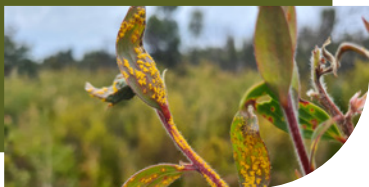




Australian Government

Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry



Australian Biosecurity Awards 2025

AWARD RECIPIENTS

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Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
GPO Box 858 Canberra ACT 2601
Telephone 1800 900 090
Web agriculture.gov.au

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Acknowledgements

The Australian Biosecurity Awards team thanks the 2025 selection panel for their thoughtful deliberation in recognising this year's outstanding award winners.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

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FROM THE MINISTER



Congratulations to the 2025 Australian Biosecurity Award recipients.

Australia's biosecurity system is world-leading, which is why the Albanese Labor Government has invested an additional \$2 billion to strengthen it.

The success of our biosecurity system is built on the dedication, innovation and collaboration of individuals, groups and organisations across the country.

The Australian Biosecurity Awards program celebrates these contributions, recognising those who go above and beyond to protect our environment, agriculture and communities from the biosecurity threats of today and tomorrow.

The awards are a testament to leadership, collaboration, innovation and proactive risk management.

I am proud to champion this program and commend the outstanding efforts of our award recipients.

Their work exemplifies the values of resilience, connection and shared responsibility that underpin our national biosecurity system.

Whether through industry leadership, community engagement or First Nations stewardship, this year's winners demonstrate unwavering commitment to safeguarding Australia's future and protecting our way of life.

I would like to extend heartfelt congratulations to our 2025 winners.

Your achievements are inspiring and reinforce just how special our national biosecurity system is and what it protects.

Thank you to Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia for their continued support of the Farm Biosecurity Producer of the Year award.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julie Collins".

The Hon Julie Collins MP

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

The Australian Biosecurity Awards recognise individuals, groups and organisations that have shown a commitment to supporting and promoting Australia's biosecurity and the systems that underpin it.

For more information, visit [Australian Biosecurity Awards](#).

AWARD CATEGORIES



Dr David Banks Biosecurity Lifetime Achievement Award

Recognises an individual who has made an outstanding contribution over a sustained period.



Dr Kim Ritman Award for Science and Innovation

Recognises an outstanding individual as an ambassador for science and innovation.



First Nations Award for Excellence in Biosecurity

Recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, groups and organisations for outstanding contributions to biosecurity and exceptional commitment to protect Country and people from pests, weeds and diseases.



Farm Biosecurity Producer of the Year

Recognises Australian primary producers and growers for outstanding on-farm biosecurity practices.



Industry

Recognises contributions to Australia's biosecurity in their related industry.



Government

Recognises government employees, partnerships or organisations that significantly contribute to maintaining Australia's biosecurity integrity.



Environmental Biosecurity

Recognises significant contributions to protecting our environment from biosecurity risks.



Community

Recognises significant contributions to biosecurity outcomes in the community.



Education

Recognises significant contributions to biosecurity education.



DR DAVID BANKS BIOSECURITY LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Dr Allison Crook

Dr Allison Crook has dedicated almost 30 years to animal health and biosecurity, driving positive outcomes for industry, the environment, communities and government. Widely recognised for her analytical and strategic thinking, Dr Crook is highly respected by government and industry partners as a trusted leader in emergency management, daily operations and for championing positive change.

She started her public service career in 1997 as a veterinary officer with the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries. Early achievements include leading national programs to monitor and reduce chemical residues in animal products and establishing the department's first detector dog team.

In 2001 Dr Crook travelled to the United Kingdom as a representative of the Queensland Government where she assisted in the response to the devastating foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) outbreak in Wales. In September 2002 she led the Queensland component of Exercise Minotaur designed to test Australia's national arrangements for managing post-border aspects of an FMD outbreak.

Dr Crook was appointed Director, Animal Biosecurity and Welfare, Biosecurity Queensland in 2008. As part of this role, she also held the position of Chief Inspector of Stock, coordinating a team of policy officers working across animal biosecurity, animal welfare and animal ethics. She was instrumental in supporting the team that controlled and then eradicated equine influenza in Queensland, helping Australia become one of the few countries in the world to have successfully eradicated the disease.

In June 2014 she was appointed General Manager Animal Biosecurity and Welfare, Biosecurity Queensland, which also includes the role of Chief Veterinary Officer.





In 2019 the Australian Chief Veterinary Officer invited Dr Crook to be a member of the Australian delegation at the 87th World Animal Health Organisation General Session in Paris. This is testament to her professionalism and commitment to animal health and biosecurity at a national and international level.

Dr Crook is an outstanding advocate for continuous improvement in the biosecurity system and affecting change at a state and national level. This is demonstrated through her work on national approaches to managing significant emergency animal diseases, including FMD and Hendra virus.

Throughout her career, Dr Crook has energetically led and contributed to animal, aquatic and plant biosecurity emergency responses at a state, national and international level. She actively promotes response preparedness and has led or been involved in exercises that aim to enhance the national biosecurity system.

Dr Crook is a progressive and considered thinker. She is always looking ahead and scanning to evaluate biosecurity risks. For example, she implemented a proactive approach to address the spread of African swine fever (ASF) in Europe and Asia. This included the launch of an extensive communication campaign and development of a nationally implemented ASF guide for veterinarians to raise awareness among government and industry stakeholders.

Dr Crook is now leading the Queensland Government's high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) preparedness agenda through a One Health approach. HPAI is a significant threat to Australia's poultry industry, wildlife and environment, so preparedness is a national priority.

Through her leadership, Queensland has maintained a strong presence on high-level national forums and committees focused on biosecurity and animal welfare. Dr Crook represents Queensland on the national Animal

Health Committee, including chairing several specialised task groups. She has chaired the national Animal Welfare Task Group since 2020.

Dr Crook has represented the state and territory agriculture authorities on the SAFEMEAT Partners group for many years. The group plays a crucial role in ensuring Australia has robust meat safety and livestock traceability systems in place.

Dr Crook was honoured with a Public Service Medal at the 2024 Australia Day Awards for outstanding public service during COVID-19 to animal welfare and the protection of biosecurity in Queensland.

Demonstrating exemplary leadership and unwavering commitment, she has made a profound and nationally significant contribution to Australia's biosecurity – an achievement worthy of recognition.

THE DR DAVID BANKS BIOSECURITY LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

*is dedicated to the memory
of Dr David Banks*





DR KIM RITMAN AWARD FOR SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Dr Nerida Donovan

For over 25 years Dr Nerida Donovan has led a citrus pathology program that enables government and industry to combat citrus biosecurity threats and support industry sustainability.

Dr Donovan and her team are recognised as the premier laboratory in Australia for the detection, identification, classification and management of citrus pathogens. They can detect all described citrus diseases, understanding these within our borders to minimise their impact and preparing for the arrival of new diseases.

In recognition of her continued efforts to safeguard Australia and its citrus industries against emerging threats, Dr Donovan was honoured by her peers in 2019 with 2 prestigious awards: the Lester Burgess Award for Diagnostics and Extension presented by the Australasian Plant Pathology Society and the Service to Industry Award presented at the Citrus Australia Technical Forum. The awards acknowledged her work to enhance the preparedness of industry and government.

Dr Donovan and her team work closely with the Auscitrus propagation scheme to ensure the citrus industry has access to 'high health status' propagation material. This is achieved through routine disease testing of budwood and rootstock seed source trees and by maintaining healthy foundation trees as part of the National Citrus Repository Program. These trees are the backbone of the Australian citrus industry. They provide an ongoing source of disease-free material to establish and restock citrus orchards nationally, maintaining high health standards and suppressing the distribution of citrus diseases.

A champion for biosecurity and the citrus industry, Dr Donovan generously attends a range of professional events to increase awareness of important issues. She has been featured by national media outlets and in industry publications and is a sought-after speaker at national and international conferences.

Dr Donovan is a prolific contributor to scientific journals, sharing the work of her team to showcase advancements in citrus testing, pathogen distribution and pest and orchard management. Her work represents best-practice biosecurity on a global scale, helping to reduce the risk across citrus-growing nations worldwide.

Dr Donovan has authored and contributed to publications such as *Viroids: Methods and Protocols* (2022) and *Diseases of Fruit Crops in Australia* (2009), and production manuals, including the *Citrus plant protection guide* (2017 to 2024) for Australian growers and a *Nursery Manual for Citrus and Mango* (2016) for developing nations.





Her work demonstrates that sharing knowledge and resources creates a stronger biosecurity system for all. Her laboratory was one of the first to provide rare samples of genomic extractions from infected plant material to the department's Post Entry Quarantine Facility. The samples were used to develop, enhance and validate in-house testing, which improves capability to detect the world's worst citrus pathogens at the border.

Dr Donovan has travelled extensively to support international engagement opportunities, particularly across Asia, where she trains farmers, extension officers and scientists on citrus tree inspection and management practices for maximising fruit production and returns. Her expertise, experience and professionalism have contributed to improved biosecurity and economic outcomes for our near neighbours.

Dr Donovan's work on increasing quality and output of citrus orchards has helped alleviate poverty in developing nations where citrus is an important cash crop.

During these trips, Dr Donovan obtains samples of infected plant material that would otherwise be difficult to secure. She brings them back to Australia for analysis and shares them with other agencies to improve diagnostic and detection capabilities – uplifting the entire plant biosecurity system.

Dr Donovan maintains an enviable network, including world-leading experts in the pathology field. In 2019 her peers elected her Chair of the International Organization of Citrus Virologists. In this capacity, she organised their 2022 online conference and the 2025 conference in Mildura, giving Australian growers and scientists direct access to international experts on our key citrus biosecurity threats.

Dr Donovan's unwavering dedication and scientific leadership have made her a cornerstone of Australia's biosecurity efforts, leaving a legacy in the protection and resilience of the nation's citrus industries.

THE DR KIM RITMAN AWARD FOR SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

*is dedicated to the
memory of Dr Kim Ritman*





FIRST NATIONS AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN BIOSECURITY

This award was introduced in 2024 to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, groups and organisations that have made an outstanding contribution beyond their normal responsibilities to Australian biosecurity. This award recognises exceptional commitment to improving the protection of Country and people from pests, weeds and diseases.





FIRST NATIONS AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN BIOSECURITY

Torres Strait Island Regional Council

The Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC) represents 15 island communities across more than 42,000 square kilometres of sea and land. The Torres Strait shares an international border with Papua New Guinea.

As the largest Indigenous council in Australia, it combines cultural authority with operational leadership to safeguard one of the country's highest biosecurity risk regions.

Biosecurity in the Torres Strait is about more than science. It is about Caring for Country and community. TSIRC's work is grounded in Torres Strait Islander knowledge and guided by Elders and Traditional Owners. Programs consider seasonal signs, sacred sites and totemic species. Education is delivered in local language and through traditional teaching methods, ensuring communities feel ownership and can pass knowledge on.

The council leads locally driven programs that manage pests, weeds, animal health and invasive species across the



region. This includes surveillance, education, emergency planning and hands-on response work. By aligning cultural knowledge with government partnerships, the council protects local livelihoods and national interests.

For example, the Exotic Fruit Fly Block Program, delivered in partnership with Biosecurity Queensland, monitors for pests like *Bactrocera dorsalis*. Community knowledge is used to decide where traps should go and when to monitor them. This helps protect Australia's fruit-fly exclusion zones, which are critical to national trade.

Another key program is animal biosecurity. Working with Animal Management in Rural and Remote Indigenous Communities (AMRRIC) and Queensland Health, the council supports desexing, pet ownership education and disease monitoring. This reduces the risks of rabies, ehrlichiosis and other serious conditions reaching the mainland. A pilot project trialled a 'no survey without service' model, where staff provided clinical care while conducting surveillance. This built trust, improved disease detection and created stronger local capacity.

The council also delivers invasive species programs under the *Torres Strait Regional Biosecurity Plan*. High-risk threats such as *Salvinia molesta*, *Mimosa pigra*, feral pigs, cane toads and tramp ants are managed through island-specific responses. These efforts are in close collaboration with prescribed body corporates and community groups, ensuring that cultural authority and community priorities guide the work.

Education is another pillar of the council's approach. Co-designed with AMRRIC and Environmental Health Workers, education programs raise awareness in schools and communities about everyday biosecurity practices. Virtual delivery reduces travel costs, improves accessibility across remote islands and builds workforce capability.

The Environmental Health Worker team is at the heart of the council's work. All team members are Indigenous and locally employed within their 15 island communities. Many hold or are completing formal qualifications in Indigenous environmental health, adding professional recognition to cultural knowledge. Their work encompasses barge inspections, pest and weed control,

animal management, waste management and biosecurity surveillance.

Through this work, TSIRC shows how First Nations-led leadership can address challenges of national significance. By protecting traditional food systems, public health and the natural environment, the council also protects Australia's northern biosecurity frontier.

TSIRC demonstrates cultural strength, operational excellence and deep community ties. Its leadership proves that biosecurity is strongest when built on local wisdom, cultural accountability and community ownership.





FARM BIOSECURITY PRODUCER OF THE YEAR

Ella Matta Pastoral

Ella Matta Pastoral is a sheep operation on Kangaroo Island. Jamie, Andrew (Aphid) and Tracie Heinrich run the family farm with their team. They are leaders in farm biosecurity and have put extensive measures in place to protect their property and those around them.

Ella Matta Pastoral enforces strict on-farm biosecurity protocols in line with their biosecurity plan. As part of that plan, visitors undergo a structured induction process and receive an informative handout when required. This manages risks from visitors, vehicles, and equipment that might carry diseases, pests and weeds.

To reduce disease risk, they have kept a closed flock since 1999, and new genetics are only obtained through artificial insemination. They have a variety of boundary and landcare fencing to control stock and wildlife, which they continuously monitor.

Heinrich-owned vehicles are preferred on their property. If outside vehicles have to enter, they must first undergo a thorough cleaning. All visitors must complete a biosecurity induction, wear provided boots, or authorised thoroughly cleaned boots, and follow access rules. A vehicle and equipment wash-down area and boot-cleaning stations are available at visitor entrances. Biosecurity signage is clearly displayed around key areas of the farm.

At Ella Matta Pastoral's annual sale of White Suffolk, Poll Merino and Composite Rams, the biosecurity plan is put into action. Visitors enter through an approved entrance and clean their footwear at the cleaning station. The Ella Matta Pastoral team checks shoes before handing out wristbands. This clearly indicates that compliance with cleaning processes has been met. Once processed, visitors can register and enter the sale area. Ella Matta Pastoral welcomes 80 to 120 visitors each year who follow



the biosecurity measures, so it's vital that the process runs smoothly.

The farm maintains high animal welfare standards and is certified under the Responsible Wool Standard, which recognises best farming practices worldwide and prohibits mulesing. Under the standard:

- wool must come from farms that progressively and responsibly manage their land, business and stock
- sheep must be treated ethically according to the Five Freedoms (freedom from hunger and thirst, discomfort, pain, injury or disease, the ability to express normal behaviour, and freedom from fear and distress).

Ella Matta Pastoral is certified under the Livestock Production Assurance program. This national farm assurance initiative supports food safety, animal welfare and biosecurity in Australian livestock industries. Certification provides verified evidence of livestock history and on-farm practices when animals are transferred through the supply chain.

The Heinrichs are prominent biosecurity advocates and are leaders in the Australian sheep industry. They are actively involved in various agricultural boards and organisations, and encourage biosecurity through educational outreach, advocacy and proactive on-farm measures.

Through their commitment to best-practice on-farm biosecurity, Ella Matta Pastoral has set a high benchmark for excellence, protecting not only their own business, but contributing to the resilience and sustainability of Australia's broader agricultural landscape.



farmbiosecurity



Queensland Beekeepers' Association

The Queensland Beekeepers' Association (QBA) has demonstrated outstanding leadership and a strong commitment to ongoing collaboration with government and other industry sectors, advocating for biosecurity within the beekeeping community. This has been especially evident in their response to multiple detections of varroa mite (*Varroa jacobsoni* and *Varroa destructor*) and Asian honey bee in Queensland.

The QBA acted swiftly when *Varroa destructor* was first detected in New South Wales in June 2022, working closely with Biosecurity Queensland to address complex challenges affecting commercial and recreational beekeepers. The QBA prioritised education and support for members by providing clear, evidence-based communication about biosecurity risks, mitigation strategies and regulatory requirements. They played a central role in response operations and ensured industry perspectives were heard and addressed.

When some restricted movements of varroa mite carriers were permitted into Queensland from other jurisdictions, the QBA played a pivotal role in the design and implementation of permit conditions. Their work helped protect Queensland's biosecurity system and maintain continuity for the state's beekeeping businesses. They worked alongside Biosecurity Queensland in providing valuable information for rapid risk assessment as the situation changed in other jurisdictions. This collaboration and ongoing commitment supported business continuity and allowed for the safe movement of tens of thousands of hives back into Queensland while preventing the introduction of varroa mite.

In response to a new detection of *Varroa jacobsoni* in Queensland, the QBA assisted in a volunteer-led



Photo credit: Queensland Department of Primary Industries



Photo credit: Queensland Department of Primary Industries

surveillance effort that played a critical role in the successful containment of the incursion. Through their network, they facilitated 27 volunteers over 18 weeks to assist Biosecurity Queensland with surveillance. They successfully located 15 European honey bee colonies and one Asian honey bee colony – the latter being the original source of the *Varroa jacobsoni* detection. This early effort enabled swift eradication activities and gave government agencies crucial time to destroy host species, significantly reducing the risk of further spread.

The QBA's impact extends beyond incident response. They work with a range of stakeholders on biosecurity matters to build resilience and readiness for future biosecurity threats, including honey packers, researchers, suppliers, brokers, as well as local, state and Australian Government agencies. The QBA was instrumental in the development and roll out of Queensland's passive surveillance system Bee 123. This collaboration showcases their commitment to proactive planning that improves biosecurity outcomes for the Australian honey bee industry.

Now that varroa mite is present in Queensland, the QBA continues to collaborate as the next phases of varroa mite establishment are collectively navigated. This includes working alongside Biosecurity Queensland on proposed regulatory changes under state legislation, such as reclassification of the pest and rescinding of the varroa mite biosecurity zone.

The QBA's contributions have been essential to minimising the impact of multiple biosecurity incidents. Their work protects Queensland's vital honey bee population and supports critical pollination services that sustain Australian agriculture and biodiversity.



Photo credit: Queensland Department of Primary Industries





Dr Kirsty Richards

Dr Kirsty Richards is a highly experienced veterinarian with over 20 years in the field. Throughout her career she has demonstrated exceptional leadership and unwavering commitment to advance biosecurity standards across the industry.

As the Industry and Government Liaison Manager at SunPork Group, Australia's largest pig farming integrator, she provides essential professional services to farms responsible for 20% of Australia's pork production.

At SunPork, Dr Richards plays a key role in maintaining and enhancing national biosecurity standards. She has been pivotal in their world-class antimicrobial benchmarking program, which has led to a significant reduction in antimicrobial usage. Her commitment and leadership is also reflected in her management of SunPork's world-leading initiative Autism and Agriculture program that employs and trains autistic adults in farming roles.

Her influence on biosecurity policy and change advocacy extends across the entire pork industry and Australia's biosecurity system. She plays a key role in helping the pork industry prepare for and manage biosecurity risks in Australia and advises on health and biosecurity matters in pig production.

As a foundation member of the Australian Pork Limited Emergency Animal Disease Technical Panel, she plays a pivotal role in strengthening partnerships between industry and government to proactively manage biosecurity risks. She was heavily involved in the development of the pig industry's Voluntary Enhanced Biosecurity Standards (VEBS) that aim to raise on-farm biosecurity practices and provide governments with assurance of a farm's disease risk status during an African swine fever (ASF) outbreak. She led industry



benchmarking for VEBS compliance and developed verification best practices as a Pork SA representative in collaboration with the Department of Primary Industries and Regions South Australia. Her extensive technical knowledge and collaborative approach enable effective engagement between industry and government.

Dr Richards is a leader in operational and strategic post-border preparedness for the pork industry and has a history of initiating, building and sustaining jurisdictional partnerships. She plays an integral role in document reviews of the *Australian Veterinary Emergency Plan* (AUSVETPLAN) through her participation in relevant working groups that examine ASF, classical swine fever and foot-and-mouth disease strategies. She has initiated, led and supported research projects to improve biosecurity and welfare outcomes during an emergency animal disease outbreak. This includes the development of alternative methods for humane animal destruction and disposal, as well as improving surveillance programs for emerging risks.

An active supporter of the pork industry, Dr Richards has contributed to actual outbreak responses and preparedness exercises. She served as a Liaison – Livestock Industry representative during the 2022 Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV) response. She represented the pork industry on the National Vector Management Group, was instrumental in incorporating integrated mosquito controls into the Australian Pork Industry Quality Assurance Program and provided accurate messaging to industry. She worked with owners of infected properties, helping collect samples for surveillance and provided guidance on disease management.

Dr Richards also contributes to international research efforts by working with local and international researchers, including the Centre of Excellence for Biosecurity Risk Analysis, Swine Health Information Center and Ausvet to understand how JEV could spread in North America.

Her expertise and leadership have made a significant impact on animal health and industry collaboration. Dr Richards firmly believes that trusted, technically competent, operationally sound industry expertise is pivotal to biosecurity preparedness and response, and that working together delivers the best outcomes for all.



Argentine Ant Eradication Team, Norfolk Island Regional Council

Norfolk Island Regional Council's Argentine Ant Eradication Program team (AAEP team) plays a critical role in protecting the island's unique environment and reinforcing the integrity of Australia's national biosecurity system.

As the operator of a first point of entry (FPOE), the council and its AAEP team plays a frontline role in protecting Australia, particularly Norfolk Island, from pest incursions. The team demonstrates persistence and innovation – despite the scale of the threat, and limitations imposed by the remote island setting and the complexity of the terrain.

The Argentine ant (*Linepithema humile*) is listed among the top 100 worst invasive species globally. Left unchecked, it displaces native species, harms agriculture, disrupts ecosystems and invades homes and infrastructure.



No mainland jurisdiction has eradicated Argentine ants from an area as large or as complex as Norfolk Island. With the support of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, the AAEP team led a multi-year eradication effort across 24 identified infestation zones, covering more than 560 hectares – roughly one-third of the island's developed and natural land.

The AAEP team partnered with multiple government agencies and stakeholders to deliver the program: coordinating reports, registering products, issuing pilot permits and meeting data requirements. They have worked with CSIRO and scientific experts worldwide to trial and evaluate treatment protocols. They consult cultural and environmental heritage advisors to ensure work aligns with cultural and environmental values.

Beyond Norfolk Island, the team's work represents a critical contribution to Australia's environmental biosecurity. Their achievements include protecting Norfolk Island's World Heritage-listed ecosystems and unique endemic species, preventing the spread of Argentine ants to mainland Australia via freight or tourism vectors, and contributing practical field data to national tramp ant strategies. They have also strengthened confidence in remote FPOE readiness and response and demonstrated that eradication of entrenched invasives is achievable with leadership, local knowledge and scientific rigour.

They have led a complex eradication program with limited resources, innovated under pressure, maintained compliance and public trust, solved regulatory and logistical problems collaboratively, and delivered measurable results in eradication, containment and community engagement.

The AAEP team’s contribution sets a benchmark for remote, government-led and locally delivered biosecurity action in Australia.





Dr Geoff Pegg and Aj Perkins

Through thoughtful collaboration and partnership, Dr Geoff Pegg and Aj Perkins have brought together a diverse network of stakeholders to deliver a transformative 2-year environmental biosecurity program, funded by the Environmental Biosecurity Project Fund.

The program focused on training and capacity building to protect culturally significant species and places from the threat of exotic environmental pests and diseases. Together, they laid the foundation for a more skilled, connected and resilient approach to environmental protection.

The initiative focused on northern New South Wales (Coffs Harbour), south-east Queensland (K'gari and Bunya Mountains) and Cairns. They partnered with Australian and state government agencies, Plant Health Australia, Indigenous communities in the region and other key stakeholders to raise awareness of the vital roles played by Indigenous Rangers, natural resource management organisations and other land managers in safeguarding Australia's unique ecosystems.

The program included developing and delivering training modules for Indigenous Rangers and land managers to improve their ability to spot and report biosecurity threats. Participants included Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation, Bunya Peoples' Aboriginal Corporation, Coffs Harbour Aboriginal Land Council, Gumma Indigenous Protected Area and Minyurnai Indigenous Protected Area staff.

The training materials addressed key forest health and environmental biosecurity topics and were tailored to the priorities and concerns of the community. The workshops were an opportunity to share technical information and learn practical skills for identifying and monitoring myrtle rust and other exotic pest and pathogen threats.



Dr Pegg and Aj Perkins engaged a range of stakeholder groups to highlight the cultural and ecological importance of *Myrtaceae*, and forests in general, and the essential role Indigenous knowledge plays in developing management strategies. This is vital because First Nations groups manage over 50% of Australia's National Reserve System.

The team built a groundbreaking trans-Tasman partnership in Indigenous forest health and environmental biosecurity with Māori custodians and scientists from New Zealand (Aotearoa). This collaboration led to a cultural exchange involving:

- Butchulla and Gumbaynggirr Rangers
- Māori participants from the Rotoiti 15 program
- scientists from SCION research
- officers from our department and the New South Wales and Queensland governments.

Representatives from the SCION-led Myrtle Rust Jobs for Resistance program – Te Rātā Whakamaru visited Australia. This cross-cultural collaboration, funded by Catalyst Seeding from the Royal Society of New Zealand, created a partnership that transcends domestic and international borders to combine different cultural ways of working. It was the first initiative of its kind, providing a model for managing exotic pests and diseases that highlights the interconnected impacts on Country, people and culture.



The program produced the short film [Roots of Resilience](#), a moving testament to the enduring cultural significance of Australia's natural forests to First Nations people. The film highlights the urgent need for collective action to protect these important ecosystems for future generations.

Through genuine engagement with Indigenous perspectives and a shared commitment to environmental protection, Dr Pegg and Aj Perkins have shown that the most effective biosecurity outcomes are achieved through collaboration. As evidence of its impact, the project has been extended until 2029, ensuring that this important work in environmental protection will continue.





COMMUNITY

Peel Harvey Biosecurity Group

The group is a standout leader in community-driven biosecurity in Western Australia. What sets them apart is their commitment to protecting agriculture, native ecosystems and community health. Through active pest management and targeted education programs, they have built trust, empowered local action and created a model that others can look to for inspiration.

Since 2014, the group has led biosecurity efforts in the Peel–Harvey region. Their role as a biosecurity group is defined under the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007* (WA), which enables them to use funds from the state's Declared Pest Rate to support landholders in the control and management of established declared pests.

Their strategy, shaped by the CSIRO's Impact Framework, ensures that activities are impactful and aligned with community needs. The group's operational plans reflect seasonal and ecological conditions, which ensures timely and targeted interventions against declared pests such as rabbits, foxes and feral pigs.



Their annual rabbit biocontrol project has developed from an area-wide calicivirus release (RHDV1 K5 strain) to a highly targeted application based on blood sampling that tests for immunity. This approach demonstrates the dynamic nature of delivering biosecurity services using science-based pest management.

Through workshops, newsletters and the Peel–Harvey Pesky Pests schools outreach program, the group raises awareness about biosecurity risks and the importance of community involvement. Their newsletters are a key communication tool, keeping stakeholders updated on biosecurity issues and upcoming events. The group provides landholders and the community with best-practice information and the tools they need to manage pests.

The polyphagous shot-hole borer is an invasive beetle that destroys trees and agricultural produce. After the beetle was detected in Perth in 2021, the biosecurity group played a key role in raising local community awareness. This was important because part of the locality was under a quarantine area notice. To address the threat of this invasive beetle, the group undertook detection training to support local monitoring efforts and circulated monitoring resources to community members and schools. The group supported early detection of the beetle by promoting the Department of Primary

Industries and Regional Development's online training resources, and boosting community surveillance and public engagement.

The group has contributed to environmental biosecurity by implementing strategic pest control and habitat restoration programs that have helped protect the region's natural heritage and enhanced biodiversity. Collaborative projects include seedling giveaway events, bee hotel school holiday programs and a 3-year initiative to control cotton bush in Serpentine National Park, highlighting their commitment to conserving native species and promoting environmental resilience.

Their success stems from a strong collaborative approach. Over the past year, they launched the Cross-Tenure Invasive Species Program, a project that fosters collaboration between public and private landholders in the Peel–Harvey region to manage declared pest hot spot areas that extend beyond fence lines. The project funds private land managers to deliver integrated management plans that achieve long-term outcomes and reduce community concerns.

The group's engagement with First Nations communities supports Indigenous knowledge integration into biosecurity strategies. They also contribute to regional forums and policy development, reinforcing their commitment to collective action and continuous improvement in biosecurity practices.





COMMUNITY

Dr Richard Willan

Dr Richard Willan is a renowned marine invertebrate taxonomist who has studied and delighted in molluscs for over 50 years. He has held positions at the University of Auckland and University of Queensland. He is Curator Emeritus of Molluscs at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory. His expertise in identifying marine and freshwater pests and deep knowledge of aquatic invertebrate taxonomy and biology have significantly strengthened national pest management efforts.

With a passion for community biosecurity management, Dr Willan actively engages with community groups to build awareness and capacity in aquatic biosecurity – ensuring that scientific knowledge translates into practical, on-the-ground impact. He is a tireless contributor to community-led biosecurity efforts, consistently volunteering his knowledge and time to support environmental education, conservation efforts and community engagement initiatives. His dedication has been recognised through numerous community accolades, including life membership of the Auckland University Underwater Club, Conchology Section of Auckland War Memorial Museum (Auckland Shell Club), the Malacological Society of Australasia and the Northern Territory Field Naturalists' Club. Dr Willan is also involved in citizen science community organisations, particularly [iNaturalist](#), [QuestaGame](#) and [Reef Life Survey](#).



Photo credit: Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory



Photo credit: Northern Territory Fisheries

Dr Willan began his career in mollusc research in New Zealand, but he has since become a cornerstone of Australia's biosecurity system. For over 30 years, he has provided expert taxonomic identification of marine and freshwater invertebrates and played a pivotal role in biosecurity responses. Not all introduced species pose a threat, so his ability to rapidly confirm detections has enabled timely action in cases where intervention was critical. Most notably in 1999, when his swift identification of the black-striped false mussel (*Mytilopsis sallei*) led to one of the world's few successful eradications of an established, highly invasive marine pest.

Dr Willan has also provided invaluable technical support to the [Indigenous Ranger Biosecurity Program](#). His expert identifications enhance the program's effectiveness in protecting northern Australia's aquatic environment from exotic invasive species and fostering meaningful collaborations with First Nations communities.

He played a key role in assessing species for the development of the initial [Australian Priority Marine Pest List](#) – a national awareness tool that supports marine pest surveillance. He also contributed to the implementation of [MarinePestPlan 2018–2023](#), Australia’s national strategic plan for marine pest biosecurity.

As a technical expert, he supports jurisdictions and the national Consultative Committee on Introduced Marine Pest Emergencies by providing subject matter expertise on the biology, ecology, impacts and control of marine and freshwater pests.

In addition to his advisory roles, Dr Willan has trained government biosecurity personnel in the identification of marine and freshwater pests and continues to provide ongoing informal training in identification of local and exotic species. His mentorship helps build national capability in early detection and response to aquatic biosecurity threats.

Dr Willan’s legacy extends beyond scientific excellence to meaningful community impact. Through his decades-long commitment to aquatic biosecurity, he has not only safeguarded Australia’s marine ecosystems, but also enabled local communities, government agencies and industry stakeholders with timely, expert guidance. His collaborative approach and dedication have fostered trust and strengthened national pest management networks, ensuring that biosecurity responses are informed, swift and inclusive. Dr Willan exemplifies how scientific expertise can be a powerful force for community resilience and environmental stewardship.



Photo credit: Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory



Photo credit: Deborah Aston



Photo credit: Neil Wright

Biosecurity Training Centre, Charles Sturt University

The centre was established in 2022 as a partnership between the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Charles Sturt University. It has since become a centre of excellence in biosecurity training and workforce capability. The centre has trained more than 3,000 department officers and 180 international participants, and provided over 3,000 training days in 2024–25 on regulatory, scientific, policy and operational matters. Its short courses on professional development help the department meet its capability uplift goals set out in the [DAFF Biosecurity 2030 Roadmap](#).

The centre uses an integrated training model that combines technical expertise with regulatory professionalism, leadership and operational practice. Courses are designed to meet the department's regulatory biosecurity requirements and are delivered by over 20 academic facilitators specialising in veterinary and agricultural sciences, education, psychology, business, law and scientific research. Training pathways enable officers to progress from entry-level courses to executive level with a consistent focus on integrity, collaboration and capability.



Through this holistic model, the centre is strengthening Australia's biosecurity system by equipping officers with the skills and confidence to prepare for and respond to complex and evolving biosecurity threats. By embedding a culture of learning, innovation and regulatory stewardship, they are building long-term capability and resilience and supporting a workforce that is ready to protect Australia's people, environment and economy.

The centre is contributing to Australia's regional and global biosecurity leadership by delivering impactful international training programs that strengthen institutional capacity, improve frontline biosecurity readiness and build lasting partnerships. This training initiative is in line with the [Pacific Biosecurity Strategy 2022 to 2027](#) and the [DAFF Biosecurity 2030 Roadmap](#).

This includes the design and delivery of a dual-location program (Australia and Indonesia) that trained 160 veterinarians from the Indonesian Quarantine Agency.

Using a train-the-trainer model, the program enhanced technical expertise and regulatory understanding, equipping participants to deliver biosecurity training within their own institutions and networks.

The centre developed and implemented a program that trained nearly one-third of Timor-Leste's national biosecurity officers and included a foundational in-Australia program followed by in-country mentoring. This initiative provided in-language training resources and built a group of local trainers capable of supporting Timor-Leste's biosecurity training needs and laying the foundation for long-term capability uplift.

As part of their growing international engagement, the centre delivered tailored training on Australia's biosecurity system to 12 participants from the Central American Organismo Internacional Regional de Sanidad Agropecuaria (OIRSA) in Brisbane. This highlights the centre's expanding global profile and ability to deliver tailored programs.

The centre's international engagements are improving biosecurity outcomes in participating countries and have enhanced Australia's global standing as a trusted partner in technical and regulatory biosecurity practice.



BIOSECURITY COMMENDATION CERTIFICATES

These certificates recognise individuals, groups and organisations that have demonstrated commendable impact, innovation or dedication. The certificates also acknowledge contributions to supporting and promoting Australia's biosecurity on a local or regional scale.

2025 RECIPIENTS

Camford Distributions

for playing a critical role in protecting Australia's local ecosystems and agricultural industries by identifying and reporting a significant pest threat.

Hillary Cherry

for outstanding contribution to environmental biosecurity through the strategic development and delivery of post-border weed management initiatives.

Dr Heather McKimm

for outstanding contribution and biosecurity advocacy during the 2025 high pathogenicity avian influenza outbreak response.

Sal Milici

for dedicated efforts in advancing biosecurity awareness across the international freight and logistics sector.

Duncan Rowland

for valuable contributions to biosecurity initiatives and for championing biosecurity, traceability and surveillance across livestock industries.

SAIC Anji Logistics

for exceptional commitment to managing biosecurity risks associated with new vehicle imports from China.

Dr Andy Sheppard FTSE

for outstanding scientific contribution to invasive species management and leadership in advancing national biosecurity innovation and strategic research initiatives.

Dr Adam Ślipiński

for significant contributions to biosecurity preparedness and response through extensive research on native and exotic beetle species.

Oliver Tester

for outstanding contribution to national policy development and Indigenous leadership in biosecurity management.

Dr Annelise Wiebkin

for exceptional commitment to safeguarding Australia's biosecurity through collaborative feral deer management efforts.



agriculture.gov.au/ABA

Email: aba@aff.gov.au

Facebook: [Australian Biosecurity](#)