

Chairman's Address

17th General Meeting | May 2018

Welcome everyone to the 17th General Meeting of PHA. I hope you've all found the day's meetings helpful and interesting, a reminder that the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed remains a key focus for PHA.

You will all have received a draft copy of the coming year's Annual Operational Plan, so you'll know that 2018–19 will be another busy year for the company and one that will add substantially to the plant biosecurity system. You might also have noticed that there are a greater number of projects that are following on from the 2017–18 year. Funding from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources through the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper will continue to link with industry funding through their respective RDCs or PHA levies or both, to deliver long term industry and system benefits.

Last year you supported a 2.1% increase in members subscriptions. This AOP is based on increased subscription income, pending your approval of a 1.9% increase. Project funding has also increased to just over \$ 7 million based on strong industry support but notably a significant increase in government funding driven by White Paper investments.

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. This structure, first used last year, aims to focus PHA activities on your needs, increases transparency and clearly shows PHA's work across all aspects of Australia's plant biosecurity system.

Across all areas, our staff will be continuing to have input to national committees and working groups to advance the aims of members.

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. Established programs for grains and vegetable and potatoes will be expanded along with newer programs for melons, mangoes and bees.

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). It's now 13 years since ratification but we continue to attract more signatories and improve the operation of the Deed.



The Emergency Plant Pest Response team are currently engaged in twelve responses as we approach the 2018–19 year. We have had two Transition to Management programs operating during 2017–18, the first time this phase has been used under an emergency response deed in Australia. These are further examples of opportunities to improve our operational arrangements through application and review of EPPRD activities.

Of significant interest will be the training. PHA now has a formal role with the National Biosecurity Response Team and is planning exercises simulating incursions of *Varroa*, *Xylella* and a pest of the cotton industry to test response readiness. Further planning to improve local industry understanding of the EPPRD and industry's role is foreshadowed.

Continuing implementation of the National Plant Biosecurity Strategy and support for the National Fruit Fly Council are activities that highlight a national focus and benefits of partnerships between industry and government.

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 site for the Consultative Committee on Emergency Plant Pests continues to grow into an essential response resource. PHA will continue to maintain and utilise the Portal to integrate biosecurity activities, scientific capabilities and analysis across the biosecurity continuum.

Websites and e-newsletters Tendrils, BeeAware, Prevent Fruit Fly will continue to be supported.

Our relationship with AHA remains strong, focusing on the joint Farm Biosecurity Program and a number of training initiatives.

Developing and revising biosecurity plans which identify and mitigate biosecurity risks for plant production systems and the environment continue. A number of plans are underway. Newly established Reference Panels have already met for projects, to ensure implementation plans are followed.

AusPestCheck, 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.

Work on the Rural R&D for Profit project 'Improving Plant Pest Management Through Cross Industry Deployment of Smart Sensor, Diagnostics and Forecasting', now referred to as iSCOUT, has started. This was the first program driven across all plant based RDCs by the Plant Biosecurity Research Initiative. The program 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.

AUSPestCheck, has received significant funding under the White Paper and there has been support from Plant Health Committee to trial national collation of fruit fly data. Discussions are also ongoing with Animal Health Committee, as the system developed can support the whole biosecurity system.

Support for PHA's initiative related to the International Plant Sentinel Network will see formal engagements established with Australia's major botanic gardens with surveillance data managed through AUSPestCheck.

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 2018–19.

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.

The AGSOC driven National Plant Biosecurity RD&E Strategy is being rewritten with a greater focus on providing advice to groups with implementation resources. This work has a key role in the coordination of plant biosecurity research across government and industry groups.

Although the Annual Operational Plan identifies a small deficit, I know that PHA management will do what it can to deliver a better result.

On behalf of my fellow directors, I'd like to thank PHA staff and all of you for assisting our staff in their continued efforts to achieve the biosecurity system that we all want.

Thank you again for attending today and I look forward to our AGM in Canberra in November.

[Steve McCutcheon](#)

Chairman