



## Boosting post-border supply chain biosecurity in NSW

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Two post-border detections of live brown marmorated stink bugs (BMSB) in NSW from imported cargo in 2017 saw swift and effective response. Following this detection, the NSW Department of Primary Industries set about enhancing its understanding of the international supply chain, post-border biosecurity protocols and associated sentiment.

“By improving our understanding of how the sector operates, the role of biosecurity and what motivates and demotivates people and businesses to report biosecurity-related risks, the NSW Department of Primary Industries can ensure its engagement with the sector is both targeted and as effective as possible,” said NSW Department of Primary Industries Researcher, Dr Nicole Schembri.

A qualitative human-centred methodology using direct, interview-style approach was undertaken to gain a deeper understanding of the sector and their biosecurity awareness, values, practices, their real-world experiences and problems. The research team interviewed 14 supply chain and logistics representatives and 7 government and industry bodies and individuals over a 3-month period.

“Research findings indicated that people’s understanding of biosecurity varied considerably, highlighting opportunities for further engagement. Definitions ranged from explosive material and human waste (biohazards) to bugs and beetles that could harm the Australian environment,” Dr Schembri said.

Businesses that either had staff trained in biosecurity protocols (such as

customs brokers) or worked alongside Commonwealth biosecurity officers had a more positive sentiment towards biosecurity and reporting. Companies with a trusting, transparent culture also had higher positive engagement and compliance with biosecurity procedures. When staff were assured no personal or business-related repercussions (e.g. fines, termination) would arise from reporting a potential biosecurity risk, staff were more likely to report.

The perception of biosecurity non-compliance within and between other stakeholder groups and businesses within the supply chain varied considerably. All engaged parties, however, unanimously identified the warehouse and distribution centre sector as having the poorest biosecurity practice and level of understanding, being the sector to focus future education and engagement activity. Numerous and varied attempts were made to engage with this sector.

The perceived importance of biosecurity mandatory measures reportedly differed between some regional and metropolitan-based members of the sector. One regional-based business

believed metropolitan companies actively avoided rural tailgate inspections, by directing cargo to a metropolitan address prior to regional transportation.

On reporting potential biosecurity risks, interviewed companies reportedly felt unmotivated, indicating that previous attempts to do so were either not followed up on by the authorities or they were not advised on the outcome of their report.

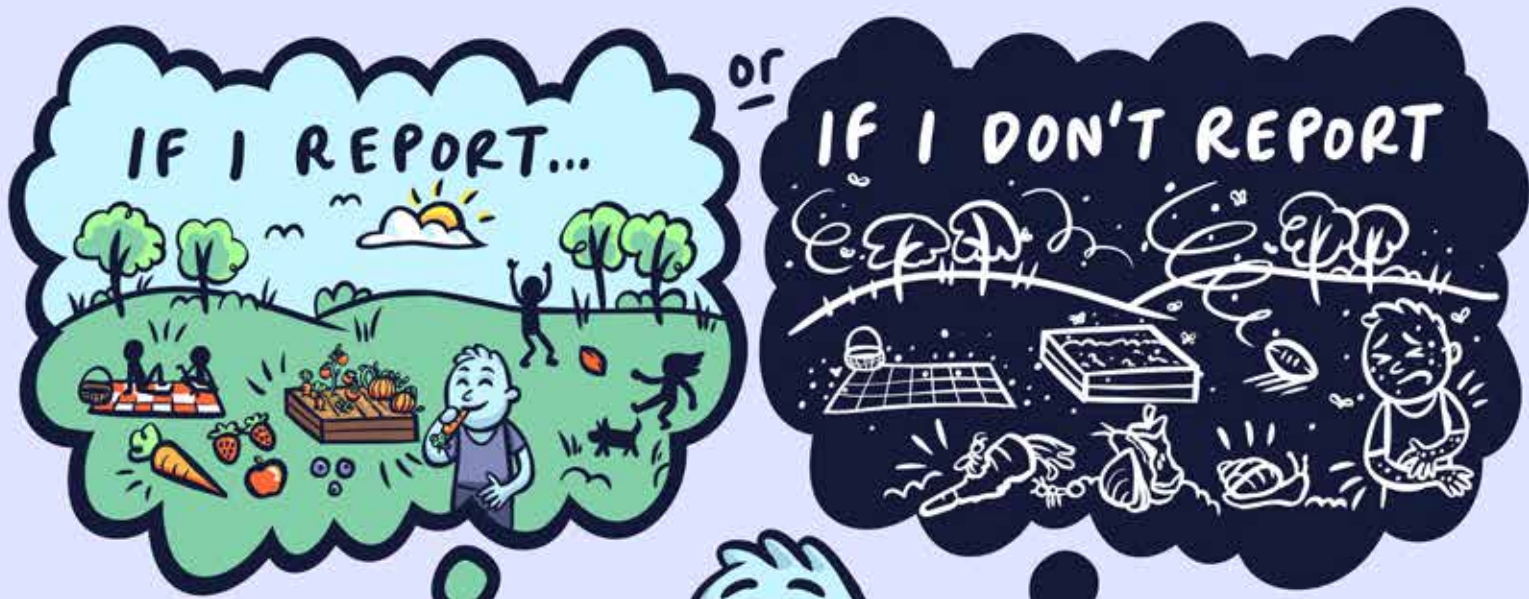
The sector participants indicated that efforts were made to proactively engage with Commonwealth officers separate to auditing and compliance activities on biosecurity issues. Businesses were keen to improve their education and awareness of current biosecurity issues relating to the sector, including why certain pests are targeted and the consequences of not reporting. There was, however, a general sentiment that official biosecurity communications were too frequent and generally irrelevant to most of the sector; they were jargon heavy and subsequently poorly understood by staff operating within the sector.

“The research findings showed a need for broader understanding of the meaning and importance of biosecurity, with communications to focus on contextualising the risk of specific exotic pests, in Australia. This means, using tangible examples, such as financial hardship for farmers, or detrimental effects on native flora and fauna or recreational activities to evoke emotional or personal connections,” Dr Schembri said.

For the full report, head to: <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/community-engagement-and-education/understanding-the-freight-and-logistics-sector>



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