Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry







Australian Biosecurity Awards 2026

AWARD RECIPIENTS

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Acknowledgements
The Australian Biosecurity Awards team thanks the 2026 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 2026 Australian Biosecurity Award recipients.

Australia's biosecurity system is one of the strongest in the world, protecting our environment, agricultural industries, communities and way of life.

It's backed by more than $2 billion in additional biosecurity resourcing delivered by the Albanese Labor Government since 2022, and is made stronger by the dedication, innovation and expertise of people across the country working to manage risks, bolster preparedness and safeguard what Australians value.

We have seen this system at its best with Australia's response to H5 bird flu. Working together across government and with industry, we are minimising the impact of H5 bird flu on Australia's unique wildlife, our $100 billion agriculture industry and local communities.

Of course, biosecurity is a shared responsibility in an increasingly complex environment. Growing trade and travel, changing climate conditions and evolving threats highlight the importance of a proactive, connected and adaptable national system.

Meeting these challenges requires strong partnerships between governments, industry, research organisations, First Nations communities and the wider public.

This year's award recipients underscore the broad effort required to protect Australia from biosecurity threats. The achievements of the award recipients span emergency management, surveillance, scientific research, education, community engagement, Indigenous-led land and sea management, industry leadership and cross-sector partnerships.

Whether working in laboratories, on farms, at our borders or within local communities, they are delivering practical action, innovation and collaboration that strengthens Australia's capacity to anticipate, prevent and respond to biosecurity risks.

I congratulate all award recipients and thank them for their dedication to strengthening Australia's biosecurity system. By sharing their stories, we celebrate excellence, promote best practice and inspire others to help protect what makes Australia unique.

I extend my thanks to Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia for their continued partnership in supporting the Farm Biosecurity Producer of the Year award.



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

Kevin Cooper



For more than 40 years, Mr Kevin Cooper has made an exceptional contribution to Australia's biosecurity system through leadership in emergency management, preparedness and biosecurity response. Throughout a distinguished career spanning animal, plant, aquatic and environmental biosecurity, he has played a pivotal role in strengthening Australia's ability to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from biosecurity incidents. His work has shaped the systems, frameworks and people that underpin Australia's biosecurity emergency response capability today.

Beginning his career in the early 1980s, Mr Cooper worked across animal and plant health laboratories, including emergency disease preparedness. He led the design and establishment of the Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute and later oversaw its technical operations, strengthening Australia's diagnostic and emergency preparedness capability before moving into emergency management. Over the years that followed, he became a recognised leader within the primary industries sector, working across government and with stakeholders nationally to strengthen Australia's approach to biosecurity emergency response. His expertise extended across production agriculture, various pests and diseases, aquatic biosecurity threats, environmental biosecurity incidents and natural disasters affecting agriculture.

Throughout his career, Mr Cooper provided expert advice to governments, industry and response agencies across Australia and overseas. He held senior leadership and management roles in numerous medium and large-scale emergency responses, helping guide decision-making during some of the most significant biosecurity and agricultural incidents faced by Australia. These included the 1999–2000 Newcastle disease outbreak in New South Wales, where he coordinated emergency response activities to support containment efforts, and the 2007 equine influenza outbreak, where he served as Controller of the Local Disease Control Centre in Camden and helped implement disease control measures, including movement controls and vaccination during one of Australia's most challenging animal health emergencies.

Mr Cooper's expertise was also recognised internationally. During the 2001 foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in the United Kingdom, he was deployed as an emergency manager, leading surveillance and tracing activities before taking responsibility for a disease control centre in Yorkshire. On returning to Australia, he prepared a strategic report that strengthened our national foot-and-mouth disease preparedness and informed future training and exercise programs. The experience further shaped his approach to emergency management, reinforcing





the need to consider a broad range of risks and considerations associated with biosecurity emergencies, including economic, environmental, social, political and operational impacts. His expertise was subsequently sought after by other countries looking to enhance their own emergency management capability.

A significant part of Mr Cooper's legacy lies in the systems and frameworks he helped develop. He played a leading role in the development, validation and continual improvement of biosecurity emergency management plans, procedures, policies and agreements that continue to support preparedness and response activities across Australia. He contributed to the design of response structures and operating models used during biosecurity emergencies and helped establish training standards that strengthened workforce capability across jurisdictions.

Mr Cooper was also an integral part of developing and delivering exercises at national, state, territory and regional levels, ensuring Australia's response arrangements were regularly tested and improved. His work helped foster a culture of preparedness and continuous improvement that strengthens Australia's resilience to biosecurity threats. Beyond preparedness activities, he spent more than 3 decades supporting and leading responses to a wide range of incidents, including the 2010 myrtle rust incursion in New South Wales and the nationally significant *Banana Freckle Eradication Program* in the Northern Territory, where he served as State Coordinator during one of Australia's largest and most complex plant pest eradication programs.

In the latter part of his career, Mr Cooper became a highly respected mentor to the next generation of emergency managers and biosecurity professionals. He generously shared his knowledge, experience and judgement with colleagues across Australia, helping develop the skills and confidence of those responsible for managing future biosecurity emergencies. Even in retirement, he remains a trusted source of advice and counsel, reflecting his enduring commitment to collaboration, professional development and capability building across the sector.

Through more than 4 decades of service, Mr Kevin Cooper has helped shape Australia's biosecurity emergency management capability at every level. His contributions have strengthened preparedness, response coordination, workforce capability and national resilience. His enduring impact reflects the qualities embodied by the Dr David Banks Biosecurity Lifetime Achievement Award. Through sustained leadership, service and commitment, he has helped safeguard Australia's industries, environment and communities, leaving a legacy that will continue to influence biosecurity preparedness and response for generations to come.

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

Professor Caroline Mohammed



Professor Caroline Mohammed has made an outstanding contribution to Australia's biosecurity system through her leadership in plant health, forest biosecurity and biosecurity innovation. As a researcher, educator and internationally recognised plant pathologist, she has dedicated more than 30 years to advancing the science that underpins Australia's preparedness for plant pests and diseases. Her work has strengthened diagnostic capability, surveillance, risk assessment and biosecurity decision-making across Australia and internationally, helping protect our agricultural industries, forestry sector and natural environments.

As Centre Leader for Agricultural Systems at the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture, Professor Mohammed leads multidisciplinary research spanning plant health, forestry, agriculture, climate change and biosecurity. Throughout her career, she has combined expertise in plant pathology, diagnostics, modelling and surveillance with a strong commitment to capacity building and collaboration. Her work has consistently bridged the gap between scientific research, policy development and practical biosecurity outcomes, ensuring research findings are translated into real-world improvements for industry, government and the broader community.

A prolific scientist, Professor Mohammed has authored more than 200 publications across plant health and biosecurity disciplines. Her research has improved understanding of significant plant pathogens and supported the development of innovative tools and approaches for disease detection, preparedness and response. She has made important contributions to understanding pathogens affecting forestry and agricultural systems, including threats such as myrtle rust, *Ceratocystis* species and *Ganoderma*. Through this work, she has strengthened Australia's ability to detect, manage and respond to emerging plant health risks.

Her contributions extend across the entire biosecurity continuum, from threat identification and risk assessment through to diagnostics, surveillance, preparedness and long-term resilience. She played a key role in developing rapid screening protocols for disease resistance in *Acacia* species, creating more efficient and reliable methods to support disease management and breeding programs. She also contributed to the development of nationally adopted diagnostic protocols that support consistent and robust responses to plant disease incursions across Australia.





Her expertise was instrumental in Australia's response to myrtle rust, including the development of critical diagnostic tools and contingency planning measures.

Beyond her scientific achievements, Professor Mohammed has been a strong advocate for strengthening biosecurity capability both in Australia and internationally. Through her research leadership, she has built enduring partnerships across government, industry, academia and international organisations. Supported by sustained investment from the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research over several decades, her work in Southeast Asia has strengthened plant health systems and biosecurity capability within plantation forestry industries, particularly for eucalyptus and acacia plantations. This long-term collaboration has built regional expertise, advanced forest health research and fostered enduring international networks. By integrating plant breeding, diagnostics, remote sensing, climate modelling and social science, Professor Mohammed has developed practical approaches to managing plant health risks and improving biosecurity outcomes across the region.

A defining feature of Professor Mohammed's career has been her commitment to developing future generations of biosecurity professionals. She has supervised numerous postgraduate researchers and mentored emerging scientists from Australia and overseas. Many of her former students have gone on to become leaders in plant health and biosecurity in their own countries, creating a lasting legacy that extends well beyond her direct research achievements. Through teaching, training and professional leadership roles, she has made a significant contribution to strengthening scientific capability and expertise across the biosecurity sector.

Professor Mohammed has also been a trailblazer for women in science. She became the first female president of the Australasian Plant Pathology Society and the first female professor within the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture. Her distinguished career has been recognised through numerous leadership appointments and accolades, including the University of Tasmania Distinguished Service Medal. These achievements reflect both her excellence as a scientist and her commitment to fostering an inclusive and collaborative research community.

Through her leadership, research excellence and collaborative approach, Professor Caroline Mohammed has made an exceptional contribution to Australia's biosecurity system. Her work has enhanced preparedness, strengthened scientific capability, improved plant health outcomes and built enduring partnerships across Australia and the Indo-Pacific region. Her contributions continue to support the protection of Australia's environment, industries and communities from current and emerging biosecurity threats.

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

Djelk Women Rangers



The Djelk Women Rangers are recognised for their remarkable contribution to Australian biosecurity through Indigenous-led shorebird surveillance, environmental stewardship and the protection of Country. Based in Maningrida and supported by Bawinanga Homelands Aboriginal Corporation, the Women Rangers represent more than 102 clans and 12 language groups across Arnhem Land. Through their leadership, Indigenous ecological knowledge and commitment to on-Country monitoring, they are helping strengthen Australia's preparedness for emerging biosecurity threats while supporting cultural knowledge, community wellbeing and biodiversity conservation.

Operating across more than 14,000 square kilometres of Arnhem Land and the Arnhem Marine Park, the Women Rangers undertake nationally significant surveillance of migratory shorebirds along one of Australia's most important biosecurity frontiers. Northern Australia lies along major migratory bird pathways linking Australia with Asia and the Pacific, making the region strategically important for detecting emerging disease risks, including avian influenza. Through regular monitoring at remote coastal sites, wetlands and islands, the Women Rangers provide valuable information that supports national biosecurity preparedness and environmental surveillance efforts.





By combining cultural authority, Traditional Owner knowledge and scientific monitoring practices, the Women Rangers deliver a unique approach to biosecurity surveillance. Their long-term presence on Country provides local insight and continuity that strengthens understanding of disease risks and environmental change across northern Australia. Monitoring at locations such as Second Island Lighthouse near Maningrida Harbour contributes to an early-warning capability for unusual bird health events and emerging biosecurity threats, supporting preparedness for avian influenza and other transboundary animal diseases.

The Women Rangers also strengthen biosecurity through community engagement, cultural governance and knowledge sharing. Traditional Owners, Elders, Sea Rangers and community members contribute local observations that help identify priority monitoring areas and inform surveillance activities. At the same time, the program supports intergenerational learning and leadership development, with younger women gaining experience through on-Country training, mentorship and internships linked to the Learning on Country Program. This approach helps build future biosecurity capability while ensuring cultural knowledge and local expertise continue to inform environmental monitoring and stewardship.

Through their sustained commitment, the Djelk Women Rangers are strengthening environmental protection and biosecurity resilience for Arnhem Land and Australia. Their work demonstrates the vital role of Indigenous leadership in protecting Country, supporting communities and delivering ongoing national biosecurity outcomes.



FIRST NATIONS AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN BIOSECURITY

Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation



Protecting Country through Indigenous-led environmental management is central to Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation's contribution to Australia's biosecurity system. Through innovative partnerships, long-term stewardship and a commitment to restoring ecological balance, the organisation has delivered significant environmental and biosecurity outcomes while creating new opportunities for Indigenous leadership in landscape-scale pest management.

The organisation's work is centred on the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape on Gunditjmara Country in south-western Victoria. Comprising of Budj Bim National Park and adjoining Gunditjmara-owned Indigenous Protected Areas, the landscape contains one of the world's oldest and most extensive aquaculture systems and was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2019. For more than 6,600 years, Gunditjmara people have maintained a sophisticated network of channels, weirs and dams constructed from the basalt lava flows of the ancient Budj Bim volcano. Today, the landscape remains a powerful demonstration of cultural ingenuity, environmental stewardship and enduring connection to Country.





Recognising the threat posed by feral pigs to this culturally and environmentally significant landscape, Gunditj Mirring, with support from partners, led a coordinated initiative to protect native ecosystems, cultural heritage sites, waterways and agricultural land. By bringing together Traditional Owners, government agencies, researchers and local stakeholders, the organisation developed and implemented a strategic management program that combined Traditional Owner knowledge with contemporary monitoring and control techniques.

Through sustained effort and collaboration, the program achieved a reduction of more than 90% in feral pig activity across key project sites. This delivered substantial benefits for native vegetation, wetlands and culturally significant locations, while reducing risks to neighbouring agricultural enterprises and supporting broader environmental biosecurity objectives.

Beyond the environmental outcomes, the initiative demonstrated the value of Indigenous leadership in addressing complex biosecurity challenges. By placing Traditional Owners at the centre of planning, decision-making and implementation, Gunditj Mirring strengthened Indigenous participation in environmental management and created a model for collaborative biosecurity action. The project also strengthened partnerships between

Indigenous communities, government, industry and research organisations, building capability and supporting long-term stewardship of culturally and environmentally significant landscapes.

Through its leadership, innovation and commitment to Caring for Country, Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation has delivered lasting environmental and biosecurity benefits. Its work demonstrates how Indigenous leadership can strengthen Australia's biosecurity system while protecting cultural heritage, restoring ecosystems and supporting resilient landscapes for future generations.



FARM BIOSECURITY PRODUCER OF THE YEAR

Allen's Warrawee Park



Allen's Warrawee Park has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to farm biosecurity through practical risk management, continual improvement and a whole-of-business approach to protecting livestock health. Spanning 2,700 hectares south of Keith, South Australia, the Allen family's fifth-generation farming enterprise combines irrigation, cropping and 3,600 Poll Merino ewes. Allen's Warrawee Park has embedded strong biosecurity practices across its operations, strengthening animal health, safeguarding productivity and supporting long-term business resilience.

A defining moment in the property's biosecurity journey came following the detection of footrot within the flock. Rather than viewing the incident as a setback, the business used it as an opportunity to review and strengthen biosecurity systems across the property. Through rapid action, disciplined management and a commitment to continuous improvement, the enterprise successfully eradicated the disease and regained disease-free status on their ewe flock within the same season. The experience reinforced the importance of prevention, surveillance and preparedness, and helped establish an even stronger culture of biosecurity throughout the business.

Biosecurity now underpins all aspects of the operation, from livestock movements and visitor management to record keeping, planning and on-farm decision-making. The Allen family has implemented a range of practical measures to minimise risks and ensure biosecurity remains a core business priority. This includes maintaining a closed flock, visitor hygiene protocols, biosecurity signage and well-maintained boundary fencing to reduce disease, pest and weed risks. Their approach demonstrates that effective biosecurity is not a standalone activity, but an integral part of everyday farm management that protects productivity, animal welfare and market access.





Allen's Warrawee Park has also played an important role in promoting biosecurity awareness within the broader farming community. By sharing lessons learned and demonstrating the benefits of strong biosecurity systems, the business provides a practical example of how producers can strengthen resilience and respond effectively to disease threats. The family's openness and willingness to share their experience has encouraged greater awareness of the value of proactive biosecurity management across the sector.

Through leadership, perseverance and a commitment to continual improvement, the Allen family has demonstrated excellence in farm biosecurity. The enterprise's proactive approach to risk management, successful disease response and strong biosecurity culture provide an excellent example for producers across Australia. Their work highlights the critical role on-farm biosecurity plays in protecting animal health, supporting agricultural productivity and strengthening Australia's biosecurity system.



farmbiosecurity

Melinda Hashimoto



Mrs Melinda Hashimoto has made an outstanding contribution to Australia's biosecurity system through her leadership, collaboration and commitment to strengthening preparedness across the layer sector. As Chief Executive Officer of Egg Farmers of Australia, she has played a key role in improving industry resilience, supporting disease preparedness and ensuring producers are equipped to respond to emerging biosecurity threats. Through her work with industry, government and research partners, she has helped strengthen biosecurity awareness and preparedness across one of Australia's most important agricultural industries.

A significant focus of Mrs Hashimoto's contribution has been supporting the layer industry's preparedness for, and response to, highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). She has provided leadership and coordination during recent HPAI responses, including outbreaks in 2020, 2024, 2025 and 2026, helping ensure producers received timely information, practical support and clear guidance during periods of heightened biosecurity risk. Her involvement extended well beyond her formal role, supporting industry discussions, coordinating response activities and contributing to national efforts to minimise the impacts of disease outbreaks.

Mrs Hashimoto has also driven the development of practical tools that help producers strengthen on-farm biosecurity. Most notably, she led the development of the *Avian Influenza Biosecurity Checklist*, a resource designed to assist producers in assessing vulnerabilities, improving preparedness and strengthening biosecurity practices. The checklist has become an important resource for the layer industry and producers to understand their role in preventing and responding to disease incursions.





Beyond disease preparedness, Mrs Hashimoto has been instrumental in raising awareness of biosecurity risks and responsibilities across the agricultural sector. She has worked collaboratively with Animal Health Australia, research and development corporations, government agencies and industry stakeholders to develop and share biosecurity information, improve preparedness planning and support broader industry engagement. Her work has helped strengthen understanding of biosecurity obligations among producers and encouraged a culture of shared responsibility across the sector.

Mrs Hashimoto's commitment to continuous improvement is further demonstrated through her Churchill Fellowship research, which examined Japan's approach to H5 HPAI preparedness and response. By investigating international best practices and identifying opportunities for application in Australia, she has helped strengthen industry thinking around preparedness, outbreak management and long-term resilience.

Through her leadership, practical approach and dedication to collaboration, Mrs Melinda Hashimoto has made a significant contribution to Australia's biosecurity system. Her work has strengthened preparedness across the layer sector, improved industry resilience and supported coordinated responses to emerging disease threats. Her ongoing efforts continue to help protect Australia's animal health, food security and agricultural industries.



David Hill



Mr David Hill has played a leading role in strengthening Australia's biosecurity system through industry leadership, advocacy and collaboration. As a respected cattle producer and the founding Chair of the Cattle Australia Biosecurity Working Group, he has helped support emergency animal disease preparedness, improve industry engagement and ensure producer perspectives inform national biosecurity decision-making. Through his practical leadership and commitment to shared responsibility, he has played an important role in strengthening biosecurity resilience across Australia's cattle industry.

As a second-generation producer, Mr Hill operates Clarkwood, an 8,500-hectare EU-accredited cattle breeding and fattening enterprise in central Queensland. Alongside his farming operation, he has devoted significant time to industry service, providing leadership across a range of biosecurity, sustainability and agricultural initiatives. His contribution has been characterised by a strong focus on practical outcomes, ensuring biosecurity measures are both effective and workable for producers.

Mr Hill's leadership was particularly important during the emergence of lumpy skin disease and foot-and-mouth disease in Indonesia. As Chair of the Cattle Australia Biosecurity Working Group, he helped establish a coordinated forum for industry to assess risks, share information and support preparedness activities. Under his leadership, the working group strengthened communication between government and industry, promoted evidence-based decision-making and helped ensure producers were informed and prepared during a period of heightened biosecurity concern.

A strong advocate for preparedness, Mr Hill has contributed to the development and implementation of national biosecurity initiatives, including consultation on the *National Lumpy Skin Disease Action Plan* and support for improved vector surveillance capability. Through his advocacy, he helped support investment in emerging surveillance technologies that may improve Australia's ability to detect and respond to future animal disease incursions. He has also actively encouraged producer





participation in emergency animal disease training and preparedness programs, recognising the critical role industry plays in effective biosecurity responses.

Throughout his career, Mr Hill has worked to strengthen collaboration between industry, government and other stakeholders. He has coordinated industry input to reviews, policy discussions and national consultations, including work relating to the *National Biosecurity Strategy*, sustainable biosecurity funding, emergency animal disease preparedness and AUSVETPLAN development. His leadership has helped ensure industry expertise and operational realities are reflected in national biosecurity policy and response planning.

Through practical leadership, sustained service and a commitment to collaboration, Mr David Hill has helped strengthen Australia's preparedness for current and emerging biosecurity threats. By championing practical solutions, fostering strong partnerships and recognising the link between sustainable farming systems and long-term biosecurity resilience, he has enhanced emergency animal disease preparedness and reinforced the importance of shared responsibility across the cattle industry. His leadership continues to support a resilient cattle industry and a stronger national biosecurity system.



NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development-led response phase of the National Varroa Mite Emergency Response



The detection of varroa mite in New South Wales in 2022 marked a defining moment for Australian biosecurity. As the world's most serious pest of honey bees, varroa mite posed a significant threat to Australia's pollination-dependent industries, food production systems and agricultural economy. To address this threat, the NSW Department of Primary Industries, now referred to as the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (NSW DPIRD), led the response phase of the National Varroa Mite Emergency Response, coordinating one of the largest and most complex biosecurity operations in Australia's history.

Between July 2022 and February 2024, more than 2,000 personnel and volunteers worked across an operational footprint that eventually exceeded 3.4 million hectares. NSW DPIRD rapidly established surveillance, diagnostics, regulatory controls and operational systems, supported by advanced monitoring techniques and the processing of thousands of samples to guide evidence-based decision-making.

A key strength of the operation was its commitment to innovation and collaboration with key industry partners. Working closely with beekeepers and horticultural industries, NSW DPIRD delivered a coordinated national biosecurity effort while supporting business continuity and pollination services under highly challenging conditions. The response also facilitated the assessment and adoption of synthetic and organic mite treatments that have helped shape Australia's ongoing varroa management strategy.





While Australia ultimately transitioned to long-term management, the response delivered significant benefits for the agricultural sector and biosecurity capability. Industry estimates indicate that measures implemented during the eradication phase substantially reduced projected economic impacts over a 30-year period, compared with an uncontrolled spread. The response also helped protect pollination-dependent industries that underpin Australia's food production system, including major berry-growing regions where industry estimates suggested that pollination disruption could affect hundreds of millions of dollars in annual production.

This award recognises the NSW DPIRD-led response phase of the National Varroa Mite Emergency Response and the extraordinary efforts of the team that drove it. The achievement was supported by many contributors across government, industry and the community, including numerous commercial and recreational beekeepers whose tireless work helped slow the spread of this serious pest and buy valuable time for the transition to management initiatives that followed. Many worked under sustained pressure and uncertainty, often in addition to their normal responsibilities, business and personal commitments.

Through its leadership of the National Varroa Mite Emergency Response, NSW DPIRD made an outstanding contribution to Australia's biosecurity system. The efforts made helped protect agricultural productivity, strengthened national preparedness and provided important lessons for future emergency operations. The professionalism, innovativeness and dedication demonstrated by all who contributed leaves a lasting legacy for Australian biosecurity.



Dr Ross Wylie



Dr Ross Wylie has positively contributed to Australian biosecurity through more than 50 years of public service, scientific leadership and innovation in invasive species management. A renowned forest entomologist and biosecurity specialist, he has played a pivotal role in strengthening Australia's ability to prevent, detect and eradicate invasive pests. His work has transformed surveillance systems, emergency response capability and pest management practices, helping safeguard Australia's industries, environment and communities from some of the world's most significant biosecurity threats.

A notable aspect of Dr Wylie's career has been his ability to translate scientific innovation into practical biosecurity outcomes. In 1995, he established Queensland's first forest health surveillance system, laying the foundations for modern forest pest surveillance in Australia. He also developed Australia's first post-border hazard-site surveillance system for forest invasive species and led collaborative projects across 8 Asia-Pacific countries to strengthen pest detection and response capability. These initiatives improved regional preparedness and enhanced Australia's ability to identify emerging threats before they reached Australian borders.

As Science Leader for the *National Fire Ant Eradication Program*, Dr Wylie guided the scientific direction of one of Australia's largest invasive pest eradication initiatives. Under his leadership, the program adopted advanced technologies, including thermal imaging, remote sensing, environmental DNA surveillance, genetic analysis and odour detection dogs. These innovations enabled earlier detection, more effective treatment and helped establish Australia as a global leader in invasive ant eradication.





His leadership has transformed Australia's approach to invasive ant eradication. Under his direction, fire ant infestations were successfully eradicated from the Port of Brisbane, Brisbane Airport, Yarwun, Gladstone and Port Botany. He also played a critical role in securing ongoing government investment in eradication efforts through rigorous scientific analysis and evidence-based risk assessment. Under his guidance, the program became the first ant eradication initiative globally to routinely use genetics and remote sensing technologies at the scale employed in South-East Queensland.

Throughout his career, Dr Wylie has combined scientific excellence with a commitment to collaboration, knowledge sharing and capability building. His expertise has supported invasive species management across 17 countries, and he has authored more than 100 scientific papers and 4 books while mentoring generations of scientists and biosecurity practitioners.

Through his leadership, innovation and commitment to public service, Dr Ross Wylie has made a notable contribution to Australia's biosecurity system. His work has strengthened surveillance, advanced invasive pest management, improved eradication capability and built enduring scientific capacity within government. His contributions have delivered lasting benefits to Australia's industries, environment and communities.



Wildlife Health Australia



For more than 2 decades, Wildlife Health Australia has been at the forefront of wildlife disease surveillance, preparedness and response, helping strengthen Australia's environmental biosecurity capability and resilience to emerging disease threats. As Australia's national wildlife health coordinator, the organisation plays a critical role in detecting, assessing and responding to diseases that could affect wildlife, livestock, human health and the environment. Its work has strengthened Australia's ability to identify and manage biosecurity risks while supporting a resilient, nationally connected wildlife health system.

Wildlife Health Australia has been at the forefront of Australia's preparedness for highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), one of the most significant emerging disease threats to global biodiversity, animal health and food production systems. Through a coordinated One Health approach, the organisation has helped strengthen preparedness across government, industry, research and environmental sectors, ensuring Australia is better positioned to detect and respond to a potential incursion.

A key strength of the organisation is its extensive wildlife health network and its ability to connect stakeholders across sectors and jurisdictions. Wildlife Health Australia receives and analyses between 50,000 and 75,000 wildlife health reports annually and supports one of the largest wildlife disease surveillance systems in the country. It also coordinates networks of veterinarians, wildlife carers, researchers, environmental managers and government agencies that contribute to the early detection of unusual disease events and emerging biosecurity risks.

The organisation's leadership during the global spread of HPAI has been particularly significant. Wildlife Health Australia has developed nationally consistent guidance, surveillance frameworks, preparedness plans and technical resources to support governments, industry and wildlife stakeholders. It has worked closely with the Australian Government, states and territories, Animal Health Australia, environmental agencies and international partners to improve preparedness, response planning and information sharing.





These efforts have helped establish Australia as a leader in wildlife-focused HPAI preparedness and risk management.

Beyond avian influenza preparedness, Wildlife Health Australia has made enduring contributions to environmental biosecurity through technical leadership, training and capability building. The organisation has supported disease preparedness initiatives across Australia and the Pacific, delivered guidance on emerging wildlife disease threats, and improved understanding of the important connections between environmental, animal and human health. Its resources, training programs and expert networks continue to strengthen Australia's ability to respond to current and future biosecurity challenges.

Through surveillance, collaboration, scientific leadership and as a trusted broker in the system, Wildlife Health Australia has strengthened Australia's environmental biosecurity capability and preparedness for emerging wildlife disease threats. Its work continues to deliver lasting benefits for biodiversity conservation, animal health, public health and national biosecurity resilience. By fostering strong partnerships and promoting a One Health approach, Wildlife Health Australia has made a remarkable contribution to protecting Australia's environment and biosecurity future.



Photo: Shana Ahmed

Eidsvold Cattle Drive



The Eidsvold Cattle Drive has become a powerful example of how community-led initiatives can strengthen Australia's biosecurity system while preserving regional heritage and supporting rural communities. By integrating biosecurity education, risk management and community engagement into a large-scale livestock event, the organisation has created an innovative model that promotes biosecurity awareness and preparedness across regional Queensland.

Held every 2 years, the Eidsvold Cattle Drive brings together approximately 500 cattle, 40 riders and numerous volunteers from across Australia to retrace historic stock routes in Queensland. Recognising the potential biosecurity risks associated with livestock movements, the organisers developed a comprehensive biosecurity framework that has transformed the event into a practical demonstration of best-practice biosecurity management. Through this approach, the organisation has turned participants into active biosecurity advocates while helping strengthen community understanding of biosecurity obligations and responsibilities.

A key strength of the initiative is its focus on education and behavioural change. Biosecurity training is mandatory for participants, with 54 volunteers and riders completing comprehensive induction programs covering personal biosecurity obligations, livestock health, pest identification and disease preparedness. By embedding biosecurity requirements into every stage of the event, Eidsvold Cattle Drive has successfully normalised biosecurity practices and demonstrated their importance within everyday livestock operations.

The organisation has also adopted innovative systems to support traceability, livestock movement management and risk identification, helping ensure the safe movement of animals throughout the event. These measures support compliance with biosecurity requirements while providing participants with practical experience in managing biosecurity risks. The initiative demonstrates that even large-scale community events involving





livestock can successfully integrate strong biosecurity safeguards without compromising participation or cultural significance.

Beyond biosecurity outcomes, the Eidsvold Cattle Drive delivers significant community benefits. The event has raised more than $400,000 for regional charities, including the Royal Flying Doctor Service and LifeFlight, while helping preserve an important part of Australia's pastoral heritage. It brings together landholders, producers, volunteers, community groups and biosecurity stakeholders in a shared effort that promotes both community resilience and responsible livestock management.

Through leadership, innovation and community collaboration, Eidsvold Cattle Drive has made a noteworthy contribution to Australia's biosecurity system. By successfully integrating education, training and practical biosecurity measures into a major community event, the organisation has strengthened awareness, promoted best practice and demonstrated the important role local communities play in protecting Australia's agricultural industries and biosecurity future.



Plant Biosecurity Research Initiative



The Plant Biosecurity Research Initiative (PBRI) is strengthening Australia's plant biosecurity capability by connecting research, education, training and industry needs. Supported by Australia's plant research and development corporations, PBRI provides a national platform to develop the next generation of plant biosecurity professionals and improve preparedness for emerging pest and disease threats.

Recognising that a skilled workforce is critical to Australia's biosecurity future, the PBRI uses coordinated research, development and extension investments, training programs and collaborative events to grow national capability, reduce reliance on overseas expertise and ensure plant industries are prepared for future biosecurity challenges. Its collaborative approach has strengthened workforce capability, increased awareness of plant biosecurity careers and helped establish clearer pathways into the sector.

A cornerstone of the initiative is the Ritman Scholarship, which supports postgraduate students undertaking research in plant biosecurity. The program encourages multidisciplinary learning and connects emerging researchers with industry, government and research partners. Through applied research projects addressing real-world biosecurity issues, scholarship recipients are developing practical solutions that support Australia's plant industries and national biosecurity priorities.

In addition, the initiative fosters ongoing capability development through targeted education, training and professional learning activities. Through workshops, seminars, symposia and knowledge-sharing events, students, researchers and industry participants collaborate on current and emerging plant biosecurity challenges. These activities help ensure research remains relevant, nationally coordinated and aligned with the needs of government, industry and the broader biosecurity system.





The initiative has also demonstrated a strong commitment to inclusion and knowledge sharing. Through partnerships with First Nations stakeholders, universities and industry organisations, it supports diverse participation in plant biosecurity education and helps ensure future capability reflects the broad range of skills, perspectives and knowledge needed to protect Australia's plant industries.

Through its biannual Plant Biosecurity Research Symposium, PBRI brings together students, researchers, industry, government and growers to share knowledge, build networks and support practical solutions to cross-sector biosecurity risks.

By investing in leadership, collaboration and practical capability building, the Plant Biosecurity Research Initiative is helping ensure Australia has the expertise, partnerships and innovation needed to protect plant industries and maintain a resilient national biosecurity system.



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.

2026 RECIPIENTS

Vale Emeritus Professor Kevin Bell

For dedicated service to biosecurity through veterinary leadership and mentorship that strengthened animal disease surveillance capability across northern Australia.

Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC

For outstanding leadership in environmental biosecurity through Indigenous-led initiatives that strengthen biosecurity preparedness, collaboration and protection of K'gari's unique natural and cultural values.

Captain Nicolas Fischer

For exceptional contribution to marine biosecurity through leadership in ballast water management and promoting compliance to protect the unique environment of Christmas Island and the surrounding marine parks.

Dr Nichole Hammond

For outstanding leadership and scientific expertise in plant biosecurity, strengthening Australia's pest preparedness, risk analysis, surveillance and response capability.

Lily Hu and Lee Reid

For the timely identification and reporting of the invasive zebra mussel, enabling the early detection and management of a significant environmental biosecurity threat.

North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance, Protecting Country Against Invasive Species Program

For exceptional Indigenous leadership in biosecurity, working alongside Traditional Owners and Indigenous Ranger groups to protect Country through invasive species management across northern Australia.

Sarah Watkins

For helping safeguard Australia's agricultural industries through the timely detection and reporting of the high-risk exotic pest khapra beetle.



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