

## Chairman's Address

31 May 2016

Welcome everyone to the 15th General Meeting of PHA and my first as Chairman. I hope you've all found the day's meetings helpful and interesting – I certainly always find meeting with members to be informative and collegial.

You will all have received a copy of the coming year's Annual Operational Plan (AOP) so you'll know that 2016-17 will be a busy year for the company, and one that will contribute a lot to the plant biosecurity system.

You'll also know that, due to rising expectations of the company over recent years, we are proposing to increase subscriptions by about 7 per cent. The company has had to put forward the proposal given that we've had four consecutive years with expenditure on subscription funded activities exceeding subscription income.

We know that you are, by and large, all quite satisfied with the performance of the company, because of the answers given in the PHA Member Survey at the end of last year, so we know that we're not too wide of the mark with what we do. In that survey, we asked which areas of company activities were most important to you:

- Administering the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed
- facilitating government-industry partnerships to work on various aspects of the system
- helping industries to prepare for exotic pest threats
- monitoring the effectiveness of the system and
- raising awareness of biosecurity.

And, typically, the answer was, 'all of them'.

So we plan to continue to operate across the four areas as we have over recent years.

The AOP sets out clearly what PHA does with subscription funds:

About one third will be spent on the efforts of Susanna Driessen and her team in administering the Deed and making sure that all emergency plant pest incursions are dealt with in line with the provisions of that pivotal agreement.

Another third funds partnerships activities which include the communication aspects of the company such as the website and Tendrils, the Status Report (which will be coming your way soon) and staff travel to meetings all over the country, including this one. These are opportunities for PHA to listen to members about their needs and priorities and opportunities to keep members up to date on what is happening in the plant biosecurity space. This includes travel to attend meetings of 15 national committees that PHA serves on, many of which are ensuring that progress is made on aspects of the system across the country as a whole.

The remaining third is split between company management and core risk management activities including the Farm Biosecurity Program, staff time spent arranging biosecurity planning, our work with the Plant Biosecurity CRC, and the CEO's time on the committees implementing the National Fruit Fly Strategy and the National Plant Biosecurity RD&E Strategy.

PHA ensures that much is achieved with subscriptions, which this coming year will amount to just over two and half million dollars. The pattern of activities and expenditure we've designed is guided by the company's strategy of the past five years. This strategy is now coming to an end, finishing in 2016, and the Board will be developing a new five-year plan to guide the company to 2021 over the next few months. If you have any comments on where you think the company should head in the next five years, we'd love to hear from you. Please raise any issues with us today or contact us later to have your say.

In addition to these central functions, PHA will be undertaking a large number of projects that boost biosecurity for one or more members and, in some cases, for non-members. In all, there is expected to be about \$4.75 million spent on this project work. It's mostly risk management activities of various kinds, and the majority is commissioned by non-government organisations.

There are many worthwhile projects planned but I'll mention just a few. Seven industries are having their biosecurity plans reviewed and it looks like we'll be doing biosecurity plans for two or three non-members as well.

Biosecurity officers for particular industries, who raise awareness of biosecurity among producers and others along the supply chain, have proved effective so the officers for the grains, citrus,

vegetable and potato industries will be continuing and Bee Biosecurity Officers in six states will join them. All officers are funded from monies raised by biosecurity levies.

Work on honey bee biosecurity is continuing including the National Bee Pest Surveillance Program which continues in expanded form around coastal Australia, a pest ID app and training modules all in train. It's great to see such a fruitful partnership of governments and industries working together in this important area.

There's going to be work preparing for an incursion of exotic fruit flies this year. The Australian Government has funded a suite of preparedness projects and we'll be holding an exercise to practice developing a response strategy for a simulated exotic fruit fly incursion too. EPPRD exercises have been very popular, because all Parties find that there's nothing like a simulated emergency to focus minds on the ramifications of a real one.

So it's going to be a productive year, as I said.

The other work involving multiple players is the continued implementation of the National Plant Biosecurity Strategy. The plan was published in 2010, setting out a blueprint for the future of Australia's plant biosecurity system. Last year PHA made an analysis of progress on the various aspects of that strategy and found that much has been improved at the halfway mark. We also found out that the plan is still considered to be a useful template for improving Australia's plant biosecurity system. There is still work to be done however, so PHA has developed a Gap Analysis and Implementation Plan to guide the remaining work. Make sure you get hold of a copy of the report and check what tasks your organisation is expected to work on in order to be fully implemented by 2020.

On behalf of my fellow directors, I'd like to thank the staff at PHA for their continued efforts on achieving the biosecurity system that we all want. Thank you also to all of you for attending today and for the efforts you put in during the year to protect plant production as well as our unique natural environment from pests.

I look forward to reporting on progress against this year's plan to you all at the AGM in Canberra in November.

Thank you.

**Darral Ashton**