



Australian Government

Australian Government response to the Rural and
Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee
report:

Adequacy of Australia's biosecurity measures and
response preparedness, in particular with respect to
foot-and mouth disease and varroa mite.

September 2023

Introduction

The Australian Government welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee report: Adequacy of Australia's biosecurity measures and response preparedness, in particular with respect to foot-and mouth disease and varroa mite, tabled on 8 December 2022.

The Australian Government takes very seriously the increasing risk of pest and disease entry into the country as the climate changes and global trade and travel patterns shift. While Australia remains free of foot and mouth disease, the Australian Government is working with other governments, industry and internationally to mitigate the risks to Australia of further spread of the disease and strengthen our collective preparedness and response capability. We will continue to work with other governments and industry on the current eradication response for varroa mite and will consider the views of the Committee as this work progresses.

The Australian Government's response to the report is set out below. The response addresses the recommendations contained in the report and takes into account additional contextual information provided by the Committee subsequent to the report's release in relation to the intent of some recommendations.

Response

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries, publicly report on findings from their investigations into the origin of the varroa mite incursion in the Williamstown area.

Response

The Australian Government **supports in principle** this recommendation.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) agrees increasing public information on the source of the incursion is important for public confidence and informing future actions. As was noted in the inquiry, this work may not be conclusive. Releases of information will also need to have regard to the fact that some specific details of the investigations being led by New South Wales Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) may lead to formal compliance action. DAFF will work with NSW DPI, on appropriate information releases, noting the origin investigations are not limited to the Williamstown area.

Recommendation 2

The committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry review its food import risk frameworks to ensure that they are fit for purpose and that decisions under the frameworks are accelerated where required.

Response

The Australian Government **supports** this recommendation.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry is responsible for assessing the biosecurity risks associated with the import of a range of goods from overseas. Regular reviews are undertaken, and risk analyses may be conducted, in response to new information about biosecurity risks, or to an import proposal. These reviews aim to modernise Australia's biosecurity measures for imported products to reflect the current and future trading environment. They take into account new and relevant peer-reviewed scientific information, international standards, relevant changes in industry practices and operational practicalities.

Recommendation 3

The committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry prioritises the enhancement of screening and assessment systems to facilitate the timely processing of mail and cargo entering Australia.

Response

The Australian Government **supports** this recommendation.

Enhanced biosecurity detection capabilities continue through the deployment and trial of new technology and methods of detection for biosecurity risk material at our airports, air cargo facilities, seaports and mail centres. This enhanced technology is expected to improve the detection of biosecurity risk material when compared to current screening technologies and supports more efficient and accurate assessments on the presence of biosecurity risk material.

Recommendation 4

The committee recommends that the Australian Government consults with freight, shipping, port and biosecurity stakeholders, including Australia Post, to develop priorities for the implementation and funding of new and emerging technologies into mail and cargo biosecurity screening systems.

Response

The Australian Government **supports** this recommendation.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) works with industry and partner agencies, both domestically and internationally, on the identification, development and implementation of new and emerging technologies.

Specifically, DAFF engages regularly with international trade and logistics service providers through its Cargo Consultative Committee to consider practical and strategic measures that ensure effective biosecurity outcomes are delivered without unnecessary impediments to trade.

Recommendation 5

The committee recommends the Australian Government, in partnership with industry and state and territory governments, commits to long-term and sustainable funding to the National Bee Pest Surveillance Program.

Response

The Australian Government **supports in principle** this recommendation.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) recognises the importance of a sustainable funding model for ensuring the delivery of biosecurity outcomes. DAFF has funded Plant Health Australia to develop a national plant health surveillance co-investment model as part of its scoping of a Nationally Integrated Surveillance System for Plant Pests (NISSPP), and will support the implementation of the NISSPP, once finalised.

The Government also supports Rural Research and Development Corporations (RDCs) with matched expenditure on eligible research and development. RDCs such as Hort Innovation are also funding programs in relation to bee pest surveillance.

Recommendation 6

The committee recommends that the Australian Government reviews the balance between sentinel hives and bait hives as part of the National Bee Pest Surveillance Program.

Response

The Australian Government **supports in principle** this recommendation.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has funded Plant Health Australia (PHA) to develop a national plant health surveillance co-investment model as part of its scoping of a Nationally Integrated Surveillance System for Plant Pests (NISSPP). The government will consider the implementation of the NISSPP, once finalised.

Governments are also considering how the current varroa response experience can help inform future surveillance programs noting that all national cost-shared responses under the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD) must undertake an after-action review led by PHA and involving both government and industry parties. The outcomes of the review and the response itself will be used to inform the National Bee Pest Surveillance Program.

Recommendation 7

The committee recommends the Australian Government, in partnership with other stakeholders, ensures that adequate funding is provided to the National Bee Biosecurity Program.

Response

The Australian Government **supports in principle** this recommendation.

The Australian Government recognises the importance of a sustainable funding model for the National Bee Biosecurity Program (NBBP) to ensure the delivery of program outcomes. The NBBP is an industry and government collaborative partnership: Plant Health Australia (PHA) provides national management and governance, the honey bee industry provides funding and resources via a honey levy, and state and territory governments deliver activities and provide regulatory support which includes significant in-kind and financial support.

The responsibility of maintaining the NBBP lies mainly with the state and territory governments as the program focuses largely on management of established bee pests and diseases to maintain the sustainability and viability of Australia's honey bee industry.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) has recently committed additional funding to enhance the bee biosecurity awareness activities undertaken by PHA through the NBBP, over the next two years, and will continue to consider opportunities in the future for enhancing the program's effectiveness.

Recommendation 8

The committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry coordinate a national response to control and manage feral and invasive species to safeguard Australia's biodiversity and environmental biosecurity.

Response

The Australian Government **supports** this recommendation.

Established pest and weed management is a shared responsibility between landholders, community, industry and governments, noting it is primarily the responsibility of state and territory governments and landholders. The Environment and Invasives Committee, a sectoral committee supporting the National Biosecurity Committee, provides national policy leadership on the identification, prevention and management of invasive species and facilitates collaboration across all levels of government.

The Australian Government, including both the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), supports a range of work and provides funding to assist state and territory governments, natural resource management groups, Traditional Owners and land managers to effectively manage established invasive species in Australia. These include the National Landcare Program, National Environmental Science Program, Established Pest Animals and Weeds Program and other grant programs. Established Pest Animals and Weeds programs have committed nearly \$160 million since 2015.

DAFF also supports national efforts to control and manage feral and invasive species through:

- the Chief Environmental Biosecurity Officer role;
- the development of a new National Established Weed Priorities (NEWP) Framework that aims to revitalise weeds management in Australia. It will allow for new Weeds of National Significance to be declared and introduces Weed Issues of National Significance; and
- funding to support coordinated national action on priority pest animals including wild dogs; feral pigs, cats and deer; and foxes (2022-23). This investment includes assistance for:
 - the upskilling of landowners through training and communication;
 - strengthening collaboration to increase the effectiveness of control actions across land tenures;
 - adoption of technologies and best practice; and
 - collection and sharing of information to measure outcomes.

National action plans for wild dog, feral pigs and feral deer have strong stakeholder involvement and co-investment.

Recommendation 9

The committee recommends that Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia broaden their consultations to include all stakeholders from across the supply chain, including transport and livestock transport industries and the retail sector.

Response

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) notes Animal Health Australia (AHA) and Plant Health Australia (PHA) are independent national bodies that are jointly funded by the Australian Government, state and territory government and industry members. AHA and PHA have extensive existing consultation mechanisms, and DAFF will work with them to encourage broader enabling dialogue with stakeholders across the supply chain, including through national preparedness and response exercises. DAFF notes that stakeholders from supply chain sectors are currently not members of AHA and PHA and do not contribute to their operating costs.

Recommendation 10

The committee recommends that the Australian Government work with agencies and industry bodies to ensure appropriate governance and reporting structures are in place to ensure that recommendations arising from simulations and exercises are implemented in a timely way.

Response

The Australian Government **supports** this recommendation.

Collaboration on the implementation of biosecurity exercise recommendations currently occurs with government response agencies and industry bodies through established fora, such as the National Biosecurity Committee (NBC) and the Biosecurity and Agricultural Emergency Network (BAEN).

This is further supported through collective priority of 'Coordinated preparedness and response' identified through the National Biosecurity Strategy. Strategy implementation planning is underway through a group comprising government and non-government biosecurity stakeholders, including to identify actions that will enhance governance and information flows related to preparedness and response.

Recommendation 11

The committee recommends that the Australian Government increase funding to Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia to enable them to appropriately maintain, review and develop funding and compensation arrangements.

Response

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

Animal Health Australia (AHA) and Plant Health Australia (PHA) are funded by all signatories to the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA) and Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD). There is a process in place for AHA and PHA to propose these activities as part of their operational plans and seek additional resourcing from all members. The Australian Government contributes one-third of membership fees.

Recommendation 12

The committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry consults with the honey bee industry to consider the inclusion of pollination services under the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed Levy guidelines and legislation.

Response

The Australian Government **supports** this recommendation.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry is streamlining and modernising agricultural levies legislation work is developing legislation that (if passed) would enable a framework under which a levy on bee pollination services could be established. The department expects to consult on the relevant draft legislation. In addition to the legislative framework, the establishment of new levies requires a levy proposal supported by the majority of future levy payers to be submitted by industry to government. The department has encouraged Australian Honey Bee Industry Council (AHBIC) to consider the design of a pollination services levy in advance of the new legislation being in place.

Recommendation 13

The committee recommends that the Australian Government conduct a review of national livestock traceability funding and co-funding mechanisms, to ensure they are sustainable, comprehensive, and equitable.

Response

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

The Australian Government is supportive of national efforts to improve traceability, biosecurity, animal welfare outcomes and notes current work underway by the National Biosecurity Committee. Industry, governments, agricultural supply chain participants and other stakeholders are working together to strengthen our national traceability systems and improve livestock traceability, noting that State and Territory governments are the primary regulators of biosecurity traceability systems that support biosecurity and animal welfare outcomes.

Australia's current livestock traceability systems are world-class and effective, and efforts are ongoing to ensure they remain fit for purpose and able to adapt into the future. There are several livestock and traceability reform processes underway including working towards implementation of electronic identification (eID) for sheep and goats by 1 January 2025. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry is working with industry and government

to ensure these processes are staggered, manageable and deliver the desired outcomes within sensible timeframes, which include consideration of governance structures and funding.

The Australian Government has invested \$118.5 million to support the continuous improvement of Australia's agriculture traceability systems. The traceability work program is supporting efforts to enhance traceability systems across agriculture supply chains to safeguard and grow sustainable agriculture, fisheries and forestry for all Australians. This includes:

- \$68.4 million over four years from 2021-22 to develop a national approach to improve traceability;
- \$46.7 million over three years from 2022-23, as part of the 'Bolstering Australia's biosecurity system' package towards upgrading the national livestock traceability system and transitioning to nationally harmonised individual electronic identification (eID) for sheep and goats.;
- \$1.1 million over two years to support efforts to improve national horse traceability; and
- \$2.3 million ongoing to support the Modernising Agricultural Trade traceability grants program.

Recommendation 14

The committee recommends that the Australian Government establish a statutory or regulatory authority responsible for managing Australian livestock traceability.

Response

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

The government acknowledges that governance arrangements for traceability are important. While statutory and regulatory authorities are options to manage this, traceability arrangements must be considered holistically and all options should be considered.

All Australian Agriculture Ministers continue to acknowledge traceability is a shared responsibility, and have agreed to work together on national approaches and aligning key traceability initiatives to continue to enhance Australia's already robust traceability systems.

This responsibility also extends to industry including the management of industry owned traceability systems such as the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS). The Australian Government has committed \$26.6 million to support upgrades to the NLIS, and associated activities, to ensure Australia's industry-led national livestock traceability systems remain fit for purpose into the future.

Recommendation 15

The committee recommends the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, in partnership with state and territory governments and the honey bee industry, conduct a feasibility study for a commercial bee hive traceability system.

Response

The Australian Government **supports in principle** this recommendation.

The Australian Government is supportive of national efforts to improve traceability and biosecurity and notes current work underway by the National Biosecurity Committee, recognising that biosecurity traceability is a jurisdictional responsibility. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry is aware that work exploring beehive traceability systems is underway in some jurisdictions and this will help inform considerations on the feasibility for future traceability systems.

Recommendation 16

The committee recommends that the Australian Government and Animal Health Australia establish a lumpy skin disease vaccine bank for use by Australia in the event of an incursion.

Response

The Australian Government **supports in principle** this recommendation.

The Australian Government will continue to work with state and territory governments, affected industry parties and Animal Health Australia to determine whether there is merit in developing a national vaccine bank for Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD), as agreed by governments and industry in Activity 5.2.c (*Investigate options for the timely supply of LSD vaccines*) of the [National Lumpy Skin Disease Action Plan](#). In the interim, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry is working with international vaccine manufacturers to ensure Australia has the ability to access a safe and effective LSD vaccine in an emergency.

Recommendation 17

The committee recommends that the Australian Government negotiate with the United Kingdom Government the ability for researchers from the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness to access and conduct research on Australia's bank of foot-and-mouth virus vaccine in the United Kingdom.

Response

The Australian Government **supports in principle** this recommendation.

The Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness advises it has longstanding research collaborations with the World Reference Laboratory for FMD in the United Kingdom, as well as other institutions globally, to investigate the efficacy of antigens held in Australia's FMD vaccine bank against new strains emerging overseas. The Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness will advise the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry if they require any assistance in changing these arrangements in the future.

Recommendation 18

The committee recommends that the Australian Government coordinate the implementation of a national approach to interstate border control and permitting, and use of a national movement permitting system.

Response

The Australian Government **supports in principle** this recommendation.

The Australian Government agrees that strong livestock traceability arrangements and 'contact tracing' for livestock are important to Australia's preparedness in the face of the growing threat of exotic animal diseases (including foot and mouth disease).

The Australian Government has committed \$46.7 million over three years from FY 2022-23, as part of the 'Bolstering Australia's biosecurity system' package, towards improving national livestock traceability arrangements. Industry and governments continue to work towards a harmonised approach to implementation in terms of key milestones and timelines, to develop a national system to improve reporting.

The National Biosecurity Committee will consider the merits of a national permitting system as part of its consideration of the National Biosecurity Strategy.

Recommendation 19

The committee recommends that the Australian Government coordinate the development of a national network plan and sustainable funding for the establishment of livestock transport infrastructure at rest stops on key livestock freight routes around Australia.

Response

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry will work with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts to consider how best to support preparedness activities through the utilisation of and improvements to livestock transport logistics.

Recommendation 20

The committee recommends that the Australian Government conduct industry consultation to determine the feasibility of a Road Transport Management Deposit Scheme.

Response

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry will work with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts to consider the feasibility of a Road Transport Management Deposit Scheme.

Recommendation 21

The committee recommends that the Australian federal, state and territory governments commit to a sustainable biosecurity funding model to reflect the changing risk profile of pests and diseases to Australia's agriculture and environment and overall way of life.

Response

The Australian Government **supports** this recommendation.

Through the National Biosecurity Strategy, all governments have committed to work together with stakeholders on the development of long-term sustainable funding and investment approaches to support the system's growing needs and priorities. Work is underway – including through a National Biosecurity Strategy Implementation Committee comprising a cross-section of stakeholders – to consider how best to implement the Strategy.

Furthermore, the Australian Government has committed to deliver long-term sustainable funding that will go directly to strengthening Australia's biosecurity system. Noting the Commonwealth is a core contributor to national biosecurity outcomes, options for a sustainable Commonwealth biosecurity funding model are being developed for government consideration. These options are being developed following recent stakeholder consultation in which 55 public submissions were received.

Recommendation 22

The committee recommends the Australian Government, in partnership with animal, plant and environment biosecurity stakeholders, conducts a review of how biosecurity funding is allocated to ensure that it is adequate and equitable

Response

The Australian Government **supports** this recommendation.

A strong biosecurity system is critical to protecting Australia's economy, environment and way of life. All Australians share the benefits of our biosecurity system, and we all have a valuable role to play in supporting it to continue to protect Australia – overseas, at our border and within Australia.

As noted in Recommendation 21, options for a sustainable Commonwealth biosecurity funding model are being developed for the government's consideration. This will encompass core Commonwealth biosecurity responsibilities and include investment in critical biosecurity systems.

Sustainable system investment more broadly is one of six priority areas outlined in the National Biosecurity Strategy. Advancing co-funding and investment – recognising all stakeholders have a part to play in supporting the system, just as all share in its benefits – is a key early focus for the national committee steering implementation, the membership of which includes industry, community and government biosecurity stakeholders.

Recommendation 23

The committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry incorporate an audit of existing skills and gaps in the development of the national biosecurity workforce strategy.

Response

The Australian Government **supports in principle** this recommendation.

The Australian Government supports the proposed audit of the existing skills and gaps as a logical step in the development of the national biosecurity workforce strategy. This will be incorporated into the National Biosecurity Strategy which has identified that that additional skills and infrastructure are required to support a more responsive biosecurity system.

Recommendation 24

The committee recommends that the Australian Government support and prioritise biosecurity officers' capacity and capability development to improve border responses and reduce delays for passengers and importers, and improve Australia's overall biosecurity readiness.

Response

The Australian Government **supports** this recommendation.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has invested significantly in the capability of biosecurity staff, including through the investment in the Biosecurity Training Centre and new tailored training packages delivered to staff over the past 18 months. The department, as part of its commitment to a professional and capable regulatory workforce, will continue to prioritise support for biosecurity staff who are making important regulatory decisions at the border.

Training is reviewed and enhanced as needed.

Recommendation 25

The committee recommends that the Australian Government work with relevant industry bodies to design and implement measures to improve the capacity and capability of production animal veterinarians, particularly in rural and remote areas, including:

- enhancement of veterinarian attraction and retention strategies and initiatives such as graduate and rural practice incentives;
- compensation paid to veterinarians in the event of their involvement in an EAD response; and
- increased utilisation of rural and remote veterinarians in surveillance and monitoring activities.

Response

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

The Australian Government notes and acknowledges that the initiative to *improve the capacity and capability of production animal veterinarians, particularly in rural and remote areas*, is a broader challenge in the veterinary industry more generally.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) has recently participated in, and contributed, to the Animal Health Committee taskforce which is reviewing the National framework for the engagement of private vets during an emergency animal disease response. This is an important initiative which provides a useful platform for engagement on these ongoing challenges.

DAFF has also had recent engagement with the Department of Education who are closely monitoring the efficacy of the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debt measures for teachers, and proposed measures for doctors and nurses, to determine whether these initiatives should be expanded to other critical professions such as veterinary science.

DAFF has a particular interest in the strength of Australia's veterinary industry given the contribution this makes to biosecurity and agricultural productivity, and will continue to assist and engage with state and territory governments and the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) to enhance veterinarian attraction and retention strategies.

Recommendation 26

The committee recommends that government departments, Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia consult a wider range of stakeholders from across the supply chain, including the transport and livestock transport sectors and the retail sector.

Response

The Australian Government **supports** this recommendation.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry will work with Animal and Plant Health Australia and other government bodies - such as the departments of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication and the Arts; and Industry Science and Resources - to coordinate dialogue with stakeholders across the supply chain, including through national preparedness and response exercises.

Recommendation 27

The committee recommends that the department, in consultation with stakeholders, coordinate the development of a strategy for biosecurity research development and extension which includes:

- a long-term funding mechanism for biosecurity research;
- approaches to identify research, development and extension gaps and national priorities across the biosecurity continuum;
- strategies to develop better integrations between industry and research organisations; and

- mechanisms to support the commercialisation of research, development and extension outputs.

Response

The Australian Government **supports in principle** this recommendation.

As noted in Recommendation 21 – the Australian Government committed to deliver long-term sustainable funding that will go directly to strengthening Australia's biosecurity system.

The development of options for a sustainable long-term funding model for biosecurity is underway. This has included targeted stakeholder consultation to seek feedback on opportunities for government investment including into systems and technologies that both improve risk management and drive efficiency into the system.

Through the National Biosecurity Strategy, all governments have agreed to work together with stakeholders to create a more connected and efficient system in which we better leverage existing and new technology, research and data to facilitate more timely, informed and risk-based decisions. The Strategy discusses initial work on increased coordination and engagement across biosecurity stakeholders, including research and development bodies, investment in transformative technologies, and encouraging greater private sector investment.

As part of the Statutory Funding Agreements, Rural Research and Development Corporations (RDCs) are required to consider each of the four innovation priorities when making investment decisions.

Recommendation 28

The committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry coordinate the development of national data and information standards, and sharing protocols in relation to biosecurity.

Response

The Australian Government **supports** this recommendation.

The National Biosecurity Committee is developing a national data sharing capability that includes identifying critical data holdings across governments, agricultural industries and commercial data vendors. Assessments will be made on data standards, sharing protocols, policy and legislative constraints, including the role of existing systems to support a national approach for sharing pest and disease data.

Recommendation 29

The committee recommends that Plant Health Australia in partnership with the bee industry and other stakeholders of AUSPestCheck, consider the platform's capability and data sharing arrangements for tracking varroa mite should it become endemic.

Response

The Australian Government **supports** this recommendation.

Consideration is being given to assessing the role of biosecurity systems, including AUSPestCheck, to support a national approach for collection and sharing of accurate and reliable data to manage biosecurity pests and diseases and export market requirements.

AUSPestCheck is endorsed by National Biosecurity Committee as the national surveillance data system and the department has funded Plant Health Australia to maintain it for the next three years.

Additional Recommendations – Australian Greens

Recommendation 1

The Australian Greens recommends the Australian Government provide specific commentary on the feasibility of a container levy and outline whether it intends to consider introducing one in this term of government.

Response

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

The Australian Government has made a commitment to bolster Australia's biosecurity system including a long-term sustainable funding model to strengthen the system.

Work is underway to develop options to implement a long-term sustainable biosecurity funding model for the government's consideration. Development has included public and targeted consultation to seek feedback on the current funding model as well as options that have previously been provided to government including various air and sea freight, conveyance, or container levies.

Recommendation 2

The Australian Greens recommend that the Australian Government include discussion of state and territory-based biosecurity issues arising from this inquiry in future Agriculture Minister Meetings.

Response

The Australian Government **supports** this recommendation.

Australia's biosecurity system is a national asset and the shared responsibility of the Commonwealth, states and territories, and industry. Strengthening biosecurity systems to reflect emerging risks is a significant component of the Agriculture Ministers' Meeting (AMM) work program. In July 2022, AMM approved Australia's first National Biosecurity Strategy. Biosecurity is one of AMM's 3 priorities for 2023 and it will oversee the implementation of the strategy through the National Biosecurity Strategy Implementation Committee. The AMM and the Agriculture Senior Officials' Committee are the established mechanisms for considering state and territory-based biosecurity issues of national significance, informed by the work of the National Biosecurity Committee.

Recommendation 3

In relation to inquiry Recommendation 22, The Australian Greens recommend that the Australian Government include specific reference to improvements in training, including the feasibility of formalising and expanding the Biosecurity Emergency Response Training Australia initiative.

Response

The Australian Government **supports** this recommendation.

Through the National Biosecurity Committee (NBC), governments have committed to the development of a system-wide strategy that improves workforce capacity and training. A training approach that is consistent with the wider emergency management sector is important to access additional workforce capacity during a largescale biosecurity incident. This forms part of broader strategic considerations about how the biosecurity system can best leverage the emergency management sector training packages to improve interoperability between response agencies.

Recommendation 4

The Australian Greens recommend that the Australian Government provide an update on the progress of implementation of the National Invasive Ants Biosecurity Plan 2018–2028.

Response

The Australian Government **supports** this recommendation.

The National Invasive Ant Biosecurity Plan 2018-2028 (NIABP) has been active for four years. Ten of the total 42 actions listed in the NIABP are assigned to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF). Five of those 10 have been completed and all 5 were high priority, 4 DAFF actions have been started and 1 is to be commenced. The NIABP is scheduled for a mid-term review in 2023 when remaining actions will be re-prioritised and assigned to DAFF, state and territory authorities, NGOs, and researcher stakeholders.

Recommendation 5

The Australian Greens recommend that the Australian Government publish an update on the implementation of recommendations from the 2017 review of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity (IGAB review) and the reports of the Inspector-General of Biosecurity.

Response

The Australian Government **supports** this recommendation.

In late September 2022, the National Biosecurity Committee (NBC) committed to undertake a stock-take of the IGAB review report recommendations to determine their current status and to align implementation activities with work underway to implement the National Biosecurity Strategy.

Updates on the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's progress addressing and implementing recommendations made by both the Inspector-General of Biosecurity and the Australian National Audit Office are published within the Commonwealth Biosecurity 2030 annual action plans.

Recommendation 6

The Australian Greens recommend that the Australian Government establishes a Productivity Commission inquiry into the economic and environmental benefits of long-term control of feral animals.

Response

The Australian Government **does not support** this recommendation.

State and territory governments hold the legislative responsibility for the management of feral animals in Australia. The Australian Government provides support, including funding, for management where this is in the national interest or on Commonwealth land.

The Australian Government uses a variety of funding models to assist state and territory governments, natural resource management groups, Traditional Owners and land managers to effectively control feral animals in Australia, reducing impacts to provide economic and environmental benefits. These include the National Landcare Program, National Environmental Science Program, Supporting Communities Manage Pest Animals and Weeds Program and other grant programs. These programs have reporting and review mechanisms.

With the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) we continue to work to improve understanding of the distribution, abundance, as well as impacts (including economics) of established pest animals on primary production and the environment.