NORTHERN AUSTRALIA BIOSECURITY FRAMEWORK REFERENCE GROUP

Communique

The inaugural *Northern Australia Biosecurity Framework Reference Group* met on Wednesday 23 March 2016.

The *Reference Group* was established to strengthen biosecurity across northern Australia and support a collaborative approach to new northern Australia biosecurity projects.

The group noted the intent of the *Developing Northern Australia* and the *Agricultural Competitiveness* White Papers, including increasing economic opportunities and stronger agriculture in particular.

The Reference Group discussed opportunities presented by the White Papers to deliver lasting benefits in six areas:

1. Indigenous Rangers – expanding the scope, volume and remuneration of biosecurity work undertaken by Indigenous biosecurity rangers across northern Australia;
2. Northern Australia Biosecurity Surveillance – including new aquatic biosecurity surveillance work and improving biosecurity infrastructure on Torres Strait Islands;
3. Offshore Biosecurity Surveillance – including collaborative biosecurity surveys in Indian Ocean territories and neighbouring countries;
4. Modern diagnostics – to support tropical biosecurity networks, knowledge and facilities;
5. Better data – to improve the accuracy and usefulness of field biosecurity data collected across northern Australia; and
6. Community engagement – expanding information and tools available to identify and report potential biosecurity threats.

The *Reference Group* was chaired by Department of Agriculture and Water Resources Deputy Secretary Ms Lyn O'Connell and was attended by: Jim Thompson, Queensland Chief Biosecurity Officer; Michelle Rodan, NT Director Biosecurity and Animal Welfare; Kevin Chennell, Executive Director Biosecurity and Regulation Department of Agriculture & Food WA; Greg Fraser, CEO Plant Health Australia; Ian Langstaff Animal Health Australia, Mark Coffey, Head of Office of Northern Australia; Brant Smith, Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet; Kim Ritman, Chief Plant Protection Officer; and Robyn Martin, Animal Biosecurity Division, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources.

The Reference Group will meet again in Darwin in May.

Northern Australia Biosecurity Framework Reference group

23 March 2016