

National Biosecurity Emergency Preparedness Expert Group Meeting 6 Communiqué

The National Biosecurity Emergency Preparedness Expert Group (expert group) was established by the National Biosecurity Committee (NBC) in March 2015 as a recommendation from the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity (IGAB) Implementation Taskforce. The role of the expert group is to develop, harmonise and maintain the national capability and capacity to prepare for the response to biosecurity emergencies. Three specialist task groups were established under the group to focus on different elements of preparedness (resourcing, training and evaluation/lessons management) identified by the IGAB (Schedule 7), which are chaired by members of the Expert Group.

The expert group reports to NBC and is currently chaired by Dr Lloyd Klumpp, the Tasmanian NBC representative.

To provide for common understanding of preparedness targets the group coordinated a national agreement entitled the *Strategic Position for Biosecurity Emergency Preparedness*. This document was endorsed by NBC in November 2015.

Progress Update

Meeting six of the expert group was held in Hobart, Tasmania on 29-30 November 2016. The meeting included professional development activities for members, including briefings by the Australian Antarctic Division, the Environment Protection Authority, Tasmania and the Bureau of Meteorology.

Key matters considered during the meeting were:

- Progress developing the Biosecurity Emergency Management Knowledge Base. The knowledge base will provide biosecurity emergency managers and relevant parties within industry, business and the agricultural sector with one single point of access to contemporary and validated biosecurity emergency management information and documentation relevant to biosecurity emergency preparedness, response and recovery.
- The current state of preparedness and response for environmental biosecurity incidents. Members agreed to develop a discussion paper for consideration by NBC outlining the gaps in current arrangements for responding to environmental incursions.
- Outcomes from consultation with state and territory jurisdictions on the transition toward a cross-sectoral Rapid Response Team. The newly named National Biosecurity Response Team will be formed with personnel who are able to perform a number of functions within a State Coordination Centre and/or Local Control Centre during the response to biosecurity incidents.
- Progress developing the national suite of training and assessment materials, including work being undertaken with Australian Industry Skills to transition the biosecurity response qualifications into a new format required for all training packages.
- Exercise Athena, an Australian Government Department of Water Resources exercise held on 21 November to 2 December 2016. The exercise comprised of two components, a departmental and an international. Both components focused on the ability to deploy and receive staff to assist in the response to an emergency animal disease scenario. Members discussed the process, the success of having Animal Health Australia and jurisdictions assisting with exercise control and evaluation, along with some initial observations coming out of the first week of the exercise.

Outcomes:

- The expert group agreed to the Evaluation and Lessons Management Guide progressing to the NBC for endorsement.
- The expert group provided in-principle endorsement to the Interstate Deployment Arrangements for Biosecurity Responses, pending any changes made following evaluation of the draft arrangements that occurred in the Australian Government Exercise Athena. The final document will then progress to the NBC for endorsement.

The next meeting of the expert group will be held in Perth on 20-21 June 2017.



Expert Group members being briefed on the operations and biosecurity measures at the Australian Antarctic Division