Darren Peck:
Thanks Monica. Hi, Paul, really great talk. Fantastic. Really, really enjoyed it. Thank you so much. As you know, in Northern Australia it's very diverse culturally. How do you adjust your engagement style with different stakeholders? You know, just be interested in how you've how you've done that. Some tips and tricks in that space.

Paul Burke:
It's an awesome question Darren, and it's a really interesting space because when we're talking about cultural diversity and you know it, it's not just Aboriginal people in North Australia, there's a massive Vietnamese and Cambodian and a whole range of communities. I think you do adjust, there are subtle adjustments. I think you still will remain true to the person you are. But I think you know, what we've found as an industry advocate was, we're often in conflict over, with Aboriginal people, especially over land development. There was this tension always there. And I think we, we need to actually park that and be able to say, you know, we're not going to agree on all of these things, but there's all these really cool things that we can actually get along and do together. And the two things are actually not mutually exclusive.
So we know we've got problems over here and we're going to have to keep working on those.
But where we don't have problems, let's get on and actually support each other to do that and I think my key learning in dealing with Aboriginal people in their communities is listen.

They actually want to be heard. Whilst I might be going in there and I got this great idea and this is what you need to do, it needs to be their idea. It's their country, their land. I think there's that the messaging and the person you are remains the same but the speed you actually want to do it needs to be done at a speed that they're comfortable working with as well. And sometimes that's really fast. Sometimes I can't keep up, but you know, So I think that’s different sectors.
The Vietnamese people are great because you know there's such an awesome community and you can go out and meet with them in a group and you find your champions amongst those networks, and you know Chris Bam for me, I could ring Chris up and say, ‘Yep, go and talk to these people. Go and do this.’ I think it's just having those champions again and fostering those relationships.

Darren Peck
Thanks, Paul. Very good. Thank you.

Monica Collins:
That's brilliant. Thank you very much, Paul, and thanks for that question, Darren.
I think we're getting close to time Anne, so I might hand to you in a second, but before I do, I'm just going to say really appreciate your insights, Paul. Fantastic that you're able to share such a depth and breadth of your experience in just such a small amount of time and really appreciate you spending the time and joining us in the NAPCaRN network. I'll hand back to you, Anne, and leave it there. Thanks.

Anne Walters:
Thank you so much, Monica for your time today and for facilitating the session and thank you Paul, for a fantastic presentation.
So good to see so many people online and enjoying such an amazing presentation and some reflections from you and as well as you, Monica, thank you for that amazing introduction.
Thank you to everyone who took up a few minutes of your lunch today or of your day to come and listen to today's session. We've obviously got another speaker coming up in September and it would be great to see you all there. That will be coming out shortly through the email distribution list, and if you're not a part of that, you'd like to be, please feel free to either flick me an email or through to the NABS team and we can add you to that email distribution list. For those people that have just a couple of minutes now, there is a survey in the chat box that's Shona has kindly put up, just helping us to identify where we can make these sessions even better for you guys.

If you could just click on that and spend five minutes, filling that out. There are only five questions on there, so it won't take you very long. We would really appreciate the feedback, thank you all for joining us today. Have a really fantastic weekend and I look forward to seeing you next time.