



Rapid establishment of the Agriculture Policy Taskforce strengthened DAFF's biosecurity preparedness in the short and longer-term.

There are no cases of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) or lumpy skin disease (LSD) in Australia at present, but **Australia's risk environment and profile is changing, becoming more complex with new and emerging threats.**

Between March and May 2022, FMD and LSD cases were detected in some of our closest neighbours, in addition to other potential threats. As a result, Australia has increased focus across the biosecurity system, including establishment of the Taskforce on 8 August 2022 to advise the Secretary on preparedness for a nationally significant EAD outbreak.

The taskforce faced the challenge of not detracting focus from frontline biosecurity services, whilst managing competing and complex factors during its service.



Impacts to Australia's livestock industries affecting profitability, trade and market access



Multi-layered issues complicating mobilisation processes within a constraint timeframe

By applying modern ways of working with a 'Being Future Ready' mindset, **the taskforce quickly achieved tangible outcomes and capability uplift while adapting to an evolving and complex environment.**



Evaluated and assessed current and potential risks



Built a better understanding of the biosecurity system



Identified potential gaps and opportunities, including resourcing



Clarified roles, responsibilities and necessary contributions.

The culture and work practices adopted by the Taskforce embodied the Government's APS Reform priorities:

- 1 An APS that embodies integrity in everything it does.**
Working collaboratively across the APS, with jurisdictions and other stakeholders to restore public trust and strengthen standards of integrity.
- 2 An APS that puts people and business at the centre of policy and services.**
Planning solutions with end users and those affected in mind, including jurisdictions, industry and the broader community.
- 3 An APS that is a model employer.**
Applying best practice modern ways of working to ensure all employees continue to learn, build networks and meaningfully contribute to outcomes.
- 4 An APS that has the capability to do its job well.**
Identifying the capabilities needed for emerging work and challenges to support the best service delivery to Australians.

Key characteristics of the Taskforce approach that demonstrate commitment and alignment to APS Reform



Establishing the Taskforce to assess preparedness for a nationally significant EAD outbreak, including appropriate and rapid responses to associated broader economic and societal impacts.



Workstreams led by staff at different levels in the organisation bringing together a wide range of perspectives and experience. This was complemented by the engagement of deep subject matter experts within DAFF and across the APS, states and territories, and industry.



Adopting a flat management structure, cooperating across workstreams, and embracing agile practices helped the taskforce to manage workflow and risk, deliver to tight timeframes, engage necessary expertise and share workloads.



Direct engagement of staff with appropriate experience and skillsets ensured that the 'right people were on the job'. This was accompanied by a collegial mindset towards temporary mobility opportunities and the release of staff 'in good faith'; and the embedding of the Policy Office as the taskforce's 'internal consultants' for new ways of working and practical application of APS reform agenda proposals.



Applying innovative thinking to ensure outcomes are practical to implement and adaptive to future scenarios. The Taskforce utilised technologies such as Mural boards, SharePoint and Teams to stay connected, collaborate and share ideas in an accelerated way.



Engaging with diverse stakeholders, including farmers, businesses, industry, and various levels of government, to co-design biosecurity policies and funding models. This enabled the Taskforce to identify opportunities to enhance the department's operating model, in turn leaving the biosecurity system better than we found it.



Embracing public transparency when responding to active biosecurity treats and commissioning independent reviews to identify opportunities for improving biosecurity preparedness.



New ways of working enabled the Taskforce to work collaboratively, achieve capability uplift and deliver accelerated outcomes

Working to a tight time frame provided focus

- 1 Aug**
DAFF preparedness planning workshop brings together key internal stakeholders to examine challenges and barriers for biosecurity preparedness
- 8 Aug**
Secretary Metcalfe establishes the Agriculture Policy Taskforce, prompting scoping and mobilisation discussions
- 15 Aug**
An Inter-departmental Committee on FMD is established
- 25 Aug**
The Taskforce consults with Australian Meat Industry Council
- 26 Aug**
DAFF's submission for *Senate Inquiry into adequacy of Australia's biosecurity measures and response preparedness, in particular with respect to foot-and-mouth disease* is lodged
- 29 Aug**
National Livestock Standstill Exercise is led by Joint Interagency Taskforce: Exotic Animal Disease
The Taskforce consults with Dr Graeme Cook from Agriculture Victoria regarding the UK's response to FMD
- 27 Sep**
Joint Interagency Taskforce: Exotic Animal Disease Workshop released by Senator the Hon. Murray Watt, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Minister for Emergency Management
- 29 Sep**
The Taskforce engages in consultation regarding FMD trade preparedness
- 14 Oct**
The Taskforce deliver *Maintaining social licence during an FMD (or other significant EAD) outbreak* to DAFF's Executive Board
The Taskforce enables consultation and implementation planning for the Joint Interagency Taskforce recommendations
- 1 Nov**
The Sustainable funding and investment to strengthen biosecurity: discussion paper is publicly released
- 22 Nov**
Final report on how DAFF could strengthen its preparedness capability delivered to Secretary Metcalfe

Participants used flexible work arrangements and collaboration tools



Desley Darby
Director, Biosecurity Strategy Unit,
Biosecurity Strategy & Response Branch
Cairns, QLD
'I now have the ability to work remotely but still undertake key roles that involve working on policy and transformative issues. Once, you could only do this if you were in Canberra.'



Paul Treloar
Contract Manager, Policy and
Portfolio Strategy
Brisbane, QLD
'The lite touch use of Agile project management methods helped the team be flexible and responsive in achieving the Taskforce's deliverables.'



Durham Bennett
Senior Adviser, Transport, PMC,
seconded as A/g Assistant Secretary
Canberra, ACT
'The DAFF taskforce was an easy place to work, filled with people ready and willing to jump into whatever tasks were required.'



Gael McNaughtan,
Director, Regional Investment
Corporation Policy
Donnybrook, WA
'Drafting and editing the Senate submission in real time with my colleagues all in the same document was trouble-free using the taskforce Teams site'



Christine Mulhearn
Assistant Secretary, Livestock and
Crops, Agricultural Policy Division
Canberra, ACT
'The ability to utilise technology for real-time collaboration allowed for everyone to make meaningful contributions no matter their location in Australia.'

Work streams assessed key issues across the biosecurity system

