

Western Australian biosecurity roundtable report

Thank you for attending the 2016 National Biosecurity Committee (NBC) Biosecurity Roundtable (Roundtable) held in Perth, Western Australia on Thursday 9 July 2016.

This event was hosted by the NBC, together with the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources and the Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia. After receiving feedback from stakeholders who attended previous events, a new format for the Roundtables is being trialled this year. There will be one roundtable event held in the capital city of each state/territory. The key themes from each Roundtable will be discussed at the National Forum in Canberra later in the year.

The morning session opened with updates from the state government, federal government and an industry representative, John Shannon from Vegetables WA.

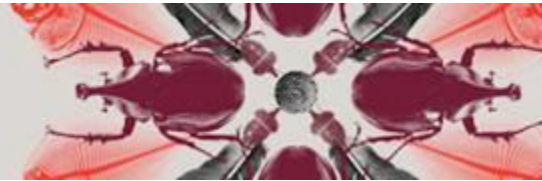
The morning session closed with a question and answer (Q&A) panel, made up of six state government, federal government and industry representatives.

The afternoon session consisted of discussion groups on two key topics 'Shared Responsibility' and 'Community Awareness'. For the Shared Responsibility session, attendees broke up into six smaller discussion groups, then reported their key discussion points back to the group. The group then reconvened for the Community Awareness session and discussed this topic as a whole.

Key themes from the Western Australia event include:

1. *Biosecurity Act 2015*
2. Shared responsibility
3. Surveillance capability, and
4. Communicating the importance of biosecurity to the broader community.

More detail about these themes is included below. The key themes from the other roundtable events will be added to this list and then discussed at the National Forum.



Key themes

1. Biosecurity Act 2015

Some attendees discussed their concerns about a lack of compatibility between the Western Australian *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act* and the new Commonwealth *Biosecurity Act 2015* (which commenced the week after this event). Concerns centred largely on a potential reduction of scope to prevent entry of diseases and pests from overseas and that import conditions would not recognise regional differences.

Commonwealth government representatives stressed that the new legislation contains the same base legislation as the *Quarantine Act 1908*, but in a much more user-friendly way that is outcomes based and easier to administer. Some members of the group expressed a desire to ensure that WA specific import restrictions would be maintained after the commencement of the *Biosecurity Act 2015*. The department reiterated that scientifically based regional differences would continue to be allowed under the new legislation. The group also discussed that it will be difficult to implement a 'One size fits all' piece of legislation when the states are all so different.

2. Shared responsibility

The group discussed the concept of shared responsibility at several times throughout the day. There were some concerns that 'shared responsibility' was code for cost shifting from government to industry. The focus of these concerns were largely around government funding cuts in recent years and that this could mean a transfer of responsibility to industry and the community, which would not be matched by a commitment to compliance. The group also discussed what shared responsibility and engagement should look like. It was discussed how shared responsibility is not just about increased obligations for industry, but can also involve increased benefits and privileges for industry and the scope for industry to have 'a seat at the table'.

3. Surveillance capability

The group discussed the issue of surveillance capability from a number of angles. This included the need to strengthen surveillance capabilities and the benefits of citizen science and reporting. However, the group also raised concerns with relying on the community to 'discover' major incursions, noting there are not many resources to put into community awareness activities. Concern was raised around a lack of adequate monitoring to enable industry to be free from pest and disease. Attendees also raised concerns around the level of technical support from government staff, especially around point of entry surveillance.

4. Communicating the importance of biosecurity to the broader community

The group discussed concerns about people in the broader community not understanding their role in the biosecurity system or taking personal responsibility for biosecurity. Biosecurity can be viewed as someone else's problem. The group also discussed ways to change this perception such as advertising and social media campaigns.