



# Communique

## 2025 National Biosecurity Forum

5-7 November 2025

### Context

Key stakeholders gathered for the 2025 National Biosecurity Forum ‘the forum’ at a pivotal moment for Australia’s biosecurity system. The system plays a critical role in protecting our environment, industries and communities, and underpins the continued success of our agriculture, fisheries, and forestry sectors, which are projected to reach over \$100 billion this financial year.

Biosecurity risks, however, are evolving, shaped by global factors and instability, climate pressures, rising trade and travel volumes, and shifting public expectations. While our system is robust, it is becoming increasingly stretched. At the time of the forum, there were 17 nationally cost-shared emergency responses in progress, with costs exceeding \$1 billion. Ensuring the resilience and sustainability of our biosecurity system is critical.

Australia’s biosecurity system must not only meet today’s demands but also anticipate tomorrow’s threats. The forum provided a vital platform to explore these challenges and opportunities.

### Forum summary

The forum was held from 5 to 7 November 2025. The forum is held every two years and is hosted by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry on behalf of the National Biosecurity Committee (NBC). The forum included:

- an opening plenary session
- targeted, invitation-only workshops including presentations and facilitated activities
- the Australian Biosecurity Awards ceremony
- the launch of the Biosecurity Business Pledge Australia.

The aim was to give participants space for collaborative thinking, practical problem solving and generating actionable outcomes.

### Who attended

The opening plenary and workshops brought together over 180 participants, both in-person and online.

Participants covered a broad range of sectors and industries including trade, plant, animal, education, research and governments.

A further 75 participants joined online for the launch of the Biosecurity Business Pledge Australia.

## Day 1: session highlights

### Opening plenary

The opening plenary began with Ngunnawal Traditional Custodian, Selina Walker, providing a Welcome to Country.

The Hon Julie Collins MP, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, opened the forum with a pre-recorded message, reaffirming the Australian Government's commitment to biosecurity and highlighting the value of coming together to discuss the challenges facing the national biosecurity system.

Christie Sawczuk, Co-chair, NBC, and Acting Deputy Secretary of the Biosecurity, Operations and Compliance Group, Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry delivered an opening address.

Biosecurity leaders then explored the strategic challenges, threats and opportunities facing the national biosecurity system from the plant, animal and environment perspective as well as the role of the NBC. This included presentations by:

- Dr Beth Cookson, Australian Chief Veterinary Officer, Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Dr Gabrielle Vivian-Smith, Australian Chief Plant Protection Officer, Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Dr Bertie Hennecke, Australian Chief Environmental Biosecurity Officer, Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Dr Rachel Chay, Co-chair, NBC, and Deputy Director-General and Chief Biosecurity Officer, Biosecurity Queensland

### Biosecurity sustainable funding and investment workshop

This workshop focused on funding and investment needs and priorities across the system and explored options for cost-sharing and long-term investment planning.

Participants heard from Acting Deputy Secretary Christie Sawczuk and Dr Rachel Chay, who shared insights on sustainable funding and investment for biosecurity, highlighting national, Commonwealth and Queensland perspectives.

Participants discussed key priorities for investment including surveillance and preparedness. They then considered how to transform these ideas into action, recognising the need to more strategically allocate existing resources. The conversation drew together a range of views on investment priorities, and how to fund those priorities, noting that these challenges are not new or easy to solve, but are important to progress together. Participants also explored how to ensure the system remains robust and adaptable under financial pressure.

The *National Biosecurity Strategy Action Plan 2024* identified sustainable investment as a priority area and outlined key actions to develop long-term, sustainable funding and investment approaches. Workshop insights will help define next steps for implementing sustainable investment actions under this plan.

## Biosecurity research and innovation priorities workshop

This workshop focused on aligning national research and innovation priorities to identify shared opportunities and challenges.

Participants heard from Acting Deputy Secretary Christie Sawczuk and Professor Andrew Robinson from the Centre of Excellence for Biosecurity Risk Analysis, who emphasised the responsibility of all stakeholders in driving a more strategic and impactful research and innovation agenda. This agenda must be designed not only to solve today's problems but to support the system in the future.

Participants discussed the importance of a shared vision, the opportunities provided by data-driven approaches, and the need to ensure limited funding is allocated to research and innovation that delivers greatest value to the biosecurity system. The workshop concluded with a discussion on how to more effectively coordinate and align research outcomes to ensure innovation is translated into system-wide benefits. The conversation recognised the importance of research and innovation in a connected and resilient national biosecurity system.

The *National Biosecurity Strategy Action Plan 2024* includes a priority of using research and innovation to facilitate timely, informed and risk-based decisions. Workshop insights will help guide the development of the department's research and innovation priorities as well as support further research and innovation collaboration between stakeholders to strengthen our national biosecurity system.

## Australian Biosecurity Awards

The 2025 Australian Biosecurity Awards winners were announced at a ceremony as part of the forum. Acting Deputy Secretary Christie Sawczuk provided the opening address.

The awards celebrate the individuals, groups and organisations that champion Australia's biosecurity system, recognising leadership, collaboration, innovation and proactive risk management.

There were 11 winners across 9 categories including internationally renowned scientists, animal-health pioneers, biosecurity and aquatic educators, on-farm biosecurity leaders, First Nations stewards, innovators, teams tackling invasive species and community-led pest managers.

Find out more about the [2025 winners](#).

## Day 2: session highlights

### National biosecurity emergency response arrangements reform workshop

This workshop focused on the growing pressures on Australia's national biosecurity emergency response arrangements – from increasing frequency, costs and complexity of biosecurity incursions.

Participants heard from speakers about the history and intent of the emergency response arrangements, including the 3 deeds that underpin Australia's cost-sharing framework:

- Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA)
- Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD)
- National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement (NEBRA).

They also heard about the current national response environment and the New Zealand (NZ) biosecurity cost-sharing model.

Participants heard about the NBC's reform initiative, in collaboration with Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia, to tackle emerging and long-standing policy challenges as they relate to cost-sharing arrangements in emergency responses. They discussed the project's early direction and provided views on shaping the future of biosecurity response arrangements.

The workshop included activities to:

- identify the strengths of the NZ and Australian models
- consider the future of the Australian biosecurity system
- identify priority areas for reform
- discuss how to engage stakeholders throughout the reform process.

There was broad support from participants to pursue reform to address the identified challenges.

Workshop insights will inform and shape the direction of this significant reform initiative.

## Day 3: session highlights

### Launch of the Biosecurity Business Pledge Australia

The [Biosecurity Business Pledge Australia](#) is a national initiative that invites businesses to formally commit to safeguarding Australia from pests, weeds, and diseases. By taking the pledge, businesses publicly declare their dedication to proactive biosecurity management across their operations and supply chains.

The forum included the formal launch of the pledge through a webinar. Participants learnt more about the pledge and how they could get involved.

## Learn more

Visit [agriculture.gov.au/NBF](https://agriculture.gov.au/NBF) or contact [NBF@aff.gov.au](mailto:NBF@aff.gov.au)

[Subscribe](#) to receive updates on future forum events.

### 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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