Biosecurity is Our Future

Freycinet
Photo courtesy: Simon de Salis

Date: May 2013

pibaa
PRIMARY INDUSTRY BIOSECURITY ACTION ALLIANCE

This list acknowledges past and present PIBAA members who have had input into this document:
Wine Tasmania (WT)
Tasmanian Aquaculture Council (TAC)
Oysters Tasmania
Tasmanian Abalone Council (TAC)
Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association (TFGA)
Fruit Growers Tasmania (FGT)
Agricultural Contractors of Tasmania (AGT)
Tasmanian Island Pork Alliance Inc (TIPA)
Tasmanian Crop Pollination Association (TCPA)
Tasmanian Salmonid Growers Association (TSGA)
Nursery and Garden Industry TAS (NGIT)
Tasracing Pty Ltd
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Tasmanian Agricultural Productivity Group (TAPG)
Hop Products Australia
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Poppy Growers Tasmania Inc (PGT)
Primary Employers Tasmania (PET)
Tasmanian Quality Assured (TQA)
Forest Industries Association Tasmania (FIAT)

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Department Primary Industry, Parks, Wildlife & Environment
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Tasmania
Explore the possibilities

Contents

Photo courtesy: Oysters Tasmania

Who is PIBAA?

On Wednesday 14th April 2010 a group of Primary Industry representatives met to discuss the direction of biosecurity within Tasmania. The reason for the meeting was due to the concerns that various industry sectors have in relation to current services and the threat of reduced services in the future. As a result of the meeting it was decided to officially form the Primary Industry Biosecurity Action Alliance (PIBAA).

The Alliance represents a diverse group of primary producers from agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, nursery and horticulture. Although issues of interest within biosecurity and quarantine are varied the key concerns for the group remain focused on ensuring the State Government has a continued commitment to maintaining and strengthening biosecurity to protect primary industries and the states economy.

Tasmanian food is one of the best ambassadors for our state not only nationally but globally. Reducing our biosecurity would potentially risk many of the state's global icons – abalone, cherries, salmon, wine, cheese, honey - to name a few. Investing in biosecurity is minimal insurance compared to the global and national capacity these products have.

The significance of strong biosecurity to Tasmania is fundamental to the long term strategies of this state. The primary industry sector is aligned with the future vision of the state being a producer of premium, high-quality product for national and international markets – this cannot be attained if the biosecurity funding in the state is not given the financial priority it requires.`

Salamanca Market
Photo: Lucy Gregg

The Process

From the initial *Biosecurity For Our Future* launched in July 2010 PIBAA have been actively engaging industry, government and other stakeholders to reinforce the significance of biosecurity to the Tasmanian Primary Industry sector. New primary industry members have joined PIBAA and additional recommendations have been added to the original twenty two developed in 2010.

With the release of the Tasmanian Economic Development Plan (EDP) in 2011, PIBAA were disappointed that biosecurity had once again been largely ignored, particularly given the significant engagement of PIBAA members in the development of the EDP, especially in the food & agriculture sector.

PIBAA further engaged with the Tasmanian Government to ensure that biosecurity was properly addressed in future policy and funding and as a consequence PIBAA received funding of $8000 (jointly shared between DPIPWE & DEDTA) to review and prioritize the PIBAA Recommendations.

PIBAA then planned a review process which included:

- Survey of PIBAA members to prioritize PIBAA Recommendations
- Workshop with PIBAA members to define outcomes and actions of the PIBAA Recommendations
- Development of *Biosecurity Is Our Future* – Biosecurity outcomes, actions and strategies for Primary Industry in Tasmania
- Workshop with stakeholders to present *Biosecurity Is Our Future* and feed in additional comments and feedback.
- Final review and release of *Biosecurity Is Our Future*

The economic viability of Primary Industry in Tasmania is dependent upon strong biosecurity policy within the State. PIBAA will continue to proactively engage with Government to ensure that the biosecurity risks are addressed in a timely and proactive manner.

North East Tasmania
Photo: Lucy Gregg

Strategies

Strategy One: Biosecurity is a Shared Responsibility

- Priority 2: Formation of Primary Industry Biosecurity Consultative Committee
- Priority 3: Independent Analysis into Cost/Benefit of Area Freedom to Tasmania's Economy
- Priority 7: Development of Holistic 'On-Farm' Biosecurity Strategy
- Priority 11: Compensation Policy and Guidelines for an Incursion of an exotic Pest or Disease
- Priority 16: Development of a Communication Strategy
- Priority 21: Facilitate Uptake of Certification Schemes and Approved Officers

Strategy Two: State Government Actively Promotes Strong Quarantine and Biosecurity Policy

- Priority 1: Formal Recognition of Regional Differentiation
- Priority 4: Ongoing Provision of AQIS Services by Quarantine Tasmania
- Priority 9: Embedding Biosecurity into Whole of Government Policy & Planning
- Priority 13: Climate Change Research into Potential Changes to Pest & Disease Dynamics in Primary Industry
- Priority 19: Fully Computerised Systems within Quarantine Tasmania
- Priority 22: Review of Fee-for-Service Activities

Strategy Three: Maintain Tasmania's Disease Free Status

- Priority 5: Review of Commercial Importation Policies
- Priority 6: Review of Emergency Preparedness/ Response Plans
- Priority 8: Review of Incoming Freight Inspection Services
- Priority 10: Maintaining Trapping and Surveillance Programs within Tasmania
- Priority 12: Review of Incoming Passenger Inspection Services and Feasibility Study into the Introduction of Passenger Declaration Cards
- Priority 14: Development of further Strategic Pest and Disease Monitoring
- Priority 15: Biosecurity Audit of Refuse and Garbage Disposal within Tasmania
- Priority 17: Maintenance of Post Entry Quarantine Stations
- Priority 18: Simulated Emergency Response to a Exotic Pest or Disease Incursion
- Priority 20: Identification of Biosecurity Risks in relation to Irrigation Developments
- Priority 23: Review Quarantine and Biosecurity on King Is. And Flinders Is.

Northern Midlands
Photo: Lucy Gregg

PRIORITY 1

Formal Recognition of Regional Differentiation

Regional differentiation is enshrined in federal legislation

ACTIONS:

- Tasmanian Premier write to the Prime Minister and other Tasmanian Senators to clearly state Tasmania's case for formal recognition of regional differentiation in relation to quarantine and biosecurity matters due to Tasmania's special circumstances and geographic isolation.
- Gain tri-partisan support at a state level for formal recognition for regional differentiation
- PIBAA to write to Tasmanian federal representatives and relevant ministers to state the case for regional differentiation.
- Scientific, technical information needs to be available to demonstrate the need for differentiation.
- Engage with other states and industries regarding the significance of regional differentiation.

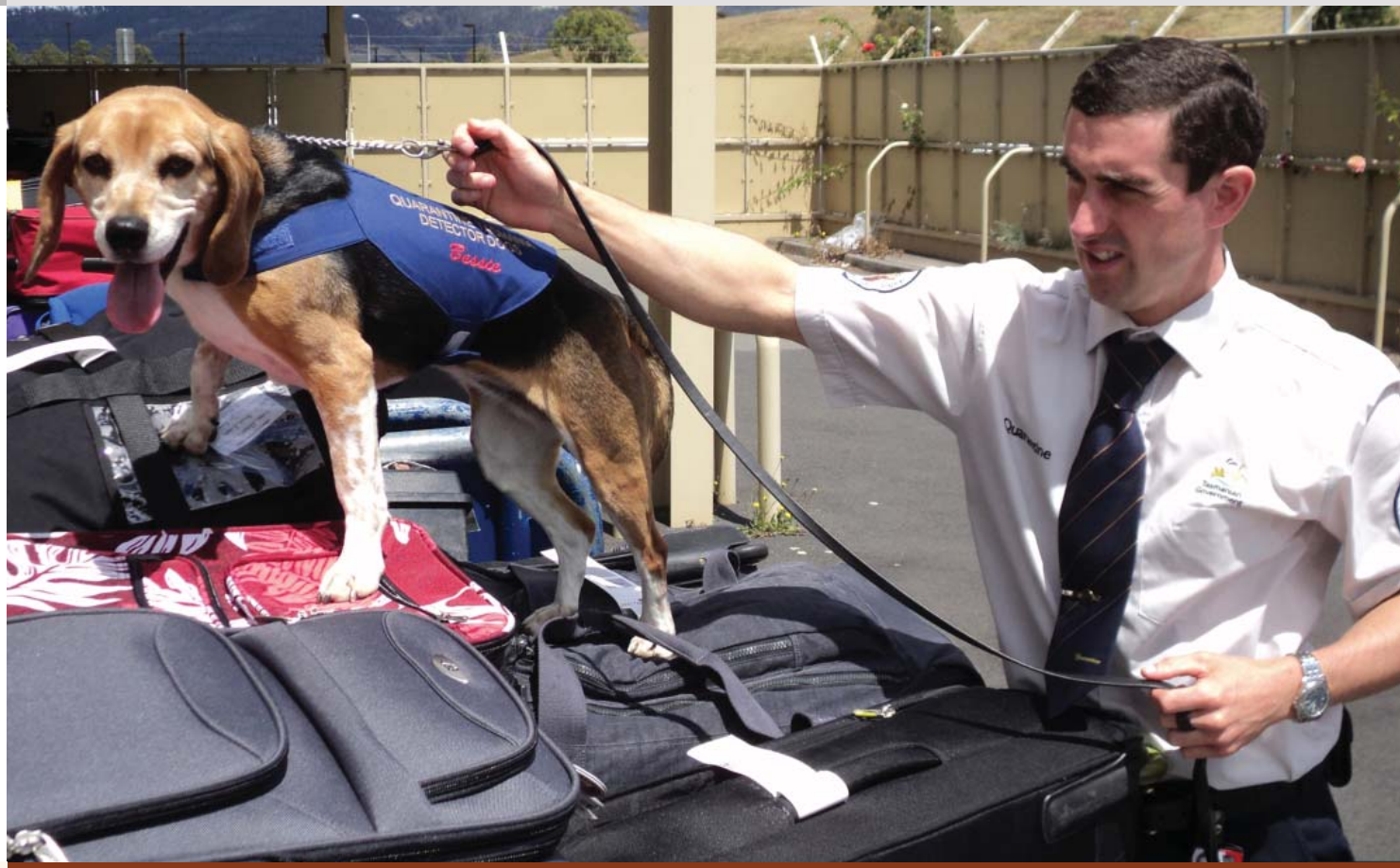

Photo: Quarantine Tasmania

OUTCOMES:

- Tasmania can exercise sovereign right
- Tasmania has the flexibility to respond to biosecurity risks

PRIORITY 2

Formation of Primary Industry Biosecurity Consultative Committee

A Ministerial endorsed Consultative Committee is formed which addresses industry biosecurity issues in a proactive manner

ACTIONS:

- PIBAA continues to discuss formation of Consultative Committee with State Government and whether it should be formalised as an Advisory Board.
- PIBAA has input into the terms of reference, membership composition and communications strategy of the Consultative Committee.
- Responsive Risk Assessment will be a fundamental aim of the Consultative Committee.
- The Consultative Committee should have an initial MOU with the lead Minister until the role of the committee is legislatively formalised.

OUTCOMES:

- Consultative Committee is formed, reporting directly to the responsible Minister, and recognised through legislation.
- Consultative Committee is recognised within State Biosecurity Strategy & Policy
- PIBAA has an integral role within the membership of the Committee

Photo: Lucy Gregg

PRIORITY 3

Independent Analysis into Cost/Benefit of Area Freedom to Tasmania's Economy

Investment in Biosecurity is seen as good insurance to guarantee the future of primary industry in Tasmania

ACTIONS:

- PIBAA seeks the appointment of an independent consultant to assess the costs and benefits of providing strong biosecurity for Tasmania versus the adverse effects on the Tasmanian economy if an incursion occurs.
- Outcomes of the analysis will underpin the argument for regional differentiation,
- Analysis should have a holistic approach and include the affects on tourism and hospitality.
- Costs include social, economic and environmental.
- Validated data will assist in planning and allocation of funding for biosecurity

OUTCOMES:

- The Cost/Benefit calculation for ROI on biosecurity is known
- Biosecurity investment can be prioritised
- Long term strategic planning and investment can be justified across all tiers of government and industry

Photo courtesy: Quarantine Tasmania

PRIORITY 4

Ongoing DAFF Service Provision by Quarantine Tasmania

Provision of DAFF Biosecurity & Quarantine Services in Tasmania are maintained and operated by Quarantine Tasmania

ACTIONS:

- PIBAA work with agri-business and peak bodies to raise the significance of this issue.
- Continue to lobby the state and federal politicians on maintaining the service provision arrangements.
- Further investigation of synergies and integration of services between DAFF and Quarantine Tasmania.
- Explore further opportunities to reduce the administrative and regulatory burden.

Photo courtesy: Nursery Garden Industry Tasmania

OUTCOMES:

- The current MOU with DAFF is maintained at no less than the present level
- Streamlining of state/federal processes

PRIORITY 5

Review Commercial Importation Policies

Biosecurity integrity maintained with minimum regulation

ACTIONS:

- Gap analysis of existing schemes to see areas of potential.
- Government to engage with industry to identify areas which can be streamlined.
- Understand the most cost effective systems which comply with import requirements.
- Identify requirements within the system which require legislative changes.

Photo courtesy: Richard Jupe

OUTCOMES:

- Recognised industry programs are adopted or enhanced to increase efficiencies
- Quarantine inspections are undertaken by authorised persons other than Government
- Strong government and industry relationships & collaborations

PRIORITY 6

Review Emergency Preparedness/ Response Plans

Tasmanian primary industry should have the confidence in the capacity of the State Government to respond to an incursion

ACTIONS:

- State Government develops, in conjunction with industry and other stakeholders, comprehensive systems, processes and framework to address an exotic pest or disease incursion which is continually reviewed and updated.
- Peak bodies to promote industry awareness of biosecurity response plans
- A comprehensive communication strategy is developed to adequately deal with a pest or disease incursion.
- Response policies need to address the social and personal issues of reporting a pest incursion.
- State government is to increase community awareness in relation to pest and disease incursion.

Photo: Lucy Gregg

OUTCOMES:

- Emergency Plans are in place and the state has the capacity to respond to a pest incursion.
- The state has the financial capacity to respond to an exotic pest or disease.
- Emergency plans are communicated to all stakeholders in a clear and concise manner through logical plans and systems

PRIORITY 7

Development of Holistic 'On-Farm' Biosecurity Strategy

On-Farm biosecurity strategies will be implemented by more Tasmanian farming enterprises as standard best practice.

ACTIONS:

- Facilitate behavioural change to increase adoption of on-farm biosecurity practices by individual enterprises, including recreational and agri-tourism.
- Develop an extension strategy that goes further than on-farm
- Develop a central website to access on-farm biosecurity information including generic and specialist farm biosecurity policies.
- Undertake a gap analysis of current on-farm biosecurity models i.e PHA, AHA etc .
- Indentify current areas of weakness in existing biosecurity plans.

OUTCOMES:

- An overarching biosecurity framework exists for primary industry
- Sector specific unit s/modules are available for a diversity of stakeholders which focus on biosecurity risks.
- Integration of biosecurity into other certification schemes/ codes of practice etc

Photo courtesy: Wine Tasmania

PRIORITY 8

Review of Incoming Freight Inspection Services

Greater efficiency in processing incoming freight whilst maintaining the barrier integrity.

ACTIONS:

- Central database to manage incoming commercial freight both nationally and internationally which will enable risks to be managed more effectively.
- Review current inspection systems and identify weaknesses or gaps and potentially how these weaknesses or gaps may be filled, including through the use of quality assurance and other certification schemes.
- Engage industry, freight companies and DPIPWE to discuss systems to streamline the inspection process.
- Review of non-commercial freight sent through post and with couriers/domestic freight. Update the risk assessment of this pathway given changes in on-line purchasing etc
- On-the-ground operations are adequately funded to ensure minimum inspection percentages are met.

OUTCOMES:

- Updated risk assessment process for incoming freight
- On-the-ground operational systems are adequately funded
- Streamlined and cost effective freight inspection processes

Photo courtesy: Oysters Tasmania

PRIORITY 9

Embedding Biosecurity to Whole-of-Government Policy and Planning

All biosecurity threats are being monitored and controlled to an appropriate level of protection for commercial industry

ACTIONS:

- Undertake a gap analysis of government (local and state) to understand the scope of biosecurity planning in new developments and planning proposals.
- Identification of areas where biosecurity needs to be addressed i.e peri-urban dwellers, hobby farmers, recreational fishers, equine pursuits, agri-tourism etc
- Need to develop exit strategies/policies for abandoned or neglected commercial developments i.e orchards, oyster farms, nurseries etc

Photo courtesy: Simon de Salis

OUTCOMES:

- Biosecurity is embedded into policy and planning at all levels of Government and across all departments.
- Biosecurity is integrated into all-of-government strategies i.e TasTogether

PRIORITY 10

Maintenance of Ongoing Trapping & Surveillance Programs

Industry has confidence in the monitoring and surveillance systems undertaken by State Government.

ACTIONS:

- PIBAA to see government commitment to maintain current trapping and surveillance programs.
- Review current trapping and surveillance systems to ensure that resources are maximised.
- Investigate potential of collaboration between Quarantine Tasmania and industry to streamline trapping and surveillance without jeopardising integrity of data.

Photo courtesy: Simon de Salis

OUTCOMES:

- Overseas markets have validated trapping and surveillance data.
- Market access is guaranteed by maintaining area freedom from pests and diseases

PRIORITY 11

Compensation Policy & Guidelines for an Incursion of a Serious Pest or Disease

Compensation implications are understood by all parties and stakeholders

ACTIONS:

- Industry and government need to understand the discuss the implications of what could happen in the event of a serious pest outbreak.
- Understand the costs involved in potentially eradicating or controlling a serious disease.
- Compare compensation packages in other states, nationally and across different industries i.e marine, plant, animal

Photo courtesy: Tasmania Abalone Council

OUTCOMES:

- Clearly defined guidelines and responsibilities in the event of a serious incursion.
- All sectors of primary industry have confidence in the processes that occur as consequences of an outbreak or incursion.

PRIORITY 12

Review of Incoming Passenger Inspections & Feasibility Study into Introduction of Passenger Declaration Cards

Risks associated with incoming passengers carrying prohibited material is reduced to an appropriate level of risk

ACTIONS:

- Assess current processes and pathways for passengers in relation to potential pest incursions (biosecurity hazard analysis)
- Analyse historical data in relation to incoming passenger biosecurity breaches to identify the most significant risks
- Liaise with tourism and hospitality industry to maximise outcomes in relation to biosecurity
- Explore communications strategies to more fully engage passengers to Tasmania in relation to biosecurity risks.

OUTCOMES:

- Biosecurity threats through importation of goods through passengers is reduced.
- Increased awareness of the travelling public of biosecurity threats
- High risk ports of entry are monitored more vigorously
- Penalty units for breaches are more substantial and act as a deterrent.

Photo courtesy: Tourism Tasmania Image Library
Photographer: Melinda Ta

PRIORITY 13

Climate Change Research into Potential Changes to Pest and disease dynamics in Primary Industry

Primary industry is able to take a strategic approach to managing pests & disease scenarios as a consequence of climate change

ACTIONS:

- Identify particular threats of commercial significance through undertaking a gap analysis of current research.
- Undertake research and modelling of pests of concerns to develop risk profiles of major potential pests.
- Research undertaken to investigate management implications of commercially significant pests and diseases.

Photo: Lucy Gregg

OUTCOMES:

- Adequate knowledge of how climate change may change pest management dynamics across different primary industry sectors
- Climate change research regarding biosecurity issues is a standard inclusion in primary industry R & D

PRIORITY 14

Development of Further Strategic Pest & Disease Monitoring

Industry is confident that the threat of new pests or diseases is reduced due to proactive monitoring & surveillance.

ACTIONS:

- Strategic introduction of further pest and disease monitoring for market access and surveillance.
- Commercial enterprises undertake a compulsory biosecurity checklist to identify potential areas of risk.
- Introduction of further community awareness to assist in quick identification of potential threats.
- Government maintain trained staff and laboratories for testing and identification.

Photo courtesy: Simon de Salis

OUTCOMES:

- Collaboration between industry and government to reduce potential biosecurity risks.
- Early identification of an incursion or outbreak through surveillance monitoring
- Monitoring, testing and identification is undertaken quickly and accurately.

PRIORITY 15

Biosecurity Audit of Refuse & Garbage Disposal

On-site biosecurity polices are implemented across all refuse and garbage sites including points of entry into Tasmania

ACTIONS:

- Conduct an audit into refuse and garbage disposal practices within Tasmania including medical centres, laboratories, commercial fishing vessels, research vessels, cruise ships & passenger vessels, refuse from outlying islands and Antarctica, itinerant yachts as well as commercial establishments—nurseries, pet shops, aquariums, supermarkets and other retail outlets.
- Increased public awareness campaign in this area. (Not typically targeted in public awareness campaigns).
- Implement signage in ecologically sensitive areas and commercial enterprises in relation to appropriate refuse disposal.

Photo courtesy: Simon de Salis

OUTCOMES:

- A State Government Biosecurity Policy exists for waste and refuse disposal
- Key stakeholders understand and manage the biosecurity risks of refuse and garbage disposal

PRIORITY 16

Development of Communication Strategy

General public is aware of the far reaching implications of biosecurity and supportive of funding

ACTIONS:

- Strengthened commitment by stakeholders to maintain and expand the public awareness campaign.
- Government to develop a core of common language resources for industry and stakeholders to use. Information suitable for websites, brochures, signage etc
- Co-operative engagement with airlines, cruise ships and TT Line
- Increase presence of quarantine staff (and beagles) at major points of entry. (Beagles are very successful method of community engagement and education).

OUTCOMES:

- General public has a much greater appreciation and understanding of biosecurity within Tasmania, and implications on industry and Tasmania's economy
- All stakeholders take a greater responsibility to maintain biosecurity status of Tasmania.

Photo: Lucy Gregg

PRIORITY 17

Maintenance of Post Entry Quarantine Station

Expansion of Tasmanian Primary industry is not inhibited due to lack of access to plant quarantine facilities

ACTIONS:

- An appropriate post-entry quarantine station is maintained to ensure new breeding material and commercial plant material can enter the state.
- A review undertaken on the current facility to assess the capacity and utilisation and how it aligns with the needs of industry.

Photo: Lucy Gregg

OUTCOMES:

- Industry has the ability to access new plant material for commercial benefit and expansion.
- Flexible and cost effective post-entry quarantine options are available

PRIORITY 18

Simulated Emergency Response to an Exotic Pest or Disease Incursion

Government, stakeholders and industry have confidence that Emergency Response Plans are effective when activated and that all persons along the chain know their responsibilities

ACTIONS:

- A simulated emergency response be undertaken in the immediate future and such activities are scheduled into the calendar every 2-3 years.
- Stakeholders participate in other simulated emergency response activities undertaken in other states.

Photo courtesy: Tourism Tasmania Image Library
Photographer: Don Stephens

OUTCOMES:

- Regular practice of SERP's as part of a training continuum for government and industry
- Strengthened links between government and industry regarding emergency pest incursion responses

PRIORITY 19

Implementation of Fully Computerised Systems within Quarantine Tasmania

Quarantine Tasmania is fully electronic and retrieval and processing of data is undertaken in an accurate & timely manner

ACTIONS:

- Stakeholders identify the major areas where electronic lodgement and processing would increase efficiency and reduce costs.
- Reduction of manual processing would allow redeployment of staff into other areas.
- Electronic systems would allow easy identification of high risk product and appropriate resources allocation.

Photo courtesy: Tasmanian Island Pork

OUTCOMES:

- Lodgement and processing of paperwork is undertaken electronically and such information can be communicated quickly between stakeholders
- Border protection systems and recall systems are more effective

PRIORITY 20

Identification of Biosecurity Risks in relation to Irrigation Developments

Biosecurity threats associated with irrigation and water developments are known and appropriate risk management strategies implemented.

ACTIONS:

- Government to undertake a risk analysis to identify biosecurity threats related to irrigation or water developments.
- Development of a biosecurity policy which will underpin any future water developments.
- PIBAA to discuss water biosecurity issues with Irrigation Tasmania and other relevant government departments.
- Integrate biosecurity with on-farm NRM property management planning modules.
- Water born biosecurity threats are incorporated into 'on-farm' biosecurity strategies.

OUTCOMES:

- Biosecurity threats are assessed in new water developments/ plans.
- Biosecurity is incorporated into standard planning and approval processes.

Photo courtesy: JW Kirkwood

PRIORITY 21

Facilitate Uptake of Certification Schemes & AO's

Business operates cost-effective, flexible and manageable quarantine & inspection self-inspection/operation options

ACTIONS:

- Quarantine Tasmania engage with industry to educate business on possible self-inspection options
- Lobby for certification schemes to apply across national and export inspection protocols
- Lobby for recognised QA schemes to compliment biosecurity certification schemes

Photo courtesy: Tasmanian Abalone Council

OUTCOMES:

- Tasmanian businesses have streamlined their business through adoption of appropriate approved certification schemes
- Quarantine Tasmania and industry are co-operatively working together to manage biosecurity risks
- Existing QA schemes are embedded into Quarantine certification schemes to avoid duplication and double auditing

PRIORITY 22

Review of Fee-for-Service Activities

Industry confident that costs are minimised through the development of effective & efficient service delivery processes.

ACTIONS:

- DPIPWE review current fee-for-service activities, in consultation with industry and stakeholders, to identify areas of cost saving and efficiencies.
- Identify potential service providers which could cost effectively undertake activities .
- Explore potential to train employees to undertake certain activities without compromising integrity.
- Push for greater collaboration between states to streamline inspection processes.

Photo: Lucy Gregg

OUTCOMES:

- Cost efficient and uncompromised biosecurity compliance systems
- Flexibility in the delivery of fee-for-service options

PRIORITY 23

Review Quarantine & Biosecurity on King Island & Flinders Island

That the Bass Strait islands are not a weak link in Tasmania's border protection strategy

ACTIONS:

- Risk assessment is undertaken to verify the biosecurity risks.
- Understand the vectors of pests and diseases and identify which ones could pose substantial threats.
- Government develop specific biosecurity policy for the Bass Strait islands to educate residents and visitors or the risks.
- Establish appropriate biosecurity measure to control biosecurity risks.

Photo coutesy: Wine Tasmania

OUTCOMES:

- A biosecurity strategy for outlying islands of Tasmanian is operational and offers guidelines to reduce or eliminate biosecurity threats.
- Stakeholders, visitors and residents understand the significance of maintaining strong border protection.

Executive Summary

The importance of biosecurity to the Tasmanian economy cannot be disputed, with the primary industry sector, tourism sector, recreational sector and general community reliant on a strong quarantine and biosecurity system within the State.

The continued provision of biosecurity services within the state should, at a minimum, be seen as insurance for the industries that rely on the current pest and disease status in Tasmania. Investment in irrigation schemes or infrastructure will not be maximised if pest and disease incursions continue to occur, as the costs to industry will reduce our competitiveness at a national and international level.

The significance of strong biosecurity to Tasmania is fundamental to the long term economic development strategies of this State. The primary industry sector is aligned with the future vision of the state being a producer of premium, high-quality product for national and international markets – this cannot be attained if the biosecurity funding in the state is not given the financial priority it requires.

As one of the leading employers of the state and the backbone of many rural and regional communities it is fundamental that the primary industry sector be supported through strong biosecurity policy. Furthermore, a biosecurity policy that is developed in consultation with industry is imperative to ensure that the risks, strategies and outcomes are beneficial and workable to the primary industry sector.

PIBAA are focused on biosecurity and what it means to Tasmania. Pest and disease incursions have already cost the Tasmanian primary industry sector and Government significantly. Eradication and control are costly and undermine productivity and financial viability.

Our actions now will be fundamental to the long term vision we have for primary industry in the state.

Photo courtesy: Simon de Salis

Summary of Priorities

High Priority

1 Formal Recognition of Regional Differentiation

2 Formation of Primary Industry Biosecurity Consultative Committee

3 Independent Analysis into Cost/Benefit of Area Freedom to Tasmania's Economy

4 Ongoing Provision of AQIS Services by Quarantine Tasmania

5 Review of Commercial Importation Policies

6 Review of Emergency Preparedness/Response Plans

7 Development of Holistic 'On-Farm' Biosecurity Strategy

8 Review of Incoming Freight Inspection Services

9 Embedding Biosecurity into Whole of Government Policy & Planning

10 Maintaining Trapping and Surveillance Programs within Tasmania

11 Compensation Policy and Guidelines for an Incursion of an exotic Pest or Disease

12 Review of Incoming Passenger Inspection Services and Feasibility Study into the Introduction of Passenger Declaration Cards

Medium Priority

13 Climate Change Research into Potential Changes to Pest & Disease Dynamics in Primary Industry

14 Development of further strategic Pest & Disease Monitoring

15 Biosecurity audit of Refuse & Garbage Disposal within Tasmania

16 Development of Communication Strategy

17 Maintenance of Post Entry Quarantine Stations

18 Simulated Emergency Response to a Exotic Pest or Disease Incursion

19 Fully Computerised Systems within Quarantine Tasmania

20 Identification of Biosecurity Risks in relation to Irrigation Developments

Low Priority

21 Facilitate Uptake of Certification Schemes and Approved Officers

22 Review of Fee-for-Service Activities

23 Review Quarantine & Biosecurity on King Island and Flinders Island

Photo: Lucy Gregg

PIBAA Recommendations

Photo courtesy: Poppy Growers Tasmania

Recommendation 1

Formal Recognition of Regional Differentiation

For many years the Tasmanian government and industry sectors, both terrestrial and marine based, have requested the Australian Government, that Tasmania be granted the status of be regionally differentiated due to its geographic isolation, key quarantine and biosecurity advantages, recognised internationally and nationally, all linked to the Tasmanian Brand and current export markets and a comparative advantage as we currently have into Japan and Korea for cherries as an example.

As yet these requests have gone unheeded by the Australian Government and Tasmania is used as a pawn in World Trade Organization talks whenever countries want to import their products into Australia. This occurred with the importation of fresh salmon products(that are still not allowed into the State) and similar campaigns have been pushed in relation to the possible importation of apples from New Zealand and now China into Australia and Tasmania.

With our more stringent ALOP requirements, GMO free status currently up until 2014 and our quarantine status of being fruit fly free, for example, it is vital that the Tasmanian Government in a tripartite approach both at State and Federal level, lobby and continue to push for Tasmania to be granted regional differentiation status for current, short and long term market opportunities, to maintain the 'Tasmanian' brand and for future, export growth potential. This is an opportunity not to be lost.

PIBAA recommends that the Tasmanian Premier write to the Prime Minister on this matter so when the new Federal Biosecurity Bill is debated, that an amendment be made to ensure Tasmania is formally, recognized as a region of differentiation in relation to biosecurity and quarantine matters due to its special circumstances and geographic isolation.

Recommendation 2

Ongoing AQIS Service Provision by Quarantine Tasmania

Tasmania is the only remaining state or region of Australia where the provision of AQIS services to agricultural exporters and responsibility for management of Australia's boarder and post boarder quarantine surveillance is conducted by a state agency. Quarantine Tasmania holds responsibility for AQIS services in Tasmania under a Memorandum between the Australian Government's Department of Agriculture, Forest and Fisheries and the Tasmanian Government.

This unique arrangement provides many advantages to Tasmania including:

- International confidence in Tasmania's boarder control and surveillance at all ports of entry for both national and international passengers and freight is enhanced by Quarantine Tasmania's arrangement with AQIS.
- Improved international market access for Tasmanian products compared to other regions of Australia due to recognition of Quarantine Tasmania as a nationally accredited quarantine agency with year round monitoring and surveillance programs to protect Tasmania's area free status from several pests and diseases of concern in international markets.
- Flexibility in the number of trained staff that can be deployed on any given day to undertake AQIS responsibilities, particularly on days of peak seasonal activity requiring multiple AQIS inspections and certification to satisfy quarantine protocols in certain international markets.
- The high level of AQIS service in Tasmania is unparallel in any other region of Australia.
- Cohesion between the national and state quarantine effort is unique in Tasmania due to the closer relationship created through the Memorandum.
- The Tasmanian community and international markets have a higher level of confidence in the protection of Tasmania's biosecurity whilst Quarantine Tasmania conducts international boarder control within the state compared to the likely alternative of one or two permanent AQIS staff positioned in Tasmania to manage the entire international boarder surveillance and export certification role.
- Current arrangements ensure that policy, strategy and management within Tasmania are benefitting the Tasmanian industry and not part of a strategy driven from another district or area i.e. Victoria, where priorities and strategies could be vastly different.

These are just a few of the many reasons why the Tasmanian Government should make every effort to maintain the current arrangement for the provision of AQIS services through Quarantine Tasmania.

Recommendation 3

Formation of Primary Industry Biosecurity Consultative Committee

The 7th Tasmanian Biosecurity Policy[1] element is that of 'Shared Responsibilities' which is duly reflected in the Biosecurity Strategy Outcomes[2]: 9 (Relevant stakeholders effectively engaged in partnerships with Government to manage biosecurity risks), 10 (Biosecurity Stakeholders understand how to maximise Tasmania's biosecurity status and ensure the threats of biosecurity risks are minimised and mitigated) and 11 (Community awareness of biosecurity and confidence in the capability and effectiveness of the Tasmanian biosecurity system).

PIBAA acknowledge that the Tasmanian Biosecurity Council has been formed (one of the outcomes of the Gorrie Report) but if 'Shared Responsibility' is core to the successful implementation of the Tasmanian Biosecurity Policy then it is PIBAA's belief that a Primary Industry Biosecurity Consultative Committee should be established. The Committee would be independently chaired by a person nominated by the Primary Industry sectors on the committee and would consist of representative from the different sectors within Primary Industry as well as representatives from DPIPWE, DED, a representative from the Primary Industry Minister's Office and other relevant organisations such as TIAR or UTAS.

The responsibilities of the group could include reviews of biosecurity legislation, certification programs, biosecurity risks and addressing the 22 Recommendations in PIBAA document (2010).

The involvement of industry is also paramount when defining degrees of risk and the response to managing the risks. Some industries rely on the importation of product to maintain their business but at the same time realise that there is a balance between implementing rigorous inspection regimes (at a high cost to Quarantine and industry) versus the potential for importing a pest or disease of high risk. Hence it is important to have dialogue with industry to ensure that there is a balance and a sense of commercial reality in decision making.

Consultation with industry is also critical in ensuring that all risks are identified and addressed appropriately. PIBAA is concerned that the interests of minority groups and non-commercial enterprises are guiding policy to the detriment of commercial industry and stakeholders. The formation of the Primary Industry Biosecurity Consultative Committee would ensure that risks adversely affecting the sector are addressed appropriately.

Recommendation 4

Review of Incoming Commercial Freight Inspection Services

Commercial freight is imported into the state on a daily basis by sea, air and through the postal system. Freight can be containerised, in bulk, loose

consignments or in small units via the postal system and is subject to a wide range of possible quarantine checks at the various barriers. The bulk of freight imported into the state comes in via containers and once unloaded can be distributed to all regions of the state – both urban and rural.

The commercial freight system carries a variety of high quarantine risk commodities including fresh fruit and vegetables, nursery stock, grain, stock/fish feed, used machinery and containers. Contamination risks can not only occur with the contents of the containers but also due to soil adhering to the base of containers.

Some freight can be cleared prior to dispatch using pre-clearance systems whilst other freight requires inspection upon arrival. It is understood that it is commercially not viable to check all incoming freight due to time pressures and cost restraints however commercial freight potentially carries the greatest quarantine threat.

Freight entering the state needs to be cleared quickly and efficiently to ensure financial impositions are not put on importers or freight companies. Some industries and businesses readily acknowledge the balance between quickly clearing potentially high risk product for retail versus the necessity to have thorough checks and balances to ensure potential pests and diseases do not enter the state which could cause significant financial losses.

Due to the sometimes complex nature of freight distribution with the use of sub-contractors etc there is also an ignorance of the responsibility of some parties in relation to the importation of some freight items. And in a minority of cases it is recognised that the non-declaration of high risk freight occurs due to the costs and inconveniences that occurs. A well resourced quarantine inspection service dedicated to incoming freight is important to ensure that deliberate breaches of state quarantine and unintentional breaches of state quarantine do not occur.

Incoming freight inspections can be undertaken effectively as long as adequate resources are allocated to ensure an effective inspection regime is maintained to reduce risk to an acceptable level to industry. Currently there is limited or non-existent consultation with industry to assess what levels of inspection are acceptable.

It is also deemed that the introduction of electronic freight systems and electronic pre-clearance may also mean that freight clearance could be undertaken more efficiently whilst also reducing the risks and also potentially increasing the percentage of freight subject to border scrutiny. The adoption of quality assurance systems or Approved Arrangements which would allow companies to clear their own freight could also be investigated.

Industry would also encourage a review of penalties for those in breach of deliberately contravening quarantine import requirements.

Non-commercial freight

With the rapid uptake of E-bay and on line shopping the movement of high risk product through the postal, courier or air freight system has increased significantly in recent years. Although many national distributors may be aware of the quarantine restriction many of the overseas suppliers would not. Plant materials, seeds, food stuffs and other high risk products are regularly introduced into Tasmania. These products can be distributed throughout all the regions of the state and in quite isolated areas of the state and therefore pose a high risk.

A review of the non-commercial importation of product needs to occur to ensure the risks associated with this are addressed and that appropriate resources are allocated. Currently this area of incoming freight could pose the highest risk to not only primary industry but also in relation to other unwanted pests and diseases which pose a threat to the greater community.

Recommendation 5

Review the policies in relation to the importation of commercial product

In some instances the importation of product occurs on a regular basis through established systems. Whether it be plants, laboratory samples, food products or other items, there can be more efficient methods of clearing imported products without compromising risk to the states biosecurity systems.

The adoption of AA's (see Recommendation 16) could allow (with modification) the importing business to undertake authorised inspections by their own trained staff and reduce costs as well as reducing the burden on Quarantine Tasmania staff. This would save considerable costs, reduce reliance of Quarantine Tasmania staff and ensure the level of inspection was fully compliant to the risk profiles of commodities and in some instances may increase the current sampling ratios of imports i.e grain. There would also be greater flexibility and reduce delays in handling incoming product.

The import of commercial products needs to be assessed to ensure risk is reduced but efficiencies are increased and must be done in consultation with industry.

Recommendation 6

Review of Incoming Passenger Inspection Services

Currently several methods of screening incoming passengers for biosecurity risks are utilised in Tasmania including x-ray machines, detector dogs and Quarantine Tasmania staff undertaking general surveillance and detailed inspections. A large percentage of passengers entering the state are unaware of the biosecurity protocols which exist, particularly interstate and overseas visitors. Unfortunately many locals who are aware of the quarantine requirements in the state don't believe that a small plant cutting, a tray of mangoes, or some fresh fish smuggled into the state will make any difference.

Regardless of the intent, the risk from incoming passengers either by air, cruise ship, passenger ferry or other itinerant vessel is significant and they provide a real and viable pathway for many pests and diseases to enter the state.

In many instances the quarantine inspection process is the first point for many people entering the state and therefore it is important that the process is managed effectively. Currently the design of airport arrival areas allow passengers to enter the state without undergoing full scrutiny due to there not being clearly designated processing channels. There is also concern that a protracted inspection process will cause discontent and negative connotations for people visiting the state.

On any flight into the state one can observe that potentially only a small percentage of passengers are actually scrutinised regardless of whether a Quarantine Officer is present or not. Of further concern is the number of passenger cars which are checked upon arrival into Devonport on the two Spirit of Tasmania's. Currently only random checks are carried out on what is classified as 'high risk' vehicles and yet the most innocuous looking vehicle may harbour fishing or diving gear, dirty farm boots, fresh fruit, seeds, plant cuttings and a multitude of other high risk items.

PIBAA also wishes that quarantine and biosecurity authorities in Tasmania are more authoritative with domestic airlines and passenger vessels that use high risk produce items in their food service i.e apples. Whilst resources go into protecting our biosecurity at incoming passenger points it is compounded when passengers keep food items to eat at a later stage and bring them into the state. It is also important that the airlines and passenger

vessels continue to reinforce the quarantine messages upon arrival into Tasmania.

The introduction of a passenger declaration card as outlined in Recommendation Seven should be considered as part of the review of incoming passengers.

Recommendation 7

Investigate the Introduction of Incoming Passenger Declaration Cards

The use of incoming passenger declaration cards has been well established and accepted at entry points into Australia. The passenger cards clearly assist all incoming passengers on acceptable and non acceptable plant, animal and aquatic related products which can be brought into Australia. Failing to declare material or making a false declaration incurs an enforceable penalty.

Currently the incoming passenger vessels into Tasmania warn passengers on the quarantine requirements however many people ignore the warnings, do not understand the warnings, and in some instances the warning is not issued. In some cases, passengers have a good understanding of the common biosecurity risks such as fruit but are unaware of less known biosecurity risks. A completion of an Incoming Passenger Declaration will formalise the system and clearly define a breach as the passenger has to sign a declaration stating that they do not have prohibited items on their possession.

Passenger Declaration cards also have the ability to streamline incoming passenger processing by providing a quick scanning system which allows a quick exit for those without any biosecurity risks to exit via a 'green' channel. Those passengers which indicate a risk on their card would go through a 'red' channel and have contact with a Quarantine Official to process the risk and take appropriate action. This system would also mean that 100% of passengers are screened on each flight where as currently the system does not meet this standard.

The use of the incoming passenger card is also an excellent way of educating visitors and locals on the importance of biosecurity to the state. It will also help enforce quarantine breaches as ignorance cannot be cited for a reason to bring unwanted material into the state.

Although it can be cited that passengers (particularly air passengers) are low risk due to the volume of product that could enter the state they are also the highest risk group due to their potential ignorance of quarantine issues and diversity of risk profile compared to those importing product commercially. With the potential numbers of passengers set to increase into the future it is important that a) passenger inspections continue to minimise import risks and b) more effective methods of passenger processing be implemented to cope with increasing numbers.

The introduction of Passenger Declaration Cards will potentially require trials and modifications before a successful model is found.

Recommendation 8

Maintenance of ongoing trapping and surveillance programs

Surveys and monitoring offer benefits beyond improved risk assessment as they provide information about the effectiveness of controls and make earlier detection of pests and diseases more probable.

Trapping and surveillance programs are of assistance to the Tasmania's primary industries by fulfilling its national and international obligations (WTO[3] & IMO[4]). Under the international phytosanitary agreement member countries are required to establish scientifically that they are free of specific pests and diseases.

Failure to scientifically validate pest and disease data can mean Tasmanian product cannot be exported to various countries which potentially has serious commercial implications. Furthermore failure to validate area freedom of certain pests and diseases within the state also means that Tasmania cannot block entry of certain products based on the risk of introducing particular pests and diseases.

The cost of eradication of an unwanted pest or disease can be significant, especially when compared to the annual cost of targeted trapping and surveillance programs. Data collected from the Tasmanian trapping and surveillance programs underpins the states internationally acknowledged disease-free and 'clean & green' status.

The trapping programs also provide the scientific data that is required to support the states quarantine legislation. It is a common occurrence for a state, territory or overseas country to ask for the technical data that is required to support Tasmania's endorsements on Phytosanitary Certification.

When overseas quarantine delegations visit the state they audit our trapping and surveillance programs to ensure they meet their import and protocol requirements. Currently the Tasmanian Government conducts 23 trapping and surveillance activities for a variety of purposes, commercial and community, and for both national and international compliance. Other trapping and surveillance programs are undertaken by industry and individuals to fulfill trade obligations.

The Gorrie Report in 2004 stated:

"Monitoring and surveillance not only assist in the prevention and management of those biosecurity risks but also underpin certification of Tasmania pest and disease free status in produce that is exported to the mainland and overseas.

The continuing compilation of information on Tasmania's pest, disease and weed status through monitoring and surveillance activities is vital to improving and strengthening decision making in terms of risk assessment/risk management strategies for pest, disease and weed incursions."

Recommendation 9

Development of further strategic pest and disease monitoring programs

Monitoring and trapping of pests and diseases is integral to ensure quick detection and identification occurs. Currently there are numerous sources of potential pest and disease carriers such as ballast water, aquarium imports, animals, grains etc. PIBAA recommends the introduction of strategic sampling and monitoring of such imports into the state. Sampling will not only allow early detection but also allow the historical data to be collated for future reference.

Furthermore countries are continuously reviewing their import requirements based on new scientific data, re-assessment of risks and other factors. Whilst in some cases the import requirements are reduced, in other cases the import requirements become more difficult to the point where the addition of new pests of concern can affectively close access to a country for particular commodities.

Intelligence is critical to ensure that potential changes to import requirements are known by industry so that necessary action can occur. In some cases access to the market will require verification that particular pests or diseases do not occur in particular regions which could involve trapping or surveillance activities. Verifying that a particular pest or disease is not endemic to a region can require several years of verification activities. It is important that industries are aware of potential threats to market access and possible courses of action can be discussed between government and industry to ensure market access is not inhibited.

Recommendation 10

Review Emergency Preparedness/ Response Plans

Although it is recognised that many potential biosecurity emergencies would be covered by national emergency plans (i.e AUSVET and PHA) Tasmania has unique area freedom from many pests and diseases which are currently endemic (or near endemic) on mainland Australia. It is also well known that due to the island nature of Tasmania, a serious biosecurity threat on mainland Australia, if identified early enough, may likely be prevented from spreading to Tasmania.

It is for these reasons that it is imperative that teams of emergency response staff, industry representatives and other key stakeholders be educated on the emergency response process if/when such situations may occur in the future.

According to the Biosecurity Emergency Preparedness Program (2006-2008) 150 DPIPWE staff have been identified for emergency response roles. PIBAA would like the current numbers of employed staff within the department which are trained to respond to a biosecurity incident to be identified and reviewed. It is also unknown how many staff from other relevant government departments are currently familiar with Emergency Preparedness Plans (i.e DHHS, DEDTA, DIER, DPAC and DPEM). It is also of importance to identify and familiarise all key stakeholders within industry sectors and educate them on emergency response plans.

With the diminished size of the Primary Industry Department and the removal of extension roles which were the key link between government and industry it is particularly important that the roles and responsibilities of all parties be clearly defined.

It is also highly probable that databases of primary producers by commodity are no longer maintained by State Government and that is some cases the information is also no longer collated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Although some peak bodies would maintain data bases of members other peak bodies would not have the human or financial resources to maintain such information and the State Government should ensure that funding be allocated to peak bodies for data collation to ensure all databases are current and relevant. In the event of an incursion or outbreak it is critical that access to industry (and recreational) databases be undertaken quickly so that communication to stakeholders occurs in a timely manner.

As detailed previously the recreational and hobby sectors are high-risk sectors whether it be recreational fishermen, pet owners or home gardeners to name a few. PIBAA would seek expansion of registration systems to ensure that some of the high risk non-commercial sectors are isolated and can be easily communicated with if the need arises.

The review of all Emergency Response Plans should occur on regular basis (every 3-5 years depending on risk) with government employees and stakeholders charged with the responsibility of implementation of such plans also being trained and refreshed on a similar rotation. At a minimum the key contact people for each response plan should be updated annually with contact numbers, emails etc. Potentially a threshold trigger to undertake re-training could also be set when the number of trained personal still within key positions drops below a certain percentage.

As part of the process all emergency permits in relation to chemical registrations should also be updated and able to be submitted to the APVMA upon detection or outbreak of a serious pest or disease.

Recommendation 11

Implementation of Simulated Emergency Response Plans

Emergency Response Plans are of minimal benefit if there not the trained personnel able to initiate the response plans at all levels of government and industry. Simulation trials need to be undertaken to ensure the plans are effective when activated and that all persons responsible down the supply chain know their roles and responsibilities.

Simulation trials need to be undertaken on a regular basis with the key persons within government, industry and key stakeholders participating. As per Recommendation 8, in many instances Tasmania has a unique area freedom from certain pests and diseases which means that the skills base to initiate responses would be unique to Tasmania.

It is recognised that many government staff have participated in national simulation trials and have undertaken training in the event of an incursion (i.e fruit fly outbreaks in Victoria and South Australia) but industry, on the whole, has not participated in such activities. As already indicated the decline in DPIPWE staff and services has weakened the links between industry and government to the point where industry peak bodies are now ultimately the responsible entity.

Recommendation 12

Independent Report into the Cost/ Benefit of Area Freedom from Pests and Diseases on Tasmanian Economy

The current system of funding allocation appears to be focused on cost to government rather than benefit to industry and the flow on affects to the greater Tasmanian community. There needs to be debate as to whether science or economics should be the basis of decision making and that the full flow-on affects from breaches in quarantine and biosecurity are considered when budgets are allocated. As discussed previously, the matter of biosecurity should be seen as insurance to guarantee the future of Tasmania's primary industries as well as for the greater good of the Tasmanian community.

PIBAA seeks the State Government to appoint independent auditors to assess the cost/benefit of providing strong biosecurity versus the affects on the Tasmanian economy if an incursion of a serious pest or disease occurs. The review should also focus on the significance of ALOP's from a state and national perspective which should reinforce the argument highlighted Recommendation One.

Recommendation 13

Development of Compensation Policy/ Guidelines in the event of an outbreak of a serious pest or disease in the state

The State Government needs to address the issue of a serious pest incursion in respect to compensation as well as costs associated with an incursion. Currently the State Government has committed multi-millions of dollars to eradicating foxes in the state however there does not appear to be any guidelines or models associated with the expenditure. At what point does the strategy switch from being an eradication strategy to a control strategy to the point of accepting the pest as endemic within the state?

There needs to be clearly defined guidelines in the event of a pest incursion as an ad-hoc attitude to the issue leaves industry in a vulnerable position. Upon a serious pest incursion all resources will be aimed at eradication/control and the issue of costs or compensation will be left to be battled out after the event which is not a desirable outcome. At what point to the State Government walk away from assisting the eradication or control of a pest or disease? Are all the costs borne by the State Government or by industry? At what point is the State Government liable for

the incursion if due diligence in respect to maintaining border controls is found to be negligible?

These are serious issues and need to be addressed prior to the event to ensure that all parties are aware of the consequences of a serious pest incursion.

Recommendation 14

Development of 'On-Farm' biosecurity strategy

On-farm biosecurity can be undertaken in various ways; monitoring and surveillance, farm hygiene, effective reporting/ recording systems, awareness and education. On-farm biosecurity can also form the first, vitally important stage of early detection of pests and disease incursions. Early detection of incursions will greatly improve the chances of successful eradication or control and ultimately save significant amounts of human and financial resources. On-farm biosecurity is also another important step in the post barrier role of quarantine within the state.

There are many generic 'on-farm' biosecurity guidelines available, and in some cases there are organisation specific and industry specific 'on-farm' biosecurity guidelines however the development of a holistic strategy specifically for the Tasmanian industry is required. This strategy would not only identify guidelines for on-farm biosecurity but also incorporate an education campaign, on-farm biosecurity kit and communication strategy.

Ideally any on-farm biosecurity strategy should be complimentary to existing on-farm systems whether they be quality assurance schemes, environmental management systems, occupational health and safety systems or other industry 'best practice' guidelines. The introduction of on-farm biosecurity should also be supported through all tiers of government from local council through to Federal government and, where industry support occurs, mandatory compliance through legislation should be implemented.

Compliance to the biosecurity 'on-farm' policies may also be sought across the community to ensure that recreational, hobby and other like sectors also adhere to the guidelines as these groups may potentially be the highest risk sectors in relation to strong biosecurity within the state.

The education campaign would encompass producers/employers, employees, contractors, consultants, customers, freight contractors, and other 'on-farm' visitors, including recreational visitors (hunters, fishermen etc), commercial visitors (Aurora, local council etc) and tourists/locals visiting farm gate and pick-your-own operations.

The communications strategy would be focused on awareness; understanding the importance of quarantine and the control of unwanted pests and diseases and the affects that pest incursions have not only our area freedom status but also our clean-green image.

Unified signage, symbols, policy and a consistent message through a communications strategy across multiple industries will assist in ensuring the importance of on-farm biosecurity is widely recognised across all sectors of the industry and general public.

Recommendation 15

Formation of Primary Industry Climate Change Research into Pest and Disease Dynamics

It is well recognised that with a changing climate the dynamics of various pests and diseases will change and their ability to cause significant commercial damage may be more likely. As well the modified Tasmanian environment could become more hospitable for various pests and diseases which currently cannot survive in the state.

Research and modeling needs to be undertaken to understand which pests and diseases will become commercially significant and which pests and diseases may establish if introduced into the state. This includes the full gamut of pests including weeds, animals, insects etc.

A comprehensive gap analysis needs to be undertaken to identify the areas of concern. Upon identifying particular threats, risk profiles should be undertaken to manage the commercial significance of the pest or disease in the future. Once undertaken and prioritised, industry and government need to implement appropriate R &D activities to respond to these potential threats.

Recommendation 16

Strengthened Commitment to Public Awareness Campaign

As referenced earlier the implementation of the state's biosecurity is a responsibility between all stakeholders including the general public. In fact, many of the activities undertaken in Tasmania are for the wellbeing of Tasmanian residents, whether it be the prevention of potential human diseases entering (i,e swine flu, hydatids) or even domestic pests such as fire ants.

Public awareness at pre-barrier, barrier and post barrier is important to prevent the entry of unwanted pests and diseases but also to allow a quick response to detections or outbreaks of introduced pests and diseases. The importance of public awareness has been highlighted with the public interception of potential fruit fly maggots in fruit purchased from retail outlets in recent years.

As mentioned in Recommendation Four the rapid uptake of E-bay and on line shopping is posing a high risk to the pest and disease status of Tasmania. It is critically important that the public are aware of what products can be introduced into the state and what procedures need to occur to import, in many cases what appear seemingly harmless, products into the state.

Recommendation 17

Audit of current biosecurity procedures in relation to Refuse and Garbage Disposal

The disposal and treatment of refuse from high-medium risk sources needs to be audited to reassess the level of risk as well as the method of disposal. Tasmania is surrounded by water and by its nature has a large number of vessels and aircraft visiting the state bringing refuse. The refuse on board boats and planes may have originated from mainland Australia but also from other countries as in the case of cruise ships, commercial boats/ships and research vessels. Some of the refuse is returned to Tasmania from ecology sensitive environments such as Antarctica and other off-shore islands where all rubbish needs to be removed. In some instances the food provided to these islands is also sourced from other countries once again highlighting the risk of refuse disposal.

The disposal of high risk product such as imported fruit, aquarium waste, laboratory waste, passenger vessels refuse etc also needs to be fully examined to ensure that risks are minimised. A waste and refuse disposal policy should include a stronger public awareness campaign, establishment of on-site biosecurity policy and increased signage at all ports of entry.

The scope of the refuse disposal audit needs to include:

- Medical centres
- Laboratories
- High-risk product from commercial establishments i.e pet shops, aquariums, supermarkets etc
- Commercial fishing vessels
- Commercial research vessels
- Cruise ships & passenger vessels
- Itinerant yachts and recreational/pleasure vessels
- Waste from outlying islands and stations (i.e. Macquarie Is and Antarctic)

Recommendation 18

Facilitate greater uptake of Approved Arrangements (AA) and other relevant certification schemes. Including AA's to be recognised between states.

Approved Arrangements, a quality assurance system managed by AQIS (Australian Quarantine and Inspection Services) allow industry to undertake certain duties normally carried out by AQIS staff. The State Government, through Quarantine Tasmania should encourage the uptake of AA's within the state which would facilitate greater export opportunities.

Furthermore the State Government should negotiate the acceptance of AA's for protocols between states where particular quarantine barriers occur.

Recommendation 19

Full Implementation of electronic systems and databases within Quarantine Branch at an interstate and intrastate level.

Many processes and operations within the Quarantine branch are manually processed and data stored as paper files. Collation and retrieval of data for documentary purposes is cumbersome and time consuming and in many instances the paperwork is handled multiple times.

To ensure full effectiveness of the border protection system including full computerized recording of all commercial freight movements a electronic database needs to be implemented. Documentation between states should also be fully electronic and login systems should be utilized to reduce paperwork and increase the efficiency of the import/export process.

An electronic system would also reduce the potential for human error, reduce the costs associated with a manual system and ensure data was available in a timely manner.

An electronic system would also have the potential to isolate high risk product and streamline the effectiveness of commercial freight imports.

Recommendation 20

Maintenance of Post Entry Quarantine Station

Only one post entry plant quarantine station exists in Tasmania and is located in Kingston. The station performs a range of services for industry on a fee for service basis. Post entry quarantine stations are used as a buffer against the entry of pests and diseases which may exist in the country-of-origin of the imported plant material.

Plant material may be held in post entry quarantine for a period anywhere between 14 days and several years and during that time the plants undergo pest and disease screening, particularly for those pests and diseases which may not appear evident at the time of importation. During this process the staff also has duty-of-care of the plants and may also be responsible for multiplication of plants for commercial purposes.

The duty-of-care often involves handling plant material potentially worth significant amounts of money and a substantial investment on the part of the owners of the material. To maximise profit and ensure the best outcomes for plant multiplication and survival occur it is recommended that arrangements occur which allow the plant owner to tend for their own plants in the restricted environment or at the least have a considerable input into the maintenance of the plant material.

The Kingston station is a high-medium security establishment and has an essential role in the future development of the Tasmanian horticultural industry. New varietal strains, introduced crops and a range of other plant material are cleared through the Kingston station on a regular basis. The screening of imported plants and genetic breeding material for pests and diseases provides Tasmania with the opportunity to keep ahead of it's competitors with new varieties and products by importing new breeding material. The station also provides Tasmania with a level of quarantine security that prevents the introduction of potentially devastating pests and diseases from overseas.

Maintenance of the station is critical to the future development of the Tasmanian horticultural industry particularly as many plant breeders and nurseries are seeing Tasmania as the centre of plant breeding for mainland Australia for both amenity and production horticulture.

Recommendation 21

Review all fee-for-service activities and look at the potential options to tender or subcontract services to commercial operators or discharge responsibility to 3rd parties (under set guidelines/ compliance requirements so as not to threaten integrity).

Throughout the globe government services are being discharged to commercial providers who can deliver services more cost effectively without compromising the integrity. Even in Australia AQIS is currently reviewing all fee-for-service activities and options to deliver these services more cost effectively.

PIBAA requests that DPIPWE review all fee-for-service activities and look at options for other service providers to potentially deliver the services. In countries such as New Zealand most of the quarantine and biosecurity services have been discharged to independent entities. In some cases service providers include local councils and other specific regional service providers.

With our high costs of production compared to our international competitors, as well as our high costs of freight compared to many mainland producers it is vitally important that all costs be minimised. It is important that any change of service provision does not compromise the integrity of our international obligations nor minimise the service delivery.

Recommendation 22

Review quarantine and biosecurity on King Island and Flinders Island.

Currently King Is and Flinders Is could be viewed as a weak link in the maintenance of our quarantine status. Quarantine services on both the islands are restricted and largely limited to self regulation and public awareness.

With direct services between the islands and mainland Australia and Tasmania the risk of the islands being the transit point of pests and diseases is quite high, especially with mobile diseases such as Varroa.

Of concern, is that the quarantine services to the islands could potentially be seen as the weak link in maintaining our biosecurity credibility with international countries such as Japan, Taiwan and South Korea.

Notes

1 See Appendix A
2 See Appendix B
3 World Trade Organisation , particularly the Sanitary and Phytosanitary agreement (SPS)
4 International Marine Organisation , particularly International Convention for the Control & Management of Ships Ballast Water & Sediments.

Mt Field National Park
Photo courtesy: Simon de Salis


pibaa
PRIMARY INDUSTRY BIOSECURITY ACTION ALLIANCE