



Almost there...

The CRC for National Plant Biosecurity's start-up phase is almost at an end, with the appointment of Dr Simon McKirdy as our new Chief Executive Officer and the Centre's agreements being almost finalised. A number of departures and new appointments since our last newsletter signal the end of CRCNPB's establishment phase and its imminent start-up.

Documentation nears Completion

Various obstacles have delayed the finalisation of legal documents for CRCNPB and, thus, a formal start to the Centre, a situation common to all Ninth Round CRCs. Progress has been made in this direction, and the CRC has now been incorporated as the 'Cooperative Research Centre for National Plant Biosecurity Ltd'. The CRC's agreement with the Commonwealth should be completed by DEST this week, at such point executable copies of the Participants and Commonwealth Agreements will be forwarded to all core participants for signing. We understand that pens are poised ready to sign these agreements as soon as possible. Once all the core participants have signed the two Agreements, the CRC will be able to commence operations. We expect CRCNPB be formally up and running in September.

CEO Appointment

After a lengthy recruitment process, the CRC last week announced the appointment of Dr Simon McKirdy to the position of Chief Executive Officer - an appointment that has received a warm welcome by the Centre's community and stakeholders. Simon's appointment signals the Centre's imminent formal commencement and, thus, also Bill Roberts' departure as Interim CEO. Bill has worked tirelessly (while still doing his day job at DAFF) to get the Centre's agreements and Constitution into a form that was acceptable by all core participants. The Interim Board and everyone concerned with the CRC bid recognizes Bill's huge contribution as Interim CEO and we thank him sincerely for this. Bill has been in hand-over mode during the last couple of weeks as Simon begins to take up his new CEO duties (while also doing his day job!). Bill will now embark on a new adventure as Principal Scientist with Biosecurity Australia, and we wish him all the best in this role.



John Lovett

Chairman, Interim
Board

[Home](#)[Status](#)[Profiles](#)[Participants](#)[Contacts](#)

Business Report

Annual General Meeting: The inaugural Annual General Meeting of the CRC for National Plant Biosecurity will be held on 26 October in Canberra. This date has been selected to coincide with the Annual General Meeting of Plant Health Australia Ltd in order to accommodate those that have to travel and attend both AGMs. All core and supporting participants are invited to attend the AGM but supporting participants will only have Observer status at this meeting.

Planning: The Interim Board has co-opted John Pollock (QDPI&F); Jenny Carter (CDU); John Sandow (GRDC), Mark Lonsdale (CSIRO) and Alma Reynolds (Apple and Pear Australia Ltd) to a small working group to develop the CRC's planning process. This planning group took the CRC's Final Business Case as their starting point and met on 1 August to consider a working draft for the planning process that was prepared by Simon McKirdy. A second draft of this plan will be circulated to all participants on 18 August with an invitation for written comments to be returned by 6 September. The working group will meet again on 12 September to consider these comments and a final plan will be put forward at the AGM in October.

Science Committee: The CRC will operate a Science Committee, comprising the CEO and the six Program Leaders (4 science and technology programs, education and training program and commercialization and utilisation program) that will be responsible for managing and delivering the science program. The committee will also be responsible for recommending new projects to the Board.

Leader for Research Program 4: With the appointment of Simon McKirdy to the CEO position, there is now a vacancy for a Program Leader for Program 4: Impact Management. The Board has requested the nomination of suitably qualified persons from the core participants. In consultation with the Science Committee, the CEO will recommend a Program Leader to the Board.

As this is the last time that I will report to you as CRCNPB's Interim CEO, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support over the last 12 months and wish you farewell as I take up a new position with Biosecurity Australia. The CRC for National Plant Biosecurity will play a vital role in maintaining Australia's future biosecurity and I wish CRCNPB, its members and participants, all the best in this task.



Bill Roberts
Interim CEO
(outgoing)

[Home](#)[Status](#)[Profiles](#)[Participants](#)[Contacts](#)

Chief Executive Officer



Simon McKirdy
CEO (elect)

The Cooperative Research Centre for National Plant Biosecurity last week announced the appointment of Dr Simon McKirdy as its Chief Executive Officer (elect).

Dr McKirdy has wide-ranging expertise in both the scientific research and management of plant biosecurity, at both the state and national level, with experience in areas such as:

- developing and reviewing state and national import risk analyses;
- implementing diagnostic capacity for emergency plant pests;
- development and operation of surveillance strategies for emergency plant pests;
- coordination of emergency plant pests incursion responses;

Simon moves from a Program Manager position with Plant Health Australia Ltd, a core participant in CRCNPB, to take up the CEO position. At PHA, Simon has been responsible for managing many plant biosecurity projects as part of developing a national plant health system. This role has given Simon a solid foundation for managing biosecurity for Australia's plant industries.

Dr McKirdy is currently balancing his new role at CRCNPB with his PHA commitments, and will start work full-time at the CRC for National Plant Biosecurity position in September.

Brief Bio: Dr Simon McKirdy

Simon McKirdy (PhD University of Western Australia, 1997) is a trained plant pathologist and has published widely in the area of plant virology, addressing a range of crops across horticulture, grains, legumes and viticulture. Prior to his appointment at Plant Health Australia, Simon McKirdy held a quarantine plant pathology position with the Western Australia Department of Agriculture. Simon is also the current Senior editor of Disease Notes for the Australasian Plant Pathology Journal.



[Home](#)[Status](#)[Profiles](#)[Participants](#)[Contacts](#)

Other Comings and Goings

The CRC for National Plant Biosecurity welcomes a new member, Dr Peter Merriman, to its Interim Board.

Dr Merriman fills the casual vacancy created by Mr Brian Newman who has stepped down from the Interim Board after assisting with the CRC's establishment phase. We thank Mr Newman for his relatively brief but significant contribution to the CRC's start-up phase and will welcome his continued interest. The Board's newest member, Dr Merriman, brings extensive experience in plant health research to this position, and a brief profile is given below for your reference.

Bio: Dr Peter Merriman

Currently Chair of the Board of the Victorian Strawberry Industry Certification Authority, Chair of the Institute Bio- Safety Committee for Hexima Pty Ltd, Consultant to Horticulture Australia Ltd and Plant Health Australia Pty Ltd. Formerly Manager Plant Health and Principal Research Scientist Plant Protection DPI Victoria (1993 -2003), Member of Plant Health Committee and the Consultative Committee for Emergency Plant Pests and Diseases (1980 – 2003), Member of the Advisory Board of the Centre for Environment and Stress Adaptation Research (2000 – 2003), Director of Australian Development Project on Control of Coffee Leaf Rust PNG and Member of the Coffee Research Advisory Committee PNG (1988 -1992).

Departure

We report that Neil Fisher, foundation CEO of Plant Health Australia Ltd, has left PHA to take up the position of CEO of A3P (Australian Plantation Products and Paper Industry Council). Neil has been a staunch supporter of the CRC for National Plant Biosecurity from the earliest phases of the bid and his feisty contributions to recent discussions of the Constitution and Agreements were greatly appreciated by all concerned. We thank Neil for his support and wish him well in his position at A3P.



Peter Merriman

[Home](#)[Status](#)[Profiles](#)[Participants](#)[Contacts](#)

KEY CONTACTS

CRC for National Plant Biosecurity

2/4 Phipps Close
Deakin ACT 2600

Chairman, Interim Board

Professor John Lovett
Phone (02) 6227 5050
Email lovettassociates@bigpond.com

Chief Executive Officer

Dr Simon McKirdy
Phone (02) 6260 4322
Email simon@phau.com.au

Science Coordinator

Dr James Ridsdill-Smith
Phone (08) 9333 6640
Email james.ridsdill-smith@csiro.au

PROGRAM LEADERS

P1: Preparedness & Prevention

Dr Paul DeBarro
Phone (07) 3214 2811
Email paul.debarro@csiro.au

P2: Diagnostics

Dr Caroline Hauxwell
Phone (07) 3896 9362
Email caroline.hauxwell@dpi.qld.gov.au

P3: Surveillance

Dr Darryl Hardie
Phone (08) 9368 3799
Email dhardie@agric.wa.gov.au

P4: Impact Management

to be announced - please contact
[Simon McKirdy](#) with enquiries

P5: Education & Training

Prof Peter Baverstock
Phone (02) 6620 3719
Email pbaverst@scu.edu.au

PARTICIPANTS

Core Participants

- [Charles Darwin University](#)
- [Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries](#)
- [CSIRO Entomology](#)
- [Grains Research and Development Corporation](#)
- [Murdoch University](#)
- [New South Wales Department of Primary Industries](#)
- [Plant Health Australia Ltd](#)
- [Queensland Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries](#)
- [Saturn Biotech Limited](#)
- [South Australian Research and Development Institute](#)
- [Southern Cross University](#)
- [Victoria Department of Primary Industries](#)
- [Western Australia Department of Agriculture](#)

Supporting Participants

- [Australian Plant DNA Bank](#)
- [Horticulture Australia Ltd](#)
- [Northern Territory Dept of Business, Industry and Resource Development](#)
- [Rural Industry Research and Development Corporation](#)
- [University of Adelaide](#)