# 2021 National Biosecurity Forum

2021 Australian Biosecurity Awards ceremony

(Duration 46 mins 54 secs)

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## Introduction

This is the transcript of the National Biosecurity Forum – 2021 Australian Biosecurity Awards ceremony, presented by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.

## Transcript

[Session begins]

Richard Morecroft: Welcome and good afternoon to you all as we prepare to announce the winners of the 2021 Australian Biosecurity Awards this afternoon. And we begin immediately with a welcome from the Minister for Agriculture, David Littleproud.

Hon David Littleproud MP: Welcome to this year's Australian Biosecurity Awards. And can I firstly say, thank you. Thank you to each and every one of you for your commitment in securing Australia's borders. Biosecurity is at the heart of my job in making sure that we protect not only Australian agricultural production systems, but our environment. And can I say to all award winners and nominees, your contributions are changing lives, particularly those in regional Australia, to make sure that our trade of our agricultural product continues to get the highest price because of the credentials we have from our biosecurity measures. So, to each and every one of you over the eight categories, can I say congratulations. Thank you and I look forward to hearing about the winner's works. Thanks for having me.

Richard Morecroft: Thank you very much indeed minster. And thank you for your warm welcome. I'm Richard Morecroft. I'm delighted to be here with you this afternoon to celebrate the 2021 Australian Biosecurity Awards. And today's award winners range from those who are working on the frontline responding to outbreaks or managing feral pests, to those innovating technologies and methods to improve biosecurity systems. Some of our winners have dedicated their lives to scientific research or educating the next generation of biosecurity aware Australians through mentoring, through communication activities and of course, through leadership.

Our winners today certainly demonstrate the importance of collaboration in supporting our biosecurity system. Now, these awards have been held annually since 2005 and this year's winners join a group of very strong advocates for the important work of biosecurity. Today, we're going to be joined by 11 winners across eight categories and we will hear a short response or message from each recipient when they receive their award.

And of course, like all award ceremonies, as we try to keep on schedule, we very politely ask all of our recipients to try to keep their responses fairly brief, please. So, without further ado, let's announce the winners of the 2021 Australian Biosecurity Awards. And the Deputy Secretary, Biosecurity and Compliance at the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, Andrew Tongue, is joining me to make the announcements and to introduce each award winner. And so let us begin. And we start with the Dr David Banks Biosecurity Lifetime Achievement Award. Now, this award recognises individuals who have made an outstanding contribution beyond their normal responsibilities for Australian biosecurity over a sustained period of time. Andrew.

Andrew Tongue: Thanks very much, Richard. I'm pleased to recognise Dr John Virtue for his contributions to biosecurity integrity as this year's winner. John's works influenced biosecurity science, policy development, monitoring communication and on the ground management across Australia and internationally. Particularly, in the invasive plant field. I'll hand over to John to say a few words.

Dr John Virtue: Thanks very much. Look, I'm humbled and thrilled to be receiving this award, the Dr David Banks award. For lifetime achievement biosecurity, it does quite feel like I've done a lifetime as yet. I've got lots more to go, but I'd really like to thank Dr Peter Turner from New South Wales, Department of Prime Industries for nominating me, but I know he worked with... I found out this week, there was quite a number of people from around the country who were co-nominated with it. And I really appreciate that.

It came from the weed world. My background, I started off as senior weed ecologist in the South Australian government, about 26 years ago and met and have worked with a range of people in the weeds right around the country and terrific bunch of people. Yes, a lot of achievements, I suppose, looking back, weed risk assessment, weeds of national significance got into quite a range of areas. And I really appreciate the people I've met with. I really appreciate receiving award. So, thank you very much for this honour.

Richard Morecroft: Well, congratulations, John, and thank you for your very fine work over the years. Our next award is the Dr Kim Ritman Award for Science and Innovation. And this award recognises outstanding ambassadors to biosecurity science and innovation in Australia. Andrew.

Andrew Tongue: Thanks, Richard and Kim Ritman, of course, is a beloved figure in biosecurity. He's worked with many people across Australia and internationally. Sarah Corcoran is our winner of the Dr Kim Ritman Award for Science and Innovation for her outstanding contributions to biosecurity. Throughout her career, Sarah has delivered significant eradication programs for invasive pests and diseases. These include as director of the national Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program and leading the emergency response to the detection of citrus canker in the Northern territory, which ultimately has been successful. Congratulations, Sarah.

Richard Morecroft: Yes, congratulations indeed, Sarah and we move on to our next award, the Farm Biosecurity Producer of the Year Award. And this particular award recognises Australian primary producers that have demonstrated outstanding on-farm biosecurity practices. It comprises all forms of Australian farming, including large commercial operations, new and emerging niche industries, operators and hobby level farmers. So, this is the Farm Biosecurity Producer of the Year Award. Andrew.

Andrew Tongue: Thanks, Richard. The Farm Biosecurity Producer of the Year Award is jointly presented with Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia. I'm pleased to announce that Pohlmans Nursery is this year's winner for its contribution to the development of BioSecure HACCP, a national industry on-farm biosecurity program. Pohlmans Nursery, a large-scale plant producer has demonstrated a strong, active, and consistent approach in meeting its biosecurity obligations to mitigate risks. I'll hand over to Chris Johnson and Andy O'Brien to say a few words.

Chris Johnson: Hi guys. Thanks Andrew. We are extremely humbled to have been just nominated for this award and even more humbled to be announced as the overall winners. We are proud at are Pohlmans at what we do with our system management day-to-day and especially on the biosecurity requirements and reducing any biosecurity risks in the future. Pohlmans strive to produce the best quality plants we can for our customers. And we are always looking for the continuous improvement in our day-to-day operations. The BioSecure hazard system has helped improved our production system overall with a massive improvement on our day-to-day quality and has saved us a lot of efficiencies and dollars along the way. We've embraced the BioSecure hazard as a broader plant protection system. And it encompasses all aspects of our production system, not just biosecurity. It is a full management system.

Andy O'Brien: This is more acknowledgement of almost a decade of hard work, particularly I've worked with Chris here from day one, but thanks must also go to John McDonald at Green life Industry Australia for the nomination and for his support throughout the design and implementation of the program. Thanks also to the Department for hosting these awards.

Barry Spence: I can just add to. We're very confident in the way we control our biosecurity risks that if a new incursion was to happen, we could continue trading with very minimal disruption to our business. We're also proud of our environmental and sustainability achievements, things like reducing pesticide use, beneficial insects across the nursery and reducing our environmental footprint. And that biosecurity as program has helped us with these initiatives. So, thank you.

Richard Morecroft: Well, thank you very much indeed. And well done. Pohlmans Nursery. Now, we are delighted to be able to say that just a few minutes ago, we announced the Dr Kim Ritman Award for Science and Innovation and the award winner was Sarah Corcoran. We are delighted that she is able to now provide us with an acceptance.

Sarah Corcoran: Hi, I'm Sarah Corcoran, CEO of Plant Health Australia. I'm extremely honoured to be awarded the Dr Kim Ritman Award for Science and Innovation. To be recognised in the league of great scientist nominated to receive this award is very humbling. It means a lot to me that someone thinks my contribution to biosecurity in Australia is worthy of nomination, let alone to win the award. And I'd like to extend a special thank you to Jenny Logan who nominated me.

A trusted colleague, Jenny was there when I headed up the National Red Imported Fire Ant and Electric Ant Eradication Programs in Queensland. One of the highlights from our time working together was the declaration of the Yarn Gladstone area free from red imported fire ants in mid 2016. And this was due to the strong cooperation of industry, community and government, setting a new standard in invasive pests eradication.

I'd also like to thank the Department for hosting the Australian Biosecurity Awards. Awards like this inspire scientists to keep investigating and developing solutions. While leading Biosecurity and Animal Welfare for the Northern Territory, I was extremely proud to formally declare Australia free from banana freckle and to lead the emergency response to citrus canker. Now also eradicated.

My inspiration comes from discovering new innovative ways to further protect Australia's biosecurity system. And Kim was someone who also subscribed to this. It was with his support that I was able to secure funding to train the world's first odour detection dogs for the invasive browsing ant. And now I'm very fortunate to be heading out Plant Health Australia, bringing together industry, government and community to protect plant health, the backbone of our everyday existence.

We're a team of specialist staff and our trusted mainstay in Australia's biosecurity system, recognised nationally and internationally as leaders in plant health biosecurity. Plant health is of global importance and is a field of great complexity, requiring lateral thinking and importantly, collaboration to solve problems and develop solutions with those that have the experience and the knowledge. Let's use this knowledge and build on people experiences in COVID to nurture the newfound understanding amongst the community that our food and fibre, livelihoods and the fabric of our society, our environment needs to be protected.

And lastly, I feel privileged to have known Kim as a colleague, a mentor and friend. He built a deep and rich legacy. To receive this award in his honour, his recognition of that legacy and inspiration to keep leading the way through science and innovation. Thank you very much.

Richard Morecroft: Well, thank you very much and congratulations to Sarah Corcoran. And as you can see for those recipients who aren't able to join us in person this afternoon, we will manage to bring them to you via a pre-recorded message as Sarah has done. So, we're very grateful for that. Now, our next award, the Industry Award, recognises individuals, groups or organisations that have demonstrated a significant contribution to maintaining Australia's biosecurity integrity. Andrew.

Andrew Tongue: Thanks very much, Richard. The 2021 Industry Award is jointly received by the Queensland Port Authorities and the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for their work to implement the Queensland Seaport's environmental DNA surveillance program for early warning and detection of invasive marine species. I'd like to welcome Craig Wilson from Queensland Port Authorities and John Robertson from the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

John Robertson: Thanks, Andrew, I'll go first. On behalf of the department, Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, I'd like to thank the Commonwealth Department for this award and particularly for recognising the important role that industry plays in strengthening our marine biosecurity in Queensland. The Q-SEAS program is a partnership between the five Queensland port authorities and biosecurity Queensland and acts as an early warning screening tool for marine pests threats.

It is a collaborative arrangement where the ports do a lot of the on-ground checking of settlement of arrays and plankton tows. And biosecurity provides a technical guidance and oversight, the interpretation of the molecular data and the reporting of that, but also the responding to those detections.

It's just great to see ports embrace the Q-SEAS program and incorporate biosecurity into their business as usual. It's a really good thing. And I think it's a really good collaborative approach to surveillance, particularly in the marine space where it is difficult to early detect marine species, invasive marine species. And I like to thank everyone involved, particularly the industry and their contribution. I'll pass to Craig.

Craig Wilson: Thanks, John. And thank you, Andrew. So, on behalf of Queensland Ports Association, we're delighted to accept the Industry Award at this year's Australian Biosecurity Awards. And I'd like to thank the department for, I guess, awarding us with this credit. The five Queensland ports, the Port of Gladstone, North Queensland Bulk Ports, the Port of Townsville, Ports North and the Port of Brisbane have been working closely with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries since 2019 to develop the Q-SEAS program and regarding what John has said. The Q-SEAS program has provided the ports with an innovative early warning surveillance and detection tool. That's allowed us to manage marine pest risks in our ports and certainly provides us with a really great tool in doing that.

So, I guess this is a really great recognition for the program and especially for the partnership between the five ports and the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. And just, I'd like to thank a couple of people. Firstly, our colleagues in Western Australia who provided sort of significant input in the development of the program based on their own experiences and particularly Dan Paterson from the bill reports association.

And I'd also like to throw out a big thank you to all our technical staff across the ports and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. They're the guys and girls on the ground that are getting out there, putting out the settlement arrays, doing the plankton tows, collecting all the samples and packaging them off and sending them to the labs. And they do such a great job. And without them the program wouldn't have been the success it is. So, thank you.

Richard Morecroft: Well, thank you, Craig and John. And from the Industry Award, we go to the Government Award, which recognises individuals, groups, or organisations that have demonstrated a significant contribution to maintaining Australia's biosecurity integrity. And we have two winners this year for this award. Andrew.

Andrew Tongue: Thanks very much, Richard. The winner of the first Government Award is Agriculture Victoria for its response to the 2020 avian influenza outbreak at the height of the COVID restrictions last year. If you cast your mind back to the lockdowns that we experienced when we first realised the extent COVID, our colleagues in Victoria dealt with avian influenza outbreaks affecting chickens, turkeys and emus from one side of Victoria to the other. And they managed through their professionalism and integrity to maintain an effective response, utilising resources from state and territory agencies and having to have multiple coordination centres even to cope with COVID restrictions. An outstanding job Agriculture Victoria. And I think we've got a pre-recorded message.

Matt Lowe: I'd like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the lands on which we're meeting and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. It's a great honour to be here today to be accepting the Government Award on behalf of Agriculture Victoria, for our team's outstanding efforts in responding to Australia's largest ever recorded outbreak of avian influenza.

Stephen Nee: We first detected avian influenza on the 31st of July. And you need to get onto that quickly if disease is out there in the community of domestic poultry and it's not detected, then it can keep circulating and we need to stop that circulation as quickly as possible.

Matt Lowe: The scale of the outbreak and the fact that it occurred during Victoria's second wave meant that the response was well and truly unprecedented. It's a word that's been used a lot in recent times, but I think in this situation is well and truly warranted. The Agriculture Victoria and broader DJPR team worked tirelessly for nine months, beginning in July last year to successfully eradicate the disease.

Amy Slugget: As surveillance manager, it's my job to roster the surveillance staff to allow for swabbing of properties and to allow us to door knock properties where we haven't made contact with the owners yet. Poultry have high biosecurity risks and we like to ensure that our staff are not going to take anything onto a property with them.

Katelyn Millard: Obviously, in any emergency animal disease response, it's going to be a really stressful and emotional time for the owners. So, if you are really clear and you maintain contact with them and you let them know when you're going to be on site, what time you're planning on being there, making sure that they're not feeling left out and just checking in with them and making sure that they are okay, because yeah, it is stressful and pretty upsetting for a lot of people.

Matt Lowe: Despite the challenges, Victoria was able to successfully eradicate avian influenza from all seven impacted properties. These efforts also led to several new policy innovations that will be important for years to come. My thanks to the team for their fantastic efforts in achieving this result. In often trying circumstances, the response was delivered, with staff often having to do multiple rotations due to the broader coronavirus border restrictions. The outcome would also not have been possible without the support of the Commonwealth, other states and territories, Animal Health Australia, the Australian Chicken Meat Federation and Egg Farmers of Australia and other key industry partners.

Dr Graeme Cooke: Ag Vic cannot fight diseases like salmonella and avian influenza alone. It needs to work in partnership with not only the producers, but also the representative bodies of the industries involved.

Matt Lowe: Once again, thank you so much for this award. It's a great honour and a tribute to the team for all their hard work on this complex incident.

Andrew Tongue: The winner of the second government award is Biosecurity Queensland's Social Platforms Regulatory Awareness and Engagement group, for their work to address the illegal sale of cacti on social platforms, such as eBay, Gumtree and Facebook Marketplace. Cacti are a growing problem for us at the border. And this is great work by our colleagues in Queensland. In the first four years of operation, the team seized over 2,766 illegal cacti, along with hundreds of other invasive species illegally offered for sale. And I think we've got Duncan Swan there.

Duncan Swan: Thanks very much, Andrew and Richard. It's a great privilege as the chair of the Social Platforms Regulatory Awareness and Engagement group to accept this award on their behalf. Social media is now part of everyday life. The connectivity that social media enables also creates new biosecurity risks, particularly through the distribution of pests and diseases. Biosecurity Queensland has been directly addressing these issues by developing capabilities for our inspectors and local government officers to undertake compliance and enforcement in the digital environment.

What started as a project to address the illegal online sales of cacti has developed into a significant online engagement and enforcement capability being applied across biosecurity Queensland and local governments. This work has been coordinated by the SPRAE group, which has been able to partner capabilities from across the department, including experts in digital communications, community engagement and compliance to develop techniques and procedures to enable effective enforcement of Queensland's biosecurity laws.

Over the last four years, more than 2,800 invasive cacti have been seized along with hundreds of other of invasive species. The tools and techniques developed in this project are now also applied to the carriers of fire ants and the illegal distribution of banana plants. The digital domain crosses all state and national borders and it is also pleasing to see other jurisdictions adopting online compliance projects to work further enhance Australia's cybersecurity systems. What started out as a novel approach and undertaking compliance of social media and online sales platforms has now become business as usual.

There is a need for everyone involved in the management of biosecurity risk to continually evolve and innovate, to keep pace with technology. Congratulations to the members of the SPRAE group on the award. Thanks to the National Biosecurity Committee in the department for the award and to our Deputy Director-General and Chief Biosecurity Officer Malcolm Letts for the nomination. Thanks also to our executive sponsor, Pat Bell, my co-chair Chris Holidaymaker and the group secretary Joe McIntosh for all their work in supporting the group. Most of all, thanks to all the biosecurity inspectors and local government officers who have taken these tools and worked so hard to implement them over the last four years to make the project a success. Thanks very much.

Richard Morecroft: Thank you very much indeed Duncan and congratulations. And as I'm sure you could hear, there was some unavoidable connection problems there, which affected the sound quality, but I think we could certainly hear almost all of what Duncan was saying. So, congratulations to him and congratulations indeed to both our Government Award winners. Now, the Environmental Biosecurity Award recognises individuals, groups or organisations, once again, who make a contribution, a significant contribution to protecting our environment from biosecurity risks. And we again have two winners for this award. Andrew.

Andrew Tongue: Thanks very much, Richard. Richard and I are together in a studio here in Canberra. We're now going to go right to the top of Australia to Groote Island, traditional custodians of land and sea country across the north of Australia, make a huge contribution to Australia's biosecurity. And the environmental biosecurity award is Anindilyakwa Land Council Land and Sea Rangers and South32 GEMCO for their collaborative efforts in the development of a quarantine and biosecurity program for the Anindilyakwa Indigenous protected area. This program plays a critical role in protecting Groote from existing and emerging biosecurity threats, such as the cane toad. And a shout out to our colleagues and friends on Groote. And I'll hand over to Tom Lawton. Tom.

Tom Lawton: Yeah G-day and thanks very much. Firstly, we just like to thank the department for the recognition for this award. It means a lot to us up here. We'd also like to say good thanks to South32 GEMCO and obviously the Anindilyakwa Land Council for coming together for this collaboration and made the impossible. The program itself aims to protect the environmental, social, cultural values up on Groote and the economy for the future. So, yeah, we are working hard in that space and luckily able to share this with all the groups and all in northern Australia. So, yeah, thanks again. A special thanks to Megan Lewis who nominated us for this award and having her work on the program, to start it wouldn't be way we are now without her. So, yeah, special thanks to Megan. And once again, thanks to the department.

Andrew Tongue: Thanks very much, Tom. And it's great to see you up there with everybody on the island. The winner of our second Environmental Biosecurity Award. We now go to the South Coast National Resource Management group for leading and supporting a range of projects that have delivered significant biosecurity outcomes for the south coast region of Western Australia. South Coast NRM has been a leading agency in managing phytophthora dieback in Western Australia, helping to deliver on the ground protection and tools that support this work. And Justin Bellanger has been on a pre-recorded message to acknowledge this award.

Justin Bellanger: We're really proud to be recognised through this award. Our thanks go to the Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment for the awards themselves and also the federal and state government who funded much of the work that we do. As a community-based organisation, 10-year blind and collaborative projects are what we're all about. So, we thought be a great opportunity to bring a few different people together, to really highlight like the sort of work that we do.

Joanna Young: People didn't appreciate what dieback was doing to the woodlands and heaths of the South Coast, incredibly biodiverse, internationally important systems. Here we had a feral introduced microorganism ravaging some of these really special systems. We were adamant that we wanted to not just build strategies and talk about it, we wanted to get on ground outcomes. We engaged the community and we got some wonderful people working as project officers that knew their patch, were passionate about their patch and were very good at communicating and working with local government shires and the government. So, we all were on the same page.

Dr Michael Wysong: If I stop through a desert, I respect the boundaries or tenure, it also occurs on a large scale. So, it occurs throughout the region. Knowing where to spend resources and where to prioritise really means you need to have that whole of landscape scale and figure out where to use those resources, where to prioritise those resources.

Mia Hunt: Training is a key part of what South Coast NRM has done to enable community and empower unity to play that role in environmental biosecurity. Green card training is the flagship of that program. It's more or less your slip slot, slap of environmental biosecurity, where we give you some simple tools and messages that you can use when operating in natural areas.

Gary Muir: Communication is the greatest environmental management tool you can ever use for biosecurity. However, you've got to have the infrastructure to go with it. We used to say, "Clean your shoes, dieback travels in soil and plant material." You've got to clean your cars. There was nothing to do it with. So, what we needed to do is work out a way to get that solution that would actually be able to do the signage to clean your shoes.

Justin Bellanger: For us, this award really recognises the role that community can play as a key component to our Australia's biosecurity system. There's immense capability, capacity and innovation within the community sector. And we really need to embrace all of this to maximise our opportunity to deal with biosecurity threats in Australia. Thank you.

Richard Morecroft: Well, congratulations to those Environmental Biosecurity Award winners. And it was great to see community members on Groote Island holding their award in front of the camera. So, lovely to see an award actually in the flesh. Now, we move on to the Community Award. And the Community Award recognises individuals, groups or organisations in education that have demonstrated a significant contribution to promoting or raising biosecurity awareness. Once again, we have two winners this year. Over to you, Andrew.

Andrew Tongue: Thanks Richard. The first community award winner is the GMV Fruit Fly Area Wide Management program, for its important role in managing and reducing impact of fruit fly on horticulture in the Goulburn Murray Valley region. One of Australia's great productive regions. This program has been effective through creating awareness, education and engagement across the whole community. And I think we've got a pre-recorded video.

Tony Siciliano: Hi, I'm Tony Siciliano, Chair of the Goulburn Murray Valley Fruit Fly Area Wide Management Program and President of Cobram and District Fruit Growers Association. I am honoured to accept this award on behalf of our program's governance group. And we like to thank Ag Vic for funding this vital program. This award recognises our program as the benchmark in Australia's fruit fly area wide management. Our achievements include dramatic reduction of fruit fly populations in the GMV over the past four years.

This has been done by a high level of community engagement and our communities can be proud of their efforts. Our program is delivering a return in investment of four to one to the Victorian Government. This is exceptional value by anybody standards. We are the only area wide management program in Australia to have generated over 3000 community volunteers to help educate the community about how to reduce the impact of fruit fly. Research projects use area wide management platform to provide practical solutions to reducing fruit fly populations, such as the trial of the sterile aerial release fruit flies in Cobram.

Effective area, wide management cannot be achieved without community support and community support requires minimal financial assistance from government. It's a win win. With continued financial assistance from government, we would like to share our learnings with the Australian community and engage the nation to stop the impact of fruit fly. We believe that by engaging a broader community through area wide management, we can increase the quality of Australian horticulture exports and expand further into world markets. Let's tell the world there's no flies on us and it's a community effort that guarantees the quality of Australian horticulture. Thank you.

Andrew Tongue: And our second community award winner is the Urban Plant Health Network for its work on increasing awareness of plant health and biosecurity risks in urban areas and to empower urban and community gardens like me and my family to take part in biosecurity efforts. The network was launched in 2019 and connects gardeners with industry and government experts specialising in plant health and biosecurity. And congratulations. And I'd love to welcome Kellyanne Harris. Kellyanne.

Kellyanne Harris: Awesome. Thank you. It's an absolute honour for the Urban Plant Health Network project to receive this award and it really, for us, it recognises that power of collaboration between government, industry and the community to promote the shared responsibility to biosecurity and to do this with youth in their proven extensionAUS model. So, the team have really cherished the opportunity to be innovative and creative in our delivery to engage with those community and backyard gardeners.

And the pilot's been a focus in Melbourne and we being online in digital was paramount for us because we've had multiple COVID lockdowns during the project time. I'd like to acknowledge DAWE and Agriculture Victoria for investment, to make this pilot happen. And of course, the project team, in particular, Joe and Sarah and other Agriculture Victoria staff that have been involved including Tim, Lorna and the entomology team, which have all collaborated to make this pilot a great success along with our community of practice, which is made up of 13 different organisations that all contribute and collaborate to get us delivering these important biosecurity messages into backyard and community gardeners. And of course, we'd like to thank the backyard and community gardeners who all engaged with us and provided surveillance during this project. Thank you.

Richard Morecroft: Thank you, Kellyanne. And of course, congratulations to all or both of the community award winners. Now, time for the Education Award. And the Education Award recognises individuals, groups or organisations that make a significant contribution to maintaining Australia's biosecurity integrity.

Andrew Tongue: Thanks, Richard. The Education Award winner is Associate Professor Kim Plummer, who's recognised for her long career as an educator, researcher and mentor in relation to strengthening Australia's plant biosecurity systems and in raising awareness. Congratulations to Kim. Kim's unable to join us today, but she shared a video.

Associate Professor Kim Plummer: I'm Kim Plummer, Associate Professor at La Trobe university and I'm honoured to receive the Australian Biosecurity Award in the education category. I'm also indebted to Dr Adrian Dinsdale for nominating me. I was so grateful for this great news after such a tough time for universities over the past 18 months. The recognition that education, as well as our research has specific value to Australian Biosecurity is a timely and important message to deliver to universities.

I've really loved developing innovations to spark curiosity in my students about pests and pathogens and disease in general and to introduce them to the techniques, equipping them with competence and confidence in those skills that are required for plant biosecurity. In particular, I've loved introducing them to the use of their phones with microscopes to accurately record and to share their images and help them understand what they're seeing down microscopes.

Since 2011, I've also collaborated with colleagues from five universities to train professionals and postgraduates in all aspects of the plant biosecurity continuum via the national plant biosecurity curriculum. This and other postgraduate development that we've been involved in with regard to training postgrad students in plant biosecurity, working with plant biosecurity professionals has really enriched my discourse with training for students. Critical to all of my educational activities has been a real passion and a need to reinforce the importance of plant biosecurity to secure our plant primary industries, as well, the natural estate for future generations to come. I'm genuinely grateful and very proud to receive this award. Thank you.

Andrew Tongue: Congratulations to Kim and all our 2021 winners. And I think you can see from the breadth of winners in the awards from the top of Australia to the remote parts of Western Australia, to government organisations, industry organisations and community organisations, all working together to protect Australia's biosecurity. Working together, we really can protect our country and our continent. Thanks, Richard.

Richard Morecroft: Thank you very much, Andrew. And indeed, congratulations to all of those award winners. Last year, the Department introduced a new award sub-category, the Biosecurity Commendation Certificate. Now, the Biosecurity Commendation Certificate was designed to recognise exemplary efforts in promoting strong biosecurity awareness and practices. And we have winners of the Commendation Certificates this year. So, this year's Biosecurity Commendation Certificates include Dr Cherie Gambley, for her outstanding scientific contribution and national leadership in improving Australia's capability and preparedness in plant health and biosecurity research.

EcoDNA Group, for their work with eDNA to enable real-time detections in the field and develop novel sampling methods that can be applied at the border to protect Australia from harmful invasive species, including khapra beetle. Hanneke Parish, for her efforts in protecting and maintaining plant health. Idealview Dairy, for strong commitment to on-farm biosecurity and advocating biosecurity in the goat industry. Pam Kent, for her efforts in protecting and maintaining plant health.

Dr Satendra Kumar, for national scientific leadership in plant biosecurity and mentoring and developing those who sit in key positions of leadership today. And Tim Farry, for his considerable contribution to enhanced environmental biosecurity outcomes in the invasive pest and disease space. So, the warmest of congratulations to all recipients of the Biosecurity Commendation Certificates Winners. Now, as Andrew mentioned, a moment or two ago, if you'd like to hear more about our Australian Biosecurity Award winners important work, or indeed, if you have questions for our award winners, then do join us tomorrow afternoon for our Q and A session with the award winners. But Minister Littleproud is joining us again now to offer his congratulations to award winners.

Hon David Littleproud MP: Well, congratulations to Dr John Virtue for winning the Dr David Banks Award and to Sarah Corcoran for the D. Kim Ritman award. Congratulations, your work has made profound difference, as I said earlier, to regional rural Australia and to all the other category winners, congratulations, thank you for your hard effort and your work that you've put into biosecurity. This is something that your nation is profoundly proud of. Congratulations, and have a great night.

Richard Morecroft: Thank you very much, Minister Littleproud. I'm sure great nights will be had all round because there is very much to celebrate as we have heard this afternoon from our winners and by recognising the endeavours of our award winners. And it seems fitting that just before we leave you, we should share with you this brief montage of responses from our award winners today, expressing their appreciation of these important biosecurity awards.

Matt Lowe: It's a great honour to be here today to be accepting the government award on behalf of Agriculture Victoria for our teams outstanding efforts in responding to Australia's largest ever recorded outbreak of avian influenza.

Tom Lawton: This award represents for us a real recognition of the work we're doing in this space, especially around cane toad biosecurity in Northern Australia, the collaboration between South32 GEMCO, the Rangers and the Land Council is pretty unique and can showcase to others what can be achieved when people work together.

Justin Bellanger: For us, this award really recognises the role that community can play as a key component to Australia's biosecurity system. There's immense capability, capacity and innovation within the community sector. And we really need to embrace all of this to maximise our opportunity to deal with biosecurity threats in Australia.

Dr John Virtue: Particularly folks in the weeds area, weed risk assessment, weeds of national significance, biological control, but also over time as I became manager of invasive species unit before I branched out into pest animals and aquatic pests and then also taking on strategic policy unit in the primary industries in biosecurity.

Sarah Corcoran: For me, the foundations for a career in science were built from a young age and grew after my parents gave me a book on classifying wildflowers for my seventh birthday. From this point I knew I wanted a career protecting Australia from exotic pest and disease threats, as I loved the diversity and uniqueness of our beautiful country.

John Robertson: Queensland Seaports eDNA Surveillance program or Q-SEAS is a partnership between biosecurity Queensland and the five Queensland port authorities.

Craig Wilson: Q-SEAS have provided our ports with an early warning surveillance and detection system that allows us to monitor and identify marine pest threats to our ports.

Jo Chong Wah: The Urban Plant Health Network demonstrated that urban biosecurity is a key risk pathway that can be addressed. And that backyard and community gardeners understand shared responsibility and are willing to take on a bigger role in managing biosecurity risks to complement targeted surveillance activities.

Duncan Swan: What started as a project to address the illegal online sales of cacti has developed into a significant online engagement and enforcement capability being applied across biosecurity Queensland and local governments.

Associate Professor Kim Plummer: I've really loved developing innovations to spark curiosity in my students about pests and pathogens and disease in general. And to introduce them to the techniques, equipping them with competence, confidence in those skills that are required for plant biosecurity.

Tony Siciliano: This award recognises our program as the benchmark in Australia's fruit fly area wide management. Our achievements include dramatic reduction of fruit fly populations in the GMV over the past four years. This has been done by a high level of community engagement and our communities can be proud of their efforts.

Chris Johnson: We are proud of the systems we've been able to develop, especially in conjunction with the AMS and the BioSecure hazard system. It has enabled us to minimise and eliminate current biosecurity issues and also emerging biosecurity issues. But the major thing has majorly improved our quality. And we can't have done this without our staff, our customers and our loyal support here.

Dr John Virtue: So, once again, I'm thrilled to have received this award. Biosecurity is really important, invasive species is a really important component of biosecurity.

Sarah Corcoran: Thank you very much.

Dr Rosa Crnov: So, keep flying that plant biosecurity flag and very well done to all.

Richard Morecroft: Well, wonderful to hear all those messages to conclude this afternoon's proceedings, but do please join us for day two of the National Biosecurity Forum. That's from 9:30 tomorrow morning. And we'll be covering themes of shared responsibility and partnerships, as well as looking very closely at science and innovation. And if you haven't done already just on the off chance, there is still time to register. You can visit biosecurity.gov.au and register so that you can be part of this forum. Thank you very much indeed, for joining us today. And of course, a final congratulations to all award winners and recipients of the Biosecurity Commendation Certificates. See you tomorrow.

[Session ends]