

## PRESS RELEASE

### ***Voice of Horticulture welcomes Federal Government's endorsement to strengthen Australia's biosecurity***

The Federal Government has agreed to all recommendations made in an independent review of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity (IGAB) - which has a mandate to strengthen Australia's national biosecurity system.

Peak horticulture body, the Voice of Horticulture has welcomed the news, saying the review of the IGAB also represented a commitment by all governments to build a stronger national biosecurity system to meet any new challenges and protect Australia's farming future.

Voice of Horticulture spokesperson Tania Chapman said biosecurity has always been seen as a shared responsibility but, the problem was no one wanted any share of that responsibility.

"In endorsing the 42 recommendations of the review, the Federal Minister for Agriculture, has also made a commitment that the Government will strengthen the IGAB system over the next five to 10 years," she said.

"With a strong government focus on biosecurity awareness, sustainable funding, research and innovation and managing biosecurity across all sectors, it means Australia's \$60 million agricultural industry is being safely guarded.

"Just as importantly it also means rural and regional communities that rely on agriculture for employment or in their own business are also being protected. It has mammoth roll-on affects."

Ms Chapman said that a strong national biosecurity system would be able to deal quickly and effectively with any potential risks.

"Australia has seen a massive tourism boom in recent years with more visitors than ever crossing our shores," she said.

"But this increased people movement means increased biosecurity pressure. We as a country need resources and processes to deal with these increased threats and we need to be able to act quickly."

Ms Chapman stressed that for biosecurity awareness to be most effective it also needed to occur in the wider community.

"Biosecurity awareness must also occur amongst the tourists and the residents to protect one of our most important industry assets - Agriculture," she said.

"International collaboration will be one of the key pillars of success going forward. With many biosecurity threats already evident overseas it makes it more important that we work together to find solutions and keep the pressure off our shores to protect our invaluable food source.

"In fact, the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences has found that good national biosecurity systems can save the average farmer up to \$17,500 per farm per year." But those in the horticulture industry know the savings are much more than that and in fact can stop the decimation of an entire industry.

In 2015, an independent review of the capacity of the national biosecurity system and the IGAB was initiated by agriculture ministers. The final report, titled *Priorities for Australia's biosecurity system*, was presented to agriculture ministers in July 2017, and confirmed that the national biosecurity system faced increasing resourcing pressures and risks, driven by growth in international trade and passenger movement.

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*The Voice of Horticulture is a member based organisation that represents horticultural growers and business across fruit, nuts, mushrooms, onions, processing tomatoes, turf, and nursery plants across Australia.*

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