

## Subcommittee on Plant Health Diagnostics Communiqué – SPHD33

The Subcommittee on Plant Health Diagnostics (SPHD) held its 33rd meeting via Microsoft Teams on 12 October 2021. Issues considered by SPHD as part of the meeting are detailed below:

- **Implementation of the National Plant Pest Reference Collections Strategy (NPPRCS)**  
The Reference Collections Implementation Plan Working Group (RCIPWG) and SPHD endorsed the RCIPWG Terms of Reference.

The APPD database has been re-developed with transition to the new system occurring at the end of 2021. Digitisation of the reference collections including digital images and genome sequence data is being considered to efficiently align with/connect to existing repositories of digital data.

- **Enhancing the National Plant Biosecurity Diagnostic Network (NPBDN)**  
The tenth Australian Diagnosticians Workshop was held as a virtual workshop on 5-6 October 2021. The theme of the workshop was “Diagnostics in a climate of change” and was held over a two-day period. Over 150 attendees were recorded across the two-day program and reflects both the interest and the importance of the National Plant Biosecurity Diagnosticians Network (NPBDN).


COVID has led to a delay in the delivery of the workshops under the Professional Development Framework. Plans are in place to hold technical workshops for *Miridae*, *Lygseoidea*, *Xylella fastidiosa*, and termites. A workshop on Oomycetes identification was considered as a priority future workshop.

Network Implementation Working Group (NIWG) discussed alternative and online options to deliver the NPBDN Professional Development program and considered developing training packages for National Diagnostic Protocol (NDP) development and reference collections.

- **National Diagnostic Capacity (Diagnostics Protocol Working Group – DPWG)**  
The SPHD Reference Standards for Instructions to Authors to develop a NDP are due for a review and update. DPWG has included this activity in its workplan and will further refine guidelines for the inclusion of detection tools that can be used to support surveillance activities (triage tools including Loop Mediated Isothermal Amplification (LAMP) etc). There are currently 43 endorsed NDPs and 85 draft NDPs – each of these are in various stages of development. The NDP for *Ceratovacuna lanigera* (Sugarcane woolly aphid) has been endorsed by SPHD.

The following five NDPS have been submitted to SPHD for endorsement:

- i. *Colletrotrichum lentis* (lentil anthracnose)
- ii. *Fusarium oxysporum* f. sp. *cubense* TR4
- iii. Wheat Spindle Streak Mosaic Virus (WSSMV)
- iv. *Flavescence dorée* phytoplasma
- v. *Phymatotrichopsis omnivora* (Texas root rot)



The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) has conducted a review of the National Diagnostic Protocol process. The review made 18 recommendations to improve the NDP process. SPHD will respond to this review. On the whole, many of the recommendations were valid and were directly related to resourcing of activities, particularly the review and verification of draft NDPs.

▪ **Implementing quality management systems: Proficiency Testing**

Specimen panels for round 10 of the National Proficiency Testing Program will proceed in early 2022 with specimen panel contributions from South Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland. However, there have been delays with procuring fungal and bacterial specimens due to ongoing discussions around material transfer agreements and destruction of specimens.

DAWE have informed SPHD and the Proficiency Testing (PT) Coordinator that they will be conducting a review of the proficiency testing program in 2021/22. This review is welcomed by SPHD as the current PT program is under resourced and inadequate for the required quality management systems (e.g., NATA) used by plant health diagnostic laboratories.

▪ **National Plant Biosecurity Diagnostic Strategy Update (NPBDS)**

The draft NPBDS implementation plan was discussed at the SPHD33 meeting and later endorsed out of session by SPHD (Oct 2021).

▪ **National Biosecurity Committee (NBC) High Throughput Sequencing (HTS) framework report**

SPHD sought nominations from members to join the new HTS working group. Once formed, the HTS working group will review the National Biosecurity Committee HTS framework business case and implementation plan and will support the delivery of the HTS Implantation Plan. The HTS Working group is planning to hold its first meeting in April 2022.

▪ **Plant Biosecurity Research Initiative (PBRI) update:**

The PBRI Program Director was invited to attend SPHD meeting to update on PBRI research, development, and extension work. SPHD noted the PBRI investments and priorities, its regular RD&E forums, the Biosecurity Extension Community, and the date for the forthcoming PBRI Symposium (11 & 12 May 2022).

**Date of Next Meeting**

SPHD34 will be held on Tuesday, 17 May 2022 to Wednesday, 18 May 2022 in Canberra, Australian Capital Territory.