Exercise Aggregate Report

Agriculture Victoria and Industry
Liaison exercise | August 2023

Plant Health AUSTRALIA | VICTORIA State Government

ABOUT THE REPORT

The *Exercise Aggregate Report* was authored by Plant Health Australia (PHA) in consultation with the Exercise Planning Team. The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of activities and a critical analysis of the outcomes and learnings of Exercise Aggregate. The information presented was informed by the activity evaluations, debriefings conducted, exercise outputs and the observations of the Exercise Planning Team and Exercise Evaluators.

Any feedback or questions in relation to the report can be directed to PHA as follows:

Contact Manager, Learning and Development

Email training@phau.com.au

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

AgVIC	Agriculture Victoria
AIP	Affected Industry Parties
BISOP	Biosecurity Incident Standard Operating Procedure
BMSB	Brown Marmorated Stink Bug
CCEPP	Consultative Committee on Emergency Plant Pests
DSCBIL	Deputy State Controller Biosecurity Industry Liaison
EAP	Employee Assistance Program
EPPRD	Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed
EPP	Emergency Plant Pest
IAP	Incident Action Plan
ILC	Industry Liaison Coordinator
ILO	Industry Liaison Officer
IMT	Incident Management Team
IP	Infected Premises
LCC	Local Control Centre
NMG	National Management Group
NBRT	National Biosecurity Response Team
ORC	Owner Reimbursement Costs
PHA	Plant Health Australia
PIF	Plant Industry Forum
RA	Restricted Area
SBCC	State Biosecurity Coordination Centre
SBOC	State Biosecurity Operations Centre (Attwood)
SitRep	Situation Report
SP	Suspect Premises
WH&S	Workplace Health and Safety

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Agriculture Victoria (AgVIC) and Plant Health Australia (PHA) conducted Exercise Aggregate ("the Exercise"), a joint government/industry simulation exercise aimed at bolstering preparedness efforts for potential plant pest or disease outbreaks in Victoria. The Exercise focused on enhancing the capabilities and confidence of plant Industry Liaisons and strengthening connections between government and industry representatives during biosecurity emergency responses.

Named Exercise Aggregate to signify the collaboration between government and industry, the Exercise was funded through AgVIC's *Strengthening Victoria's Biosecurity System* program.

Exercise Aggregate aimed to improve the delivery of the Industry Liaison function for plant biosecurity emergency responses, with objectives centred on testing collaboration structures, enhancing industry members' capabilities, and improving AgVIC's support systems.

The scenario involved a suspected Emergency Plant Pest (EPP) outbreak of the brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB) in Shepparton, Victoria. Participants engaged in various control centre activities, including Industry Liaison Officer (ILO) deployment, planning for movement controls, logistics for surveillance, and public information planning.

Recommendations stemming from the Exercise include sustainable engagement avenues, implementation of an industry liaison 'buddy system,' regular functional exercises, and updates to ILO deployment processes and training materials.

The Exercise provided valuable insights and recommendations for enhancing preparedness and collaboration in plant biosecurity emergency responses, setting the stage for ongoing improvements and initiatives.

Recommendations

	RECOMMENDATION	LEAD
1	AgVIC to consider sustainable ongoing engagement avenues and activities to support the continual promotion of relationships and learnings from Exercise Aggregate as well as actual responses.	AgVIC
2	AgVIC and PHA, in consultation with industry, to investigate options to implement an industry liaison 'buddy system' within a control centre environment.	AgVIC/ PHA
3	AgVIC to explore opportunities to undertake a regular schedule of functional exercises that engage their agricultural industries, informing consideration of the matters raised in Exercise Aggregate.	AgVIC
4	AgVIC to consider how systems and processes can accommodate the involvement of ILO/ILC in a hybrid control centre during all phases of a response.	AgVIC
5	PHA to initiate and support discussions through the Plant Industry Forum (PIF) to improve ILO deployment processes and structures within their industry organisations, with specific consideration of: • industry organisation and ILO reporting lines, including where state or local based industry organisation may be involved • decision making authority • conflict of interest • management of Work Health and Safety (WH&S) responsibilities, inclusive of psychosocial hazards • finance and administrative arrangements • documentation of industry liaison resourcing needs in cost shared response plans	PHA

	RECOMMENDATION	LEAD
6	PHA to support discussions occurring through the PIF on resourcing the Industry Liaison function when there are multiple Affected Industry Parties involved in a response.	PHA
7	Industry Parties to undertake planning for how to effectively work collaboratively with state and local industry bodies who may be engaged by Lead Agencies to support response activities.	Industry
8	PHA to establish separate and specific Industry Liaison Coordinator (ILC) and ILO job cards, incorporating practical elements through case studies (to which jurisdictions may add jurisdictional specific elements where needed).	PHA
9	PHA to review and update the ILO e-learning course to address outcomes from Exercise Aggregate.	PHA
10	PHA to initiate and support discussions through the PIF on the development of an industry ILO response kit.	PHA
11	AgVIC to develop an ILO induction checklist to ensure all deployment and induction arrangements have been completed with each incoming ILO.	AgVIC
12	AgVIC to develop a state-based confidentiality agreement for ILOs engaged within their control centres. This should be supported by guidance that contextualise how confidentiality provided to or by ILOs is managed within a control centre.	AgVIC
13	AgVIC, in collaboration with PHA, to develop a 'ready reckoner' that provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities of each functional area based on its Incident Management structure, which at a minimum: • shows images of the tabards worn by each function within the control centre • provides clear examples of tasks done by each of the functions to assist identifying 'who do I need to go to' for ILOs.	AgVIC/ PHA
14	Development of an ILO induction toolkit minimum requirements in line with suggested actions identified in Table 4.	AgVIC

OVERVIEW OF THE EXERCISE

AgVIC delivered a joint government/industry simulation exercise to support ongoing preparedness efforts for a plant pest or disease outbreak in Victoria. The focus of Exercise Aggregate ("the Exercise") was to build on existing training activities for plant Industry Liaison Officers (ILO) to further develop their capability and confidence to undertake this role.

AgVIC also sought to develop stronger connections between government and industry representatives and increase awareness of the needs and processes that each may have or use during a biosecurity emergency response.

The Exercise was named Exercise Aggregate to acknowledge the overarching purpose of bringing together government and industry, whilst also touching on the 'aggregating' behaviour of *Halyomorpha halys* (brown marmorated stink bug – BMSB) on which the scenario for the Exercise was based.

Funding for the development and delivery of the Exercise was provided through AgVIC's *Strengthening Victoria's Biosecurity System* project through its *Collective Biosecurity Movement* initiative, which included a series of joint emergency exercises to further engage industry participants, promote a coordinated effort, and enhance shared responsibility for biosecurity responses. In-kind support was gratefully received during the planning process from representatives from AUSVEG and the Australian Table Grapes Association, and the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries and Biosecurity Queensland through the provision of independent evaluation of the Exercise.

Aim and objectives

The aim of the Exercise was to improve the delivery of the Industry Liaison function for Victorian plant biosecurity emergency responses through upskilling industry representatives and enhancing AgVIC's processes and support functions.

The objectives (Table 1) further guided the development and evaluation of the Exercise within the agreed scope (Table 2).

Table 1 Exercise Aggregate objectives and sub-objectives

OBJECTIVE	SUB-OBJECTIVE
1 Test the effectiveness of existing structures and processes to facilitate effective collaboration between government and industry liaisons during a biosecurity emergency response.	1.1 Examine the effectiveness of allocated roles and responsibilities between government and industry in achieving response outcomes. 1.2 Examine the effectiveness of interactions between ILCs and ILOs.
2 Increase plant industry members capability and capacity to deliver the Industry Liaison function while working within AgVIC's biosecurity emergency response doctrine.	2.1 Evaluate the ILOs' knowledge of plant emergency responses and identify opportunities to enhance its effectiveness. 2.2 Participants to experience activities and tasks likely to be requested of an ILO.
3 Improve AgVIC's ability to support the Industry Liaison function during a plant biosecurity emergency response.	3.1 Identify gaps and opportunities to improve AgVIC's operational guidelines and incident management systems. 3.2 Identify components of value for an ILO toolkit.

Table 2 Exercise Aggregate scope

IN SCOPE	OUT OF SCOPE
• ILO role functions and responsibilities as per PLANTPLAN. • Support role of the ILO to other functional areas within a control centre. • State Biosecurity Coordination Centre (SBCC) and Local Control Centre (LCC) activities relevant to the Industry Liaison role.	• Field-based activities. • Consultive Committee on Emergency Plant Pests (CCEPP) and National Management Group (NMG) functions and activities (other than as injects to the Exercise).

Scenario

A scenario was crafted involving a detection of a suspected EPP – initially in an apple orchard in Shepparton, Victoria – that escalated in scale and complexity over one month to enable a range of functional control centre activities to be explored by the participants, including:

- ILO deployment to a control centre
- induction within an LCC
- planning for movement controls and property area freedom analysis
- logistics for surveillance
- public information and communication planning
- handovers
- scaling up in responses.

BMSB was chosen as the EPP as its wide host range was considered relevant to a wide range of potential industry participants. However, the pest species was not critical to achieving the aim and objectives of the exercise.

Following initial detection of BMSB on three premises and within five days of an LCC being established within Shepparton, plant industries were approached by AgVIC and requested to provide an ILO to support response activities. The ILOs arrived at the LCC 14 days after BMSB was detected, and at a point in the response where there were five Infected Premises (IPs) and two Suspected Premises (SPs) identified within orchards, plant production and retail nurseries and various community settings.

Response activities then escalated over a three-week period with:

- an increase to 28 IPs and 240 premises of interest (being Trace Premises, At Risk Premises or Dangerous Contact Premises)
- a second LCC established
- additional cropping sectors impacts
- a Restricted Area (RA) legislated
- the development of a draft response plan for consideration by the Consultative Committee on Emergency Plant Pests (CCEPP) and the National Management Group (NMG) under the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD).

The final part of the exercise saw the scenario move to day 28, where participants returned for a second rotation as ILO. The scenario ended on day 31 of the incident.

Planning and delivery

Exercise planning

Planning was undertaken in a manner aligned with the principles outlined in the Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook 3: *Managing Exercises*, 2012, Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience CC BY-NC (available www.aidr.org.au).

An Exercise Planning Team comprised of the following organisations provided guidance in the development and implementation of the Exercise:

- PHA / P2R2 (subcontracted)
- Agriculture Victoria
- Australian Table Grape Association
- AUSVEG.

Pre-exercise activities

In the lead up to the Exercise, participants were required to:

(a) attend a webinar run by AgVIC which provided foundational knowledge regarding emergency response structures in Victoria, and

(b) complete the PHA *Industry Liaison Officer* eLearning course.

Exercise commencement – 'Preparing to deploy'

Two days prior to attendance at the LCC (day 9 within the scenario), each industry participant received a standard AgVIC deployment notice, accompanied by 'pre-deployment' information (structured to be relevant for the Exercise) which included the following:

- Emergency contact information form
- End of shift debrief form
- Handover template
- Incident management log
- Acronym list
- ILO Jobcard (PLANTPLAN)
- PHA Confidentiality Deed Poll
- BMSB fact sheet
- ExAggregate - Incident Action Plan (IAP) #1
- ExAggregate - Situation Report (SitRep) #2.

Industry participants were directed to discuss with their peak industry body expectations of their role as an ILO, as well as explore any organisational matters relevant to their deployment (such as support arrangements, contact points, policies/procedures, decision making authority).

Exercise delivery

The Exercise was delivered over two days (Wednesday 2nd and Thursday 3rd August 2023) at the SBOC in Attwood, Victoria, combining functional and discussion activities (Table 3).

Table 3 Overview of key activities delivered in Exercise Aggregate

WEDNESDAY 2 AUGUST 2023	
Day 14 in scenario (morning sessions)	**Preparing to deploy (activity)** – AgVIC, industry participants and peak industry bodies considered the level of organisational preparedness to be able to deploy and support ILOs during a biosecurity emergency.
	Induction to the control centre (role play and activity) - Induction delivered by AgVIC. Incoming industry participants discussed their information needs, with components of an ILO toolkit considered.
	Movement controls (activity) - Participants gained an insight into the design and application of a containment strategy and provided the perspective of industry to the processes and the implications for growers.
	Situation appreciation (activity) - Participants gained an appreciation that response planners may not have a detailed knowledge of their sector's operations and how ILO knowledge can be critical for longer-term planning and support including how geographical and seasonal activity is important for response planning.
Day 15 in scenario (afternoon sessions)	**Surveillance and industry resourcing –** Participants gained understanding of existing surveillance activity and the interest and capacity of industry to support surveillance during a response.
	ILO/ILO handover (activity) - Participants gained experience in providing a handover to ensure continuity of representation and supporting an incoming ILO to gain situation awareness.
THURSDAY 3 AUGUST 2023	
Day 28 in the scenario (morning sessions)	**IMT briefing (role play) –** Industry participants (returning for a second deployment as part of the scenario) observed a morning IMT briefing during which it was identified that due to the increasing scale of the response, a second LCC was being established.
	Scaling up in a response (activity) - Participants gained exposure to the scalability of the response structures and explored resource needs for industry representation in multiple control centres. Participants also gained experience in establishing situational awareness and familiarity with property classifications.
	Mental health and stress in a response (presentation by AgVIC)
Day 31 in the scenario (morning sessions)	**Communication planning (activity)** - Participants gained experience in considering the needs of their industry regarding information about response activities, as well as the potential implications surrounding confidentiality.
	Property area freedom options analysis (activity) - Participants assessed the regulatory conditions and processes that may be in place to consider the feasibility of a property area freedom scheme and identify potential impacts to growers as well as opportunities to improve those conditions and processes.
Afternoon	**Exercise completion -** debriefs and discussion on future directions.

Evaluation

Participants were surveyed prior to and following completion of the Exercise to gauge the impact the training event had on their level of preparedness and to inform learnings. Participants were also able to provide feedback on individual activities undertaken.

Survey results are expressed as a percentage of responding participants (shown as 'n=') where referenced in the body of this report. Variability in number of respondents was associated in part with issues arising with implementing the post-activity surveys across the two days.

The Exercise was also evaluated by two independent evaluators drawn from biosecurity government agencies within New South Wales and Queensland. Their evaluations of the Exercise activities and outcomes against the Exercise objectives outlined earlier form the foundations of the insights identified in this report.

Participating organisations

Potential ILOs/ILCs from within Victoria from a range of plant industries, together with staff from AgVIC and the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, participated in the joint exercise (Figure 1 and Appendix 1).

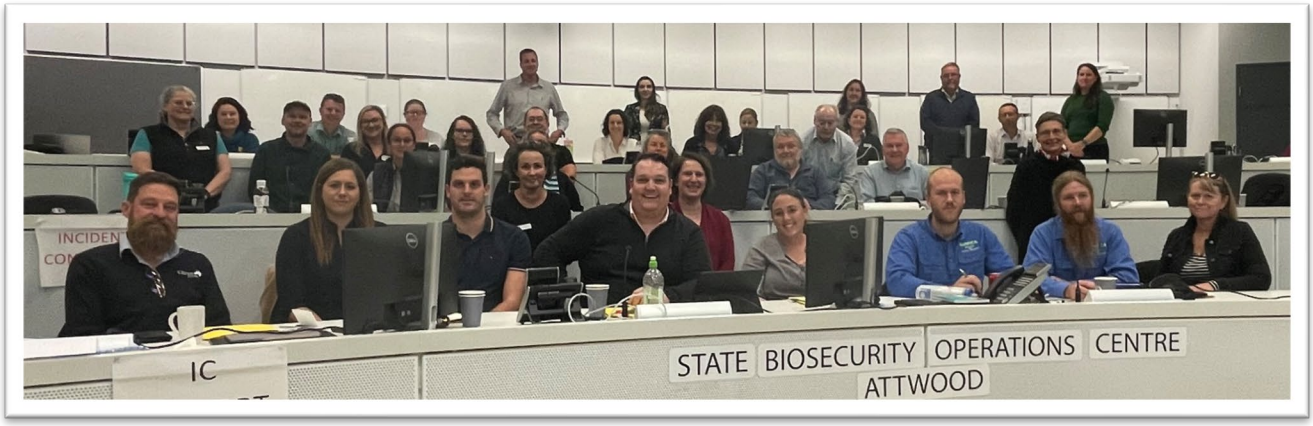

Figure 1 Exercise Aggregate participants

EXERCISE OUTCOMES AND FINDINGS

Throughout the Exercise, AgVIC demonstrated a genuine desire and proficient approach to working collaboratively with industry, with an emphasis on leveraging each other's strengths. Equally, industry embraced the challenge of working within the unfamiliar and challenging environment of a response control centre, highlighting to government the valuable contribution each makes in achieving a shared outcome.

Participants agreed on the benefits of scheduling a follow-up meeting within a few weeks post-Exercise for industry and government to review lessons learned and discuss initiated changes. This meeting successfully took place on Thursday 9 November 2023. Additional engagement and activities between AgVIC and industry sectors would further enhance existing relationships and deepen industry understanding of government operations during a response and their role as industry liaisons. (Recommendation 1).

Recommendation 1 AgVIC to consider sustainable ongoing engagement avenues and activities to support the continual promotion of relationships and learnings from Exercise Aggregate, as well as actual responses.

Collaboration within a plant biosecurity response

✓ *Objective 1 - Test the effectiveness of existing structures and processes to facilitate effective collaboration between government and industry liaison during a biosecurity emergency response.*

Overall, AgVIC's existing structures allowed for valuable engagement and collaboration between industry and government to achieve response outcomes, demonstrated through several exercise activities.

Though the Exercise did not allow for extensive testing of the existing operational guidelines and incident management systems, industry and government were exposed to fundamental elements that all personnel (industry and government) would be expected to be able to do or participate in within their role in a control centre, including:

- deployment notification and action
- induction to the control centre
- briefings/debriefings
- maintaining a log book
- providing a handover at the end of a roster.

Other activities within functional areas and associated policies/procedures (such as planning and public information) were effectively addressed by AgVIC, exposing industry to those aspects and providing confidence that they were in place.

Factors supporting engagement and collaboration

Factors seen to influence effective engagement and collaboration (whether from an individual or organisational perspective) primarily revolved around:

- familiarity with the operation of a control centre
- direct cost (to industry) of providing an ILO
- availability of individuals to participate (resourcing) and time away from business as usual, particularly over extended periods
- ability to effectively undertake the role impacted by:
  - confidence levels and/or lack of knowledge regarding the ILO role

  - level of knowledge regarding industry and broader supply chain matters outside of industry
  - insufficient preparation and processes to support the role within industry organisations
- concerns about impact on mental health and general wellbeing
- perception within an organisation (government or industry) of the value of the role.

The above matters are not unique to Victorian industries or government but are broader issues that all governments and industries must address both individually and collectively to resolve.

Some of the identified barriers that AgVIC and participating industries may be able to inform are examined below.

Familiarity of control centre operations

Not unexpectedly, the degree of familiarity with government processes, specifically incident management systems, informed the level of effective engagement by industry participants. As an example, when surveyed, 100% of respondents were certain that ILOs could be effectively engaged in communication planning in a control centre, which is a fundamental aspect for industry. In contrast there was less certainty with activities related to legislative movement controls and surveillance, areas ILOs may be less familiar with.

Although improvements in induction/training and guidance materials can help support better outcomes, often, the most effective way for individuals to learn about operational guidelines and incident management systems is through direct involvement in a real-life response. One approach could be for prospective ILOs to 'buddy up' with an ILO on duty during a response. This 'buddy system' would allow them to gain practical experience without the responsibilities of the role. Both government and industry indicated a willingness to facilitate the involvement of industry as observers during a response.

Recommendation 2 AgVIC and PHA, in consultation with industry, to investigate options to implement an industry liaison 'buddy system' within a control centre environment.

Alternatively, further exercise activities that are more functional in nature could replicate real experience and provide needed exposure. Though not necessarily within the remit of AgVIC to implement or influence, further consideration nationally could also be given to how government trains/exercises with industry jointly through such avenues as the National Biosecurity Response Team (NBRT).

Recommendation 3 AgVIC to explore opportunities to undertake a regular schedule of functional exercises that engage their agricultural industries, informing consideration of the matters raised in Exercise Aggregate.

At the time of the Exercise, the PIF was establishing an industry support/mentor system to help industry representatives involved in responses, the genesis of which could naturally expand to provide support to ILOs.

Participating in a virtual control centre was also discussed. Whilst AgVIC confirmed their ability to accommodate industry liaison involvement in this way, industry generally considered that virtual engagement, particularly in the early stages, would not provide them with sufficient situational awareness to contribute meaningfully. As the response progressed though, industry considered that a virtual and/or on-call ILO role had merit and could be considered.

Recommendation 4 AgVIC to consider how systems and processes can accommodate the involvement of ILO/ILC in a hybrid control centre during all phases of a response.

Providing a safe and supportive work environment

Discussion about mental health and workplace safety of individuals came up often throughout the two days, with industry participants placing a high importance on the potential psychosocial hazards that may be encountered within the control centre environment. The presentation on managing stress during a response was considered a valuable inclusion in the Exercise and brought into sharp focus the emphasis that AgVIC places on the health of its people working within a response. There was discussion about the government Employee Assistance Program (EAP) utilisation, and the purpose built 'wellbeing room' available for all response personnel (including industry) at the Attwood facility. This focus by AgVIC will support industry feeling cared for and part of a team, which in turn will promote greater industry involvement.

Through an industry lens, there appeared to potentially be less focus and organisational structures to provide deployed ILOs with the support they may need. Noting the increased focus on organisational responsibilities to manage psychosocial hazards as part of their WH&S obligations, a collective discussion on this matter, potentially within the PHA PIF, is warranted to improve preparedness for deployment readiness of ILOs by industry organisations (refer Recommendation 5).

Industry organisational costs of deploying an ILO

Another potential barrier to engagement is the cost to industry organisations, or individuals, associated with deployment to a response, particularly for extended periods. Participants discussed the challenges of being able to release individuals employed on research funds (such as industry development officers) to fulfill an ILO role, with smaller industries uncertain about their capacity to provide a delegate.

Several industry participants were not aware of possible cost sharing arrangements under the EPPRD that could support the involvement through funding of the ILO role of backfilling a 'business as usual' role (refer Recommendation 5). Since the Exercise, there have been further discussions amongst the EPPRD signatories as to government and industry staff costs eligible for cost sharing, which will continue to inform this matter.

Participants also expressed uncertainty around financial and administrative arrangements of being deployed and how costs associated with being away from their usual working environment would be reimbursed. This element could be effectively supported through deployment and induction tool kit elements (refer Recommendation 13).

Industry organisational systems and structures to support deployment

As indicated earlier, the Exercise enabled industry participants to reflect on how well-prepared their own industry organisation and industry base were in terms of providing and supporting suitably trained ILOs. Not all industry participants were aware of or knew whether their national peak industry body had a PHA 'Biosecurity Incident Standard Operating Procedure' (BISOP) that could assist during a response under the EPPRD.

A couple of critical matters were uncovered early in the Exercise that require further attention by industry, including specifically the need to clarify and document:

- reporting processes within their peak industry body (or as described in the next section, amongst multiple industry bodies)
- decision making authorities for the ILOs
- conflict of interest of nominated ILOs
- WHS responsibilities as they relate to deployment.

Industry organisations that are likely to be involved in deploying ILOs should develop their own ILO response toolkit (refer Recommendation 9).

Recommendation 5 PHA to initiate and support discussions through the PIF to improve ILO deployment processes and structures within their industry organisations, with specific consideration of:

- industry organisation and ILO reporting lines, including where state or local based industry organisations may be involved
- decision making authority
- conflict of interest
- management of WH&S responsibilities, inclusive of psychosocial hazards
- finance and administrative arrangements
- documentation of industry liaison resourcing needs in cost shared response plans.

Engagement of multiple industry sectors and organisations

State-based industry organisations, in addition to the national peak industry bodies that are signatories to the EPPRD, were noted as being able to support industry liaison roles. As indicated earlier, this highlighted a gap in clarity of decision-making authority and reporting lines between the various organisations (refer Recommendation 5), which appeared to increase when multiple different cropping bodies were also considered 'Affected' for the biosecurity incident.

It was noted that the incident management structure within AgVIC allowed for a Deputy State Controller Biosecurity Industry Liaison (DSCBIL) during a level 2 response, which would be the contact point to coordinate multiple ILOs. What was less clear and formalised, was how industry would potentially coordinate their efforts and sustain engagement over a longer period of time.

These matters warrant further consideration by AgVIC and industry bodies.

- How do national industry bodies (EPPRD Parties) effectively work with state/local bodies who may be beneficial in supporting the response, whether in an ILO capacity or as a local representative (not formally in the ILO role)?
- How can industry work together to support the resourcing of the industry liaison role that also meets the expectations and needs of AgVIC?

From an industry resourcing perspective, a few options were highlighted:

- Rotation of ILOs across multiple affected industries.
- The 'primary' impacted industry(s) taking the lead and reporting back/engaging with the other affected industries.
- A shared ILO that could represent multiple industry parties.

At the time of this exercise, the PHA PIF had initiated a conversation about a collaborative approach to resourcing the ILO role, informed by an agreed action arising out of a prior debriefing activity.

Recommendation 6 PHA to support discussions occurring through the PIF on resourcing the Industry Liaison function when there are multiple Affected Industry Parties (AIP) involved in a response.

Recommendation 7 Industry Parties to undertake planning for how to effectively work collaboratively with state and local industry bodies who may be engaged by Lead Agencies to support response activities.

Interactions between coordinator and officer level industry liaison roles

– ***Objective 1.2*** – *Examine the effectiveness of interactions between ILCs and ILOs*

The Exercise successfully tested the ability of the industry participants to engage in activities that were relevant to either a SBCC or an LCC (such as handovers, IMT briefings and planning activities), though it did not scrutinise in detail the interplay between the control centre levels.

The practical differences between the roles of the coordinator and officer level industry liaison functions were questioned by participants and appeared generally unclear to most. This lack of clarity appeared to impact the ability of industry to contribute in some instances due to uncertainty as to whether they had the 'authority' to contribute (particularly with decision making). This appeared to multiply where the reporting lines within or between industry bodies were unclear.

The above highlighted an opportunity to refine current guidance materials, develop case studies of "a day in the life of an ILO/ILC" (Recommendation 8), and investigate future training or exercise prospects to improve clarify on the roles and responsibility of the ILO and ILC (Recommendation 3). Information on how the two levels communicate with each other, who they report to and how this would be applied across multiple ILOs potentially across state and national industry bodies, also needs to be explored (Recommendation 5).

Recommendation 8 PHA to establish separate and specific ILC and ILO job cards, incorporating practical elements through case studies (to which jurisdictions may add jurisdictional specific elements where needed).

Enhancing industry capability and capacity

✓ ***Objective 2*** - *Increase plant industry members capability and capacity to deliver the Industry Liaison function while working within AgVIC's biosecurity emergency doctrine.*

Exercise participants arrived with a variable level of knowledge and experience in being involved in a biosecurity response, either through national level engagement or within a control centre (though not all within Victoria). Across the two days, there was a significant leaning towards increasing participant awareness of the industry liaison role(s) and exposing industry to some of the more fundamental tasks and functional areas they may be involved in within a control centre.

Industry gained a lot of valuable information, were able to self-assess how prepared their organisation was and had 'homework' with which they could take back to their industry sectors to enable continual improvement of their response readiness.

The level of input that could be provided by an ILO and industry more generally into response aspects such as planning, movement control options, technical advice around treatments and communication planning/talking points, was refreshing for participants and to some extent surprised both industry and government participants. It also highlighted that there was a genuine appreciation from industry to be able to contribute to response activities and acknowledgment not all response decisions are pre-determined.

A key insight across most activities undertaken was that an ILO's ability to contribute effectively to an activity was enhanced when both the process and the purpose of their contribution was understood. Knowing why the information and contribution is needed is a vital step in enabling industry to have a greater input into the success of response actions and should be a key reflection in the development of all training and guidance materials.

Industry knowledge and implementation

✓ *Objective 2.1 - Evaluate the ILOs knowledge of plant emergency responses and identify opportunities to enhance its effectiveness.*

Prior to participating in the exercise 22% (n=18) of industry participants stated they were unsure/unclear about the role of an ILO (Figure 1). This could be due to the fact that fewer than half of participants (44% n=18) had any direct prior exposure to biosecurity responses prior to participating in Exercise Aggregate. The majority of industry participants had completed the PHA ILO e-learning course prior to attendance, though only a few had participated in the PHA ILO workshop.

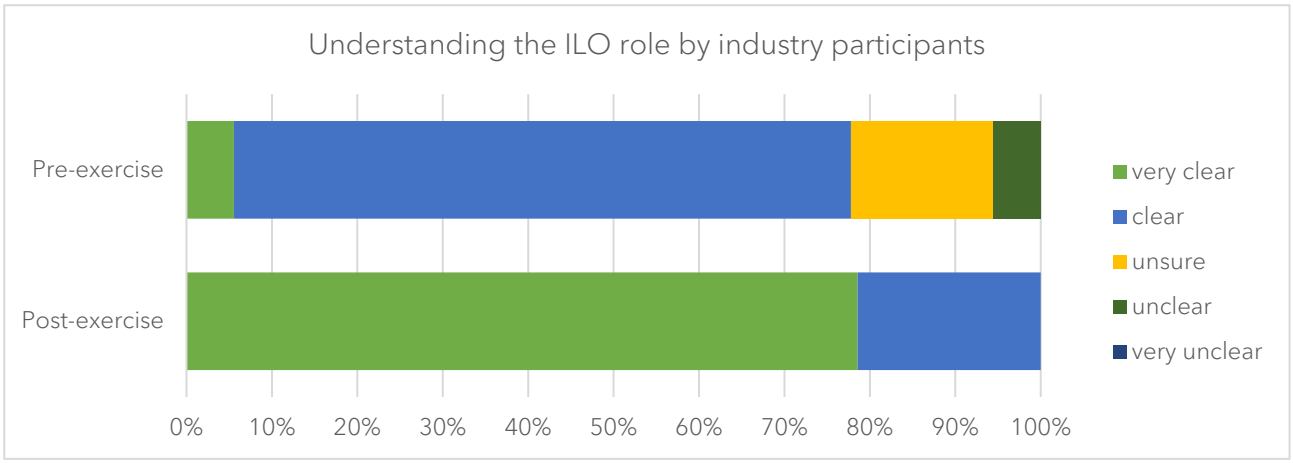

Figure 1 - Change in understanding of industry participants as a result of participating in Exercise Aggregate

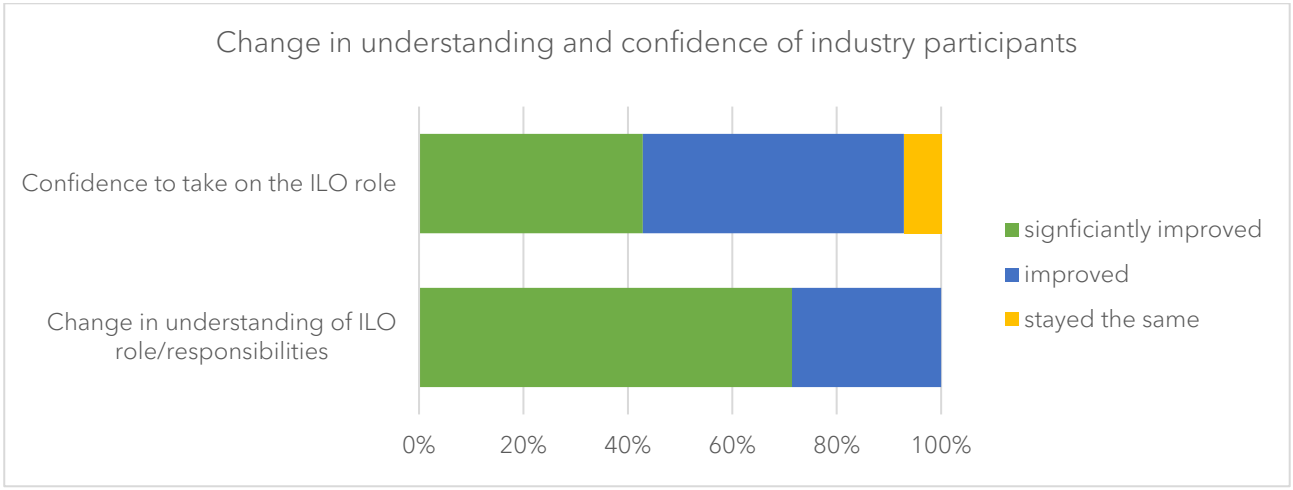

Figure 2 - Change in understanding and confidence of industry participants as a result of participating in Exercise Aggregate

Critically, the Exercise was shown to promote confidence amongst industry participants to take on an ILO role in a future response (Figure 2), with 100% of industry respondents stating that participating in Exercise Aggregate had improved/significantly improved their understanding of the ILO role (Figure 1 and 2).

Improvements to e-Learning

The e-learning component of PHA's ILO training program provided a solid foundation for participants prior to their participation in the Exercise. However, content updates would address some of the knowledge gaps identified during the Exercise. These include:

- greater explanation and examples of incident management communication documents (SitRep, IAP, handover, talking points etc.)

- greater detail on roles and responsibilities of each functional area
- tips on how an ILO can engage with functional areas to address their concerns or contribute to response activities
- additional information on ILC and ILO roles and responsibilities
- additional information on the roles of the CCEPP and NMG and how they relate to an ILC/ILO
- additional information on phases of a response with consideration to an ILOs involvement and contribution.

Modifications to the e-learning will ensure that just in time and refresher training provides greater understanding and preparedness for industry.

Recommendation 9 PHA to review and update the ILO e-learning course to address outcomes from Exercise Aggregate.

Establishing an industry ILO response kit

Industry organisations that are likely to be involved in deploying ILOs should develop their own ILO response toolkit which includes, at a minimum, the following information, and as they are developed, other elements captured through other recommendations:

- contact information for members of the peak industry body as well as state-based organisations
- guidelines on what information can be provided to a lead agency including personal information
- factsheets/background on high-priority pests relevant to that industry
- industry information for each state and territory:
    - the location of growing locations, distribution points, and processing centres
    - peak periods of production (planting, spraying, harvesting etc)
    - common practices used during production that may assist biosecurity measures (eg washing, cold storage, fungicide treatments as a preventative)
- documentation of key industry biosecurity systems (such as surveillance systems).

Recommendation 10 PHA to initiate and support discussions through the PIF on the development of an industry ILO response kit.

Experiencing control centre tasks and activities

✓ *Objective 2.2 – Participants to experience activities and task likely to be requested of an ILO.*

Each exercise activity focused on exposing the industry participants to tasks and functional activities they would likely be involved in during a response as outlined in Table 3, highlighting a number of considerations to working within a control centre.

Knowing the functional areas is key

Industry gained an understanding that staffing, from a government perspective, is highly rotational during a response and the importance of talking to persons based on their functional role, not the individual. This provided valuable learning for industry and emphasised the importance of understanding the structure and the functional roles within a control centre. It also provided insight into the potential exhaustion ILO's might experience from continuously establishing new relationships as staff rotations occur.

Timely contribution and decision making

Decision making was discussed extensively, and industry participants were not always clear on the level of decision that was expected of them or that they would be able to provide, or whether industry board or CEO approval would be required. It was reinforced during the Exercise that the ILO role predominantly provides local knowledge and intelligence, and technical advice to support response decisions, rather than being required to make decisions. The importance of the response being able to make operational decisions quickly, and the need to draw on industry knowledge and insight in a timely manner was also recognised.

Industry understanding industry

Participants quickly recognised the need to have a solid understanding of their industry, including knowledge of local producers and supply chains, to be able to support control centre requests in a timely manner. Participants were able to reflect upon who they would need to call if they didn't have all the needed information, and how they could better prepare for such situations.

Other matters

The nature of the activities also allowed for more 'content' specific queries to occur, related to such matters as:

- surveillance structures and national data systems
- EPPRD specific topics, including Owner Reimbursement Costs
- specifics of movement restrictions during a response and pathways to market
- area freedom determination
- budget development in a response
- responsibilities for containment and treatment actions
- elements of good communication
- recovery and business continuity.

Supporting industry in a control centre environment

✓ *Objective 3 - Improve AgVIC's ability to support the Industry Liaison function during a plant biosecurity emergency response.*

✓ *Objective 3.1 - Identify gaps and opportunities to improve AgVIC's operational guidelines and incident management systems.*

As noted earlier, AgVIC was able to effectively support engagement and collaboration of ILOs during a response (as demonstrated through the Exercise activities), and that collaboration was more effective when industry participants understood not only the process itself, but what the purpose behind the task was.

This section outlines the noted highlights of the Exercise activities and the opportunities AgVIC may wish to consider to improve elements of their processes and systems, specifically with a view to providing increased support to ILOs/ILCs.

Deployment and induction arrangements

Deployment into a response is a stressful situation, even those who are experienced. So, for those where emergency response is not their day-to-day role, providing clear instructions is vital to reducing stress and improving their capacity to contribute.

Prior to a deployment notice being issued to an incoming ILO, it was noted a phone call from

someone within the IMT would benefit ILOs and the IMT. This initial conversation would allow the IMT the ability to assess the knowledge and skills of the ILO, as well as the ILO to assess what additional information or support they may need before commencing the role.

The following list was identified as information that should be included in the deployment notice and control centre induction to provide a smooth transition into the response:

- briefing on administrative tasks such as:
    - WH&S
    - recording hours
    - recording and claiming expenses
    - rostering
    - end of deployment
    - code of conduct
    - confidentiality during the response
    - instruction on completing log books, call logs and handover notes
- timetable of 'battle rhythm' including the timing of meeting and ILO is expected to or suggested they attend
- contact details of IMT staff rostered at the same time
- roles and responsibilities of each functional area for the current response
- name of key contact while working in the response
- list of affected industries for the current response
- details of physiological wellbeing support
- industry Liaison tabard for clear identification within the control centre

Recommendation 11 AgVIC to develop an ILO induction checklist to ensure all deployment and induction arrangements have been completed with each incoming ILO.

Confidentiality

Industry participants identified that it was not clear within the control centre environment what was considered 'confidential information' and how to manage confidentiality when engaging with their peak industry bodies. As with all responses, industry identified that there was certain information that needed to be shared to provide updates or seek industry members advice but what that information was and the level of detail that could be provided is unclear.

Conversely, it was not clear to industry how AgVIC records and uses the confidential information provided by the ILOs.

As part of exercise activities, participants were provided with and asked to sign the Confidentiality Deed Poll that is connected to activities under the EPPRD. Though signing this Deed Poll is a requirement, its direct relevance is to those that are participating in meetings of the CCEPP and/or NMG and does not provide any guidance for industry delegates operating within a state-based control centre.

Recommendation 12 AgVIC to develop a state-based confidentiality agreement for ILOs engaged within their control centres. This should be supported by guidance that contextualises how confidentiality provided to or by ILOs is managed within a control centre.

Functional areas

Though the pre-Exercise training materials and documentation provided a solid overview of the control centre structure and environment, industry participants identified at several points that they were unclear on which functional area lead they should engage with to provide information or address concerns. This was somewhat exasperated by the absence of tabards during the Exercise. However, the core issue appeared to be understanding of which functional area was responsible for which tasks or actions.

Though AgVIC noted that under such circumstances, the DSCBIL (if established) would be a point of contact for the ILO to seek clarification, there is an opportunity to improve foundational guidance material.

Recommendation 13 AgVIC, in collaboration with PHA, to develop a 'ready reckoner' that provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities of each functional area based on its Incident Management structure, which at a minimum:

- shows images of the tabards worn by each function within the control centre
- provides clear examples of tasks done by each of the functions to assist identifying 'who do I need to go to' for ILOs.

Planning

Many of the Exercise activities centred on participants working with the Planning function. This provided the opportunity for industry to gain an understanding that many of the processes implemented and decisions made by Planning are not pre-determined but allow for engagement and consultation with industry.

A key factor in ILOs being able to fully engage in the planning processes, however, was having a clear understanding of the bigger picture. Exercise activities sought input from the ILO on a specific task within Planning, but participants expressed a need for the wider understanding of the process and situation to be able to effectively contribute.

Participants also acknowledged the desire to be able to deliberate with their industry organisation on planning matters before offering advice, citing lack of confidence to make a decision that would influence the response without consultation.

The above highlighted the need for industry organisations to ensure they are appointing the right people to the role of both ILO and ILC (Recommendation 8), and the need for further training or exercises to improve the understanding of how to work within functional areas (Recommendation 3), and clarity on when and how ILOs engage with their industry organisation regarding decision making (Recommendation 8).

Public information

The Exercise highlighted the role of the Public Information function within the control centre and the types of communication events they are involved in. Participants were able to gain an understanding of the importance of industry having a voice and the role the ILO plays in being able to advise on industry needs.

Communication and how it flows within the control centre and outside the control centre was a theme across many of the activities. Participants were exposed to the importance of providing consistent messaging and information and how that can change over time and inform decision making.

Exercise activities raised the need for greater clarification on matters such as:

- what information from within the control centre can be shared with their industry, peak industry bodies and CEOs/growers (ref Recommendation 10)

- the approval process an ILO should follow in the Public Information function when sharing information beyond the control centre
- would the control centre process specifically require engagement with the ILO to ensure talking points are fit for purpose or would the ILO drive that engagement
- clarification on the purpose and application of talking points including differentiation between national talking points and operational talking points
- how can industries work together to coordinate messaging, particularly if there are multiple industries involved but only one ILO in the control centre.

Industry Liaison control centre induction toolkit

✓ ***Objective 3.2*** *- Identify components of value for an ILO toolkit.*

A key evaluation metric and anticipated output of Exercise Aggregate was identifying the potential scope and indicative content of an Industry Liaison induction toolkit to support the induction of ILOs/ILCs into Victorian response control centres.

Components of the toolkit were scoped through consultation with industry participants and observations of government and industry needs throughout the Exercise.

The composition of the Industry Liaison induction toolkit (Table 4) should be considered 'minimum requirements' to improve baseline knowledge and support improved induction and subsequent contribution of ILOs in control centre activities. Elements may also prove useful to support induction of personnel seconded from other jurisdictions or outside AgVIC.

Additional response specific elements may need to be included on a case-by-case basis depending on the nature of the incident or the phase of the response.

Recommendation 14 Development of an ILO induction toolkit minimum requirements in line with suggested actions identified in Table 4.

Table 4 Components of an Industry Liaison induction toolkit and suggested actions to implement (if not identified elsewhere within this report)

COMPONENT	SUGGESTED ACTIONS AND INCLUSION
Acronym and definition list	The use of acronyms was a frustrating, though reluctantly accepted, part of operating within the control centre environment. Though an acronym list was provided within the deployment notice, industry participants considered it overwhelming (over 400 listed) with many acronyms noted as being out of date. Suggested actions/inclusions: ☐ PHA to develop a generic list and publish it under PLANTPLAN as well as a resource in the ILO eLearning course. ☐ AgVIC to develop and adopt a streamlined and current acronym/definition list.
Job cards	Inclusion: ☐ Reviewed and revised ILC and ILO job cards (refer Recommendation 7). ☐ List of decisions / advice that an ILO may be called on to provide.
Control centre structure and environment	Inclusion: ☐ 'Ready reckoner' for industry participants (refer Recommendation 11) ☐ Information package including all forms they are required to fill out (together with a guideline on how to fill these out).
Common control centre	Common control centre activities were not familiar to most industry participants. During the Exercise a number of excellent 'tips and tricks' or standard requirements were identified, such as writing 'HN' next to text in your log book to identify this was

COMPONENT	SUGGESTED ACTIONS AND INCLUSION
actions/tasks	important during the handover, and that ILOs should photocopy their log book as a copy has to be left at the control centre. Inclusions: ☐ Doing and receiving a handover guidance - tips and tricks factsheet. ☐ Managing your incident log – tips and tricks factsheet. ☐ Recording and claiming expenses – operating procedure/factsheet. ☐ Roster processes – operating procedure/factsheet. ☐ Rhythm of the day in SBCC/LCC - timetable of team meetings. ☐ Data capture policies / record management - operating procedure/factsheet.
Understanding government policies and procedures	As above, there were a number of standard government procedures and policies which industry had variable familiarity with, particularly in relation to legislation. Suggested inclusions: ☐ 'Privacy and confidentiality within the control centre – your responsibilities' factsheet. ☐ 'Understanding [Victorian] plant health legislation' – factsheet/guideline.
Welfare and wellbeing support	Suggested inclusions: ☐ Information about WH&S responsibilities and structures within the control centre. ☐ 'Recognising and managing stress in a control centre' factsheet that covers both generic support means (such as available crisis/support hotlines) and response specific support such as: o who to contact in the control centre o is the government EAP available to ILOs o is there a 'wellbeing space' for the ILO to go to.

GENERAL FEEDBACK ON EXERCISE AGGREGATE

The following section outlines general feedback on the implementation of Exercise Aggregate not specifically related to the aim and objectives of the Exercise.

Survey outcomes (industry participants)

Industry participants (n=14) valued the structure and format of Exercise Aggregate, with the opportunity to network with government and other industries particularly appreciated (Figure 3).

Reflections on the usefulness of individual activities was more variable, though overall each of the activities was considered generally useful to understanding the ILO role (Figure 4).

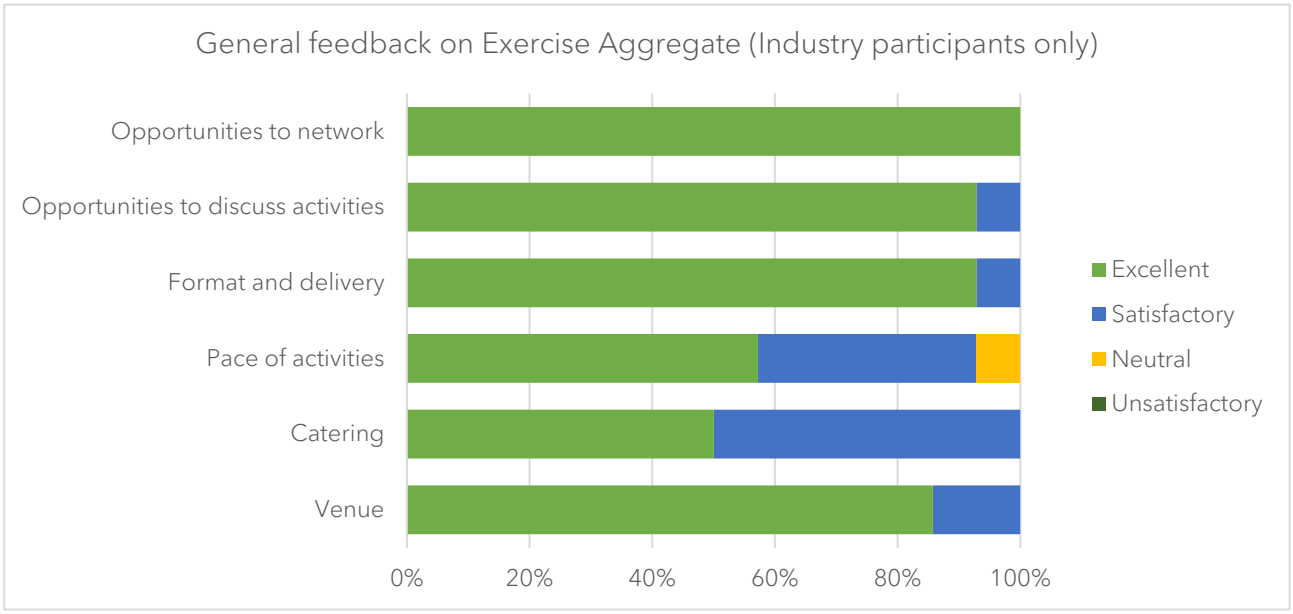

Figure 3 - Post exercise survey results from industry participants on the structure, format and delivery of Exercise Aggregate

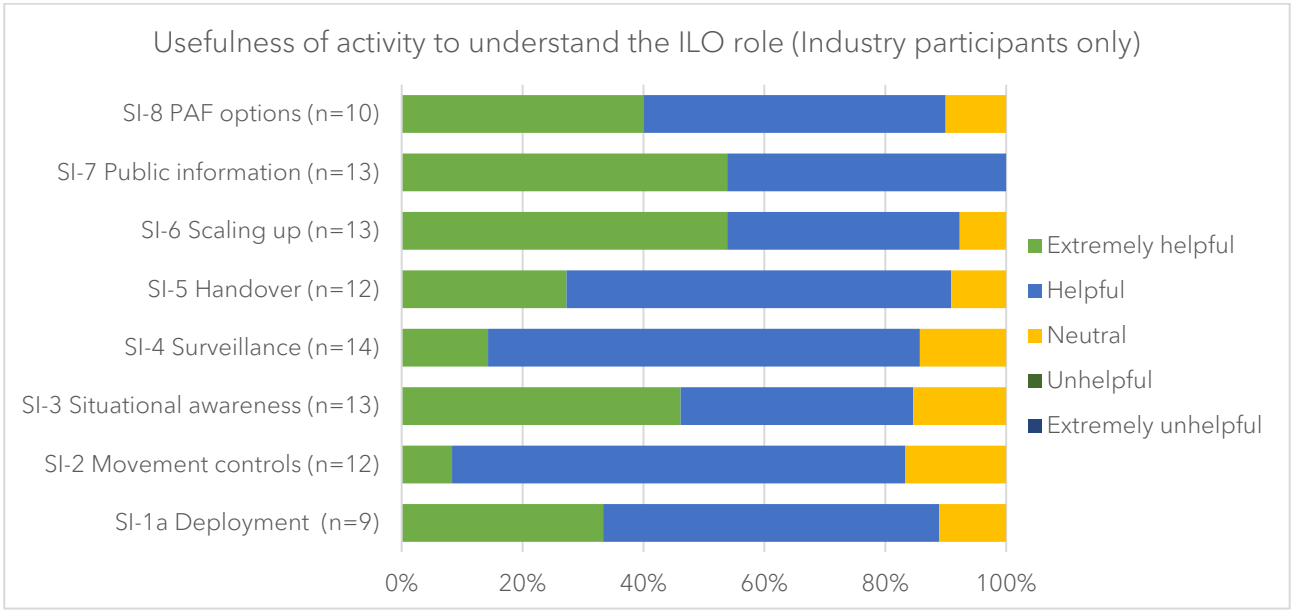

Figure 4 - Post exercise survey results from industry participants on the value of individual activities

43% of industry respondents suggested they would value additional training or experience prior to taking on an ILO role, reflecting the following:

"Step wise checklist/ train the trainer for expanding ILOs primarily sourced from industry. Then maintaining their interest/connection to their role during peacetime. Regular short biosecurity briefings on incursions/activities (even those interstate) could be useful for those not intimately engaged in the space."

"It is always a need to stay fresh, on point and informed."

"Repetition of this type of info is important."

"Refresher; partaking in an actual response where my industry is not involved."

"Potentially the opportunity to shadow an ILO in a response for a short period."

"Follow up before an incident."

"Practice doing common ILO duties during a response."

Overall industry welcomed the opportunity to engage with AgVIC, as well as their industry colleagues in a training exercise, and expressed a willingness to continue to collaborate on response capability development.

"Thank you for a terrific couple of days. Next steps for our industry is identifying suitable people within industry to perform the role and the rules of engagement need to be developed for [industry] during a response particularly how we communicate with stakeholders including [industry]. Thanks again. Well done."

"Name badges or even labels would have been handy, but has been great."

"Really worthwhile event, thank you"

"Awesome job"

"Really interesting to hear from those that have been involved in previous incident / incursions"

"Great exercise, really built on previous ILO training"

Evaluator feedback

The following reflections below are comprised of feedback through the evaluators and self-reflection of the Exercise Planning team through debriefing.

- The Exercise had a more 'education/awareness' focus with AgVIC personnel being more of the subject matter expert/facilitators rather than being a participant in the exercise. A simple change (as implemented on day 2 following day 1 debriefing) was to incorporate more role playing.
- Industry participants often drew on and sought to share their experiences in other responses, which though valuable, impacted on some of the activities which were to be more functional in nature. A greater focus on group facilitation would have supported participants staying on track and made it a more 'joint' discussion (this was seen on day 2 after a day one debrief).
- The evaluation processes (through surveys throughout the couple of days) appeared rushed and uncoordinated for participants, impacting on the evaluation process.
- Simple elements, such as name tags and wearing tabards, were overlooked and would have improved navigating through the exercise activities.

APPENDIX 1: EXERCISE PARTICIPANTS

ORGANISATION	ATTENDEES	
Agriculture Victoria	Lana Russell* Lavinia Zirnsak* Stephen Dibley* Paula Giraldo* Sue McConnell* Ryan Cooke	Tong Chen Brittany Greet Kim Andrews Nicole Cairns Rob Walker
Animal Health Australia	Geraldine Wickham	
Apple and Pear Australian Limited	Ian Cover	
Australian Seed Potato Industry Certification Authority	Jonathan Eccles Barry Strahan	Jack Mueller
Australian Table Grapes Association	Jenny Treeby* Karen Connolly	Jeff Scott
AUSVEG	Shakira Johnson* Rose Daniel	Danielle Park Joy Pederson
Biosecurity Queensland	Lisa Hickey (Evaluator)	
Chestnuts Australia	Elke Jasper	
Citrus Australia	Nathan Hancock Jessica Lye	Matt Jones
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	Emma Carroll	Alisa Render
Dried Fruit Australia	Mark King	
Fruit Growers Victoria	Kerrie Watson	
Melons Australia	Johnathon Davey	
New South Wales Department of Primary Industries	Leonie Martin (Evaluator)	
Nursery and Garden Industry Victoria	David Reid	
Plant Health Australia	Susanna Driessen* Naomi Wynn*	Carolyn Blomley (Evaluator)
Victorian Farmers Federation Beekeepers	Robert McDonald	
Victorian Strawberries	Angela Atkinson	

* denotes part of the Exercise Planning Team

Exercise Aggregate

Plant Health Australia

Level 1, 1 Phipps Close
DEAKIN ACT 2600

Phone: +61 2 6215 7700
Email: admin@phau.com.au

PHA 23-042