

# CHAIR ADDRESS

## PHA 25th General Meeting

Thursday 21 May 2026

Now in our 26th year of operation, PHA continues to work in partnership with our Members to strengthen Australia's plant biosecurity system. This collaborative approach is grounded in a culture of shared responsibility and national coordination, with PHA serving as the trusted system coordinator. In this role we provide continuity of knowledge and expertise, a national perspective and sustained insight, ensuring the system remains forward-looking and focused on practical, solutions-orientated outcomes.

A clear trend has emerged in recent years with the plant biosecurity system facing increasing pressure from a range of external factors, highlighting the growing need for system transformation and more sustainable funding arrangements. This trend is being further reinforced by the conflict in the Middle East, which has contributed to a global energy crisis and heightened uncertainty for growers, particularly in relation to rising input costs and the potential downstream impacts on levy revenue.

The Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed continues to play a pivotal role in enabling nationally coordinated responses. Each time the Deed is enacted, it presents a valuable opportunity to capture lessons learnt or improve aspects of its operation. As the custodian, PHA plays a key role in monitoring its application, reviewing associated processes, and raising issues for the Parties to consider. Through a number of formal mechanisms in place to support reflection and continuous improvement such as stand-alone debriefs, biannual EPPRD signatories meetings and the five-year review of the Deed, the EPPRD continues to evolve. The draft five-year review report was circulated to Parties in March and the content of the draft report will be unpacked, validated and refined at the Review Workshop on Friday.

PHA continues to adapt and grow in response to the challenges and opportunities shaping our operating environment, recognising the need to remain agile to meet the pace of operations, growing compliance obligations and the increasing level of support required by Members. To sustain our role as the trusted coordinator of Australia's plant biosecurity system, this agility must be underpinned by a clear understanding of the true cost of service delivery. The rollout of our Enterprise Resource Planning system has enhanced our visibility of operational costs, providing greater transparency and insight into the adequacy of current funding arrangements and this data will inform PHA's medium to long term strategic focus.

After careful consideration of the Consumer Price Index and the increasing external cost pressures impacting our operating environment, a 3.8% increase in Member subscriptions is proposed. This increase would mean an increase of \$38,596 for the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments and Plant Industry Members, bringing total subscription funding to \$3.19M - which equates to 22% of PHA's income.

PHA is also forecast to receive \$11.62M in non-subscription project funding, making up 78% of our total income. Project funding plays an important role in benefiting Members by enabling PHA to scale up capability and technical skills and respond flexibly to emerging issues - particularly during emergency responses. This funding also enables us to recover overheads and underpins the entire biosecurity system which benefits all PHA Members.

The Board has resolved to retain the minimum subscription and Associate Member subscriptions at the current levels.

Looking ahead, the 2026-27 Annual Operational Plan sets a clear roadmap aligned with our Strategic Plan. We thank Members who contributed feedback during the consultation period, which was incorporated into the revised AOP which was circulated with notice of this meeting.

It's my great pleasure to announce that the Directors have approved AgriFutures Australia as an Associate Member of PHA at our Board meeting earlier this week, increasing our membership to 58. PHA has enjoyed a productive collaboration with the AgriFutures team over many years, and we are delighted to formally welcome them as a Member. Their involvement strengthens our shared commitment to Australia's plant biosecurity system, and we look forward to continuing this important partnership.

Finally, I would like to thank the PHA team for arranging the Plant Industry Forum, Government Members Forum, EPPRD Annual Debriefing Forum, EPPRD meeting, EPPRD review workshop, General Meeting and Members Forum and for preparing a portfolio of work that continues to maximise Member benefits, support emerging Member needs and focuses on strengthening the plant biosecurity system for the benefit of the economy, environment and community.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank you for your attendance and continued commitment to Plant Health Australia and to the strength of our national biosecurity system. Your engagement, insights and collaboration remain central to ensuring we are well-positioned to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities. As we move forward into 2026-27, we look forward to working closely with Members to deliver on our shared priorities and maintain a strong and resilient system.