Chairman's Address

May 2017

Welcome everyone to the 16th General Meeting of PHA. I hope you've all found the day's meetings helpful and interesting – I certainly always find meeting with members to be informative, constructive and friendly.

You will all have received a draft copy of the coming year's Annual Operational Plan so you'll know that 2017-18 will be another busy year for the company, and one that will add substantially to the plant biosecurity system.

The AOP for 2017–18 presents PHA activities planned for the coming financial year. The two key components of our income stream, subscription income, pending your approval of a 2.1% increase, is allocated according to member priorities and a further $6.5 m invested in projects by key stakeholders including members, groups of members and non-members. This is the highest level of annual project funding that PHA has received.

This year, activities are presented to reflect the seven key result areas in the PHA Strategic Plan 2016–21: Partnerships, Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed, Preparedness, Surveillance, Diagnostics, Research, Development and Extension, and Company Health. We hope that the new structure increases transparency and clearly shows PHA's work across all aspects of Australia's plant biosecurity system.

A number of the programs and projects are a continuation of existing work, however, there are many new projects too.

It should not be a surprise that a large part of the proposed subscription budget is dedicated to the work generated by administering and applying the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD). More than a decade after ratification, operations under the agreement are in full-swing. To highlight this, recently we participated in three NMGs in a week, along with a number of you here.

We are currently managing seven eradication responses as we approach the 2017–18 year. In addition to incursion management, work continues on improving the agreement itself, and ensuring those involved are well-trained.

PHA will continue to support the joint Farm Biosecurity Program with Animal Health Australia, the National Fruit Fly Council and implement the National Plant Biosecurity Strategy.

All three programs highlight the benefits of partnerships between industry and government. As such, they are truly national programs.

The company will maintain its role in coordinating and facilitating the national diagnostic network. It provides diagnostic services in Australia and professional development opportunities, laboratory residential courses, training workshops and proficiency testing for diagnosticians, planned for 2017–18.

PHA provides support for information technology systems including the Biosecurity Portal, Pest Information Document Database and the Australian Plant Pest Database. These resources provide access for stakeholders to essential pest information, which is crucial in the event of a suspected plant pest incursion.

AusPest*Check*, the virtual coordination centre for surveillance data, continues to be rolled out, and will be an important part of a number of new projects over the coming year, including the recently announced Rural R&D for Profit project "Improving Plant Pest Management Through Cross Industry Deployment of Smart Sensor, Diagnostics and Forecasting". The initiative, led by Hort Innovation will develop a mobile cross-industry plant pest surveillance network, which will provide primary producers and government, information on established, trade sensitive or exotic pests. It will underpin existing surveillance initiatives, and provide a foundation for a nation-wide surveillance network. This project is an example of a truly collaborative approach to improving biosecurity engagement with all seven plant based RDCs, international collaborators, AUSVEG and PHA involved.

Over two million records have now been entered into AUSPest*Check*, including the most recent data resulting from tomato potato psyllid surveillance in Western Australia. PHA's growing expertise and experience with AUSPest*Check* as a platform for co-ordinating surveillance data is also a key component of our involvement in the International Plant Sentinel Network and ongoing discussions with the Canadian Government.

PHA will continue to ensure that websites and e-newsletters managed by the company are communication tools that keep members, stakeholders, producers and the broader public informed about developments in plant biosecurity.

The Biosecurity Portal provides a gateway to an array of biosecurity information sources, as well as secure workspaces for closed groups including emergency response decision-

makers. Other sites include those for the diagnosticians' network, beekeepers and pollination service users, fruit fly prevention and interstate quarantine. The CCEPP site continues to grow into an essential response resource.

The work supporting plant biosecurity research, development and extension continues, with PHA bringing together government, industry and research funders and providers to ensure that research dollars bring the maximum benefit.

Implementation of the National Plant Biosecurity RD&E Strategy continues and a new pivotal role, assisting the coordination of plant biosecurity research across seven rural RDCs, has been added.

Staff will continue to contribute to national committees and workgroups to input into improving our biosecurity system.

Developing and revising biosecurity plans which identify and mitigate biosecurity risks for plant production systems and the environment continues apace this year, including new plans for native plants, acacia and tea tree.

PHA is also working with industries to establish and support biosecurity officers who raise awareness of biosecurity among producers and others along the supply chain.

This year a number of new biosecurity programs are being added to the existing work in the grains, citrus, honey bee, vegetable and potato industries, all funded from monies raised by biosecurity levies.

This challenging workplan shows PHA's willingness to work across the whole plant biosecurity system, in line with your priorities.

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 must also go 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