



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry

Review of devitalisation requirements for fresh cut flowers and foliage

Draft report

11 November 2025

Dr Allison Jones

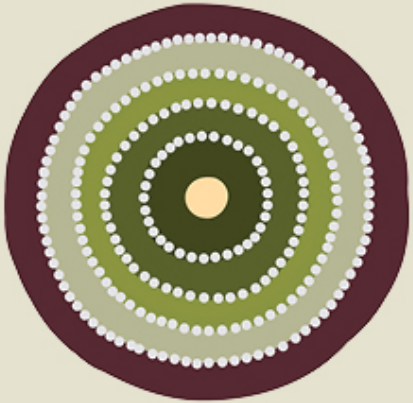
Assistant Secretary
Plant Sciences and Risk Assessment Branch
Biosecurity Plant and Science Services Division

Dr Joyce Parker

Director, Nursery Stock & Timber
Plant Sciences and Risk Assessment Branch
Biosecurity Plant and Science Services Division



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.

Agenda

- Background: How we got here
- Devitalisation: Current conditions and rationale for review
- Draft report overview
- Questions



How we got here

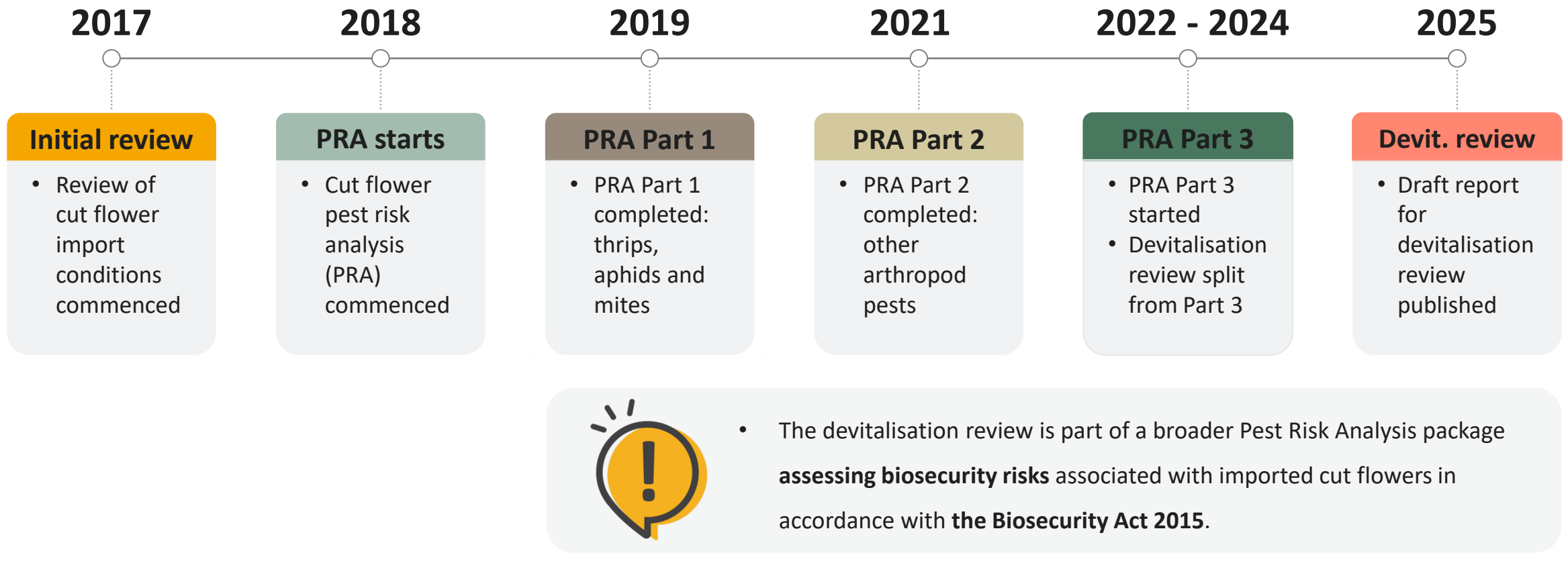
Dr Allison Jones

Assistant Secretary

Plant Sciences and Risk Assessment Branch



Cut flower pest risk analysis



Devitalisation: current import conditions



- **Devitalisation is a treatment** that makes plant material **incapable of propagation**



- Under **current conditions**, 15 types of **cut flowers** **must be devitalised** prior to export to Australia
- Most are treated with **glyphosate**
- **Metsulfuron-methyl** used for chrysanthemums from Vietnam only



Devitalisation review: rationale

We are conducting this review to:

- ensure our policy is **scientifically justified and fit-for-purpose**
- evaluate the biosecurity risk of **diversion from intended use (DFIU)**
- ensure our **import conditions** effectively **manage such risk**
- meet **our international obligations** as a World Trade Organisation (WTO) member

DFIU refers to using imported flowers for propagation, which is beyond their intended decorative purpose.

Our international obligations

Two decorative geometric shapes are positioned to the left of the ALOP text box: a smaller orange rounded square above a larger beige rounded square.

Our Appropriate
Level of Protection
(ALOP): high level
of protection aimed
at reducing risk to a
very low level, but
not zero

- As a member of the WTO, our risk management measures must be **scientifically justified**, only applied to the **extent necessary** and must **not unnecessarily restrict trade**.
- Until now, we have not conducted a risk analysis to assess whether devitalisation is justified.
 - This review **meets our WTO obligations**.

Draft report overview and findings

Dr Joyce Parker

Director, Nursery Stock, Timber and Cut Flowers
Plant Sciences and Risk Assessment Branch



Review scope



The review aimed to:

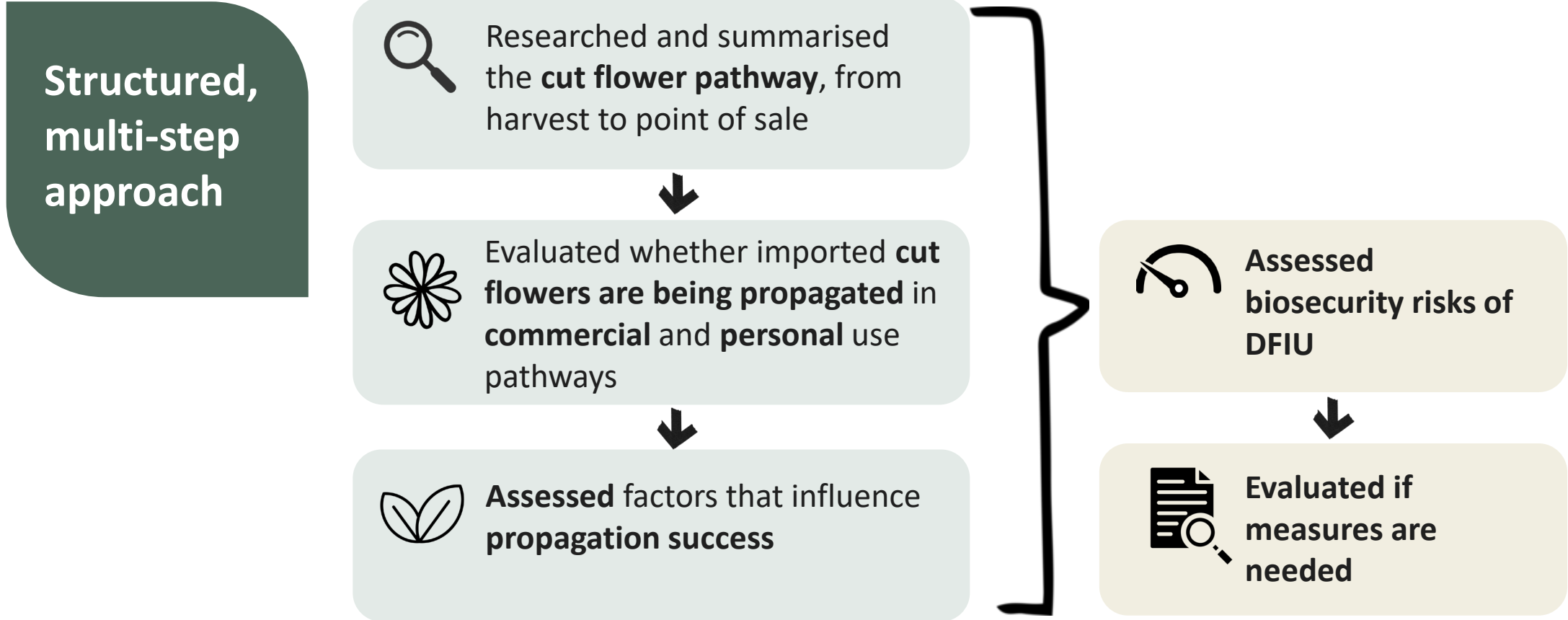
- evaluate whether **imported cut flowers are being propagated (DFIU)**
- assess the **associated biosecurity risks**
- determine if **risk management measures** are needed, and if so, which are appropriate



We define cut flowers as **stems with flowers and foliage, without propagules** (e.g. does not have bulbils, fruit and seeds)



Review method



Imported cut flower pathway overview



- Harvest to pre-export: grading, treatments, inspections
- 4 to 9 days



- Air freight: 2 to 5 days
- Sea freight: 20 to 40 days



- Biosecurity clearance: Inspections & possible mediation
- 1-7 days



- Time to domestic retail
- 1-14 days



Imported cut flower pathway: measures that reduce biosecurity risk



DFIU in the commercial pathway

What we reviewed

- EU case law on plant variety rights (PVR)
- Australian biosecurity records
- Industry submissions and anecdotal reports

What we found

- No cases of commercial DFIU in Australia
- No instances of DFIU via cut flowers in EU law case
- Anecdotal claims of ineffective devitalisation exist, but they lack verification
- Low incentive for commercial use DFIU



Commercial DFIU is not a common practice. Its prevalence appears non-existent

DFIU in the personal use pathway

What we reviewed

- Online garden forum posts on Reddit
- Data collected from 6066 garden subreddit posts
 - Covering peak flower import periods

What we found

- Very low prevalence of this activity, and attempts are largely unsuccessful
- All propagation attempts were via stem cuttings
- Posts did not specify whether flowers were imported or locally grown



Personal DFIU may occur globally at, or below, very low levels. No clear evidence of personal DFIU of imported cut flowers in Australia

Factors affecting successful propagation

Plant material

DFIU most likely involves stem cuttings, which tend to be less suitable for propagation than prepared cuttings



Time from harvest to propagation

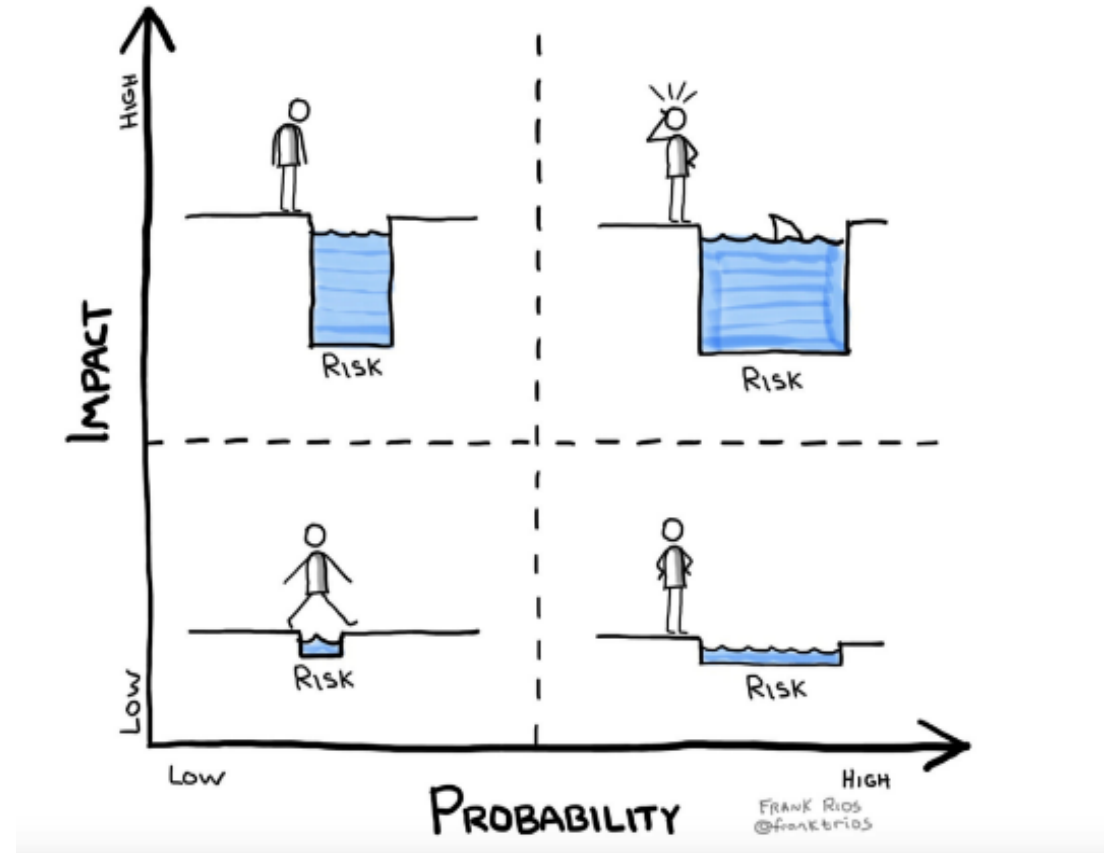
Changes in plant postharvest significantly reduces viability for propagation

Environmental conditions

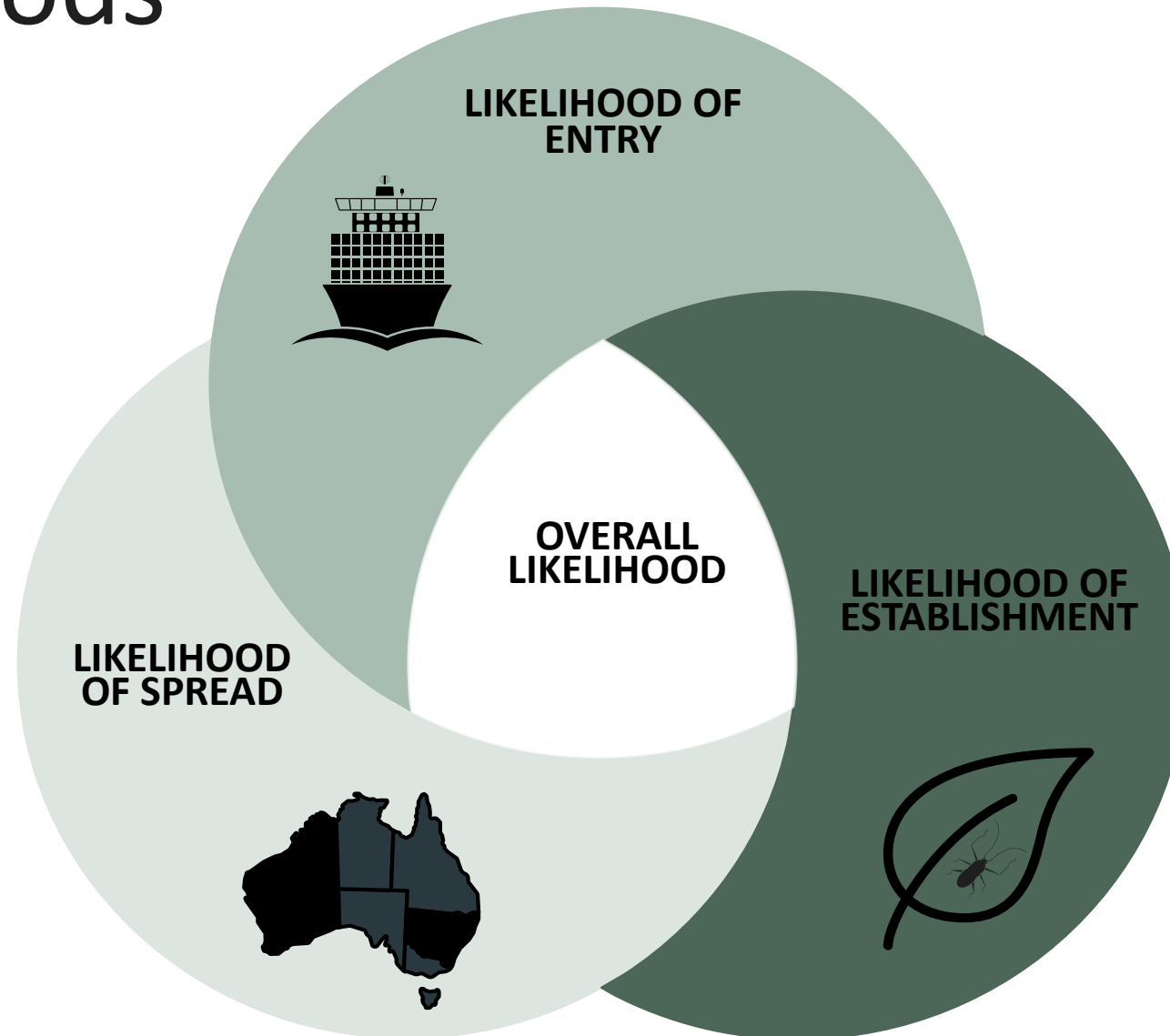
Light, humidity, temperature, and propagation practices affect success.

Assessing biosecurity risk

Risk is made up of two key factors: the **likelihood** that something will occur, and the **impact or consequence** if it does occur



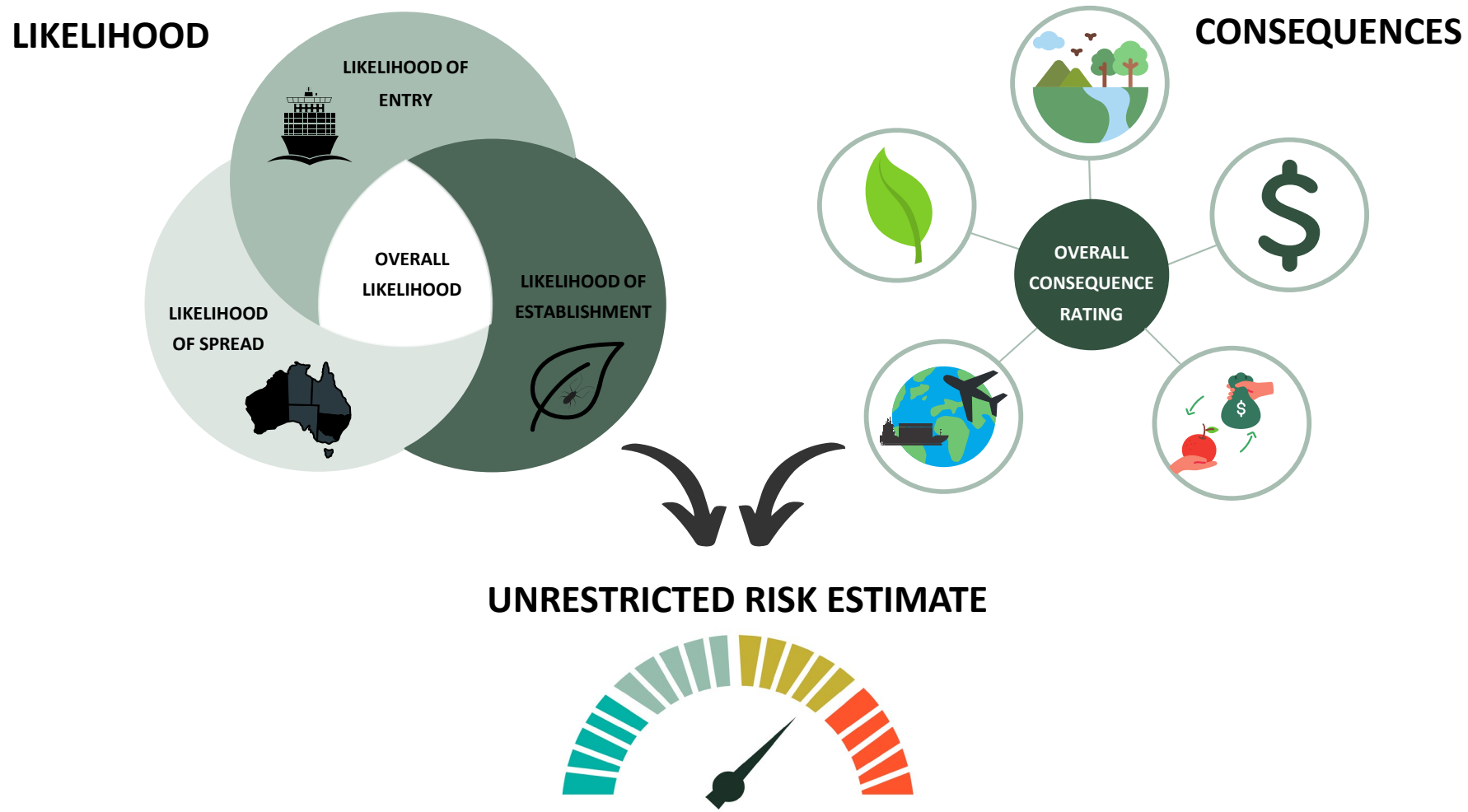
Likelihoods



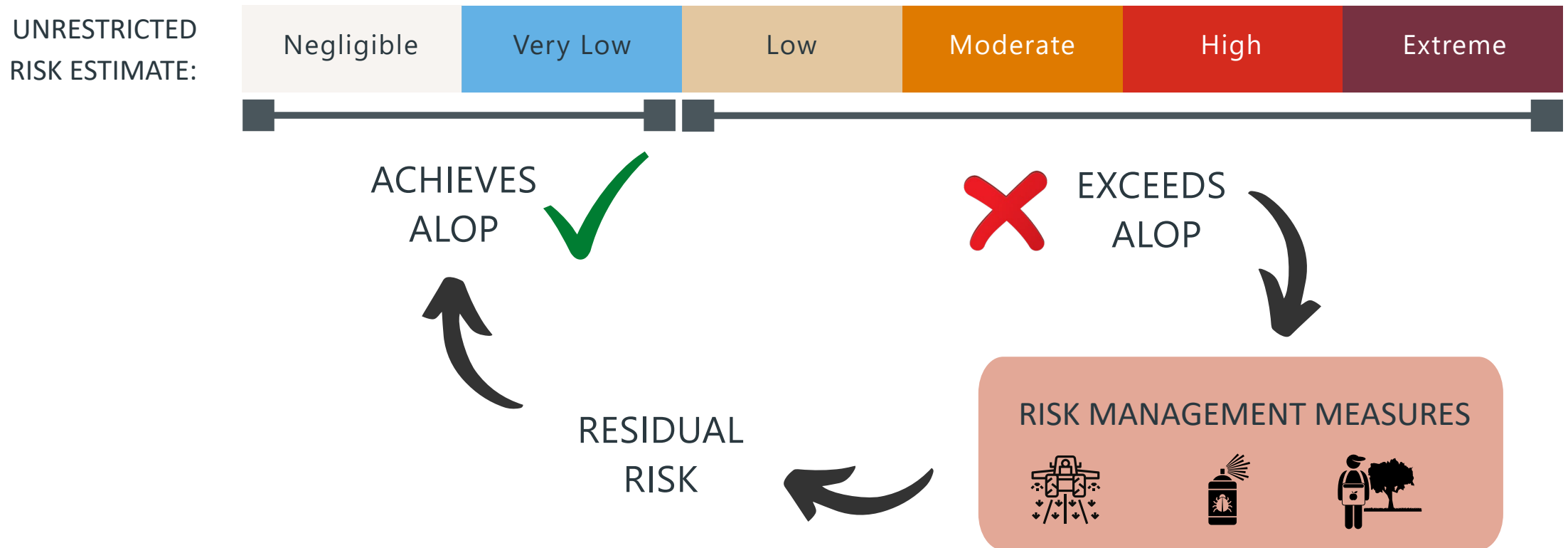
Consequences



Unrestricted risk estimate (URE)

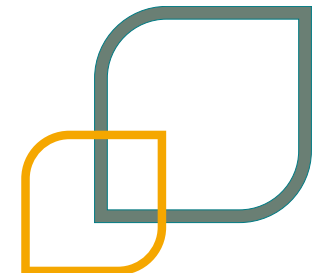


URE and Appropriate Level of Protection (ALOP)



DFIU of imported cut flowers: unrestricted risk estimates

Pathway	Overall likelihood of EES	Consequences	Unrestricted risk estimate
Commercial	Negligible	Low to High	Negligible
Personal	Negligible to Extremely Low	Low to High	Negligible to Very low



DFIU of imported cut flowers: unrestricted risk estimates



Proposed changes

1

The **biosecurity risks** associated with **DFIU** achieve our **ALOP**

2

Therefore, **risk management measures** are **not required**

3

This means the **current devitalisation requirements** for DFIU are **not justified** under **WTO** rules

The draft report **proposes removing** the current **requirement for devitalisation** on **imported fresh cut flowers**

Affected pathways

Quantity	Countries	Current conditions	Proposed change
More than 6 small boxes, bouquets or equivalent	All permitted countries	Glyphosate dip of the <i>Brunia</i> spp., <i>Calathea insignis</i> , <i>Calathea lancifolia</i> , <i>Callistephus chinensis</i> , <i>Chrysanthemum</i> spp., <i>Cordyline</i> spp., <i>Dianthus</i> spp., <i>Oxypetalum</i> spp., <i>Hypericum</i> spp., <i>Rhapis</i> spp., <i>Rosa</i> spp., <i>Viburnum</i> spp., <i>Viola</i> spp., <i>Codiaeum variegatum</i> and <i>Dracaena</i> spp.	Devitalisation requirement removed
More than 6 small boxes, bouquets or equivalent	Vietnam	Metsulfuron-methyl dip of the <i>Chrysanthemum</i> spp	Devitalisation requirement removed
6 or less small boxes, bouquets or equivalent	All permitted countries	Manual removal of the auxiliary buds of all the nodes on stems; or cutting the stems to 5 cm below the flower heads	Devitalisation requirement removed

DFIU non-compliance



- **DFIU** of any imported commodity is a **breach** of **Australia's import regulation** and the **Biosecurity Act 2015**



- If you are **aware of a suspected breach**, you can **confidentially report** information at any time our Redline on **1800 803 006**



Other cut flower import conditions

A range of **other import conditions** are in place to **manage biosecurity risks** associated with **cut flower imports**. These conditions **remain unchanged**

Visit our **Biosecurity Import Conditions System**
for full details: bicon.agriculture.gov.au



Have Your Say process



Have Your Say at: haveyoursay.agriculture.gov.au

Consultation closes at **5 pm (AEST) 19 December 2025**



Q1. Our findings and conclusions about:

- a. personal diversion from the intended use of imported cut flowers to propagation
- b. commercial diversion from the intended use of imported cut flowers to propagation
- c. the evaluation of potential success of diversion from the intended use of imported cut flowers to propagation

Q2: On the **proposal to remove Australia's existing devitalisation requirements** for imported propagable cut flowers

Q3: Do you have **any other comments, relevant issues, or additional information** you would like to share?

Thank you

Any questions?



Submit your questions via the Q&A chat box

Contact us at any time:
plantstakeholders@aff.gov.au