


An aerial photograph of a rural landscape at sunrise. The sun is low on the horizon, casting long, golden shadows across a patchwork of green fields and scattered trees. A small pond is visible in the lower right, reflecting the warm light. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

Victoria's Biosecurity Statement

2022



We will pass Victoria along to future generations, unique and enriched, out of respect for the Traditional Owners who have always been and continue to be custodians of this land. We take biosecurity action for the sake of the people, plants, animals, and culture that will live in Victoria in the future.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and their ongoing connection to this land, and we pay our respects to their culture and Elders past, present and future.

We recognise and value the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal people and communities to Victorian life and how this enriches our society.

Traditional Owners and First Peoples have an intrinsic connection to their Country and we acknowledge their ongoing knowledge and their contribution to the management of land, water, the natural landscape and our built environments.

We recognise the unique knowledge, rights and interests of Aboriginal people in Victoria's biosecurity system. We seek to create respectful partnerships and to develop policies and programs that respect Aboriginal self-determination and align with treaty aspirations.

In the context of biosecurity, this means building meaningful relationships and collaborative partnerships that seek to incorporate the knowledge, laws, culture, customs and traditions of Aboriginal people into our biosecurity laws and system.

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Background

Why do we need a biosecurity statement?

Biosecurity as a concept is not well understood, and many Victorians don't realise that they play an important role in supporting and protecting the things we value from the impacts of pests and diseases.

This document communicates our shared purpose and ambition for biosecurity in Victoria, setting a clear and cohesive direction for the broader system. We hope to connect and align the many parts of the system, so that we move in harmony.

By clarifying what biosecurity is, why it exists and how we can each play a role, we seek to improve how key stakeholders work together to take collective action. We hope that in reading this you see yourself and your part in the system.

This statement becomes a firm foundation for reform and improvement in biosecurity, and a stepping stone for developing a new biosecurity strategy.

A statement written in partnership with key stakeholders

This statement was developed using a participatory and collaborative approach written following stakeholder workshops held in April and May 2022. This work builds upon an extended period of research and consultation with people around the state who participate in, or benefit from, Victoria's biosecurity programs.

Over 14 weeks we developed a draft that was analysed, edited and refined through regular consultation.

The final output is a concise and meaningful statement that can be used to build momentum and cohesion within the system. Importantly, it reflects the voices, perspectives and language of the breadth of people and organisations across the system.

What is biosecurity?

Biosecurity is a collective effort to prevent and manage the harms caused by pests and diseases, and the impact they have on what we value most.



The land, waters, and unique ecosystems we know as Victoria is shaped by 3.5 billion years of evolution and by the ongoing care of Traditional Owners over countless millennia.

They are also shaped by all Victorians, whose actions and choices can have significant impacts on our land, waters, communities, culture, and economy.

The responsibility falls to all of us, to help protect and enhance Victoria. Together, we can strengthen our collective ability to adapt to new threats and challenges, and grow a better Victoria.

Why is biosecurity important?

To ensure we can move freely, gather, care for and connect to Country, produce safe and clean food, and enjoy the beauty of the outdoors, we need to protect ourselves, our farms, our environment and animals from harmful pests and diseases.



The risks facing Victoria are increasing and becoming more complex.

Climate change is contributing to the ability for harmful species to survive in new environments while weakening the resilience of our natural and agricultural ecosystems. Increasing trade and travel are changing the way potential risks move around the world and our country, posing threats to our land and waters.

These ecosystems are already impacted by our growing cities, biodiversity loss and changing farming techniques.

Goods and people are streaming across Victoria's borders, sometimes carrying pests from overseas or other parts of Australia. Pests and diseases are also becoming more resistant to conventional treatments.

We can all make a difference

The actions we take – or don't take – can impact an entire industry or ecosystem and protect or upend a whole community.

We can all help prevent pests from getting into Victoria, contain outbreaks before they get out of hand, and give everyone in Victoria the benefit of a safer, more resilient environment, community and economy.



What does biosecurity look like in action?

Biosecurity action is individually and collectively making choices to safeguard our land and waters, respecting the value they bring us.



A backyard gardener in Emerald reads about the pests that could attack their fruit trees and pens their chooks to protect them from diseases carried by wild birds.



A group of landholders in the Upper Murray meet to discuss their annual community-led blackberry control program.



A Wimmera farmer sees that a neighbour has not treated prickly pear and stops by their house to talk about it.



A Registered Aboriginal Party's land management team remove rabbit warrens from a site of cultural significance on the Surf Coast.

A Gippsland sheep grazier contacts the local vet after a large number of unusual deaths occur in their flock, who then notifies Agriculture Victoria to investigate further.



A farm advisor in Victoria's north-west uses the Exotic Pest Plant Hotline to send photos to Agriculture Victoria after noticing unusual insects in a barley crop.



These

small actions

have big impacts

on the things we value:

**our farms and parks
our pets and gardens
the cultural integrity of the landscape
the safety of our food
and the success of our industries.**



A vision for the future of Victoria's biosecurity system



We look toward a future where Victoria's communities are healthy, our farms are prosperous, and our culture and wellbeing are supported by a vibrant and whole natural environment.

A future where everyone in our state understands the threats posed by harmful pests and diseases and acts to protect and enhance their communities and the environment around them.

Where Victoria's food and fibre industries are sending clean and safe produce around the world, setting a standard for safety, efficiency and sustainability.

Where all Victorians can align around a vision of what's right for Victoria, and act confidently in support of that vision, informed by evidence and the knowledge of Traditional Owners.

Where we can pass Victoria along, unique and enriched, out of respect for the people who cared for it before us, and for the sake of the people, plants, and animals that will live in Victoria in the future.

Bringing this future to life

We will decide together what kind of future we want for the places we live and on which we rely; set priorities for action together by listening and deliberating; and work together to achieve that collective vision.





Decide together

We can partner with our neighbours and with people and groups across Victoria to determine what belongs in our future. Individuals and groups can come away from the process feeling confident their views have been considered alongside those of others in the system and scientific evidence.

Set priorities together

We can come together as a Victorian community to decide where to put our resources, which risks to combat and how we can adapt to changing conditions. We can look proactively at the big picture, determine the most efficient way to deploy our resources, and acknowledge the benefits our hard work and investments bring to all of us.

Work together

We can build approaches that include all Victorians, value our views and respect the diverse knowledge we hold. The relationships we build and maintain will be the foundation for our preparedness, agility, efficiency, and effectiveness in countering future threats.

Role of government

At our borders, our government will have strong surveillance, regulation and quarantine arrangements to prevent, detect and intercept risks.

In partnership with Traditional Owners, our state government will empower people and groups to understand their environments, prevent and prepare for outbreaks and incursions, and respond to changing circumstances early and with confidence.

There will be times when our government acts to enforce regulations or respond to an emergency. We can ensure these actions meet community expectations through engagement that allows every Victorian to have meaningful input into decision-making.

Values and principles that support our vision for the future

The biosecurity system involves all Victorians. Government agencies, organisations, businesses and individuals all have a role to play. The following values and principles help to build a shared understanding of how we will work together and how we will make decisions.



Values we demonstrate when working together



Respect

We will respect the knowledge of others in the system, valuing their insight and perspectives. We will listen with openness and humility and encourage the behaviour of sharing what we learn as we continue to foster our ability to work together.

Inclusion

We will enable and support collaboration and active participation across the system. Every person whose choices impact Victoria's land and waters has the opportunity, and the responsibility, to play their part.

Equality and reciprocity

We acknowledge, clarify and respect the rights of all people and groups in the system. All people are empowered to achieve the future we want to see.

Being proactive and responsive

We identify and respond to potential or emerging risks in a timely manner. We are communicative and call upon support when it is needed.

Integrity

Our behaviours, interactions and actions are in pursuit of the common good. We act with integrity, recognising the importance of the work that we do.

Principles that guide our decision-making



Our decisions are timely, transparent and well-informed

Information and knowledge play a vital role in guiding our decision-making and biosecurity actions. We consider cultural and social impacts and Traditional Owners' ways of managing Country. The decision-making process is transparent and all stakeholders have confidence, ownership and responsibility.

We are focused on outcomes and the collective good

Our decisions aim to improve overall environmental, social, cultural, health and economic values. Interventions are based on achieving outcomes. We take action based on the consideration of possible impacts and outcomes.

We plan for the long-term while remaining agile

We look at the big picture and invest in the long-term, but we maintain the agility to meet changing demands. We set clear objectives and measures, communicating these from the outset.

We share rights, responsibilities and risk

Risks, opportunities and decisions are made by those who are best placed to make them. We enable and empower leaders at all levels, increasing our collective capacity to take biosecurity action.



The Biosecurity Statement is authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

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The Biosecurity Statement was prepared and designed by Paper Giant.

Accessibility

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