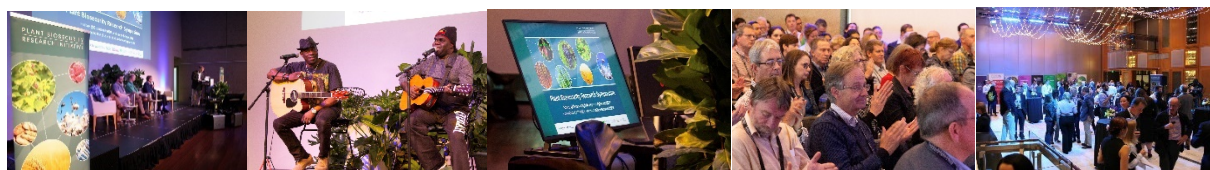


PBRI Plant Biosecurity Symposium Report

Jo Luck, PBRI Program Director, 3 September, 2019



The Program

The **PBRI Plant Biosecurity Research Symposium** was held at the Queensland State Library in Brisbane on the 15 and 16th August. The purpose of the Symposium was to share plant biosecurity RD&E across our plant industries, in Australia and New Zealand with an aim of avoiding duplication of research on common biosecurity themes. This 'sold-out' event was the first time biosecurity research, supported by seven plant RDC and Better Border Biosecurity (B3) New Zealand, had been discussed in one forum.

A Welcome to Country and performance of 'Kingfisher' by **Gawurra** from North Arnhem land provided a memorable start to the PBRI's first Symposium.



Lyn O'Connell, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Agriculture welcomed the 220 delegates from Australia and New Zealand research and government agencies to hear about cross-sectoral and Trans-Tasman collaboration efforts already underway or under development.

The program included two keynote presentations. Firstly **Doug Phillips**, a grower and a leader in the banana industry, described the Panama disease incursion experience for growers. Doug spoke about the impact of the disease to growers' businesses, such as their loss of trade and income and the social isolation of having an infected property in a regional community. This was a sobering reminder of the importance of plant biosecurity research and the value of industry, government and research partnerships.



The second keynote was from **Lois Ransom**, former Assistant Secretary with the Department of Agriculture who spoke about the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) standards as a global framework for plant biosecurity systems. She said future RD&E will be informed by global, national and regional outcomes with better connections of researchers to regulators.

Dr Baldissera Giovani was an invited overseas guest speaker, coordinator of EUPHRESKO, a European initiative which bring together funds to support Plant Health R&D. EUPHRESKO has 70 organisations from over 50 countries, including Australia, with membership via subscription. EUPHRESKO has supported over 100 projects to-date and has important synergies with PBRI and B3.



The Symposium program included session topics linked to our **six Key Focus Areas plus a Trans-Tasman session** with speakers nominated by B3. Speakers were nominated by PBRI members to provide a brief overview of their work as it related to the Key Focus Area. There were many positive comments about the length of the presentations, which enabled a good range of research content and the use of polling for questions, fielded by Chairs and Dr Steve Dibley (PHA), contributed to the running of the sessions.

For many delegates, a highlight was the presentation by growers. Shane Templeton from Templeton Ginger, described his experience with Pythium rot, the strict on-farm biosecurity measures he implemented and the effect the disease had on his business. Andrew Weidemann, a grain grower, from the Wimmera region in Victoria and Chairman of the Southern Region of Grain Producers Australia, spoke about his on-farm biosecurity practices implemented to protect his farm. Islay Robertston from HQ plantations, spoke about the Giant Pine Scale response and the importance of working closely with government to ensure systems and processes are in place *before* an emergency response.



In the Capability Building session, three Year 10 students (Ebony King, Tate Doneathy and Connor Ferguson) from **Glasshouse Christian College** spoke about their [award winning projects](#) on plant biosecurity. The Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Hermitage Research Facility, held an annual Plant Science Competition for students across Australia. This year's 'Pest Invaders' competition engaged over 3,600 students from 145 schools in experimental investigations and research into invasive pests and how they impact on our native environment and agricultural production.

One of the major prizes in the competition is the 'Conference Award' which allows 2-3 students the opportunity to attend a national conference, relevant to the topic of study, to discover the various careers in agriculture and science, gain skills and confidence in presenting and communicating and expand their knowledge of how science and agriculture is applied in sustainable food and fibre production in Australia and throughout the world.

The 2019 Conference Award winners were interviewed by Dr Harjeet Khanna (SRA) to discover their learning from studying invasive pests this year and to hear about their career aspirations. This session gave a fresh perspective to the program and the students and teacher enjoyed their participation.

Dr Gabrielle Vivian Smith, Assistant Secretary, Acting Australian Chief Plant Protection Officer, gave a cocktail dinner address, outlining the planned activities for the Australian 2020 UN International year of Plant Health and invited delegates to enter a competition at the symposium of further ideas for the year.



The winner was Tim Lester (CRRDC) and runners up were Alison Roach (DA) and Bronwyn Walsh (WA Citrus).

Winner:

- Commission indigenous music artist Gawurra to write and record a song of celebration of plant life and then use the song in a series of promotional and educational videos (Tim Lester)

Runners up:

- Commission a series of full-size plant pest suits, for use at public events all over Australia, with appropriate signage. BMSB, glassy winged sharpshooter, karnal bunt, etc. (California has GWSS man, the Phylloxera board has Phil the Phylloxera man) (Alison Roach)
- Update airline border message with "fun" format video similar to new novel "safety" videos used by QANTAS and NZ airlines *Lord of the Rings* theme. (Bronwyn Walsh)

Special mentions

- A plant health *Hackathon* to bring together plant health experts and IT geeks to solve small problems in 1-2 days e.g. software that produces synthetic genetic sequences to test HTS pipelines; online morphological identification key for pests (Baldissera Giovani, Euphresco)

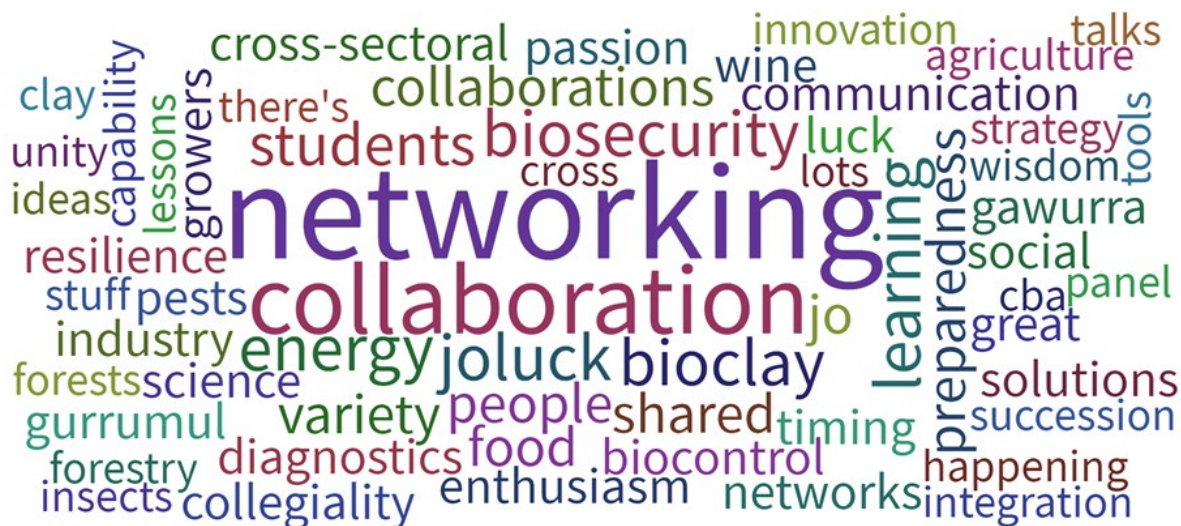
- “Plant health for healthy bodies”. An awareness campaign with positive message about people’s health relating to food security. Audiences to be schools, universities and public (Catherine Mathenge, DA)

The **panel session on future RD&E priorities**, chaired by Susan Maas (CRDC) included Dr James Buwalda (Chair B3), Dr David Teulon (Director B3), Greg Fraser (Chair PBRI) and Dr Jo Luck (Program Director PBRI). After seeing a broad range of research and research needs The audience was asked to contribute their ideas for priorities via polling.

The highlights of the symposium from the audience perspective were polled and a word cloud was created.

Respond at [PollEv.com/pbris568](https://www.poll-ev.com/pbris568)

What were your highlights of the symposium?



The RD&E priorities that were polled are included in **Attachment 1**.

The best presentation award was presented by Tim Lester (CRRDC) to PhD student Elia Pirtle (cesar)

Greg Fraser gave a closing address, thanking delegates and speakers for their participation and announcing the B3 conference to be held in May 2020 in Wellington.

Comments from Delegates

Below are extracts of some of the congratulatory emails and thank you notes received.

- *such a good/fantastic/great/excellent symposium (multiple)*
- *delivering such a useful symposium*
- *such a great event! Well done!*
- *an amazing symposium! Well done to the organisers. I learned heaps and met lots of cool people.*
- *I really enjoyed the conference. Great line up of presentations*
- *Thanks for all of your work behind the scenes*
- *Fabulous event...congratulations*
- *an extremely enjoyable and informative symposium.*
- *a great meeting last week!*
- *Congratulations to all of the Hort Innovation staff who contributed to organising a wonderful event.*
- *It was a great meeting! Well done!*
- *such a fantastic symposium, fabulous job. I was very impressed by your attention to detail - we have been treated like royalty.*
- *I very much enjoyed the symposium and thought it was extremely well run.*
- *It was a great event and I am glad I assisted. Looking forward for other events in the future.*

- *Great event, fabulous organisation.*
- *It was a great event thank you for running it.*
- *the symposium was a real success – congratulations*
- *Well done for all your efforts on the smooth sailing of last week's workshop!*
- *a great symposium, I found it very useful.*
- *It was a very well organised event with a great program. I got a lot of value from attending the symposium.*
- *(multiple)*
- *Great symposium, this has to happen again. Grower talks were a highlight and were a great education tool for researchers. The opening performance was great! The 10 minute talks a winner. This symposium fills a void*
- *indeed, we did have a great time... networking galore!!!*

The final word (tweet) was from our resident poet, Richard Price (below L) from Centre for Invasive Species Solutions with Tim Lester (below R)



*Symposium over
And what do we know
The PBRI crew
put on quite a show!
They brought us together
The old and the new
The ones in the science labs
And from offices too.
But now that it's home time
What is it we see?
Hopefully clean fields
All incursion free.*

Photos of the event can be viewed in the following link:

<https://adobe.ly/2ZzP7Mb>

Symposium Outputs

- A list of RD&E Priorities for PBRI consideration in investment planning
- A profit of \$32,958 which can be used to partly support the next symposium or for other agreed PBRI activities
- Further ideas for 2020 International Year of Plant Health activities
- A mailing list of interested delegates
- Photos and videos for promoting PBRI

Symposium Outcomes

- The Symposium provided a forum to network and form new collaborations across-sectors
- There was a high level of support to hold the event again in two years
- A high level of delegate engagement was evidenced by the responses from polling, noting also that approximately 80% of people were still present and engaged on Friday afternoon
- The symposium strengthened the Trans-Tasman partnership between B3 and PBRI and supports the MOU
- The potential for the PBRI and B3 to form a partnership with EUPHRESCRO, similar to the MOU with B3, is being discussed further with Dr Baldissera Giovani
- A general energy and momentum was achieved at this event which the PBRI needs to continue through supporting cross-sectoral research and further forums such as the symposium.