

Plant Health Australia Opening Address

Good morning, Chair and Senators, Sarah Corcoran CEO of Plant Health Australia

Thank you for the opportunity, with me today is Dr Susanna Driessen General Manager Emergency Response and Michael Milne Chief Financial Officer and Company Secretary.

I'd like to open with some background on Plant Health Australia. We were established 23 years ago and have become the trusted co-ordinator of Australia's national plant biosecurity system. We bring together expertise and knowledge of stakeholders to generate solutions that improve biosecurity outcomes and ensure the system is future focused.

Our members are comprised of all major plant industry bodies that represent Australian growers and beekeepers, as well as state and territory governments and the Australian Government.

It was the 1996 'Nairn Review on shared responsibility' that proposed forming a national coordinating body to address plant health priorities in recognition there had been a stronger focus on animal diseases. Co-design between industry and government saw the creation of Plant Health Australia in the year 2000 as a not-for-profit joint venture between government and industry.

We develop and maintain an internationally outstanding plant health system for sustainable and profitable industries and receive annual subscriptions from members to fund activities that benefit all members. We also undertake separately funded projects that increase our capability to respond where the needs are greatest and reflects our focus on strengthening the system for the benefit of the economy, environment, and community. We are a Levy Recipient Body for two statutory levies, the PHA Levy and the Emergency Plant Pest Response (EPPR) Levy both contained in the *Plant Health Australia (Plant Industries) Funding Act 2002*, noting these levies don't attract matched funding.

The PHA Levy is optional, with an increasing number of plant industries using it to invest in biosecurity activities that prepare and protect their industries.

The EPPR Levy funds industries responsibilities under the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD) and allows industries to fund their commitments for eradication activities. This levy is a direct investment by industry and establishes them as key funders of the biosecurity system.

PHA is custodian of the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed an agreement that binds industries and governments to a formal incursion response, sharing the responsibility and costs, based on a pre-agreed assessment of the relative private and public benefits of eradication. The Deed is recognised internationally for the partnership approach and benefits it delivers.

In the last decade our members have jointly invested over \$100 million in the eradication of exotic plant pests. Significant in-kind investment also comes from our member base and has meant Australia remains free of citrus canker, Brown Marmorated Stink Bug, Khapra beetle, exotic fruit flies and *Varroa jacobsoni* closely related to *Varroa destructor* currently under eradication.

In situations where eradication hasn't been possible our members have established better biosecurity outcomes with transition to management arrangements for chestnut blight, Giant Pine Scale, and Tomato Potato Psyllid under the Deed.

Through co-investment and partnerships, we continue to improve policy, practice and performance of our plant biosecurity system and thank you again for today's opportunity to answer questions on PHA and Australia's plant biosecurity.