

Victorian biosecurity roundtable report

Thank you for attending the 2016 National Biosecurity Committee (NBC) Biosecurity Roundtable (Roundtable) held in Melbourne, Victoria on Thursday 23 June 2016.

This event was hosted by the NBC, together with the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR) and the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR) Victoria. 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 Cassandra Meagher, Executive Director, Biosecurity, DEDJTR and Lyn O'Connell, Deputy Secretary, DAWR from the state and federal government, and an industry representative, Tony Beaver from the Food and Beverage Importers Association.

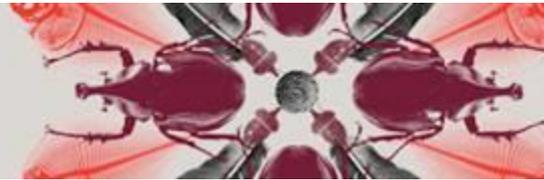
The morning session closed with a question and answer (Q&A) panel, made up of six state government, federal government and industry representatives.

The afternoon session consisted of discussion groups on two key topics 'Market Access' and 'Community Awareness'. For the Market Access session, attendees broke up into 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 Victorian event include:

1. Market access (including traceability and data collection)
2. Shared responsibility, and
3. Community awareness of biosecurity

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. Market access

A recurring topic throughout the day was market access. It was raised that market access is a privilege and we need to guard our access and our reputation carefully. Government, industry and the community all have a duty to protect our market access and help keep it open. It was noted that in order to establish and maintain market access there must first be an industry to provide the product and that care should be taken to avoid incidents that can adversely impact trade.

The group discussed how importing countries often have complex and competing market requirements that must be met. Some attendees expressed concern that market requirements are not always communicated clearly to them, can be subject to interpretation and that a country can change its importing requirements with little notice, which is difficult to plan for. There was also discussion around how these issues could be overcome through harmonisation, empowerment and working towards more simplified interpretation of requirements and better streamlining of processes.

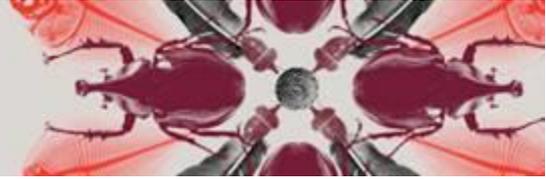
The group discussed how traceability is increasingly important to international trade. Understanding where a product comes from and what chemicals are being used is critical for the Commonwealth when negotiating market access. Underpinning this is the need for a strong system for traceability of both plants and animals.

Data collection and its importance to market access was also discussed. While a paper-based data collection system is more inefficient, to move to an electronic-based system requires a good internet connection and bandwidth, which is not always available. It was discussed how the data currently being collected and the use for which it is collected can vary greatly, posing potential reputational risks.

There was some discussion about the benefits of global harmonisation, (applying consistent standards, tests and basic requirements for each industry), and how it could be used to simplify and streamline our traceability and risk management systems. The difficulty of actually achieving this was acknowledged.

2. Shared Responsibility

The concept of shared responsibility was raised several times throughout the day. There was some discussion about what shared responsibility means and how a better understanding of it might be developed. It was also discussed in the context of market access and how everyone has a responsibility for protecting Australia's reputation with our trading partners. Some attendees were concerned that this term can be code for cost-shifting from government to industry. 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. Community awareness of biosecurity

The group discussed concerns about people in the broader community not understanding their role in the biosecurity system or taking personal responsibility for biosecurity. It was generally agreed that there is a need to generate an increased awareness of biosecurity in the general population. The group discussed ways to achieve this, including advertising and social media campaigns. It was raised that the use of 'hooks' like TV shows (MasterChef or Gardening Australia), Bunnings and school programs might be more successful avenues to get people's attention, rather than core messaging that can leave the community cold. There was also a comment about using awareness campaigns to help inform our trading partners and their customers about Australia's biosecurity status and our quality products.