

## Plant Health Committee Communiqué—PHC64

PHC held its 64th meeting (Canberra) from 21-23 November 2023, chaired by Nick Secomb (South Australia). This document aims to provide an overview of the key topics discussed, and any relevant associated outcomes that were agreed during the meeting. If there is a topic you would like additional information on, please reach out to the [PHC Secretariat](#).

This meeting welcomed the commencement of a new PHC Chair, Nick Secomb (South Australia) and Deputy Chair, Michael Reid (Queensland). In addition, the PHC welcomed the following new members, Mike Reid (QLD), David Hubbard (SA) and Vincent Lanoiselet (WA). At the meeting, the PHC farewelled long standing members Andrew Bishop (TAS) and Sonya Broughton (WA) and thanked them for their significant contributions to both PHC and plant biosecurity over the years. This is in addition to Mike Ashton (QLD) who retired earlier in the year. The PHC wishes Andrew, Sonya, and Mike the best for the future.

The PHC reviewed the draft PHC Stakeholder Engagement Plan developed to clearly identify and outline the ways that PHC will engage, collaborate, and align with their key partners and stakeholders. During this meeting the PHC provided its initial feedback to the draft stakeholder engagement plan which will be further refined, with the intention to present to key stakeholders for input.

The development of the PHC Strategic Plan and Action Plan has progressed and at the meeting, Plant Health Committee endorsed its Strategic Plan (2024-2027). The purpose of the Action Plan is to provide an avenue to more clearly define key tasks related to the developed Strategic Actions within the Strategic Plan. PHC endorsed both the Strategic Plan and the proposed structure of the Action Plan.

The Plant Biosecurity Preparedness Working Group was reviewed as it was approaching the end of its 12-month term with PHC extending the tenure of the group for a further 12-month term. This Working Group was established in response to increasing plant pest incursions with the aim of improving efficiency of preparedness efforts and to generate transferrable and nationally consistent outputs across all jurisdictions.

PHC discussed the importance of successful transition of varroa mite from eradication to ongoing management and in particular, that regulatory arrangements will be required to support ongoing management. A series of workshops are being scheduled with state and territory regulatory officers to ensure a national approach is adopted and clarity regarding ongoing arrangements.

PHC received a presentation from the CSIRO project leads on the [Safe Trade project](#). This project aims to maintain strong links with national biosecurity stakeholders and governance mechanisms to improve the way trade-related plant biosecurity risks are managed within Australia. PHC noted and agreed that Safe Trade project outputs, such as national standards or guidelines, are intended to be endorsed, adopted, applied, managed, and maintained by PHC and its subcommittees. PHC also noted and agreed to the proposal for the Safe Trade project to aid the co-design of a vision and road map for a future domestic biosecurity-trade system, with input from PHC and relevant stakeholders.

PHC discussed how to mark the International Day of Plant Health 2024 (May 12, 2024). The Australian Chief Plant Protection Officer encouraged participation in the next major event to celebrate the day - the Plant Biosecurity Research Initiative (PBRI) Symposium, held on 8-9 May 2024 in Cairns, Queensland.

Progress and outcomes were considered from the Surveillance Requirements to Support Pest Freedom Working Group. The PHC agreed for the working group to begin categorising pests to allow for comparisons of surveillance requirements to reinforce and instill confidence in pest freedom/absence claims.



PHC has regular engagement with the [Plant Biosecurity Research Initiative](#) (PBRI) and the [Plant Industries Biosecurity Committee](#) (PIBC). Jo Luck, PBRI Program Director, provided a presentation to the PHC on current PBRI projects as well as potential program initiatives for next financial year. John McDonald, PIBC Chair, provided an update on PIBC activity including real-life industry experience of working within the plant health biosecurity system. This regular engagement and two-way discussion strengthen the focus of national plant health biosecurity activity for government and industry.

The PHC evaluated and endorsed the prioritised list of fruit fly diagnostic projects provided by the Australian Fruit Fly Technical Advisory Committee and the Subcommittee of Plant Health Diagnostics. This will help to integrate new technologies and techniques, higher-definition images, and diagnostic resources and protocols available to fruit fly diagnosticians.




PHC64 members and attendees

### Who are we?

[Plant Health Committee](#) (PHC) is Australia's national peak government plant biosecurity policy and decision-making forum. Members of the committee include Chief Plant Health Managers (or equivalent) in each state and territory, the Australian Chief Plant Protection Officer and invited observers and technical experts. The role of PHC is to develop strategic policy, provide technical and regulatory advice and national leadership on plant biosecurity matters to help maintain and improve plant health in Australia. PHC has a shared purpose to protect our industries, the economy, and our unique environment.

Members contribute to the development of national plant health policy, capacity and capability in Australia by representing their governments on plant health issues and bringing a whole-of-government position to the Committee.



To achieve this, the Committee meet on a regular basis to discuss issues, deliberate on presented items and make decisions regarding aspects of the biosecurity system, including:

- Plant biosecurity preparedness
- Interstate trade
- Engagement and communications
- Surveillance
- Systems and processes
- Diagnostics
- Fruit fly
- Future focused initiatives

PHC will next meet for an intersessional meeting, PHC 2024-01, on 25-27 March 2024, and again on 2-4 July 2024 for PHC65. The Secretariat circulates a call for agenda items to Members and Observers eight weeks prior to the meeting date. All proposals should be supported in the first instance by a PHC Member or the PHC Chair or relate to a standing item. To discuss items for consideration please contact the [PHCExecutiveOfficer@aff.gov.au](mailto:PHCExecutiveOfficer@aff.gov.au) or PHC Secretariat - [PHC@aff.gov.au](mailto:PHC@aff.gov.au). Agenda items may include papers, presentations or workshopping items. All papers are due three weeks prior to the meeting date.

C/o PHC Secretariat  
Email: [phc@aff.gov.au](mailto:phc@aff.gov.au)

Australian Government  
Department of Agriculture

GPO Box 858  
Canberra ACT 2601

[www.agriculture.gov.au](http://www.agriculture.gov.au)