



CEO's Report

The CRCNPB team has been very active in the last few months since our last newsletter. It is still early in the life of the Centre, and a lot of effort is being devoted to developing a science program with a strategic direction. There has been a lot of activity by the Centre's management team in getting the CRC operational and developing the research and education programs, and I have briefly indicated the key activities in these areas below.

We've had a number of new appointments to the Centre over the last few months. Dr Gary Kong, from Queensland DPI&F, has commenced as Program 2 Leader (Diagnostics) and Dr Kirsty Bayliss has started in the position of Program 5 Leader (Education & Training). The CRC has also appointed an Office Manager/ Executive Assistant, Mellanie Balment-Sanders. Mell is currently very active in the task of setting up the office in Canberra, and will be your first contact for any administrative issues relating to the Centre. The CRC has also appointed a new Business Manager, Sunther Suntheraraj, who started work at the Centre last week. Sunther comes from the CRC for Welded Structures, and will work for us part-time over the next few months while CRC-WS is winding down, after which Sunther will be full-time for CRCNPB, based in Canberra. See the last page of this newsletter for contact details for any of our new team members.



Simon McKirdy
CEO



The Science Committee has been concentrating on developing a Science Program to commence on 1 July when the full CRC funding becomes available. To assist in this process, the Science Committee is visiting participants to develop the networks and commence the development of projects. A more detailed report is provided on the [research page](#) of this newsletter. To help build the involvement of all CRCNPB members, we have set up two 'hot desks' in the Canberra office. We encourage any members visiting Canberra to take advantage of the 'hot desks' which will provide a place to work, as well as web and phone access. A quick note to Mell before visiting Canberra will ensure all access is available when required. I would also encourage Canberra-based members to pop in to the office and say hello whenever you're in Deakin.



The CRC's Strategic Plan has been printed and widely distributed, and is about to start a second print run. Copies can be obtained by contacting Mell in the office (see last page of newsletter). I would like to thank Sue McKell again for her continued efforts in managing our communications activities. The logo she designed for CRCNPB and the format of the Strategic Plan have been very well accepted. To help members with future reporting obligations, CRCNPB is implementing an online project management system called IMAP. It is currently being configured for the CRC and will be fully operational by 1 July. The system will enable all project management and effort reporting to be undertaken via the web. The Centre's website is also nearing completion, although you can currently access files and contact details from a temporary website at crcplantbiosecurity.com.au.

View from the (arm of the) Chair

Third New Zealand Biosecurity Summit Christchurch, New Zealand, 31 Oct - 1 Nov 2005



Professor John Lovett
Chair

The New Zealand approach to biosecurity is founded on the notion of government (national and regional); industry and community working in partnership to address a very broad agenda of pest animal and plant control; plant pests and diseases, and human health. The opening plenary session at the Third New Zealand Biosecurity Summit in Christchurch consisted of three presentations on the partnership theme.

The second plenary session focussed on industry partnerships and contained a presentation by Rodney Turner (Plant Health Australia Ltd) on government/industry partnerships. This aroused considerable interest as, at present, industry in New Zealand defers to government to take the lead in matters of biosecurity, including providing most of the funding and setting research directions. The third plenary session dealt with community partnerships. So far as could be judged, community awareness of biosecurity in New Zealand is heightened as compared with Australia. This is probably a reflection of the breadth of the biosecurity agenda. The CRCNPB contingent noted, for example, that the New Zealand Arrival Card included extensive biosecurity notes for airline passengers.

Day Two commenced with a plenary session which included a briefing on the Biosecurity Ministerial Advisory Committee. The Minister for Biosecurity, Hon Jim Anderton, ranks third in the New Zealand Cabinet. Presentations on performance and evaluation, and on the biosecurity science strategy followed. The latter contribution was the only one which overtly recognised that biosecurity for New Zealand is an international issue. Rob Floyd (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet) contributed a paper 'An Australian Perspective in the New Security Environment'. Murray Sherwin (Director General, MAF) offered reflections on the Summit, emphasising the partnership theme and the point that biosecurity is everybody's business. Effective communication and building trust are paramount. Good legislation is needed to support all players. He noted the Australian government/industry model as one for further consideration. In his closing address, the Minister noted that financial provision for biosecurity had risen by 60% in the past five years. \$NZ19.5 million had recently been identified for capability enhancement. He was optimistic as to the level of continuing community support as environmental awareness was high.

At the conclusion of the Summit, the CRCNPB delegation attended a meeting with Mr Barry O'Neill (Assistant Director-General, Biosecurity New Zealand); Dr Mike Dunbier (Chair of the Board, National Centre for Advanced Bio-protection Technologies) and Professor Alison Stewart (Director, National Centre for Advanced Bio-protection Technologies); Dr Craig Phillips (Science Leader, Better Border Biosecurity [B3]); Dr Grant Smith (B3 Contract Manager); Dr Prue Williams (Crop and Food GM Research and member of Governance Council) and Mr Richard Westlake (Chair, B3 Governance Council). Options for joint approaches to science, education and training were canvassed. Letters of Intent were exchanged during the CRC NPB bid process, and it was agreed that a Memorandum of Understanding should now be drafted for consideration by the respective Boards.

Among some 150 participants in the New Zealand Biosecurity Summit in Christchurch were: CRCNPB Chairman, **John Lovett**; Board members, **Jim Cullen**, **Chris Richardson** and **Barry Windle**; CEO, **Simon McKirdy**, and Program Leader, **Darryl Hardie**.

New Zealand defines biosecurity as "the exclusion, eradication or effective management of risks posed by pests and diseases to the economy, environment and human health".

Research Update



Dr James Ridsdill-Smith
Science Coordinator

CRCNPB's Business Plan and the Strategic Plan have laid out the general direction of research that the CRC intends to undertake and the sorts of outcomes that we plan to be delivering. The Science Committee (Program Leaders, CEO and Science Coordinator) are making good progress in developing projects that provide the underpinning science needed by biosecurity groups and industries to carry out their responsibilities to protect Australian plant industries from invasive species. We have some projects already underway from Participant applications, but the CRC is still looking for projects to support the Centre's objectives and expand our research portfolio.

The science team has now provided, and is widely circulating, an overview of three to four critical research areas in each Program. The Strategic Research Program can be downloaded from CRCNPB website at crcplantbiosecurity.com.au. Within each of the Centre's research programs, there are between one and three project areas, covering the main research areas we have agreed to be involved in under our Commonwealth and Participants agreements. The team is visiting all core participants to introduce our Research Strategy and Program leaders are available to talk with any interested scientists about possible research areas. All scientists seem to be very busy with existing projects and to be overcommitted. Thus, we are finding the slightly bizarre situation where we have projects being developed, money is available to do the research, but the people who could and would like to do it are not available. The core participants have signed off on delivering around 5-6 FTEs to the CRC each year, and we are seeking ways to reach the critical mass required to deliver on the Centre's research objectives.

As the Science team is travelling around, we have been meeting with several other groups interested in contributing to plant biosecurity, with skills that will complement and help build ours. We are currently in talks with the CRC for Spatial Information and the new Centre of Excellence for Risk Analysis, both based in Melbourne, and both Centres have expressed an interest in contributing resources to joint projects.

My time lately has also been spent in advising others on Plant Biosecurity matters. This has included a consultancy through the CRCNPB with the Centre for International Economics reporting on biosecurity in Queensland for the Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries, and a smaller project helping Horticulture Australia develop their biosecurity plan. I am finding the experience helps me to see where the CRCNPB will fit better in the Australian biosecurity scene.

CRCNPB is building an enthusiastic and skilled team and they are working hard to put together an exciting and innovative research program. The team has been meeting regularly over the last few months to build a balanced program, and I am happy to report that it is progressing well. This is a cooperative research centre, and if we cannot get everyone involved in one way or another, then we are not using the resources available. If you have ideas, or comments about the research program, please feel free to contact any of the Program leaders or members of the Science team. We hope to have the a solid research framework in place to kick off a number of projects in July this year.

Education Update



Dr Kirsty Bayliss

Education and Training
Program Leader

Our first round of Honours scholarships has now closed and I am pleased to announce that we have approved two scholarships, with a number still being considered. We welcome the CRC's first Honours students:

- **Phillip Davies (University of Sydney):** "Aetiology and Epidemiology of the Fusarium Head Blight Epidemic in Wheat". Supervisors: Lester Burgess (USyd), Tim Knight (USyd), and Len Tesoriero (NSW DPI).
- **Kelly Rigg (University of Sydney):** "Development of a DNA barcoding system for the identification of Australian insect pest species: a case study of scarab beetle larvae". Supervisors: Andrew Mitchell (NSW DPI), Tom Weir (CSIRO Ento), and Raman Anantanarayanan (USyd).

The next round of Honours scholarship applications will close in June, so please start thinking about these now. As a reminder, students do not have to be enrolled at a CRCNPB-affiliated University to be considered for these scholarships.

Two PhD students have also started at the Centre, and we will be profiling them in our next newsletter. I encourage all CRC participants to discuss proposals for 2006-07 PhD scholarships with the relevant Program Leaders as soon as possible. We offer: generous full scholarships to the value of \$30,000

(including operating costs), or top-up scholarships for those students who already have an APA or an equivalent university award; an annual student forum where Honours and Postgraduate students from all States and Territories gather in one location to meet CRCNPB participants, discuss their progress and present their work; and on-going interactions with staff from various research institutions, which will assist in developing student networking skills and future employment prospects. PhD Projects should fall into one of the four CRCNPB research programs – Preparedness and Prevention, Diagnostics, Surveillance or Impact Management. If you have any queries regarding our PhD scholarships, please do not hesitate to [email me](#) or the relevant Research Program Leader (see contact details in this newsletter).

As part of my new role in the Education and Training program, I am also planning a number of workshops and training days for both CRCNPB staff and students. Currently in the development pipeline are workshops on communication (including media/publicity liaison), writing skills, and IP management. If you have any workshop ideas that you think would be useful for CRCNPB members, please do not hesitate to contact me. Although I am based at Murdoch University in Western Australia, I will be travelling regularly to the various CRCNPB nodes to keep in contact with our students and run training workshops for both staff and students - I look forward to meeting you all soon!



Profile: Mellanie Balment-Sanders

A thumbnail sketch of CRCNPB's new Office Manager and Executive Assistant to the CEO, Mellanie Balment-Sanders.

A quick chat with Mellanie uncovered the following...

What she enjoys about working for CRCNPB: I've found a challenging role working for a company that has a worthwhile focus with fantastic colleagues... honestly!

Currently busy with...: setting up the Centre's head office in Canberra and negotiating contracts for future operational activities.

Expected challenges for her role: Building comradery between the team members (at all levels - board, executive, researchers, students etc) and across the nation will be a key challenge to me in this role. I see that maintaining effective communication between team members will be especially important for this organisation.

Contact Mell for: I'd like people to see me as the first point of contact for all CRC-related business, and I would encourage them to [email](#) or phone me (02 6163 6200) if they have any queries at all that I can help them with.

Personality Profile: Mell describes herself in three words as: energetic, helpful & compassionate. Confirming this view, CRCNPB's management team were recently asked to profile Mell's personality. They offered the following suggestions on what guise Mell would take if she were a...:

Menu item	Car	Dog
Bombe Alaska	Mustang 68	Red Setter



Mellanie Balment-Sanders
Office Manager
& Executive Assistant

A day in the life of Mell might entail...

- Managing the CEO's diary
- Negotiating supplier contracts
- Coordinating a workshop
- Go for 5km hill run at lunchtime(!)
- Preparing documents for the Chairman
- Being the operational arm for the CRCNPB team in a more general sense

Where she comes from:

Previously employed as: Personal Assistant to Accounting Partner, Executive Assistant to Human Resource Director, and (before moving to Australia from Scotland), an Office Manager to major oil firm.

Describes her career path in one sentence as: Moving from the role of personal assistant to providing a more advisory level of support.

What she enjoys about CRCNPB : Being part of an organisation that has given me the trust to perform my role.

What you should know about her

Mell is an adventurous, outdoor-loving kind of girl and also something of a fitness fanatic, listing horse-riding, paintballing and Krav Maga (a form of street-based self defence) as the type of thing she might do to unwind after a long day. Mell is also currently training to participate in a triathlon for the first time next year, so adds running, cycling and swimming to an already hectic schedule of sporting activities.

KEY CONTACTS



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P6: Delivery & Adoption

[role to be filled in second half of 2006]

PARTICIPANTS

Core Participants

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

Supporting Participants

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

