# 2021 National Biosecurity Forum

Session 1: Taking a future focus – a national biosecurity strategy

(Duration 1 hour 31 mins 41 secs)

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## Introduction

This is the transcript of the National Biosecurity Forum, session 1, presented by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.

## Transcript

[Session begins]

Richard Morecroft: Hello and the very warmest of welcomes to the National Biosecurity Forum 2021, and many thanks indeed for joining us today. I'm Richard Morecroft. I will be your facilitator for the next two days of proceedings, and it is great to see that so many of you have joined us. We have over 1,100 registrations and that is a wonderfully positive response. We have representation from all states in Australia, as well as New Zealand and indeed a few representatives from further afield in the United Kingdom and Mexico. It's also great to see a very strong representation from state and territory governments, as well as our research institutions. And it also looks as though we are joined by most sectors of agriculture, as well as the supply chain with our industry participants today. So welcome to all of you, and thanks very much indeed for taking the time. From what I know, is always your busy schedule to join us for today's proceedings.

Now, over the next two days, we are going to be hearing from a great lineup of speakers from, as I said, all around the country and indeed from New Zealand as well, from across government, from across a wide range of industries, all sharing their insights and their expertise on biosecurity. But before we get underway, I would like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we meet today, and pay my respects to their elders past and present. And I extend that respect and acknowledgement to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples here today.

And we're also particularly appreciative of being joined, first of all, by Jude Barlow, who will begin our forum with a Welcome to Country. Jude is the director people services at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. She's a Ngunnawal woman who has been living and working in the ACT and liaising with First Nations communities and organisations across Australia for a number of years. So, we are delighted that she's with us this morning. And welcome Jude.

Jude Barlow: Thank you, Richard and yuma, which is hello in Ngunnawal, and I encourage you when you are on Ngunnawal country to say yuma, when you're saying hello or good day. [Ngunnawal language] Jude Barlow and I am a Ngunnawal woman. My family are Woolobaloah people, a family group within the Ngunnawal nation, and it is a pleasure to be with you all today, albeit, rather remotely. I begin today by acknowledging my family and ancestors, and for those of you viewing this from other parts of this beautiful country or elsewhere. I would also like to acknowledge the custodians of the land on which you are meeting today, and I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Now, when I had the privilege of welcoming you all to this important event, last year, I spoke the three words roaming around in my head, resilience, courage, and unprecedented, and it was an unprecedented year. The resilience I saw then is the resilience I still see today. It's the resilience of this country and its peoples to whether any storm be it hail fire, or COVID. Unlike what we may see elsewhere across the world, I see here in this country, a willingness for people to support others in any way they can by taking care of each other, and we do it so well.

In communities across this nation, there are those with the courage to be kind, to be mindful of others and to care for all at this critical time. And I see courage and resilience of the frontline staff who each and every day face many unprecedented challenges with grace and dignity. And while we talk about the unprecedented nature of what has and is currently affecting us, I think the courage and resilience on display by so many is not so unprecedented, it's just who we are, and that is why in this current environment, recognising contribution and acknowledging and accepting ancient knowledge is more important than ever. We know the land. We have lived with this land for thousands of years and we know how to be well on it, because we have always belonged to it, always was, always will be, is about recognising our ancient past and embracing that past to build a future that is sustainable, cultural and kind.

Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders long connection to country, allows us all to embrace and care for our environment and each other. And we should all travel together on this land that has always been Aboriginal land. It is a journey we travel together where we practice [Ngunnawal language], which is a Ngunnawal and Wiradjuri word meaning honour and respect. More broadly, it implies thoughtfulness, graciousness and kindness. In the language of my ancestors, we have a word which means being well together, and that word is narragunnawali. And what continues to be a very challenging time, it is important that we listen to ancient knowledge and where we can live and practice narragunnawali.

I'd now like to welcome you in the language of my ancestors, a language once thought dead, but we Ngunnawal people know it was only sleeping. [Welcome to Country in Ngunnawal language]. And this means today we're all gathering together on Ngunnawal country, and this country is my ancestor spiritual homeland, and we are keeping the pathways of our ancestors alive by walking together as one. Welcome to Ngunnawal country.

Richard Morecroft: Thank you so much, Jude Barlow, for that Welcome to Country, and indeed your reflections on the communities of this nation, which you mentioned, and the resilience and generosity that they have demonstrated in the year past. Now, the Minister for Agriculture, David Littleproud, has a message to open the forum today. Minister.

Hon David Littleproud MP: Well, welcome to this year's National Biosecurity Forum. You are playing a very important role in not just protecting Australian agricultural production systems, but also our environment. The Australian Government has, over the last 12 months, invested over a billion dollars into biosecurity measures. We are taking this very seriously about protecting our nation's borders and making sure that we're protecting agricultural production to reach that hundred-billion-dollar goal. Your attendance today is important. You are the brains trust that we are calling on to make sure that we have the technologies that we can invest in to ensure that we increase our capability and capacity. The Australian Government is committed to making sure that money goes out to ensuring our borders stay safe. So, to each and every one of you, can I say, please be open, be transparent and be candid about any of the ideas within the forums, because your idea could have a profound impact on our border security into the future. Thanks for having me and have a great conference.

Richard Morecroft: Thank you minister for that welcome and the recognition of the important work that is being done, very much appreciated. But let's move into action straight away with our first session today, and a focus on the future for our biosecurity efforts. We will be hearing from the co-chairs of the National Biosecurity Committee. Firstly, Andrew Tongue, who will present on the Commonwealth Biosecurity 2030 roadmap. And then Andrew will be followed by Malcolm Letts who will be talking to us about the alignment of collective efforts and the priorities for our national biosecurity system.

And then of course, it's time for you to get involved as we follow up with a panel discussion, and of course we welcome your questions to the panel. So our first presentation for today, accelerating reform Commonwealth Biosecurity 2030, and the link to a national biosecurity strategy. Andrew Tongue is the Deputy Secretary, Biosecurity and Compliance at the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, and we welcome him very warmly this morning. Andrew.

Andrew Tongue: Thanks so much, Richard. It's great to be here, welcome to everybody online. It's so exciting to be participating in the National Biosecurity Forum. Could I begin by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we're meeting, pay my respects to elders past and present, and extend my respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating. And it's great to be here with my colleague Malcolm Letts. I'd like to pick up where Jude Barlow left off in talking about being well on our land. For us to be well on our land, our land needs to be well. And for me coming to work every day, that's what biosecurity is about. It's about ensuring that our land is well, however, we relate to that land. I really wanted to spend some time today talking about the Commonwealth Biosecurity Strategy 2030.

The reason for that is it's our guiding document as we reform the national biosecurity system, and it's about building our capability to respond to a changing world. It picks up on findings of many inquiries. For example, Wendy Craig's report into the national biosecurity system. And it's about engaging with our partners, the states and territories, industry, the community, as we drive biosecurity into the 21st century. Of course, biosecurity is a pillar of the federal government's Agriculture 2030 plan, which is all about raising a level of agricultural exports to a hundred billion dollars a year. And we received a considerable investment of over $400 million in last year's federal budget to upgrade our capability and create a fit for purpose Commonwealth contribution to the national biosecurity system. Many of you participating would've heard me talk about why we think we need to upgrade and evolve the national biosecurity system.

There are a few key highlights that I'd like to pick up once again, just to remind everybody. Firstly, our threat environment is changing. Once, Australia was a very long way from the rest of the world. It was a long way in time. Diseases like foot and mouth disease didn't get here from Europe, because the cattle died on the trip out. That's no longer the case. We are a globally connected nation. We are connected to every part of the globe, and if you're talking about vessel sailing times, they've all come down. And so what that means is we are seeing more pests and diseases from more places across the globe, turning up on our borders.

That is compounded by a changing natural world. Climate change is affecting the range of pest and disease spread globally and domestically. You just need to think about, say the cane toad, which is coming further south as but one example of how a changing climate, a warming climate changes the range of pests and diseases. As the global trading system changes with the rise of Asia and China in particular, and climate begins to change more aggressively, those two factors compound, and they're changing the threat environment that we face.

So we're seeing more pest and disease pressure than we've seen on Australia and within Australia. And we've got to relate to that and react to it, and hence the need for the Commonwealth as the border agency responsible for keeping pest and disease threats out as far as we can to evolve. The other two things I'd like to highlight are COVID. COVID has made biosecurity a dinner table conversation topic. Seventy per cent of human viruses are zoonotic, they come from animals. The recent discovery of a new variant of the Hendra virus is but one example just in the last few months.

So COVID gives us a way in to have a conversation about the importance of biosecurity, wherever we sit in the biosecurity system. And it's important that we take that opportunity, because so much of what we have and are as a nation is linked to our natural world and our farm environments. And if we have pests and diseases from the rest of the world, we can lose a lot of what we take to be important to the Australian way of life. The other thing that's changing very rapidly is technology. And you'll hear over the course of the next two days, all sorts of information about new technologies we're applying, new technologies at the border, new technologies behind the border, new equipment that our scientists are accessing, environmental DNA, eRNA analysis, high throughput sequencing, and so on.

Across the board, governments and industry are investing in these new technologies. The importance of that is we know what we're dealing with more quickly and more accurately, and then the challenge for us is, how do we turn that into response and preparedness and resilience? So there's a lot to play for, but we've got a lot of new tools that we didn't once have. So for us, we acknowledge that we need to go on a business transformation and we've got a substantial agenda. We need to relate to complex global supply chains. Waiting for things to hit the border is no longer good enough.

We need to understand the history of containers before they come to Australia, and we're building a data lake and working with industry to get information on container trade, because if we are to keep something like the khapra beetle out, the khapra beetle can lie dormant under the floor of a container for five years and then wake up. It can wake up and crawl into packaging, and that container can be unstuffed, and the goods sent to rural areas of Australia when the khapra beetle is alive in the packaging, and we've had some examples of that recently. So we need to be able to model global container trade as but one example of how we've got to deal with supply chain complexity.

We need to do better at our relationships so that in the near region, in the Indo-Pacific region in particular, but globally, so that we're taking pressure off what's happening on the border and building defence in depth. And the Chief Vet Dr. Mark Schipp and the Chief Plant Protection Officer Dr. Gabrielle Vivian-Smith, have been very active already in the region in talking to counterparts and building networks, and hopefully down the track, working with our partners to build capability, to help not just protect Australia, but to protect our neighbours and our friends nearby.

The reason they get for that is together we are stronger. And it's not just Australia that suffers from pest and disease threats – all our near neighbours do. The other journey that we're on is discovering the value and the asset that is the data that we hold. Biosecurity floats on data, data that is relevant to the diagnosis of individual pest and disease threats, but data about supply chains, data about what's happening out on the ground, states and territories manage, various endemic pests and diseases that are here in Australia. Discovering the data asset that we all have and share is really incredibly important in my view to the future.

And certainly at a national level, we're looking at how do we even value that data asset for the nation. We know that the national biosecurity system is worth about $300 billion per annum. What is the value of the data asset underpinning that? Capability is incredibly important. New scientific equipment raises challenges for our scientists in their skills and how they apply them. Putting more data in the hands of our border offices will require us to work with them to help them grow their skills. Working with our industry partners, huge changes happening at Australia's ports, automation improves efficiency, but we lose the human eyeball in the identification of pests and diseases. For example, like the giant African snail that might be clinging to the outside of a container. So Commonwealth Biosecurity 2030, is all about how do we build our capability.

Now what's our goal? Well, we are aiming for a risk-based biosecurity system. Our challenge is to reduce the biosecurity risk to Australia, to as low as possible, but not zero. And so we see key enablers, funding, which is a topic in the biosecurity system, certainly around 40% of the budget that my group has responsibility for, is cost recovered from industry. Biosecurity is a people business and not just the people working in biosecurity, but it's a community business.

The technology I've talked about, system governance, we govern by security in a particular way. It's probably time that we ask, do we think those governance systems and approaches are going to hold us for the next 10 to 20 years? Perhaps they will. Perhaps we need to make some changes. We need to talk that through. Regulation, the Commonwealth Biosecurity Act is the piece of regulation that's been what we share with the federal health department, and it's been governing Australia's borders through COVID.

It's a very powerful piece of legislation at Commonwealth level. States and territories have their own regulatory arrangements. Is our regulation fit for purpose and up to date? And so we anticipate that we'll constantly be updating our legislation to reflect the changing realities of our threat environment and the economy. Commonwealth Biosecurity 2030 has got nine strategic actions, and I just wanted to take some time to run through those.

It talks about accelerating our efforts with key partners, and you are our key partners, including... And it's wonderful to have colleagues from overseas online. Biosecurity is a shared international endeavour, to create a future oriented and efficient national system. Expanding our offshore assurance arrangements. So many manufactured goods coming into Australia from overseas bring with them biosecurity risk. As I say, too late to deal with them at the border, working where the container is being packed to try and get clean containers and clean goods coming to Australia is but one example. And I've mentioned our activities with our near neighbours, and we're going to accelerate our efforts. And we are working for example, with the Office of the Pacific in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, so that we are a good neighbour in our region for biosecurity.

A skilled and responsive workforce, what sort of skills do we need going forward? I've mentioned data, where we probably need more data and analytical skills in our workforce. As our scientific equipment changes, I've mentioned that, how we work with industry. So ensuring that we've got access to all the skills that we need in our workforce and in the workforces we share across the country.

Detection technologies, and of course, we still rely on our dogs. Ulf, our dog of the year, really pays for his pal. Dogs are wonderful, but we need to move beyond the dogs and partner the dogs with new technologies, 3D X-ray machines that can sense organics in people's bags at airports, technology that can take high resolution 360 degree photographs of the outside of containers, sniffing technologies that can detect pheromones in all sorts of goods, robots that can go under mining equipment and check for the brown marmorated stink bug and so on. That's all ahead of us, but we have to change our business practices as we go. We have to integrate all the mountains of data that that technology will generate.

And then for us, the Commonwealth, we need to do a better job at making it available to states and territories and to industry partners. Improving awareness and understanding whilst Australia's airports have had virtually nobody going through them, less than a hundred people a day, say at Sydney Airport at the tightest parts of our lockdown. Since January 2020, we've detected a hundred thousand threat items coming in people's luggage and on their person at Australia's airports. That doesn't speak to me of a community that gets the importance of biosecurity. We have to work a bit harder at improving awareness and understanding across the community. Biosecurity can't be taken for granted. And we are betting the farm. If we let some of these pests and diseases in. African swine fever is four kilometres from Australia.

It's in Papua New Guinea. Saba Island is the northern-most island of Australia. It's four kilometres from PNG. If African swine fever was to come into Australia. And we've just released information about a new genotype of African swine fever, that's been discovered in China, the chief vets been circulating that information. If African swine fever was to come in, we would have to contemplate the possibility of killing 4 million farm pigs and going after untold millions of feral pigs. If we were to manage an outbreak causing billions of dollars' worth of damage, we're talking about non-trivial things and we need a community that understands their actions to bring a cutting from the old country, or a poorly cooked piece of pork into Australia, has real consequences. They're not just beating the guys at the border. They're risking the livelihoods of Australian farming families.

So we need to do better on community awareness. Intelligence. We maintain all sorts of clever technologies that web scrapers and bots and all sorts of things that are talking to us all the time about reports of pests and disease movement across the world. Understanding the movement of pests and diseases is incredibly important to keeping Australia safe. And we're continuing to invest in our intelligence efforts. And we want to do better at partnering with states and territories and industry, to ensure that we get advanced warning. The more warning we have, the stronger our resilience is as a nation. So building that warning. And of course, if something does get through, fall armyworm travelled from Cape York to the south coast of New South Wales in about nine months. It can fly 140 kilometres a night and it's blowing on the wind. Part of a strong biosecurity system is being prepared and having a prepared and resilient nation.

And we are doing some work on building our preparedness and we are working with our counterparts to at the Emergency Management Australia to develop a national biosecurity exercise where we'll test in real life, our preparedness to deal with major biosecurity events. And finally, all this has to be paid for. And funding is a challenge. We compete for funding with all the other things that society values – aged care, childcare, and healthcare, and having funding and investment models that allow us to prevent pest and disease incursions, but respond to them when we are here, look at the more than 400 million dollars that's being spent on the red imported fire ant, in Southeast Queensland. All that needs to be paid for and funded, and we need to make our case to the community and public policy. So those are the areas that the Commonwealth has identified as being crucial to it.

There's some areas I'd just like to call out in terms of progress. The national biosecurity strategy that Malcolm will talk about shortly is an early win. I guess, to start engaging with everybody about, Commonwealth's got a strategy, states and territories have got strategies, there's animal plan and plant plan. There's industry strategies. What sits over the top that brings us together.

We're finalising our first annual action plan under the under Biosecurity 2030 to outline all the things we are doing in a practical sense. And we are delivering our first annual report. The federal Inspector-General of Biosecurity is constantly reviewing our efforts in biosecurity. We're preparing a report on our response to his findings. I've mentioned about the chief vet and the chief plant protection officer in the Pacific. And we are doing great work there. The national preparedness exercises being prepared, knowing how we're all going to react, if the worst does happen and challenging ourselves on our failure of imagination to imagine the worst that can happen, is part of being professional in biosecurity.

We're very active in Northern Australia. Northern Australia has 10,000 kilometres of coastline, much of it remote and very hard to surveil. We're working with Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia and Indigenous partners across the north, and important to call out the activities of rangers across Northern Australia. And plenty more to go and get there. We're working very hard with industry to change our business model so that we can move goods efficiently, but get a biosecurity outcome. And we're trying to develop import systems and we've received investment from the government to be much smarter about how we clear goods at the border. We handle 6 million import documents a year, and we're assessing 77,000 combinations of goods and countries to try and keep pests and diseases out of Australia. We've got a new national biosecurity website that we hope will support the national information effort.

The new three 3D x-ray machines that we've got. And we've just, we are working with a number of Australia's airports to put them what we call in line, in the baggage system. They are world leading technology. And just by the way, they're smart enough that we can teach them to look for illegally important wildlife, and under the CITES Convention. So we're working with our colleagues in the department, in the environment area to stop the importation of threatened species. These are clever machines. We're looking at remote screening. Can we screen luggage before it even goes on the plane to come to Australia? And I mentioned a 100,000 threat items that were found recently, and we're constantly changing our regulation. There's changes in the parliament at the moment to do with cruise ships, for example. And we're also being very transparent about what you can expect from us. So the government, the federal government's increased the fines available to individuals and companies.

So now for an individual it's a 2,000, around A$2,600 fine for bringing something into Australia that threatens our biosecurity. That's up from A$95, in some instances. The fine for a company goes over a million dollars. So we are sending a clear signal about we are serious. And if you transgress, it's going to be awfully expensive. And we're working with highly compliant importers. Some of Australia's biggest companies are deeply committed to biosecurity. And so we're working with them to try and make the process of coming across the border easier, because they're committed to our concern. They're committed to Australia, and we want to reward them for that. And finally, we are reviewing our cost recovery arrangements. As I said, this is a, it's a big system. The federal government's spending more than a billion dollars this year on biosecurity and export biosecurity. So we need to continue to look at how the system's paid for, and we are doing that.

So finally turning to the development of a national biosecurity strategy. And I'll shortly hand to Malcolm. The opportunity there is, as I said, linking all the strategies that are in place at the moment and surfacing those issues that the nation needs to respond to. And those issues tend to be about preparedness response, the movement of data capability and so on. And so we've started the process of consultation to develop the national biosecurity strategy. We're supported by a reference committee of key interested players, including the National Farmer's Federation, other participants in today's forum to guide our thinking about the development of the strategy.

The development of the strategy is a commitment by agriculture ministers through the Agricultural Ministers Forum, and of course shaped by the Commonwealth and states and territories through the national biosecurity committee. We're hoping to generate a consultation draft in around early 2022. So that's a very quick tour through the Commonwealth's approach to biosecurity reform, and Richard I'll hand back to you. Thanks very much.

Richard Morecroft: Well, thank you. Thank you very much, indeed, Andrew, for that look to the future and a real strategic sense at the national perspective. A vision for Australia's biosecurity system and, and how we will get there heading towards 2030, and as Andrew emphasised, there is that need for a business transformation to keep up with the accelerating pace of biosecurity challenges. It's interesting that Andrew also mentioned Northern Australia and the significance of that particular geographical zone, because later this morning, one of our presentations will focus on the latest activities in exactly that part of Australia.

Now don't forget, of course, that there will be chances, or a chance to put questions to Andrew and indeed our next presenter who I'll introduce in a moment, Malcolm Letts, in a short while during our discussion panel. But of course, please send those questions through as soon as you can using the Q and A box. And if the question is for a particular presenter, then perhaps please indicate that when you send it and we will try and make sure that that question is then directed to the right person. Of course, with 1100 registrations for the forum, we may not be able to get to every question, but we will certainly get to as many as we can. So please start those questions coming in whenever you would like to. Now, following on from Andrew Tongue. Our next presentation as has been indicated is from Malcolm Letts, the Director-General and Chief Biosecurity Officer at the Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, looking at the alignment of collective efforts in the context of the priorities for our national biosecurity system. So a warm welcome to Malcolm Letts.

Malcolm Letts: Thanks Richard. And, and thanks for the promotion. I am the Deputy Director-General, but that's fine. Look, I'd also like to start by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we live and work and in particular acknowledge their continuing connection to country and land, waters and culture as being very much a part of how we view the overall system. So acknowledge their ongoing connection and pay our respects to their elders, past, present and emerging. Look, I'd also like to thank Andrew for the introduction. I think the importance of the national biosecurity strategy has been pretty well outlined in the slides that Andrew presented. I'd like to speak a little about what's we are looking to include in that strategy. The fact that I'm the co-chair of the National Biosecurity Committee tells you that the national biosecurity system is very much a shared responsibility and seen as such. I've staff working in Biosecurity Queensland who have been working here for 50 years, plus. People that work in this space as Andrew has indicated, tend to be absolutely dedicated to the protection of our industries and our environment.

I've only been here for a relatively a short time, but in that time, what struck me is the national approach, that's taken to biosecurity a sense of responsibility that the Traditional Owners in the Torres Strait take to protecting the rest of the country from threats and diseases. There's a whole sense of real purpose and ownership that's shared nationally. And I think the national biosecurity strategy has to speak to that.

It's critical that it outlines our priorities and approach across the entire biosecurity system. Pre-border to post-border government, to community national and local. And the intent is that the strategy will build on the existing work to provide a strategic direction for Australia's National Biosecurity system to 2030. With a collective vision, objectives, outcomes, the standard things that you would expect to be in a strategy, but under underpinned by a shared understanding of the operating environment we are facing through to 2030, as Andrew has clearly outlined the threats, just keep going up.

It'll give us some direction and impetus for government to industry and the community to work together, to strengthen Australia's National Biosecurity system. And it's the national system that we are focusing on here. So as Andrew outlined, the Commonwealth has its responsibilities in relation to the border with some very solid legislation. Each of the states and territories takes their responsibilities very seriously in relation to what's happening in their jurisdictions. But there's a national system out there that talks across the whole country.

The role of the Animal Health Australia, Plant Health Australia, the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions, all of those bodies working together with industry ownership is critically important, and there's a diverse range of people and businesses we want to involve in the development of this strategy. Some may not yet see themselves as part of the national biosecurity system and the work that we do and the engagement process hopefully will help them understand that they may be.

We want to set out an approach to ensure all those who will benefit from the system, understand and can actually act upon the responsibilities that they have, and to build a platform for coordinated system reform and investment. So we think there's more that can be done, but we want to hear from all of the people who have a responsibility. And we want to establish an implementation framework, and outline the key focus areas, the priorities, if you like, that we'll be working on in that period of time. We don't want to reinvent the wheel. As I said, one of the things that struck me is that we've got systems in place that no other country in the world does at the national level. And we want to build on those and strengthen them even further.

This is about truly enabling that system to evolve. It needs to be a joined up effort, shared responsibilities, clear priorities, and Australia remains free of the world's worst pests at this stage. We want to keep it that way. And we want the system that we support and we invest in to do that. The strategy will build on all of the strategies we have. So each of the states and territories, the Commonwealth have a strategy. We want this to build on those. And as I say, have that focus at the national level, at a national system level. So next slide. Thanks.

So the strategy offers a platform to build a common understanding about the threat environment we're currently facing and together with the strategic and operating model, we need to address that. So that common understanding is the key piece. To address these threats, as well as to harness the available opportunities, the strategy will outline our priorities for the national system. Looking out to 2030, across the whole spectrum. We also need to clearly articulate all of our roles and responsibilities within the system, recognising that all of us are participants and beneficiaries of good biosecurity, and it needs to cover our risk management systems and arrangements for our changing environment, as well as the sustainable system funding models into the future. So there's a whole range of other policies, and our considerations that we need to build into this COVID is obviously, as Andrew's already outlined, provided us with a platform to raise awareness in relation to the importance of good preparedness and surveillance in the front end of that system. Thank you.

So input from our stakeholders in shaping the national biosecurity strategy is critical. Our future direction needs to reflect the whole of system approach. And we've commenced working with our representative reference group to develop the national strategy, and have also commenced wider consultation. It'll be a combination of national and state engagement activities. So each of the states and territories are currently looking at how they can engage with key stakeholders around the national biosecurity strategy. Given the delivery timeframes we're talking about and existing pressures and other consultations in the way, our engagement approach will be flexible and adaptable as the development of the strategy progresses. We'll be taking a phased approach, building, testing, refining key concepts for inclusion in the strategy in the coming months.

We want to ensure that everyone has a voice and an opportunity to contribute particularly to accommodate input from different parties, during COVID-19. We also will look to leverage existing forums and avenues to ensure a broad reach. So recently, Andrew and I spoke at the West Australian Forum, for example. So there will be opportunities arising over the coming months for more of that to happen. Our aim is to have an early consultation draught in early next year, with further engagement to continue to develop and refine the strategy throughout next year. Thank you.

So we've already generated some key themes to help just guide the consultation. These aren't necessarily going to be the priorities that the strategy ends up with, but we are thinking that there's some subject areas that will be helpful in relations to guiding the discussions that we're having.

The first of those is around responsibility. How can we increase awareness and actions around shared responsibility to strengthen the biosecurity system? This is something that is critically important. We've had policy changes and legislative changes over recent years across Australia, around the shared responsibility, but how far out into community, into industry and other stakeholders has that understanding provided partnerships? How can we build, expand, and better coordinate in a partnership approach across government industry and community? So looking at how those partnerships work, and in some areas, this is new work. We are having the first set of conversations around what those partnerships look like. So we are learning as we go across all of the jurisdictions, how do we actually improve that and make it stronger?

How can we collectively lift our national preparedness and response resilience? So doing investing more in that side of the invasion curve, one of the challenges that we have is from a policy point of view, we know it works from a return on investment point of view. We know it works. It's hard to conceptualise that there's lots of votes in that area, unfortunately, in the broader community. So, that's something we need to do some more work on. Skills and capabilities are critical obviously to the future. We know already that there's a shortage of vets and plant pathologists and a range of other capabilities that are critical to a good national biosecurity system. So how do we actually take some action in to address those skill shortages, those capability shortages, at a national level. Thank you.

So, there's a... Yeah, just go back a slide, sorry. Sorry, there's a few other areas around technology. I think that we also want to focus on the diagnostics piece. There's a fantastic piece of work happening around high throughput sequencing. For example, genetic sequencing. We've seen the benefits of that at a national level over the pandemic, the importance of being able to trace is really added to, by that genetic sequencing capability. Data and analytics at a national level, data sharing, knowing where the hitchhiker risks are at any particular point in time, we can increase surveillance and do more work.

More research going forward into what those, or understanding what the research priorities are into the future and understanding what our investment models are and to... I go forward. So encourage everyone to take some time to think about those areas, and to consider how we can build our capability capacity across all stakeholders, all organisations, all parts of the community and industry going forward. Thank you. Next slide. Thanks.

Next slide, thanks. Yeah. So some of the early feedback we've had from stakeholders, and this is very early work, we have a reference group, as Andrew's mentioned, is that there's a recognition of the importance of a national biosecurity strategy and a real keenness to be involved in its development. There's a strong view that the journey is actually as important as the strategy itself. So having the conversation, engaging with people is critically important and allowing enough time for that to happen in a meaningful way.

Stakeholders would like to see the strategy set out areas that we will focus on nationally to help guide our work together and not just the work that governments are doing in each of the jurisdictions. And it needs to be supported by all stakeholders, seeing themselves as part of it. There's a strong desire for a strategy that can be implemented and delivered on. So something that's tangible, something that's pragmatic, something that will actually be deliverable. And we've had reviews recently, the Craig review of IGAB identified some really clear areas that we can invest more in. So we need to be focusing on some of those outcomes of those sorts of reviews in terms of having a pragmatic set of priorities.

I'd like to see more cohesion nationally and better information sharing at a national level, recognising that the world and environment is changing fast, as I said right at the start. And we need to be working hard to keep ahead of the game. And some system funding at a national level. So the national systems is one of the things that Wendy Craig in her review identified that we invest a lot of time and effort in research around biosecurity at a regional, at a property and at a paddock scale to protect ourselves from the established pests and diseases out there. What are we doing about the national systems and how they operate together? Thanks.

So here's your opportunity. How can you be involved? Andrew mentioned it earlier and I'll mention it again. You can go to the "have your say" page to say with us what you think about our national biosecurity strategy and what it needs to focus on. You can also register your interest in receiving updates or being contacted about the strategy on the "have your say" page. If you have an upcoming event or a forum such as the Western Australian forum, we can come along and speak at it and engage with the participants in that forum. Or you can also contact the national biosecurity strategy team at that email address that's on that slide. Thanks very much, Richard.

Richard Morecroft: Well, thank you very much indeed, Malcolm. It was really fascinating to hear about the importance of a collective approach, the involvement of all stakeholders as you were emphasising and that real sense of a shared responsibility in facing the task ahead. So thank you very much, indeed. So this is the first opportunity today for you to engage with our speakers about the focus of these strategies to support our biosecurity efforts into the future. As well as Andrew and Malcolm, joining the panel today this morning will be Michelle McKinlay, the industry strategy manager of the Australian Banana Growers' Council, that's of course, the national peak body of the banana industry, and also Dr. Andy Sheppard, who is a research director at CSIRO and who's currently working with the department to support the strategic research partnership with CSIRO.

So welcome to all of our panellists who are with us now. And I'll start with one of the questions that's come through from our viewers and registrants. And it's a question for all panellists. And the question is very simply, do we have a definition for a sense of shared responsibility, which has been part of what's being discussed? Maybe if we can run through each panellist, first of all, and just get that sense of what their perspective understanding maybe even aspiration for shared responsibility boils down to. And Andrew, if I can start with you.

Andrew Tongue: Thanks very much, Richard. For me, Australia is a fragile continent. We've grown our food for 60 million people, and we have an average of three centimetres of soil, and it's the driest continent on earth, and it's got unique natural environments and it's fragile and we've taken it for granted for too long. And so biosecurity is about protecting what we love and I think all Australians love our country. So for me, the sense of shared responsibility is about protecting livelihoods, protecting environments, protecting country in whatever form that country comes. And why is it a shared responsibility? Because my actions have a consequence for you. My decision to try and smuggle something across the border has a consequence for farming families or for threatened species. And so it is a shared enterprise. Together, we can protect our continent. Apart, it will just get all the pests and diseases that the rest of the world has, and we will lose precious, precious things. Thanks, Richard.

Richard Morecroft: Michelle McKinlay. First of all, can I very warmly welcome you and bring you straight into the discussion. And of course, as I've explained, you are very much involved with a very specific area of focus and industry with the banana industry. So I'm sure there is very particular responsibility, but from the viewpoint of your industry, what does that idea of shared responsibility mean to you? And what do you hope perhaps people will take up in terms of the way in which they apply it to your industry?

Michelle McKinlay: I guess the banana industry, it's multifaceted, I guess. So it means that growers have a role to play in keeping pests and diseases off their farm and so that's about installing biosecurity measures on their farm and not relying on local government inspectors and surveillance workers to be finding pests. We want to have something on farm to protect that before the pests arrive and to keep them off. But it's also about, I think, just generally people understanding that they have a role in biosecurity and Andrew did touch on that, I think Malcolm did as well in their presentations. So it's at differing levels that we have that shared responsibility and each player in the system understanding what their role is and what their responsibility is. And we are going through that education process now with banana growers, as we are transitioning the leadership of the TR4 programme from government to industry. So we are really embracing that shared leadership and shared responsibility. And it's tricky too. It's a great concept, it's one I believe in, but to make it actually happen on the ground is tricky.

Richard Morecroft: Malcolm, your response to that question, which we've been sent in, which actually asks for what is the panel's definition of shared responsibility? Is that understanding indeed something that we also need to share as well as the broader responsibility?

Malcolm Letts: I think it absolutely is, Richard. I think it's a really good question and it goes to that level of awareness of the importance of everyone sharing this responsibility and the Panama TR4 example that Michelle's speaking to is a very good one in that, even the people who are reading the electricity metres and the water metres and going onto farms have a responsibility not to pick the fungus up and take it to the next farm when they go and read that metre. So that's how broadly this responsibility needs to be owned and understood across the community. I think it is a sharing of responsibilities across government industry and community. And we know there are lots of community people who have a passion for biosecurity, particularly in the environmental space where there's no clear, identifiable, if you like stakeholders, it's a broad community responsibility, the type that's on there.

Each of the states and territories generally in the new legislation that's either been recently introduced in the last five years or so, or is being drafted at the moment, have a general biosecurity obligation within their definitions. And so there's a clear legal definition if you like, of the shared responsibility in that legislation. And that says to everyone that if you knowingly do something that is counter to a biosecurity intent, then you are liable to some level of prosecution. So that's at its black and white legal form, but I would like to think of it more as a value that we hold across industry and community in relation to understanding that everyone has a role to play in terms of protecting our industries and our environment. Thanks Richard.

Richard Morecroft: Dr. Andy Sheppard, let me bring you into the discussion now. And again, a very warm welcome to you. Thank you for joining us. We've heard a couple of different perspectives on that sense of shared responsibility, what's your take?

Dr Andy Sheppard: Well, thank you, Richard. The definition of shared responsibility as being... it's a bit of a worry that we're still trying to understand the definition when it's a concept that's been around since the mid-nineties. And we had to look at it in the context of writing the recent CSIRO biosecurity futures report. And I think the way we interpreted it is; there is the legal definition as Malcolm rightly referred to, but it's got to be a bottom up as well as the top down process. And that we need to respect the role that each of the stakeholder groups in the national biosecurity system plays and the importance they bring to it and use that as a way of empowering the different players in the biosecurity system to provide that shared responsibility. And I think one of the groups that we've been a bit negligent around are Indigenous Australians as the biggest custodians of the land in Australia, in the degree to which we need to bring them into and recognise their values and the role they can play in the biosecurity system in the context of shared responsibility. Thank you.

Richard Morecroft: Thank you very much, Andy. Now, moving on to another question that has come in, and this is actually a question which has been directed specifically to Andrew and Malcolm. So I'll just read it out. We seem to be pretty good at keeping pests and diseases out, do we spend enough attention on those which get in? And the questioner refers to Andrew mentioning fall armyworm, and there's also, the questioner asks, Ehrlichiosis. So how do you respond, maybe first of all, Andrew, to the pests that actually do get in?

Andrew Tongue: So we do spend a lot as a nation on pests that get in. The judgement about whether something can be eradicated or not, or do we just try and manage it, requires an awful lot of science and we've got, sadly, well-practiced arrangements with scientists at a national estate and territory level working out how we respond. I think Malcolm mentioned earlier, the invasion curve. And a dollar spent on prevention can save us $30 spent in response. That's the kind of ratio of expense here. States and territories say to me, and I'll leave Malcolm to go into detail, that they're dealing with more every year and that expenditure is going up. Look at South Australia and the amount it's spending say on fruit fly. I've mentioned red imported fire ants, fall armyworm, we're looking at control techniques there.

So as a nation, I think we've got a bit of a choice. If we aren't responsive early enough, we'll be dealing on a wider scale with more. If we are responsive earlier, we'll be able to cauterise and contain. And nationally, we are spending hundreds of millions across jurisdictions and industry. And individual producers, Honey Bee has released some data about the cost to individual producers of managing pests and diseases is in the thousands for every single producer. So I think in the development of the national biosecurity strategy, we probably need to reveal some of that economics and pose the question. Give you one Commonwealth example, the most northerly fly trap in Australia sits on a mango tree on Saibai Island. And to maintain it, we have to maintain staff, Torres Strait Islander staff and Thursday Island and Saibai Island. We have to fund helicopters and planes and ships and all sorts of things. It still gives us $30 back for every dollar we spend on it. So a dose of prevention is better than a whole lot of money spent on cure. Malcolm, your view?

Malcolm Letts: Yeah. Thanks Andrew. You mentioned the role industry has to play in the cost to industry of established pests and diseases, and it's immense. And the industry knows that better than anyone and I'm sure there's plenty of people on the line that will attest to that. And for that reason, industry has been willing to sign up to the deeds, Animal Health Australia, Plant Health Australia, are the custodians of the deeds and they are willing to... They understand the importance of what Andrew's just been saying in terms of investing in that earlier response, getting on top, getting something eradicated if possible, but there's always those things that are mentioned, for example, in the question itself around things like fall armyworm, Panama TR4 is another example, where we knew very early that it wasn't possible to eradicate. However, we have worked very closely with the banana growers. They've been a fantastic industry in terms of taking leadership around containment, and we've been more successful than any other country in the world in relation to containing the spread of the disease.

So we do some things very well, we work very hard on an ongoing basis in containing cattle ticks, for example, in Queensland. So there's a lot of work that happens in this space, but it is very much something that we are alert to in terms of the ongoing cost. And we have that concept of transition to management, where something's not able to be eradicated and we work through the process that we're currently working through very carefully with the banana growers.

Richard Morecroft: Andy, I can see that you want to make a contribution to this.

Dr Andy Sheppard: Well, thank you, Richard. I think what the fall armyworm example really tells us is, it demonstrates that prevention doesn't work all the time. There will be pests and certain diseases that we will not be able to prevent from arriving in Australia. And so while yes, prevention investments at the front end of the invasion curve are critically important, they cannot replace preparedness and preparedness in many ways is more important than prevention because we know that these things will come. And in the case of fall armyworm, we were well aware of fall armyworm's potential to arrive in Australia. We almost predicted it to the day. Not only did we know when it was going to arrive, we knew the genotypes that were going to arrive. So we knew what kind of crops to look on to find them. And we were ready with all of the work that we've done on managing similar pests in Australia in the cotton industry to have systems in place to be able to manage the pests once it arrives. And that to me is real state-of-the-art preparedness. So there's a great message in this story. Thank you.

Richard Morecroft: Thank you, Andy. And actually, Michelle, if I can bring you in here, we've been talking in some general terms, but we've also been mentioning very specific examples. And of course the banana industry is currently managing a very specific biosecurity challenge, the challenge of tropical race four, TR4. What are some of the lessons that you think are coming out of that, that also perhaps might be relevant to our national biosecurity strategy?

Michelle McKinlay: For me, the number one learning from this, I guess, is that it's really complicated. It takes time and it takes goodwill and it takes investment. And I'm hopeful that the strategy will help set those really strategic parameters to allow responses to sort of occur within it. Everyone has a role to play, obviously, it's shared responsibility, and we need to make sure that those roles are really visible in the strategy because it is part of this transition. That's one of the key things that we are working on, is it's part of the transition, what responsibilities will sit with government and what responsibilities will sit with industry? So, there are lots of lessons and I'm sure at the end of all of this, we'll be able to provide industry more broadly with our experience and our story to try and help shortcut that journey for other industries.

But I think what's really critical as well is industry being prepared before you have the need for a response. So that's about growers understanding their biosecurity at that farm level, at an industry level, understanding what needs to happen as far as being prepared, having that sort of corporate governance in place so that you can activate quite quickly. And I think the other thing that's really important, which again, I hope the strategy will help to achieve is allowing the different stakeholders, the government and the industry and the environment supply chain to know who's who in the zoo. And that can happen in peace time so that when you go into war time, you've got those relationships because it's the relationships that will really see you through in the really hard times.

Richard Morecroft: Yes. Thank you, Michelle. And it's interesting to hear you emphasise the importance of preparedness and exactly that focus is where we are going to be turning in our next major session of this morning; preparedness and the steps that that need to be taken. But we are having more questions coming in and I will just turn and read another question, which has come in specifically directed to Andrew and Malcolm. The question is, the USA has similar biosecurity threats to those that we face, including plant pests and animal diseases, such as ASF and FMD. What level of interaction do we have with the USA with respect to overall strategy and sharing of data in particular, adoption of new technologies for detection, diagnosis, and treatments such as vaccines?

Andrew Tongue: So from a Commonwealth perspective, I point you to the work that the people we call the chiefs do. The chief vet, the Chief Plant Protection Officer, and the Chief Environmental Biosecurity Officer. So Mark Schipp, Gabrielle Vivian-Smith, and Robyn Cleland are constantly engaged in international forum through the OIE, the world organisation for animal welfare or through the FAO or various plant protection organisations or environmental biosecurity organisations. So we're constantly interacting. And for example, the United States has just appointed a new chief vet and Mark Schipp has been interacting with the chief vet and U.S. counterparts. We're also interacting with international counterparts in agricultural trade discussions daily. And my department has staff stationed all around the world, including in the U.S. interacting with counterparts on trade and biosecurity and other agricultural issues. So I'd say we are well engaged.

In an area, say in the management of khapra beetle I would say we probably know more about the khapra beetle than any other country in the world, frankly, as a plant pest. But there's more to go and get, and we've got counterparts from New Zealand online, and we meet our counterparts from New Zealand regularly and some of the new technology we're trialling, we're trialling with our New Zealand counterparts and learning from their experience. Can we do more? Yes. And that's why in Commonwealth biosecurity strategy we're anticipating being more engaged. Not exclusively in the Indo-Pacific region, more broadly, internationally. And in relation to the U.S. the U.S. has similar but different problems. It's got land borders to the north and the south and it's not like us, it doesn't have a great moat around it. And so, in global terms, Australia and New Zealand are standouts, we go together, but we learned from it. And Latin America, for example, has a lot to teach us. Thanks, Richard.

Richard Morecroft: Malcolm, would you like to follow up?

Malcolm Letts: Yeah. Thanks Richard. I guess just following on a bit from Andrew's comment there in relation to the emphasis that the U.S. plays. My sense is that they are doing much more at a farm and paddock scale. So they don't have the same approach to eradication, for example, that we and New Zealand have, so that's one area.

The other thing that I would say is there's enormous collaboration at the academic level and with organisations like CSIRO. So the researchers are collaborating all the time. So there's the governments and the roles the governments play, but the researchers are always talking and collaborating.

And so we've done some work recently around, for example, white spot genetic sequencing, and there was enormous collaboration in that work across looking at what was happening across the world. We collaborate on an ongoing basis around red imported fire ants which they have widespread outbreak in the U.S. So we're constantly seeking information and input from them in relation to what they've learned about controlling that pest in the USA.

So there's a whole range of different... and it speaks to this concept of partnership as well so recognising that it's not all down to government, so industry and the academic sector, the universities and others are doing this collaboration as well.

Richard Morecroft: Well, from a question about the very large area of the United States and our relationship with them. Our next question that's come in deals with smaller entities and the questioner asks, "Naively, it would seem that local councils could play a role, one, in general surveillance, and two, building and sustaining the social licence that might be useful for the regulatory activities undertaken by the biosecurity system. What role can local councils play in developing the national biosecurity strategy and through what mechanisms?" I thought I'd bring you back in, Andy, if I could, perhaps just to start the ball rolling on that?

Dr Andy Sheppard: So, as I mentioned earlier, we developed on a biosecurity futures report, we look very closely at the need and the role of community. And I think the national strategy and the development of the national strategy does provide an excellent vehicle for engaging at all levels in the community. And empowering, as I mentioned, right down to the local councils to get involved and have a role to play, both in their states and then through their states into the national effort. So I think again, the national biosecurity strategy development and the journey we'll be on will be an excellent vehicle to allow them to engage.

Richard Morecroft: Andrew, would you like to pick up on that local council role as well a little?

Andrew Tongue: Yes. And thanks, Richard. And I think Andy's right, as we try and imagine development of defence in depth, from the point of origin of a pest or disease, be it Southeast Asia or Africa, on the journey to Australia, perhaps on a ship, in a plane, in cargo somehow, on the winds, on the currents, all the way through to its established in Australia and its resident somewhere, the challenge is early identification. And so who are our natural partners? In many areas, it's rural councils. In some areas Andy's made the point about Traditional Owners, Traditional Custodians of land, particularly in Northern Australia where we just don't have workforce or a dense population.

So I think it's a good point. Local councils are natural partners and local council is heavily involved in groups like Landcare, for example. And so, mobilising all the system resources, I think it's a fair point, I think it's a good point to make. Thank you.

Richard Morecroft: Michelle, if I can bring you in briefly, in your industry or for your industry in particular, is there a sense of that local council involvement at any practical level that you might want to comment on?

Michelle McKinlay: For our specific instance with TR4 in North Queensland, the Cassowary Coast Council has been very supportive. We brief them regularly on where we're at, where the response is at, and they are very keen to be of help where they can be. So for me, there's a lot of parallels between the role of industry and local government because it's where the rubber hits the road. So as far as surveillance and trying to... Well just having that really important role in preparedness, yeah, it's quite critical.

Richard Morecroft: Thank you. And we've of course heard about this interaction with local councils, but our next question touches on interactions with some other bodies. And the question is, "Could the panel comment on any strategies towards research and scientific training?" The question asks, "I can see that the CSIRO is rightly involved, however I was wondering about the potential role of universities and university collaboration with industry. Are there any plans in this area?" Can I kick off with you, Andrew?

Andrew Tongue: Thank you, Richard. So my department is forming a range of strategic partnerships. We have one, of course, with CSIRO, but we've also got one with Charles Sturt Uni. We're working very closely with the University of Canberra in the development of environmental DNA technology, and we're looking for more partnerships. Of course, we have a crucial partnership with the University of Melbourne and CEBRA, Centre of Excellence in Biosecurity Research and Analytics, and CEBRA brings that unique capability around actuarial work.

Can we do more? Yes, I think we do need to do more. Thinking about the tropics, James Cook University, Charles Darwin University, thinking about remote communities in that context. I know my state counterparts are involved in funding and supporting numerous research institutes and facilities. The National Biosecurity Committee's been doing some work about critical national infrastructure in biosecurity. And the list is quite a long one, unsurprisingly, because we've been at this for a while as a nation.

I think in the development of the strategy, engaging as many researchers as possible. And the key thing there is workforce in the future. And the changing technologies that we're bringing to science is changing how scientists are working and how they work within the system. So I think incredibly important. Thanks, Richard.

Richard Morecroft: And Malcolm, can you follow up on that a little, that importance of the university connection?

Malcolm Letts: Yeah, it is critically important, Richard, and we have a close working relationship in Queensland with the key universities, including the University of Queensland and the Alliance of Agriculture and Food Innovation. But the point I wanted to make here around the university involvement might be in some areas that we traditionally don't think about the collaboration with the universities, and I'm going to go specifically to the areas of social science.

So we talked a lot about concept of shared responsibility at the start, we talked a lot about the concept of awareness levels and those sorts of things. We are doing some more work, there's been an up surge in work around the behavioural science space over the last few years. I think we can do a lot more with universities in that space, I think we can reach out to universities who have much better expertise than we do in that space and do a lot more collaboration.

Richard Morecroft: And Andy, of course, the CSIRO was specifically mentioned in the question, but what's your perspective on the university connection?

Dr Andy Sheppard: Look, thank you, Richard. I think I'd say that CSIRO believes its role is more than just being involved. I think we have a national leadership role, we have a very strong long term tradition in working in biosecurity. Some of the first scientists ever employed by CSIRO worked in the biosecurity space. And I think our role is one of national leadership.

And there are two mechanisms by which we're trying to achieve that. The first is we're very involved in centres like the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions which connects together the innovation system around biosecurity across the environmental and post border management of pests and weeds. And through that, we have many interactions with universities, both within Australia and overseas.

But also as part of CSIRO's missions programme, we're in the process of building a biosecurity mission. The purpose of which is to bring everybody together around a shared journey to be able to undertake our researched innovation at scales we've never done before to be able to support both the strategy and where we need the national biosecurity system to be in 10 years' time.

Richard Morecroft: Thank you. Now, Malcolm, there's a very specific question that's come in for you. We've been talking about some very general issues, but the question is, "What is in place for the extensive canine sector within Australia?".

Malcolm Letts: Thanks, Richard. I'm not sure why that's a question specifically for me, but I did see the question and I was a little bit interested in what that meant in terms of the extensive canine sector. I'm assuming we're talking feral dogs or wild dogs in that space, and if we are, then there is a lot of work that's been done in this space in most jurisdictions that have dogs as a problem. But most of that, because it's an established pest issue, is done in partnership with industry and with local government. And there was an earlier question around the role of local government and local government have a big role to play in most jurisdictions in the area of established pests.

So we work very closely with... We have a land protection fund in Queensland that funds, for example, the barrier fence, which is a very extensive over 2,000 kilometre fence that goes across Southern Queensland. The Queensland government's been providing grant assistance to farmers on a dollar for dollar basis for exclusion fencing. We have historically provided 1080 to local government to facilitate and coordinate. We are working with the National Wild Dog Coordinator and we have just released our own wild dog strategy in Queensland.

So there's a lot happening in the space, but it is an ongoing problem that will require ongoing effort to manage. But it is an interesting question in relation to it's one of those problems that requires coordinated effort. So there's little use in an individual grower doing everything they can to control dogs on their property if the neighbours aren't also working together to do the same thing. So that's where exclusion fencing comes in, but there's a range of other things that we are doing as well.

Richard Morecroft: Thank you. And again, now going from that specific area to perhaps a much broader one, Andrew, that I'll direct to you. How will the National Biosecurity Strategy intersect with the Commonwealth 2030 roadmap?

Andrew Tongue: So national doesn't necessarily mean Commonwealth. And as we've talked, I think we've all been creating that sense of national is about all of us. And so, we see the Commonwealth roadmap being about us being best we can be at and before the border, and then setting groundwork for how we relate to states and territories, industry, the community, I'll use the term behind the border.

And so I see the National Biosecurity Strategy is pitching to all of us, whereas the Commonwealth strategy is basically saying, "Here's what we are going to bring." And of course with that foundational $400 million investment by the federal government, we know we need to do and be better, and we're on that journey.

And I think for the National Biosecurity Strategy, really what's come out for me in the conversation is lots of good ideas from people online and a willingness of everybody that's talking to engage and try and find a way forward. So I think we've got a stake in the ground, there are states and territory strategies, they've got a stake in the ground, but what collectively do we think we're all going to agree on and take forward? That's how I think they relate, Richard.

Richard Morecroft: Thank you very much. Now, turning to another question which has come in. "It's evident that partnerships and ongoing engagement with stakeholders, not traditionally included in biosecurity discussions, will be critical in delivering transformational change in the decade of biosecurity. Is consistency in communication foreseen as a potential challenge to ensure that we are all..." As they put it in the question here, "Singing from the same song sheet?" Malcolm, can I get you to start on this one? How important is that consistency of messaging?

Malcolm Letts: It's absolutely critically important, Richard, and it's a really good question. Underneath the National Biosecurity Committee, we have our National Biosecurity Communication and Engagement Network which seeks to try and get much better coordination around that messaging.

And in fact, AHA, PHA, are all part of that process as well. We seek to make sure that, at a range of different levels, that messaging is consistent because it's important in a response or in that space to be absolutely on the same page. But it's actually important through the development and transitions we've been talking about in relation to people understanding the roles that they play going forward, that we do have that consistent messaging going forward.

And each state and territory has a very different system in place in relation to the way that they build their capability for biosecurity, but we can still speak the same language, and we largely do across industry and the jurisdictions in terms of what we do. So we are putting effort into it, and it's not to say we can't do more, but certainly that's what's happening at the moment.

Richard Morecroft: Michelle, I'd like to come to you next from the point of view of a very specific industry. What's your take on that consistency of message and the importance of it?

Michelle McKinlay: I agree with what Malcolm has said around consistency being critical. I guess I just wanted to flag that sometimes the message needs to be delivered in a different way, depending upon who the audience is. And I think sometimes that nuance gets lost. So whoever's got the message to communicate just needs to sort of keep that in mind so you can be consistent yet still delivered in a different way so that it reaches your target audience.

Richard Morecroft: Thank you. Now, there is another question that's come in for you, Andrew, which refers to you. It said, "Andrew mentioned the importance of Northern Australia, with respect to biosecurity threats entering our country. Another area of Australia that presents a major risk is the peri-urban area. Could you comment on how important you think the peri-urban risks are and how they might be addressed in the national strategy?".

Andrew Tongue: So, peri-urban Australia's a fascinating area because you get lots of family pets and plants in backyards. And if you look at South Australia's efforts in managing the fruit fly, I would argue the peri-urban area has been a challenge for colleagues in South Australia.

We certainly worry about peri-urban Australia and travellers. So when we intersect poorly cooked pork products at airports, we worry about those products finding their way to peri-urban Australia, finding their way into the waste stream, and then being, say, fed to, for example, pigs.

I think one of the areas that would be good to have a conversation about in the development of the National Biosecurity Strategy is what I'll call area-based planning. That area could be a peri-urban area, it could be a port, it could be an agricultural region. But I have a question in my mind about are we doing enough planning there? And as Australia's opening up, the news today is travel's exploding again, people are going to want to be moving, and if they're moving into peri-urban Australia, are they bringing threat items with them?

Traditionally, we've viewed that as, well, you know it's principally a state responsibility. I think that's probably not enough and engaging people living in peri-urban Australia about their responsibilities, just highlighting the fact that their decisions have an impact on the region around them where agricultural production is underway, or in some peri-urban areas, they butt up against national parks.

And so people move to peri-urban areas, principally, for lifestyle reasons. They're on the risk of destroying the very reason they live there. So I do think there's a point of communication engagement there and I think it relates in part to local councils, the point that somebody online made earlier. Thanks, Richard.

Richard Morecroft: Thank you very much. Now, from that big perspective to the very specific, we have a question that's come in from Luke Bowen, and Luke asks, as he says, a very practical question. "To what depth has our scenario planning or assessments gone? For example, on Monday, October the 25th, there were less than 500,000.308 calibre rounds available nationally. An ASF outbreak would take this supply out in the first few hours." So it is indeed a very practical question. Would anyone specifically like to address it, or can I throw that to you first, Malcolm?

Malcolm Letts: Yeah, thanks for that, Richard. I don't have a ready answer for Luke, but I can say that those sorts of questions are exactly the sorts of things that we would be looking at, not necessarily as part of the National Biosecurity Strategy specifically, but the National Biosecurity Strategy needs to be covering off the contingencies, the preparedness work that we're doing, the exercise planning that we're doing actually does identify those sorts of questions and make sure that all of the elements that need to be incorporated in that space are incorporated.

We have run multiple exercises nationally over a long period of time, recently Exercise Razorback, but prior to that foot and mouth disease exercises and others, and in those exercises, the need for all of those sorts of things are considered. But Luke's identified that there's a issue there at the moment. I would hope the National Biosecurity Strategy identifies that that preparedness planning, the work that we do in exercises actually identifies all the elements that are required in a response.

Richard Morecroft: Well, in many ways that's a very good point to wrap up this discussion because it's gone from the very, very specific and practical to the really genuinely large vision and large strategic approach.

So many thanks indeed to Andrew and Malcolm for their presentations. And also of course, to Michelle and to Andy for joining the panel discussion. And of course, thank you very much indeed to all of you for those questions that came in. There really were some wonderfully interesting questions raised about the practical directions for the future, and some of the challenges of implementing a genuinely national strategy. And that national strategy is going to depend, from what we've been hearing, on a really consistently collective and well-communicated vision and working together to develop each stage of that strategy certainly sounds as though it's going to play a very big part in its success. So a great discussion panel to begin today.

[Session ends]