
4 ONE BIOSECURITY – A NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH BUSINESS AND THE COMMUNITY

4.1 Introduction

The Australian response to many complex issues that face the community is to adopt a consultative approach that incorporates shared responsibility. Shared responsibility includes both commitment and obligation. This has been an enormous strength in accomplishing favourable outcomes for many issues where there may otherwise have been divergent opinions and approaches.

The establishment of partnership organisations such as Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia, and the brokering of cost and responsibility sharing deeds for many of the major pests and diseases that are exotic to Australia, give testament to the success of this approach. These models, and Australia's successful exotic pest and disease eradication campaigns, are envied by many of our trading partners.

Shared responsibility was a major theme in the Nairn Report, as represented by its title: *Australian Quarantine: a shared responsibility*. The report stated that:

‘It is time for a new focus on quarantine to ensure that the vigilance that has characterised Australia's approach to quarantine protection is not diminished. This report provides the blueprint for a fresh approach to Australian quarantine based on a shared responsibility.’
(Nairn *et al.* 1996, p. 6)

The Nairn Report recommended a nationally coordinated quarantine strategy with the entire Australian community responsible for its development, implementation and funding:

‘Effective quarantine relies on all stakeholders—governments, industry and the general public—appreciating the importance of quarantine vigilance to everyday activities and responding accordingly.’
(Nairn *et al.* 1996, p. 34)

The concept of biosecurity being a shared responsibility has been incorporated into Australia's biosecurity programs for many years. The commitment and sense of cooperation has been amply demonstrated during the efforts to eradicate exotic pests and diseases that threaten businesses, the environment or the community. For example, the successful eradication of bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis was only achieved through effective cooperation between all levels of government, beef producers and the wider rural community. Australia is the only major beef producing country to have achieved freedom from these major zoonotic diseases.

Similarly, the eradication of grapevine leaf rust would not have been possible without the cooperation of governments, local agricultural businesses and the people of Darwin. The same can be said for eradication of the papaya fruit fly outbreak in north Queensland. If the current campaign against red imported fire ants in south east Queensland is to be successful, it will require the cooperative efforts of Commonwealth and state governments, business and the wider community.

Animal Health Australia was established in the mid 1990s as a partnership between governments and industry to facilitate a common approach to animal health systems in Australia. Subsequent to the Nairn Report, Plant Health Australia was established and emergency response deeds were developed in order for governments and businesses to share responsibility for the eradication of exotic plant pest and disease incursions.

The Panel has concluded that the notion of shared responsibility needs to be reinforced and extended into new areas. The recent experience following the equine influenza outbreak has highlighted that all appropriate parties in relevant business sectors should come under the aegis of emergency response agreements in order that effective, equitable and cooperative responses can be conducted. It is also imperative that these agreements cover terrestrial and aquatic environments currently outside the scope of existing responsibility sharing deeds.

4.2 Current arrangements

4.2.1 Who has a responsibility for biosecurity?

'Responsibility', when used in the context of Australia's biosecurity systems, can mean different things to different people. Everyone has some degree of responsibility for maintaining and improving Australia's biosecurity. Currently governments and businesses have specific responsibilities along the biosecurity continuum. Governments, as regulators, have prime responsibility for the development, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of the system.

At the broadest level, the quality of biosecurity reflects the community's acceptance of the need for biosecurity measures and its willingness to accept responsibility for maintaining Australia's favourable pest and disease status. It also depends on the level of trust the community has in the regulatory and program frameworks that underpin the nation's biosecurity systems.

Government agencies check and provide official certification of goods, whilst industry organisations are involved in emergency preparedness and response arrangements. International travellers are responsible for ensuring that they do not carry plant or animal products or other materials that represent a biosecurity risk into Australia. Exporters of goods to Australia must ensure that their product meets the country's biosecurity import requirements. Transport and tourism operators have a role to ensure that their customers understand, respect and share the responsibility for maintaining Australia's unique biosecurity status. Members of the general community are made aware of biosecurity threats and contribute by cooperating with authorities along all points of the biosecurity continuum. The community also has an important role in providing input into public debate and policy development on the issue.

4.2.2 The responsibilities of governments—Commonwealth, state and local

The Commonwealth has generally limited its regulatory responsibilities to the pre-border and border elements of the biosecurity continuum (as described in Chapter 2). Some post-border exceptions include components of the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy, the National Sentinel Hive Program and national surveillance programs for some exotic pests such as papaya fruit fly. The Commonwealth also shares the funding with industry groups and the states, and provides scientific input for various pest and disease control and surveillance programs that are conducted through Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia.

The Commonwealth regulates the export of major agricultural commodities. Enforcement activities are shared between the Commonwealth and the states.

State governments are responsible for animal and plant health within their jurisdictions, and participate with the Commonwealth and businesses at a national level in the coordination of national programs.

Local governments are responsible for providing municipal services to communities. In the biosecurity context these responsibilities include assisting with controls for domestic animals, feral animals, weeds and wildlife. Local council participation and cooperation in regional emergency pest and disease responses is essential and includes activities such as disposal of biosecurity waste material in the event of a pest or disease outbreak.

4.2.3 Farmers and agribusiness contribution to biosecurity

Businesses at all levels are actively involved in biosecurity. Through their national representative organisations, farm industries are members of Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia which have developed, or are in the process of developing, cost sharing agreements and biosecurity plans for each of their represented industries. Biosecurity planning ranks the most likely threats posed by exotic pests and diseases, and adopts measures that mitigate the risks across the continuum rather than simply at the border. AUSVETPLAN for terrestrial animals, AQUAVETPLAN for aquatic animals and PLANTPLAN for plants provide incursion management guidelines that outline the procedures, roles, and responsibilities of all parties in the event of an incursion.

Many farm and food businesses may already be adopting elements of a biosecurity plan without realising it. For example, farmers are generally careful to ensure that only stock or new plant varieties with a known and sound health status are introduced into their farming systems. Although not all farmers will have a documented plan, good farming practice incorporates sound biosecurity measures.

Those working in agricultural businesses are often the first to notice a change in circumstances in their crop, feedlot or packing shed and therefore need to know who to notify and what to do in the event of a suspected exotic pest or disease incursion. Biosecurity planning involves educating and training staff in pest and disease preparedness, recognition and response.

Many larger farming or agricultural processing businesses have more developed biosecurity plans. National Vendor Declarations and the Australian Standard for Hygienic Rendering of Animal Products used in the livestock industry may be incorporated into general business plans. Mandatory and voluntary quality assurance programs also serve a biosecurity function. For some businesses, particularly in the meat, dairy and poultry sectors, food safety management systems incorporating Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points are mandatory for assuring food safety.

Industry Biosecurity Plans represent an important part of the commitment that Australia's farm industries have made in signing up to emergency response deeds. Government signatories have committed the resources required to manage emergency responses, along with statements outlining biosecurity policies and programs. Business groups and governments have accepted responsibility for a continuing process of risk mitigation.

Plant industries, from apples to viticulture, avocados to vegetables, have established Industry Biosecurity Plans with the assistance of Plant Health

Australia and government agencies. A similar process has been undertaken in the animal sector. Aquatic industries are not as far advanced in their thinking on biosecurity planning but recognise the need to do so.

Industry Biosecurity Plans involve threat identification, pest and disease risk reviews, incursion management funding arrangements, risk mitigation plans, response management procedures and detailed communication programs. Some business groups have appointed biosecurity officers to ensure that the Industry Biosecurity Plans are communicated to producers, and are being effectively practiced. Similarly, a joint initiative between Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia is increasing the adoption of biosecurity plans by farmers. The *Farm Biosecurity, secure your farm: secure your future* program conveys animal and plant farm biosecurity messages to farmers across rural Australia. The Australian Chicken Meat Federation's biosecurity plan is discussed in Box 7.

BOX 7 Biosecurity planning in the chicken meat industry

The Australian Chicken Meat Federation's National Biosecurity Manual was approved by a Sub-Committee of Animal Health Australia in 2002. The Manual is based on a Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points program that provides chicken meat farmers with an agreed set of biosecurity standards. Implementation of the Manual is left to the discretion of individual businesses, but it is generally a contractual requirement that growers comply with these standards. Most companies sourcing chicken meat conduct audits of their contract growers' facilities including checking for compliance with procedures outlined in the National Biosecurity Manual. A recent study by the Australian Chicken Meat Federation found there to be a high awareness and level of implementation of biosecurity, with 93 per cent of birds having been grown commercially under these biosecurity arrangements.

The National Livestock Identification System is mandatory for individual cattle (and flocks of sheep and goats) and is an important component of dealing with biosecurity incidents. The system enhances livestock identification and traceback, which are essential in managing animal disease outbreaks, responding to food safety incidents or providing assurances to consumers and markets about the integrity of Australia's livestock and livestock products. Such a system would not have been implemented but for an effective partnership between government and business.

4.2.4 Other businesses

Businesses and individuals involved in importing products to Australia, including importers, customs brokers, freight forwarders, managers of

Quarantine Approved Premises, retailers and others along the supply chain also have an important role to ensure the biosecurity of their product.

Along with the Australian Government, travel agents, airlines, shipping operators and doctors (particularly travel medicine specialists) have a significant role in risk communication, providing information to the travelling public about potential threats and means to avoid pests and diseases.

4.2.5 The role of the broader community

By adhering to biosecurity requirements, people travelling between countries and regions can prevent the introduction of new pests and diseases. Within Australia, people moving into the Fruit Fly Exclusion Zone are responsible for ensuring they are not transporting any fruit fly host commodities that could introduce fruit flies.

Individuals assist by keeping an eye out for the unusual and reporting findings of suspected exotic pests and diseases, or events that may be a consequence of such incursions. This can be a particularly valuable contribution from those working in shipping, on docks and wharves and in the airline industry. The community can help raise awareness of biosecurity issues more broadly and lobby business and government to develop sound biosecurity policies. A number of individuals and small businesses have been nominated for Quarantine and Exports Advisory Council Quarantine Awards in recognition of the contribution they have provided to maintaining Australia's biosecurity.

The important role that business and the community play in the early detection of high-profile pests is exemplified most recently by the detection of Khapra beetle in Perth and mango leaf gall midge on Horn Island in north Queensland. Khapra beetle was recognised by a commercial pest controller whose services were sought after a recent immigrant to Australia noted the presence of beetles, larvae and cast skins in their personal effects. The incident marked the first occasion where the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed was applied with businesses and governments sharing the cost of the incursion response. In August 2008, a resident of Horn Island discovered a species of mango leaf gall midge after seeing a photograph of symptoms in the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy calendar.

Another example of public involvement can be seen in Queensland where members of the community continue to play an important role in notifying authorities of the presence of red import fire ant nests and the nests of other exotic tramp ant species on their properties (see Box 8).

BOX 8 Community engagement is important for biosecurity success

Community awareness of red imported fire ants in Brisbane has led to the detection of further ant colonies. Under Queensland legislation, fire ants are a notifiable pest and suspected sightings must be reported.

Fire ants have been found through a combination of ‘passive’ detections by members of the public reporting ants to Biosecurity Queensland and by ‘active’ detections by Biosecurity Queensland staff, often near where passive detections have been reported. Without community engagement, it would be extremely difficult to find fire ants without a substantial increase in resources.

Examples of the community engagement strategies used by Biosecurity Queensland include *Find the Fire Ant Days*; a Schools Program; Volunteer Fire Ant Ranger groups and a reward scheme. The reward scheme paid a \$500 reward for reports that led to the detection of new infested sites. In the two month period of the scheme, 29 rewards totalling \$14,500 were paid. The scheme greatly improved the public participation rate, with ant samples submitted by the public in that period increasing ten fold.

Researchers at Monash University found that even small increases in passive detection rates have a high value in reducing search costs by governments and increasing the probability of eradication (Schmidt, D. and Spring, D. unpublished research).

Biosecurity awareness varies throughout Australia, with some communities more aware and actively engaged than others. For example, the Tasmanian community demonstrates a high level of awareness reflecting the value it places on biosecurity in securing market access into quality conscious, high value and niche markets, especially overseas.

‘The high level of public cooperation with the Tasmanian quarantine agency has lead Fruit Growers Tasmania to believe that there is possibly a higher level of understanding in Tasmania than appears to exist in most other regions of Australia that quarantine is a shared responsibility.’ (Fruit Growers Tasmania submission, p. 3)

The community also needs to be prepared to cooperate with state government agencies during pest and disease emergencies. This includes providing access to properties for surveillance purposes and understanding the need for such measures as movement restrictions, such as those used during the equine influenza outbreak to halt the movement of horses.

4.2.6 Incentives to share the responsibility

There are a number of incentives for members of the community and businesses to be involved in the development of biosecurity policy. Farmers, processors and

exporters are keen to minimise costs and maintain access to overseas markets for their agricultural commodities, especially where they obtain price premiums for pest and disease free status. For the community, biosecurity is essential for protecting the environment against exotic threats, for maintaining livelihoods by safeguarding the health status of rural industries, and providing protection against zoonotic diseases.

Farmers and other agricultural businesses face huge risks should a major pest or disease be introduced into Australia. Many of these pests and diseases cause direct losses due to decreased yields of crops or stock losses. There may also be increased production costs because of a greater reliance on pesticides, chemicals or drugs used to control the introduced pest or disease. One of the major concerns for most Australian agricultural industries is the potential loss of export markets that rely on Australia's favourable health status. Pest and disease outbreaks do not just impact on farmers and agricultural business. They also impact upon importers and other businesses along the supply chain. All of these factors constitute incentives for farmers and related businesses—individually and collectively—to observe sound biosecurity principles and practices.

4.2.7 Biosecurity consultative forums

A number of forums promote discussion of biosecurity issues, some of which are summarised in Box 9. Most involve representatives from the Commonwealth and state governments and relevant business groups. Some have broadened their membership to include representatives from wildlife or environmental groups.

BOX 9 Examples of biosecurity consultative forums

Quarantine and Exports Advisory Council

The Quarantine and Exports Advisory Council was established by the Australian Government following the Nairn Report. It provides advice to the Minister and the Director of Animal and Plant Quarantine on major quarantine and export certification policy issues and strategic directions for AQIS. It also ensures effective consultation between AQIS, business and other stakeholders. Its membership is skills-based and represents a broad coverage of the policy and technical aspects of quarantine and exports of agriculture-based commodities.

Animal Health Australia

Animal Health Australia is a partnership of governments and livestock industries that was established in 1996 to improve Australia's animal health control systems. It is a not-for-profit public company funded by its members through annual subscriptions. Its collaborative national animal health programs support animal and human health, food safety and quality, market access, animal welfare, livestock productivity and national biosecurity.

Plant Health Australia

Plant Health Australia is a partnership of governments and plant industries that has a structure and purpose equivalent to Animal Health Australia. Its programs help to protect Australia's plant industries from the risks posed by pests and diseases through the implementation of exclusion, eradication and control measures.

Aquatic Animal Health Committee

The Aquatic Animal Health Committee is the primary business/government interface for policy, communication and awareness on aquatic animal health issues. Its members represent Commonwealth and state departments responsible for aquatic animal health, the Australian Animal Health Laboratory, the commercial and recreational fishing industries, the finfish, mollusc, and crustacean aquaculture industries, and the ornamental fish industry.

Australian Wildlife Health Network

The Australian Wildlife Health Network is an initiative of the Australian Government which is hosted by the Zoological Parks Board of New South Wales and New South Wales Agriculture. It promotes collaborative links in the investigation and management of wildlife health in support of human and animal health, biodiversity and trade. The Network maintains a national database of wildlife health surveillance and diagnostic information, develops wildlife management protocols, coordinates surveillance information, advances education and training, and prioritises surveillance and research activities.

AQIS Industry Consultative Committees

AQIS has 14 Industry Consultative Committees covering each of its major programs. Their purpose is to maintain close contact with business clients to ensure efficient and effective service delivery. The Industry Consultative Committees are the principal advisory forums for AQIS to consult with businesses on biosecurity and export issues including certification, market access and operational concerns. Members can be representatives of business organisations, or be appointed on a skills basis. All Industry Consultative Committees have an AQIS and Quarantine and Exports Advisory Council representative.

4.2.8 Cost and responsibility sharing deeds

Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia's cost sharing arrangements are set out in the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement and the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed respectively. They are formal, legally binding agreements between all parties and cover the management and funding of responses to exotic pest and disease incidents.

These arrangements represent a world first whereby businesses are closely involved in the decision making process and benefit from national approaches and funding mechanisms agreed in advance.

The Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement significantly increases Australia's capacity to prepare for and respond to emergency animal pest and disease incursions. All parties commit to fund the eligible costs of responding to an emergency animal pest or disease which affects them. The costs to be shared are generally linked to the category of the pest or disease and relevance to particular industry sectors.

Similarly Plant Health Australia's core funding is shared equally by its plant industry members, the Commonwealth, and state government members. Plant industry membership subscriptions are calculated on the farm gate value of each industry. Core funding is used to develop preparedness to respond to exotic pest and disease threats through industry biosecurity plans and initiatives such as the National Plant Health Surveillance Strategy.

Compensation payments, or owner reimbursement costs, paid to producers to meet the direct costs of an emergency response, including livestock or plants destroyed under a pest or disease eradication program, are shared by the Commonwealth and state governments and business in accordance with the terms of the cost sharing agreements. Claims for consequential loss (for example, future breeding value of livestock) are not covered.

In addition to all governments, most of Australia's agriculture and forestry industries are members of Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia. However, not all business members are signatories to the appropriate cost sharing deed.

4.2.9 Compliance Agreements and third party arrangements

Sections of the *Quarantine Act 1908* provide for legal agreements to be made between AQIS and businesses, allowing them to perform certain biosecurity tasks on AQIS's behalf. This is referred to as co-regulation. There are currently over 8,400 individuals with AQIS accreditation under such arrangements.

AQIS has export certification arrangements in place with business that illustrate varying degrees of shared responsibility. These arrangements include third party inspection (such as those for organic or halal certification); shared responsibility between business, the Commonwealth and the states for inspection and certification for dairy exports (see Box 10); and quality assurance systems whereby export meat businesses are required to comply with AQIS requirements and are audited on that basis.

BOX 10 Export inspection functions – shared responsibility

Commercial organic and biodynamic certification bodies can apply to AQIS for accreditation to perform assessments of organic production systems for exporters. There are defined organic standards recognised for export and enforced by certification bodies (for example, the National Association for Sustainable Agriculture Australia). AQIS's function is to verify that the organic certification bodies continue to meet their obligations.

Since 1998 the majority of export dairy inspection work has been performed by state dairy inspection agencies. AQIS has a Dairy Review Unit responsible for performing audits of state authority systems to ensure export standards are met. The arrangement has several advantages to businesses, state authorities and AQIS, primarily in removing potentially duplicative inspection.

A compliance agreement is the legal instrument used to regulate the operation of a co-regulatory arrangement. Compliance agreements are entered into voluntarily by businesses and only cover low risk activities and commodities. For example, AQIS has compliance agreements covering the collection, transportation, storage and disposal of biosecurity waste from ships; and for the disinsection of aircraft entering Australia. AQIS also has compliance agreements with a number of state government operated facilities responsible for inspecting and certifying post-entry quarantine material. Proclaimed quarantine stations or premises at which procedures are authorised under a compliance agreement are monitored and audited by AQIS officers.

The three main types of co-regulatory arrangements for import clearance processes are described in Box 11.

BOX 11 Co-regulatory arrangements for import clearance processes

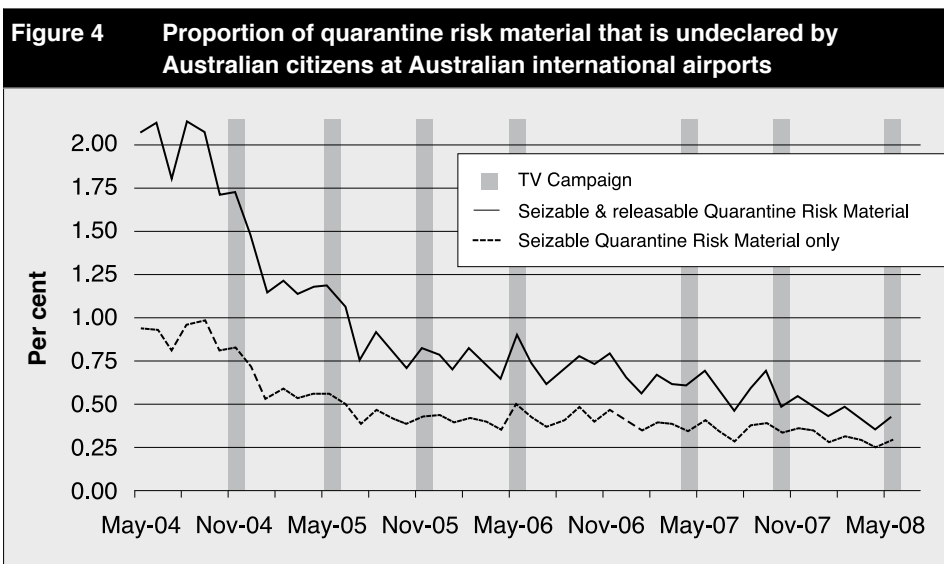
1. Documentary schemes such as the Broker Accreditation Compliance Agreement Scheme, allow accredited customs brokers to review documentation on goods subject to quarantine, such as packing declarations and fumigation certificates.
2. Quarantine Approved Premises schemes such as the Class 1 Sea and Air Freight Depot Scheme, allow a business party to open and unpack shipping containers without AQIS supervision.
3. There are also a number of activity-based schemes such as the Onshore Quarantine Fumigation Scheme and the Processing of Imported Uncooked Pigmeat Scheme.

Further information on these schemes can be found at: www.daff.gov.au/aqis

4.2.10 Community communication and awareness campaigns

Education and awareness programs directed to the general community are essential components of shared responsibility, promoting the significance of effective biosecurity for agriculture production and the environment. Either inadvertently or deliberately, people can introduce pests or diseases into the environment which may threaten native plants and animals or seriously damage amenities.

Consistent with the recommendations of the Nairn Report, AQIS has spent in excess of \$34 million to increase awareness over the past eleven years. The centrepiece has been the *Quarantine Matters!* campaign. Television advertising was introduced in 2002 and remains the most important information source for the target audience, supported by print advertising and airport signage. Recent analysis has shown that *Quarantine Matters!* has been extremely successful in increasing biosecurity awareness and behaviour at the border. Since 2004, the level of undeclared quarantine risk material by Australian citizens returning through airports has declined by as much as two-thirds, with the most notable reductions occurring following television advertising campaigns (see Figure 4).



(Source: AQIS International Airport Program)

The *Big Bugs* television advertising campaign was launched in March 2007 as the latest phase of *Quarantine Matters!*. The *Big Bugs* campaign has created an even higher level of awareness and the community’s ability to recall seeing the advertisements is retained for longer periods than previous campaigns. Television programs such as *Border Security* have also proved effective in

raising community awareness. Independent research commissioned by AQIS has shown that 80 per cent of people have watched the program, contributing to a significant increase in awareness of quarantine regulations, the need to declare items on return to Australia and the penalties for not declaring quarantinable items.

The internet, brochures and pamphlets help fill the gaps. Some examples include:

- public awareness activities associated with the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy;
- using travel agents as distribution points for literature to travellers (in multiple languages); and
- publications such as the *AQIS Bulletin*.

Education and awareness is a central component of biosecurity plans developed by Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia. The organisations, in collaboration with the Australian Government, have developed the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline (1800 675 888) and the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline (1800 084 881) to provide businesses and the community with an avenue for reporting suspected exotic pests and diseases. The hotlines are supported by the *Spotted Anything Unusual?* awareness campaign to promote vigilance in early detection and reporting across businesses and regional communities. The *Quarantine Matters!* campaign includes a recent initiative to raise awareness of the major quarantine pests associated with the cargo industry, and targets those businesses at the frontline of the post-border environment including stevedores and transporters of imported goods. The Panel also notes the efforts by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation and others who produce multi-lingual newsletters with information on biosecurity for growers in the crucial peri-urban areas.

4.3 Current debates and views in submissions

Debate on shared responsibility focuses on deficiencies in consultation arrangements, a lack of support for cost sharing—and therefore responsibility—by some parts of business, constraints on co-regulatory arrangements, and the need for greater community involvement.

4.3.1 Contrasting views on who are responsible for biosecurity

Border biosecurity functions are only one component of the biosecurity continuum. Although there has been a greater emphasis on pre-border and post-border activities since the Nairn Report, recent events such as the equine influenza outbreak suggest there still remains a mindset within parts of the

community and business that responsibility for biosecurity lies at the border and is purely a government responsibility. Similar arguments occur between Commonwealth and state governments over their respective roles (see Chapter 2).

4.3.2 Business and government consultation on biosecurity is not ideal

The Panel heard from a range of groups on processes for consultation between business and government. Formal mechanisms are not always comprehensive in their coverage of issues. It has been suggested that the consultation process needs to be refreshed to ensure there is an effective sharing of views and information.

‘Federal agencies generally have a poor record of developing effective consultation mechanisms with industry on the ground, too often relying heavily on “formal” Canberra based consultative mechanisms ... Few Government agencies have shown any sign of understanding how best to interact with industry bodies, and as a result are often deprived of valuable information.’ (Queensland Farmers’ Federation submission, p. 10)

Consultation relating to the Import Risk Analysis process is considered in Chapter 5.

Some submissions questioned the effectiveness of Industry Consultative Committees as a mechanism for engaging with business.

‘The Industry Consultative Committees (ICCs) are very important for their interchange of information, needed direction and identification of mutually agreed priorities.

... some ICCs are working well, whereas others are not, and one has been disbanded altogether.’ (Quarantine and Exports Advisory Council submission, p. 30)

‘Even with this formal mechanism in place, the industry is increasingly concerned about the lack of a constructive consultative engagement between AQIS and industry.’ (Australian Livestock Exporters Council submission, p. 7)

The Panel suspects that some concerns stem from the fact that Industry Consultative Committees are not always intended to be a consultation forum on the full range of biosecurity issues. Conversely, it is understandable if a focus on cost recovery has created expectations amongst business representatives that a corollary is a formal role in the decision making process.

As noted earlier, the Quarantine and Exports Advisory Council was established by the Australian Government following the Nairn Report. The Council has acknowledged that its own focus has evolved beyond being simply an advisory body to the Minister. Its members are strongly of the view that the Council plays an important role with room to improve its effectiveness. This is a view shared by others.

‘A revised QEAC that is independent and appropriately skills based would provide a more effective vehicle to monitor/evaluate and recommend improvements to the current operations of the quarantine and biosecurity system. The revised QEAC should have a modified mandate with greater public communication.’ (Cooperative Research Centre for Plant Biosecurity submission, p. 15)

The increasing maturity and effectiveness of both Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia are evidenced by their growing membership and achievements. The organisations have been instrumental in bringing government and business closer together.

One concern expressed in some submissions was that consultative arrangements do not include businesses that have environmental interests, such as zoos and aquariums, or the aquatic sector. The Australian Wildlife Health Network and the Aquatic Animal Health Committee provide mechanisms for business and government interaction on these broader issues.

‘Looking at various consultative committees and text in the Issues paper, there is no reference to the zoo industry as a stakeholder or being represented in consultations.’ (Australasian Regional Association of Zoological Parks and Aquaria submission, p. 3)

There is also a need to broaden the scope of business/government shared responsibility beyond primary industries to include other sectors such as tourism and transport.

4.3.3 The risk of moral hazard: compensation without commitment

The Panel notes that some industries, such as some vegetable industries and the plantation timber industry, have not entered into cost sharing deeds or agreements despite holding membership with Animal Health Australia or Plant Health Australia. When no formal agreement exists to determine how costs will be shared in the event of an exotic pest or disease outbreak, there is reduced incentive for businesses to adopt good biosecurity practices. This is particularly relevant if governments still eradicate the pest or disease and pay compensation to those affected, such as occurred in the case of equine influenza. However, the Panel notes and supports the recent introduction of legislation establishing a

compulsory levy to recoup costs in the event of an emergency disease outbreak affecting the horse industry in the future.

A range of other industries, such as the aquaculture and ornamental fish industries, are not part of Animal Health Australia or Plant Health Australia and therefore do not share responsibility for monitoring and surveillance projects or cost sharing agreements. The Panel supports the aquaculture sector's consideration of joining Animal Health Australia and embracing its shared responsibility, rewards and obligations.

The Panel was told of a gap in responsibility sharing in the aquatic environment. In its submission to the Panel, the Australian Maritime College stated that this lack of responsibility affects Australia's capacity to respond to biosecurity incidences.

‘The current cost-sharing arrangements between Commonwealth, state governments and affected industries, that apply in the event of a pest or disease incursion, are not appropriate. For example, the cost sharing agreement for culling down of aquaculture stock appears to be lacking, resulting in (at least in some States) a reluctance to order compulsory slaughter. Again, the outbreak of herpesvirus in abalone is a good example, in this particular case an immediate compulsory slaughter could have prevented spread of this pathogen.’ (Australian Maritime College submission, p. 7)

Some industries have told the Panel that ‘unique circumstances’ make it inappropriate for them to become signatories to the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed. Concerns such as these will always exist in the minds of particular sectors, but the Panel hopes that businesses not currently Deed signatories will recognise the importance of committing to a shared responsibility, and the associated benefits for producers.

The importance of the business dimension of shared responsibility was graphically demonstrated in the equine influenza outbreak. Evidence given to the Callinan Inquiry revealed that some staff involved with the thoroughbred stallions at Eastern Creek Quarantine Station (for example, farriers, grooms and private veterinarians) realised they were obliged to shower and disinfect their clothing before and after attending the horses but claimed they did not do so because they were not told to, presumably by AQIS staff (Callinan 2008). As Commissioner Callinan concluded:

‘What is most likely, is that the virus escaped from Eastern Creek Quarantine Station on the person, clothing or equipment of a groom, veterinarian, farrier, or someone else who had contact with the horses and then left the Quarantine Station without adequately cleaning or

disinfecting himself or herself, or his or her clothing or equipment.’
(Callinan 2008, p. 309)

The Panel emphasises that without failures by both the AQIS staff and employees or agents of the thoroughbred owners, equine influenza would not have arrived at or escaped from the Eastern Creek Quarantine Station. This demonstrates in a specific and tangible way, the consequences of a failure to share responsibility. In the Panel’s view, an important lesson to emerge from the equine influenza outbreak is the interdependence of action by regulators and biosecurity management by the private sector. Unless the lesson is learnt, in horses as in other contexts, unnecessary risks to Australia’s biosecurity status will remain.

4.3.4 Compensation as an incentive for good biosecurity practice

The incentive to share responsibility varies between business groups, reflecting a diffuse ability for businesses to capture benefits. This may even be the case for businesses with an export focus as the following two submissions noted:

‘Market drivers for biosecurity are not clearly defined for growers resulting in biosecurity being either unknown or considered as a secondary issue at best. Incentives to conduct surveillance and biosecurity risk mitigation activities are not well defined and while they can include financial, (e.g. the ability for grain companies to sell grain to new markets or for growers to receive increased premiums), legal (e.g. regulations or policy to require surveillance to be undertaken and recorded) or social (e.g. increased biosecurity awareness leading to a desire to improve the industry or community), these are not well identified or communicated.’
(Australia Grain Industry Alliance submission, p. 9)

‘One of the main difficulties in getting wide-scale improvements in risk mitigation on the ground is that growers lack a meaningful and immediate incentive to improve on-farm biosecurity practices. Certainly the market is not providing strong signals to growers to lift standards at this point in time.’ (Nursery and Garden Industry Australia submission, p. 8)

The Panel has heard concerns from a number of business groups in relation to compensation arrangements in the event of an eradication program. Compensation arrangements recognise inherent tensions between the costs and benefits of notifying a pest or disease outbreak. Appropriate notification will attract compensation for direct costs, but consequential losses (which could be widely distributed across an industry, its service sectors and the community) do not attract compensation. This is an issue of concern for a number of horticultural businesses and peak bodies.

‘... while there are some provisions for owner reimbursement costs in the EPPRD [Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed], these are minimal and relate only to the actual costs of an EPPR. There is no provision for recoupment of costs not directly related to the EPPR including produce harvested but not yet sold which must be destroyed, loss of income as a result of destruction of trees, wages for staff during non-production periods and so on. An affected grower would therefore suffer serious financial and operational impact if they were to be caught up in an EPPR, even if they were eligible for owner reimbursement payments.’
(Growcom submission, p. 12)

Under these arrangements, those that incur direct losses from pests and diseases are compensated to the overall benefit of business and the community. Business and community losses are minimised by rapid containment and early eradication of the threat. The parties being compensated do not profit under the arrangements, but should be sufficiently incentivised to report suspicion of a pest or disease at an early stage.

In most instances the ramifications of an incursion of an exotic pest or disease extend well beyond the direct impact on producers. Most participants along the value chain, such as harvesters, packers, processors, transporters, and even wholesalers and retailers, may be affected. Much of this impact will be consequential but responses to an incursion could lead to indirect losses with no provisions to compensate those businesses—beyond the farm gate—who are not signatories to Animal Health Australia’s and Plant Health Australia’s cost sharing agreements.

Some business groups, including members of Growcom, argued that consideration should be given to providing businesses with a means of covering losses not directly related to an emergency pest or disease incident, for example via an insurance scheme.

‘Growcom seeks an investigation into innovative government-supported insurance programs that would allow growers to access affordable insurance to protect themselves against events outside their control.’
(Growcom submission, p. 13)

Similarly, Horticulture Australia Limited suggested that:

‘Government underwriting of insurance to cover additional losses following an incursion linked to the implementation of on farm biosecurity requirements may be an option to address this issue and promote the widespread adoption of on farm biosecurity.’
(Horticulture Australia Limited submission, p. 14)

4.3.5 Commercial and community involvement

The scope of biosecurity has grown with prominence now given to environmental issues. Escape of exotic pests and diseases through commercial businesses highlights the need for greater business involvement. Under current arrangements, once a product such as timber furniture has arrived in Australia, businesses do not have any responsibility for biosecurity along the supply chain. However they have an important role to play being at the forefront of the post-border environment. Commercial business involvement should be focused on promoting and practicing good biosecurity. The Panel heard from the Quarantine and Exports Advisory Council on this very point—that biosecurity should be built into business practice along the supply chain.

‘The responsibility of managing risk should not be a sole AQIS responsibility but be spread across corporate Australia. There should be a legislative mechanism to ensure corporate Australia and importers take responsibility for managing the risk by ensuring appropriate systems and procedures are in place.’ (Quarantine and Exports Advisory Council supplementary submission, p. 3).

Businesses that deliberately breach Australia’s biosecurity system should attract substantial penalties where offenders can be identified. However, it is often difficult to find transgressors and even more difficult to mount successful prosecutions. Those business sectors whose dealings may represent a biosecurity threat, including those with a history of biosecurity breaches, should be subject to targeted education and awareness campaigns. This would ensure the requirements and their obligations are clearly understood, thereby improving compliance.

Awareness of biosecurity, let alone shared responsibility, is frequently lacking in the peri-urban environment. A number of recent biosecurity incidents have occurred in peri-urban areas including the first reported occurrence and subsequent spread of tomato leaf curl virus near Brisbane and periodic outbreaks of Hendra virus in Queensland. Involvement of small business, community groups and individuals in these areas is limited and represents a gap in the biosecurity continuum. This view was echoed in a number of submissions the Panel received, including from Plant Health Australia.

‘Another area of significant concern is the present disconnect from biosecurity matters of urban and peri-urban growers.

...

Being close to border entry points, usually less aware of the risk posed by exotic pests and diseases to their livelihoods or lifestyles, often having cultural or language barriers, with little knowledge of peak

industry representation, and sometimes in close proximity to larger-scale commercial operations, these groups pose a significant biosecurity threat.’ (Plant Health Australia submission, p. 25)

Uptake of farm and business biosecurity plans varies. Businesses that are regionally concentrated are more likely to invest heavily in biosecurity plans. However, the uptake is less widespread where incentives are less tangible and costs likely to be spread more widely.

‘The current biosecurity system and market signals provide little incentive to growers to improve on-farm biosecurity practices. While integration of biosecurity into existing Farm Management System programs and quality assurance systems will provide a driver, cost will be a factor in uptake ... it appears that biosecurity is not something that growers generally see as a prime consideration in how they operate their businesses, partly due [sic] to the lack of meaningful incentives to improve on-farm biosecurity practices.’ (Queensland Farmers’ Federation submission, p. 9)

The Panel’s view is that peak business groups should more strongly advocate the biosecurity message to their membership, including farmers.

The adoption of food safety management systems that incorporate Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points by many of Australia’s agricultural businesses reflects the commitment shown to ensuring food quality and safety. The systems are mandatory in some sectors and in addition to the food safety controls provided, they confer significant biosecurity benefits. These include traceability and labelling which are important elements of any biosecurity plan. The skills and expertise of the corporate sector needs to be better harnessed and its biosecurity preparedness recognised.

4.3.6 Compliance agreements

Compliance agreements and other co-regulatory arrangements provide for businesses and individuals to provide services and undertake biosecurity activities on behalf of AQIS. As the Quarantine and Exports Advisory Council submission indicated, co-regulatory arrangements work well when quarantine requirements provide commercial incentives.

‘... there are clear incentives for service providers such as fumigators (staying in business!) to get it right. Delays in the clearance of goods at the border add significantly to costs to importers and cause disruption through the logistics chain. It is therefore in the interests of importers to ensure that they get it right from a quarantine perspective to avoid these delays.’ (Quarantine and Exports Advisory Council submission, p. 8)

The Panel heard that there is an inconsistent approach to the administration of co-regulatory schemes, mostly in relation to audits, reporting, rewards and penalties for appropriate and inappropriate actions. Audit arrangements are discussed further in Chapter 8. The Panel also heard that existing co-regulatory arrangements involve unnecessary administration with the requirement for biennial and even annual re-registration processes, and a lack of recognition of businesses with an excellent compliance history, for example, customs brokers with a long history of adhering to the requirements of a compliance agreement. The Customs Brokers and Forwarders Council of Australia noted this in its submission to the Panel.

‘There are many entities operating under CA’s [compliance agreements] who are highly compliant (i.e. without a compliance breach) however they continue to be subject to intervention which results in on going high referral of AQIS entries (i.e. with attendant cost and delays in clearance).’ (Customs Brokers and Forwarders Council of Australia submission, p. 10).

4.3.7 Education and awareness campaigns are not comprehensive

Concerns were raised with the Panel regarding the underlying messages and effectiveness of current biosecurity awareness campaigns. It heard that despite these campaigns, there remains limited awareness of Australia’s biosecurity requirements among many incoming travellers, as well as among businesses that ship or post items to Australia. Existing campaigns mainly target travellers *en route* to Australia with awareness material provided via in-flight magazines and videos alerting visitors to the importance that Australia places on biosecurity. For cost reasons, targeting visitors through airlines and travel agents operating overseas has rarely occurred. The Panel also found little in the way of education campaigns targeting Australia’s trading partners (government authorities), overseas exporters, Australian importers or the growing number of people transacting business over the Internet.

Post-border awareness is developing amongst businesses as a result of initiatives by governments, Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia. However, it is seriously underdone for the aquatic environment, despite significant recent biosecurity incidents such as outbreaks of abalone viral ganglioneuritis and Asian green mussel.

‘In regard to the Spotted Anything Unusual? Campaign, a similar program could be exceptionally beneficial in regard to biofouling marine pests if targeted at those undertaking vessel maintenance. Some similar programs have been implemented in some States but focused on detecting exotic species in the marine environment.’ (Australian Shipowners Association submission, p. 6)

4.4 Panel's consideration

4.4.1 The imperative of One Biosecurity: a working partnership and shared responsibility

Engagement with business and the general community on biosecurity must occur consistently and continually at several levels, from policy setting through co-regulatory alternatives to actions by individuals and companies, before, at and after the border.

The message of **One Biosecurity: a working partnership** needs to be made available to a wide audience. Effective awareness campaigns and education that target all facets of the biosecurity continuum are essential, but particularly focusing on areas that have lacked representation in the past. These include aquatic and environmental biosecurity, travellers from non-traditional countries and Internet business transactions. This will require a more concerted involvement from the general community, the environment sector, organisations and businesses with a direct interest in the aquatic environment, airlines and travel agents, and Internet business providers.

4.4.2 Improving business and government consultation

To rectify a fairly consistent pattern of criticism from both government and business, the Panel proposes a fresh strategic direction to national biosecurity consultation that builds on the theme of 'shared responsibility' across the biosecurity continuum.

The Panel recommends that a new Biosecurity Advisory Council be established as an advisory body to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the National Biosecurity Commission and the Director of Biosecurity. The Biosecurity Advisory Council should have an independent chair appointed by the Minister in consultation with the states. Other members of the Council should also be appointed by the Minister for terms that are staggered to ensure continuity.

The Council should consist of skills-based members drawn from the Commonwealth and state governments, business (through Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia), academics and non-government organisations. Membership should be non-representative, consisting of individuals with substantial knowledge or experience across a range of disciplines, including agricultural, environmental and health science, risk assessment, business management and operational aspects of biosecurity. The skills base is essential to ensure that the Council is able to provide frank and unbiased advice to the Minister and the National Biosecurity Commission.

Recommendation

- 23 A Biosecurity Advisory Council (replacing the Quarantine and Exports Advisory Council) should:
- a be established to provide strategic and policy advice on biosecurity issues to the Minister, to the National Biosecurity Commission and to the Director of Biosecurity; and
 - b consist of non-representative members with a broad range of skills in biosecurity and related disciplines drawn from the Commonwealth and state and territory governments, business, academia and non-government organisations.

The Council should operate as a biosecurity advisor and should consider the functions of all agencies with an interest in biosecurity across the continuum. These agencies include those providing pre-emptive biosecurity programs offshore, those conducting risk assessments to underpin biosecurity policy, those implementing the policy, and those conducting post-border monitoring, surveillance and response activities for national priority exotic pests and diseases and any other issues associated with the Commonwealth's extended reach (see Chapter 2). The Council should also provide advice on the management of emergency pest and disease incursions and the controls for endemic pests and diseases of national significance. The Council should subsume the role of the Quarantine and Exports Advisory Council with administrative support provided by the National Biosecurity Authority.

Establishment of the Biosecurity Advisory Council will provide a forum for discussing significant biosecurity issues not part of the remit of Industry Consultative Committees. The Panel considers that Industry Consultative Committees should maintain their current functions—that is, consultation on cost recovery and other operational issues.

Recommendation

- 24 Commodity and/or sector based Industry Consultative Committees should continue to discuss operational biosecurity issues including the delivery of services and cost recovery for those services.

4.4.3 Business involvement in cost sharing agreements

As discussed earlier, the Panel has observed that a number of industries are not currently involved in cost sharing deeds or agreements even though they may

be members of Animal Health Australia or Plant Health Australia. This raises an equity issue and perverse incentives in that some industries would not share all the costs of response activities for emergency pests and diseases but may share the benefits of an effective response. Furthermore, non-signatories are not obliged to enter the risk mitigation commitments that are integral components of the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement and the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed. This increases the risk for all, including those who do accept their biosecurity obligations under the agreements, as well as those who are ‘free riders’.

The Panel strongly believes that, in the spirit and the practice of shared responsibility, all industries should be involved in cost sharing agreements, and that governments must avoid socialising the costs associated with emergency responses, or unilaterally accepting risks and responsibilities that should be shared by government and business. For governments to do so would be the antithesis of shared responsibility.

Governments also need to consider the role of the Aquatic Animal Health Committee and associated committees with an interest in aquatic biosecurity. At present aquatic businesses and their organisations are not members of Animal Health Australia or Plant Health Australia and as a consequence there is no agreement on how costs and responsibilities would be divided in the event of an exotic pest or disease incursion. The Panel’s view is that those who are not signatories to the relevant cost sharing agreements should contribute to their share of an emergency response by way of a levy to recover costs.

Recommendation

- 25 All animal, plant and aquatic industries should commit to sharing the responsibility and costs of pest and disease response actions, with those who are not signatories to the relevant cost sharing agreement meeting their share of a response, possibly by way of levy to recover costs.

Furthermore, importers may avoid much of the cost associated with eradication or control of exotic pest and disease incursions but continue to benefit from trade in commodities that may pose a biosecurity risk to the environment, business and the broader community. It is essential that importers continue to ensure that product originates from legitimate sources, complies with Australia’s import requirements, and that imported product is on-sold for the intended end-use purposes. The National Biosecurity Authority should consider greater use of pecuniary penalties in these circumstances (discussed further in Chapter 8).

4.4.4 Compensation

While the Panel has sympathy for the arguments that consequential losses may place a heavy and unfair burden on affected businesses, the case for government subsidised insurance arrangements is complex, with a range of prudential considerations to be taken into account. The Panel does not consider it has the information or expertise to make a judgement on the merit or commercial viability of such a scheme. The lack of a commercial insurance option implies that it is unlikely to be viable as a stand-alone product. The Panel also notes a similar debate over many years regarding a multi-peril crop insurance scheme, which has also failed to become established commercially or attract the interest of governments to subsidise it.

In principle, a government subsidised or mandatory scheme would amount to a form of risk sharing across the community. It could be thought of as being analogous to other forms of compulsory insurance, such as third party motor vehicle insurance. Arguments in favour of any such scheme would include equity and possibly the scope it may enable for a less risk averse approach to managing import biosecurity risks. It could, however, equally be argued that it would be costly and create a disincentive for good biosecurity management across the continuum, including by the private sector.

In the absence of further information, the Panel does not have sufficient grounds to support a government backed insurance scheme to cover some of the consequential losses of an emergency response.

4.4.5 Biosecurity plans for vulnerable sectors not covered by existing arrangements

The Panel sees a number of areas where responsibility for biosecurity is inadequate or lacking commitment by relevant parties. Involvement by non-government and non-business stakeholders will be essential if Australia is to address biosecurity threats to the environment, amenities and other areas valued by the community.

Agriculture dominates the membership and agenda of both Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia. The Panel considers there is an immediate need for the inclusion of the aquatic wildcatch and aquaculture industries, nature conservation property managers and indigenous land managers into these organisations, as full members, associate members, or as observers according to the body concerned.

The Panel recognises the value of Industry Biosecurity Plans but notes that these plans have not been universally adopted by farmers and businesses. Businesses

and individuals are more likely to establish biosecurity plans where they have clear incentives to do so. The benefits of adopting Industry Biosecurity Plans need to be actively communicated to farmers and other businesses. The Panel endorses the initiative of several industries to employ industry biosecurity officers. These positions are valuable for promoting the adoption of biosecurity plans and raising awareness of biosecurity more broadly. They also serve as a contact point for members and other stakeholders who need further information on pests and diseases, and surveillance and monitoring activities in their sector. Ultimately, if there is not general adoption of industry biosecurity planning, it may be necessary to apply eligibility conditions for reimbursement of costs under cost sharing arrangements.

While customs brokers, freight forwarders, importers and retailers do not have a formal place in existing industry biosecurity plans, they play an important role in the management of the biosecurity chain. The Quarantine and Exports Advisory Council suggested to the Panel that biosecurity obligations should be formally recognised under corporate regulatory arrangements as a duty of company directors, which would cover this sector as well as agribusinesses. The Panel believes that such a broad obligation for company directors would be difficult to support and implement. It agrees however, that more attention should be given to promoting the need for sound biosecurity management to all those who play a part in the import and export chain. This can be reinforced through more effective use of compliance agreements, feedback of information particularly in relation to post-border detections of exotic pests and diseases and appropriate penalties.

Recommendations

- 26 The membership of Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia should be broadened to encompass environmental pest and disease issues including those affecting the aquatic and terrestrial environments.
- 27 To enhance biosecurity planning:
 - a where Industry Biosecurity Plans already exist, there should be strong encouragement for their implementation at an individual business level;
 - b industries or sectors that are vulnerable but not covered by Biosecurity Plans (for example, the aquatic wilddcatch and aquaculture industries), should be encouraged to develop a Biosecurity Plan; and
 - c governments should work with managers of land for conservation purposes to ensure that they have appropriate biosecurity plans and practices.

As part of enhancing shared responsibility and accountability, the Panel recommends greater deterrents to breaches of biosecurity law. The legislation should provide penalties that are proportionate to the threat posed by a breach. The Panel was provided with information that when New Zealand introduced a non-discretionary \$200 ‘on-the-spot’ fine for an incorrect declaration on passenger arrival cards, the number of interceptions of prohibited items halved. The AQIS system provides for ‘on-the-spot’ fines, however the Panel has heard that these are applied in a discretionary manner and their application is left to individual officers. The Panel believes that consideration should be given to making them non-discretionary for all undeclared and misdeclared quarantinable items.

Education is very important in reducing misdeclarations by incoming passengers but it is essential that fines are consistently applied and administered. Automatic non-discretionary fines are the most effective way to guarantee a change in traveller behaviour. It is recognised, however, that they would raise some concerns from tourism and travel businesses, and administrative arrangements at major airports at peak times would have to be developed to ensure that their application and collection can be managed efficiently. It is important to provide airlines, cruise lines, and tour group organisers with suitable awareness material in a variety of forms that can be provided to their customers before they depart for Australia. Good educational material including sufficient warnings of Australia’s fine regime are required so that incoming passengers are clearly aware of the consequences of incorrectly declaring quarantinable items on arrival.

The Panel has closely reviewed the outbreak of citrus canker in Queensland in 2004. This matter and the events leading to it were reported upon in 2006 by a Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee—*The Administration by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry of the Citrus Canker Outbreak*. In the Panel’s view it is important that the National Biosecurity Authority have a strong investigative arm with appropriate links to Commonwealth law enforcement and prosecutorial authorities. In addition, less complex and more modern biosecurity legislation would support effective investigative and prosecutorial powers and reduce the risk of technical error.

Encouragement and acknowledgement of good biosecurity practice within the community should be provided through a continuation of programs such as the Quarantine Awards currently run by the Quarantine and Exports Advisory Council. A National Biosecurity Award program should be the flagship of a campaign to raise the profile of biosecurity and recognise actions of individuals and the broader community that go well beyond expected compliance.

4.4.6 Improving and expanding co-regulation

The Panel considers there should be improvements to existing arrangements for co-regulation of biosecurity services that would enable them to be more widely used.

Incentives should be available where they can reasonably be offered to encourage superior biosecurity behaviour on the part of importers and shipping companies. The Panel has heard examples of outstanding performance by certain companies importing products, as well as performance in relation to ballast water and biofouling management by some shipping lines (including those providing regular services to some of Australia's major resource exporting industries). However, current arrangements do not allow recognition of exemplary practices by reducing prescribed rates of container inspection. As a result, cost savings to both the importer and the inspection agency have been foregone.

There should be a concerted effort by the National Biosecurity Authority to provide greater incentives for businesses with excellent compliance histories. By using risk profiling to identify importers, brokers and commodities with an excellent track record of compliance, similar to that adopted for inspection of exports, the Authority would free resources to devote to areas of higher risk. This is discussed further in Chapters 7 and 8.

Recommendation

- 28 There should be:
- a greater consistency in the administration, auditing, and response to non-compliance of co-regulators;
 - b reduced regulatory burdens for businesses that maintain an excellent track record of compliance with co-regulatory agreements; and
 - c wider adoption of co-regulatory arrangements.

4.4.7 Communicating Australia's biosecurity arrangements

The Panel considers that biosecurity education programs have been quite effective but could be better targeted to those areas where biosecurity awareness is lacking. Communicating Australia's biosecurity arrangements requires a strategy that is consistent and targeted.

Pre-border communication should inform trading partners and travellers on Australia's biosecurity status and the measures adopted to maintain this status. Communication with exporters to Australia should focus on the commercial

benefits and imperatives of complying with Australia's biosecurity requirements. Given that most trading partners are aware of the costs and inconvenience of compliance failures (especially having cargo held up pending assessment or, in the ultimate, rejected), the target audience should be receptive. The Australian Fumigation and Accreditation Scheme (see Chapter 8) should be used as a model.

Awareness programs directed at travellers entering Australia have proved successful in reducing the rate of seizure of undeclared items, a trend that continues downward. While higher on-the-spot fines for undeclared items that are seized may change behaviour among high-risk passengers, it would be preferable to educate all travellers on Australia's biosecurity conditions prior to their departure. There has been mixed success in educating visitors to date but efforts to discourage foreign travellers from leaving home with items of biosecurity concern should continue. The Internet provides avenues for informing international travellers of their responsibilities to support Australia's unique biosecurity status. Consideration should be given to other options for disseminating awareness material including greater utilisation of airlines and travel agents, but recognising the likely costs of these approaches and difficulties achieving comprehensive coverage.

Border biosecurity activities should reinforce the messages delivered in national campaigns and programs directed to travellers, importers and other businesses. The Panel notes the beneficial contribution provided by the *Quarantine Matters!* campaign and supports the continuation and expansion of such exercises.

The Panel considers that post-border communication campaigns, such as utilising the profile of the late Steve Irwin, have increased recognition of Australia's biosecurity status. The focus in future should be on interaction with leading business groups, environmental organisations, and community bodies that influence public opinion. The National Biosecurity Council should be involved in extending the biosecurity message.

These initiatives by and large already exist, but need to be reinvigorated. With the appropriate level of support and encouragement they would provide a more valuable conduit for information flow to the relevant constituencies. Continual monitoring of awareness campaigns have demonstrated their ongoing effectiveness and should be continued.

Peri-urban areas represent a biosecurity risk that will remain a challenge to address, but one that justifies greater effort to tackle given the potential risk posed. Individuals and businesses in peri-urban areas may not be members of industry groups nor signatories to cost sharing arrangements and therefore will remain distanced from developments in biosecurity preparedness and response. Existing programs should be expanded to communicate biosecurity

responsibilities to hobby farmers and small part-time producers. These programs should utilise community leaders, cultural groups and focal points such as farmers' markets in order to heighten biosecurity awareness in peri-urban areas.

Recommendations

- 29 To enhance communications effectiveness:
 - a messages promoting Australia's biosecurity should cover the biosecurity continuum;
 - b new communication options, including those available on the Internet, should be employed by the National Biosecurity Authority; and
 - c particular efforts should be made in collaboration with the states and territories, local governments, community and business groups to inform peri-urban farmers, including from non-English speaking backgrounds, of Australia's biosecurity policies and to engage them in monitoring, surveillance and response strategies.

- 30 The National Biosecurity Authority should develop education and awareness programs for:
 - a all importers regarding their obligations to meet Australia's import requirements; and
 - b the competent inspection and certifying agencies in the exporting countries to ensure that they meet Australia's import requirements.