

National Fruit Fly Council
Annual Report
December 2023



SUMMARY

In this Annual Report, we present progress against the planned deliverables of the National Fruit Fly Council (NFFC, or the Council) for the period January to December 2023.

This year represents the second year of Stuart Burgess' term as Manager of the NFFC. The year has focused on the lead up, running and action stemming from our 2023 National Fruit Fly Symposium in Adelaide in July. Chris O'Connor continues in his role as Engagement Officer, deepening and broadening NFFC stakeholder engagement. Together, Stuart and Chris have delivered the second phase of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) funded project to support the industry engagement and extension of Australia's fruit fly system. In September 2023, Natalie Banks joined the team part-time as a Project Support Officer, helping to deliver secretariat support to the Council.

The highlight of 2023 has to be the National Fruit Fly Symposium in which over 120 delegates explored 'the view over the horizon'. This biennial event involving stakeholders working together to manage fruit fly risks for horticulture industries met in Adelaide at the National Wine Centre on 20-21 July. The Symposium took stock of progress against the National Fruit Fly Strategy as well as ensuring the long-term goals for improved fruit fly management addressed industry aspirations, changing risks, and the need for a cooperative approach. Day two comprised a series of workshops around issues including Area Wide Management (AWM) and Sterile Insect Technique (SIT), systems based approaches to safe trade, as well as extension and engagement covering social research. These were designed to provide an update on past and current work, draw on successful and practical approaches, explore case studies both locally and internationally, and explore future opportunities and priorities with an overarching theme being operating in a 'chemically limited future'.

The numerous changes implemented in response to the 2021 review of the structure and operations of the NFFC are now being actioned and embedded. These include the NFFC Executive Committee that has met on 3 occasions during 2023 plus meetings with representatives from the New Zealand Fruit Fly Committee in July 2023 in Adelaide. Further refining of their role in particular through providing leadership to the Council, monitoring and reporting against the strategy and influencing stakeholders for the benefit of the 'system'.

In addition, a series of new Council specialist groups have been convened during 2023 and are enabling broader engagement across the national fruit fly system and progress on the strategy. These include a Fruit Fly Research Working Group and a Fruit Fly Management Toolbox Task Group. Planning is well underway for the National Research Network which is being revived post covid as well as planning for a potential National Fruit Fly Research Forum for mid 2024.

The 2022–23 Annual Implementation Report for progress against the NFFS has been finalised. This report summarises progress and achievements from 1 July 2022 to 31 June 2023. Progress in each of the eight key result areas from the NFFS is tracked against the strategic framework and objectives within the NFFS.



The 2023–24 Annual Implementation Plan has also been prepared for publication. It collates key fruit fly activities that have been planned and resourced by stakeholders from 1 July 2023 to 31 June 2024 and maps them against priority areas in the NFFS. This is also used to monitor progress against the National Fruit Fly Strategy (NFFS) and identify gaps that need to be addressed in the national system. The Annual Implementation Plan acknowledges many different stakeholders' considerable and ongoing contributions to fruit fly management in Australia. Importantly, it provides an opportunity to collectively consider potential gaps in this system as guided by the Intergovernmental Agreement on Strengthening Australia's Fruit Fly Management System.

Building on the success of past fruit fly webinars, three highly successful sessions were conducted as part of the new 'Think Tank' Webinar series in the lead up to the National Fruit Fly Symposium in July 2023. The first shared the latest '*Market Access*' research and was delivered by Dr Penny Measham, Director of RD&E at the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and leader of the Market Access team. The second covered current and future '*Area Wide Management*' tools to combat fruit fly with experts Dr Hazel Parry from the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) and Dr Heleen Kruger from Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES). The third webinar showcased the latest approaches to '*Enabling safe cross-border trade with improved risk science tools*' and was presented by a team from the CSIRO led by Dr Rieks van Klinken, Research Leader of the Biosecurity Program, Jane Muller, Engagement Consultant with Agricultural Exports, and Dr Maryam Yazdani, Team Leader: Health and Biosecurity. These webinars elicited considerable interest and engagement from a diverse range of stakeholders within the fruit fly research and agricultural sectors with participants ranging from researchers to growers, grower advocacy groups, peak industry bodies, regulators, policy makers as well as the general public.

Ongoing delivery of the newsletter and social media program following the NFFC Communications Plan is continuing. A refreshed and revised Prevent Fruit Fly website was launched in early 2023.

The National Fruit Fly Council project

The National Fruit Fly Council Phase 4 is funded by Hort Innovation, states governments, the Australian Government and fruit fly impacted horticultural industries. The NFFC is a strategic body bringing together federal and state governments, growers, and research funders to oversee the implementation of the National Fruit Fly Strategy and to provide advice and leadership on the delivery of a cost-effective and sustainable approach to managing fruit flies across Australia.

The objectives of the National Fruit Fly Council Phase 4 project are to provide a national strategic direction for the management of fruit fly in Australia, prioritise RD&E for fruit fly in Australia, and inform a national approach to the application of fruit fly management to meet industry needs for domestic and international trade.

This fourth phase of the NFFC continues to build on a considerable platform of work in recent years which has increased national engagement and identified priorities to strengthen the national fruit fly



system and Australia's trade position. The NFFC is also now uniquely positioned to provide an independent and facilitatory role in bringing stakeholders around key issues that require national coordination and cooperation to be progressed and resolved.

The project enables regular meetings of the Council, and a small project team within Plant Health Australia. This team is responsible for developing the Council's agenda, increasing connectivity with trade and research stakeholders, and communicating with fruit fly stakeholders across Australia.

Outcomes of the project include:

- the provision of national, strategic direction for the management of fruit fly in Australia, including managing the risk of exotic species, to support a robust national system for trade and production,
- prioritized R&D activities to meet the short and long-term fruit fly management needs in Australia, including endemic and exotic species,
- and communication and cooperation between governments, industries, researchers, and communities to progress strategically important national fruit fly issues.

The project contributes to the Hort Frontiers Fruit Fly Investment fund outcome of *"Maintained export markets – fruit fly as a second order issue for our trading partners"* by providing coordinated and collective consideration of national fruit fly challenges by key decision-makers and service providers, and those most affected by fruit fly. As a result of these discussions, the NFFC has provided advice and leadership on the resolution of issues that benefit horticultural production and trade.

The project also contributes to the biosecurity outcomes of fruit fly impacted industry specific Strategic Investment Plans (SIPs). These outcomes include industry preparedness, responsiveness, and resilience to biosecurity threats (e.g., exotic fruit flies), a national approach to fruit fly management, reduced impact of endemic pests and improved on-farm practices.



Key deliverables

National Fruit Fly Council meetings

The Council has met twice during 2023. Of those meetings, one was a hybrid, held in Adelaide as well as online, and the second online via Microsoft Teams.

- Meeting 33 – 19 July 2023
- Meeting 34 – 13 December 2023

Some of the issues considered by the NFFC during these meetings have included:

- Ongoing consideration and implementation of recommendations from the National Fruit Fly Council review leading into Phase 4.
- Ongoing improvement of the new NFFC structures including the new NFFC Terms of Reference (ToR), Executive Committee, Working and Task Groups.
- Building on previous progress against the 2020-25 National Fruit Fly Strategy and priority activities stemming from recommendations from the National Fruit Fly Council review.
- Facilitation of NFF Protocol consultation meetings with industry on 6, 12 and 13 October 2023
- Finalizing PHA's DAFF funded Engagement and Extension project and key themes:
 1. Chemicals, control, and technologies
 2. Governance, funding, and planning
- Ongoing engagement with Riverland Fruit Fly Committee in relation to the fruit fly outbreak eradication in the Riverland (South Australia).
- Continued support for the Sterile Insect Technique (SIT) program post completion of the Hort Innovation SIT Plus project and ongoing engagement with SIT Strategic Advisory Committee regarding program deliverables and future priorities.
- Ongoing consideration and engagement surrounding the findings of the DAFF-funded and PwC-delivered *National Fruit Fly Resourcing Options* (Sustainable Funding) consultancy.
- Engagement around the DAFF-funded and Deloitte-delivered *Building Resilience to Manage Fruit Fly Package* scoping study.
- Exploring the threats and opportunities relating to the fruit fly system operating within a 'chemically limited future'.
- Consideration of a 'Deep-dive' model for review of priority issues building on learnings from the 2023 symposium
- Discussion and early planning for development of the proposed 2026-2035 National Fruit Fly Strategy.

Importantly in 2023, the Council welcomed Mr John Webster as its new independent Chair. Whilst Council membership numbers remained stable in 2023 (15 members not including PHA staff), several changes of personnel occurred within the state-based members. Departing members included Mike Ashton (Qld); Ross Meffin (SA); Andrew Bishop (Tas); Satendra Kumar (NSW) and Sonya Broughton (WA).





Prevent Fruit Fly @PreventFruitFly · Feb 22

The **NFFC** welcomes industry expert **John Webster** as the new **Independent** Chairperson. John brings a wealth of senior executive experience, a thorough working knowledge of national horticulture issues & holds several **Chair** & council member positions.

bit.ly/3EpZVjm



The National Fruit Fly Council welcomed John Webster as the new Independent Chairperson in February 2023.

NFFC Executive Committee meetings

The recently convened NFFC Executive Committee had three meetings in 2023. Of these meetings, two were held in person, the first in Canberra and the second in Sydney, and the third was held online:

- Executive Meeting 2 - 15 March 2023
- Executive Meeting 3 - 22 May 2023
- Executive Meeting 4 - 17 November 2023

The Executive Committee also completed an Australian Rural Leadership Foundation (ARLF) Workshop on 14-15th March 2023.

Some of the issues considered by the NFFC Executive Committee included:

- Development of 2024 Annual Priorities to strengthen the capability, capacity, and resilience of the fruit fly management system and to maximize R&D outcomes.
- Defining the Rules of Engagement, Operational Roles, Communication Protocols, and Implementation Approach for Strategic Priorities for the NFFC Executive Committee through the ARLF workshop.



- Development of a new “White Paper” model for the NFFC Annual Work Plan to progress priority initiatives and issues relating to the National Fruit Fly Strategy.
- 2023-24 NFFC program schedule across all core functions and activities.
- Ongoing development of NFFC stakeholder engagement and influence mapping.
- 2023 National Fruit Fly Symposium scheduled for 17-19 July, 2023, in Adelaide.
- Convened first meeting of the newly established NFFC Research Network in July, 2023.
- Further development of the new specialized NFFC Task Groups.
- 2023 National Fruit Fly Symposium, held in 20-21 July, 2023, in Adelaide.
- Executive Committee roles within the NFFC Working Group and Task Group process.
- Engagement with representatives of the New Zealand Fruit Fly Council 19 July 2023
- Preliminary discussions leading into the consultation process for the National Fruit Fly Protocol

National Fruit Fly Symposium



The 2023 National Fruit Fly Symposium was held on 20-21 July 2023, at the National Wine Centre, Adelaide. The theme for the symposium is ‘*The view over the horizon*’. Over 120 stakeholders attended and included industry leaders, government representatives, researchers, and growers. The 2023 Symposium built on the success of the 2021 Symposium. Trade issues were front a centre of the 2023 program, with other priority strategic activities covered including:

- Market access.
- Area Wide Management (AWM) and Sterile Insect Technique (SIT).
- Systems based approach.
- Extension and engagement.

The Symposium sessions focused on three key areas:

1. a status report on achievements to date,
2. successful and practical approaches (success stories) to draw on, and



3. future opportunities and priorities (view over the horizon).

A key outcome of the 2023 Symposium was the capturing and prioritising of the key issues identified through the sessions, with day summaries including actions collated similar to those generated for the 2021 Symposium.

The days were grouped into key activities and themes to help facilitate conversations and engagement:

- Day 1: The national fruit fly system and trade
- Day 2: Fruit fly in a chemically limited future, which included workshops on strategic priority issues:
 - Area Wide Management (AWM),
 - Sterile Insect Technique (SIT),
 - Systems-based approaches,
 - Extension and engagement including social research.

National Fruit Fly Council webinar series

Continuing from the previous year's successful webinar series we have again delivered several successful webinars. These webinars provide a platform which empowers regional stakeholders by sharing relevant information on national fruit fly management activities and research, and practical and regionally appropriate practices for the management and/or prevention of fruit fly.

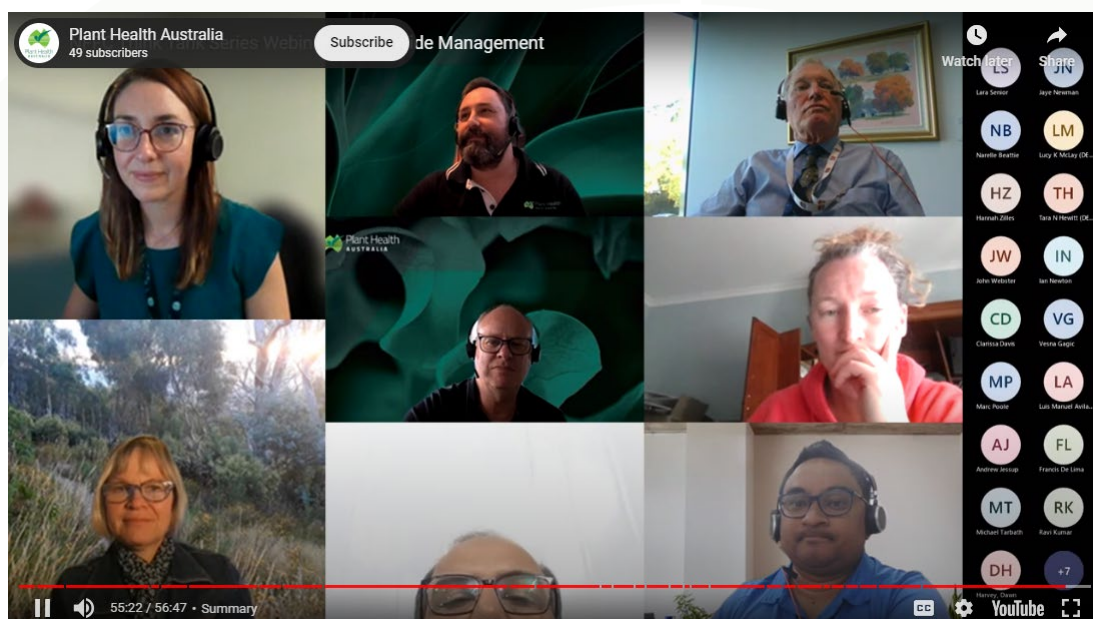
During 2023 the NFFC delivered three webinars:

- Webinar 10: Market Access (30 March 2023)
- Webinar 11: Area Wide Management (27 April 2023)
- Webinar 12: Enabling Safe Cross-border Trade with Improved Risk Science Tools (15 June 2023)

Attendance across the series averaged around 110 attendees each webinar. Participants included researchers, growers, grower advocacy groups, peak industry bodies, regulators, policy makers and the public. Slides from the individual presentations have been made available on the [Prevent Fruit Fly Website](#).

Recent restrictions on travel have seen a forced shift to online engagement and this has aided in building an appetite for delivery using digital means. The value of webinars resides in their ability to communicate national messages simultaneously reaching a diversity of production regions and industries.

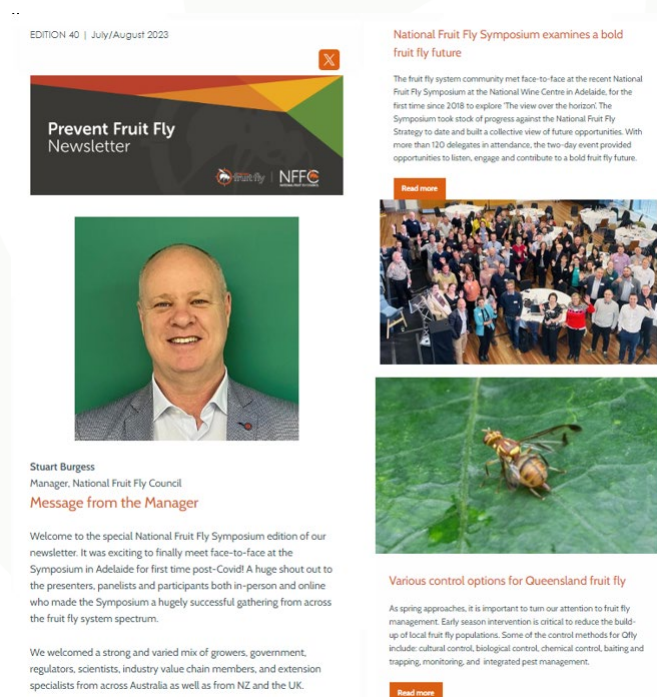




Drs Hazel Parry and Heleen Kruger present in Area Wide Management webinar

Prevent Fruit Fly E-Newsletter

Throughout 2023, three Prevent Fruit Fly e-newsletters were distributed and in this year the number of newsletter subscribers increased by 15% to 962, compared to 814 in December 2022. Past editions of the newsletter can be found [here](#).

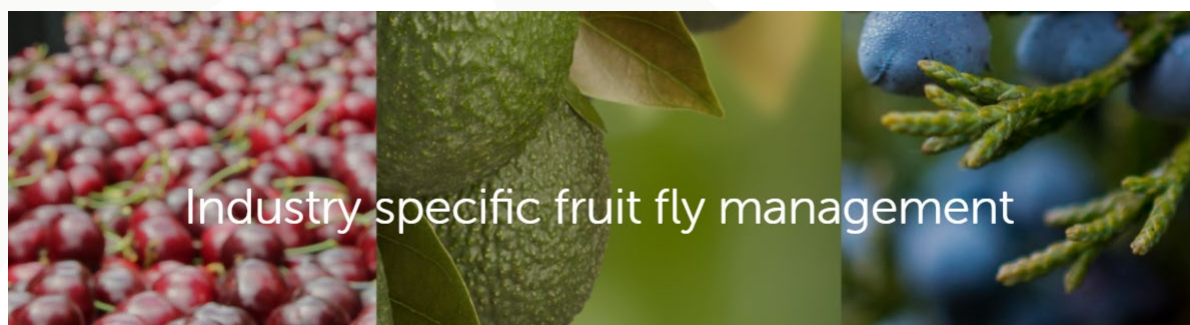


Examples from recent Prevent Fruit Fly E-Newsletters



Prevent Fruit Fly Website

The website has undergone considerable redevelopment in 2023 which temporarily led to a decrease in traffic. A comprehensive review of content and links is currently underway to enhance the user experience. A surge in internet traffic is anticipated following these improvements.



Website improvements included 10 [Industry Fruit Fly Management Placemats](#)



Area wide management and trapping

[READ MORE](#)



Bait spraying and male annihilation

[READ MORE](#)



Cold treatment

[READ MORE](#)



Industry specific fruit fly management

[READ MORE](#)



Orchard hygiene

[READ MORE](#)



Resources

[READ MORE](#)



Sterile Insect Technique (SIT) – a tool to benefit Australian horticulture

[READ MORE](#)

Website image showing new grower-based tools in toolbox [Producers | National Fruit Fly Council \(preventfruitfly.com.au\)](#)



Website image showing new SIT [Sterile Insect Technique \(SIT\)](#) tool



Prevent Fruit Fly X account

Between January and December 2023, 128 Xs and 328 re-Xs were shared on the Prevent Fruit Fly X feed, Facebook, and LinkedIn. These received a total of 38,744 impressions. During this 2023 year, the number of X followers increased by 13% from 415 followers to 476 followers.

Through the Prevent Fruit Fly X account we have also run campaigns with information targeted at specific audiences. The use of hashtags (#) enables us to group these messages together allowing users to quickly find information in the related topic. An example of the use of hashtags includes the use of #biosecurity, #planthealth #fruitfly #preventfruitfly. The nature of the platform also assists us in amplifying fruit fly related messaging of our members and other key stakeholders.



Prevent Fruit Fly Twitter channel page



Industry articles

Ten articles have been written and distributed to relevant industry magazines over the course of year including:

- ABC Online
 - Riverland Fruit Fly outbreak extra protocols high cost to growers (Jul 23)
- Farm Biosecurity e-Newsletter
 - National Fruit Fly Council appoints new independent Chair (Feb/Mar 23)
 - Save the Date – National Fruit Fly Symposium (Mar 23)
 - National Fruit Fly Council unveils new website design (June /July 23)
 - Register now for the 2023 National Fruit Fly Symposium (June/July 23)
 - National Fruit Fly Symposium examines a bold fruit fly future (Aug/Sept 23)
 - Get on top of fruit fly this season (Oct/Nov 23)
 - NFFC releases new guide on SIT (Dec 23)
 - National Fruit Fly Symposium examines a bold fruit fly future (Dec 23)
- Rural Business
 - Fruit fly control methods (Sept 23)

The 'NFFC appoints new independent chair' media release (Feb 23) was also published in the following magazines:

- Australian Tree Crop Magazine
- Good Fruit and Vegetables
- North Queensland Register
- Stock Journal
- Stock and Land
- Queensland Country Life
- Farm Online
- Farm Weekly

Bespoke articles have also been specifically developed for use on the Prevent Fruit Fly website, newsletter, and social media channels as well as more broadly via the Plant Health Australia communication channels. A response was also issued to an enquiry from WIN news on Queensland Fruit Fly.

Media Interviews

The following media interviews were conducted during the year 2023 for ABC radio:

- ABC Adelaide interview 'New NFFC Chair' with John Webster (Feb 23)
- Tasmanian Country Hour 'Positive Fruit Fly Symposium' with Sarah Corcoran and John Webster (Jul 23)
- Nic Noske - Cherry Growers SA (Jul 23)
- Jason Size - Riverland Fruit Fly Committee (Jul 23)
- Raj Guhman - Riverland grower (Jul 23)



- Tim Greiger - Riverland grower (Jul 23)

Other NFFC Phase 4 activities

Meetings with State Agencies

An independent external review of project activities, performance, program structure and corporate government arrangements, was conducted to inform future phases of funding.

The independent review of project HA18000 – National Fruit Fly Council (Phase 3) was undertaken by GHD Pty Ltd during October and November 2021. Review recommendations were presented to the NFFC in December 2021 and were considered and acted on in the first half of 2022. Twice yearly meetings have been held with a majority of states in May and September 2023.



NFFC meets with Steritech to discuss irradiation treatments for fruit fly





NFFC meets with CSIRO scientists in Brisbane to discuss future fruit fly research



The NFFC met with growers at the Summerfruit Forum in Moama, NSW.





The NFFC met with fruit fly regional coordinator and governance groups in Victoria

Research and Trade focused exchange

The first inaugural meeting of the NFFC Research Working Group was held on 19th July in Adelaide and included key stakeholders from state and national governmental departments and major fruit fly research institutions. Key outcomes from this meeting included the ToR, NFFS Research Implementation Plan as well as initial planning for a NFFC Research Forum.

PHA (through the NFFC) has continued its involvement with AFFTAC with Chris O'Connor attending as an observer. These are invaluable links to the technical experts leading the broader state and Commonwealth fruit fly related workplans.

Multiple additional meetings have been held between the NFFC and lead fruit fly research agencies and groups. These include:

- Meeting with the Macquarie University fruit fly research group
- Meetings in Brisbane with the DAF Qld fruit fly team
- Meeting and site tour of the DAF Q Horticulture Export and Market Access facility at Redlands
- Meeting the CSIRO teams based out of the Eco-Sciences Precinct in Brisbane
- Ongoing engagement with the Oriental Fruit Fly Working Group (FF18001) including involvement in the DAFF-funded National Action Plan for Exotic Fruit Flies project
- Ongoing engagement with the Steritech Irradiation program with site visit and meeting with Ben Reilly at their Brisbane facility

National Fruit Fly Management Protocol Engagement Meeting

Building on the work and engagement sessions initiated in July 2022, the NFFC convened a series of follow up facilitation meetings with industry on the 6th, 12th and 13th of October to discuss the updated Australian National Fruit Fly Management Protocol (the Protocol). The meeting was requested by DAFF to facilitate discussion and more detailed planning for future industry engagement in relation to the Protocol.



Membership

The Council is comprised of:

Name		Title	Industry / Organisation
John	Webster	Independent Chair	National Fruit Fly Council
Greg	Chandler	R&D Manager for Biosecurity	Horticulture Innovation Australia Ltd
Shane	Hetherington	Chief Plant Protection Officer	NSW Department of Primary Industries
Nick	Secomb	Director (Plant and Invasive Species Biosecurity)	Department of Primary Industries and Regions SA
Michael	Reid	General Manager (Plant Biosecurity and Product Integrity)	Department of Agriculture and Fisheries Queensland
Andrew	Bishop	Chief Plant Protection Officer (Tasmania)	Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania
Sonya	Broughton	Chief Plant Biosecurity Officer	Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development WA
Susie	Collins	A/g Assistant Secretary (Plant Health Policy)	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Rosa	Crnov	Chief Plant Health Officer	Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, VIC
Steve	Burdette	Owner	Steve Burdette & Associates
David	Daniels	General Manager (Market Development)	Citrus Australia
Tom	Eastlake	Cherry Grower	Cherry Growers Australia
Dale	Williams	Mango Grower	Euri Gold Farms
Jolene	Williams	Stonefruit Grower	Sunfruit Orchards
Stuart	Burgess	Manager, NFFC	Plant Health Australia
Chris	O'Connor	Fruit Fly Engagement Coordinator (NFFC Secretariat)	Plant Health Australia
Natalie	Banks	Project Officer (NFFC Secretariat)	Plant Health Australia



The NFFC Executive Committee is comprised of:

Name		Title	Industry / Organisation
John	Webster	Independent Chair	National Fruit Fly Council
Greg	Chandler	R&D Manager for Biosecurity	Horticulture Innovation Australia Ltd
Andrew	Bishop	Chief Plant Protection Officer (Tasmania)	Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania
Susie	Collins	A/g Assistant Secretary (Plant Health Policy)	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Rosa	Crnov	Chief Plant Health Officer	Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, VIC
Steve	Burdette	Owner	Steve Burdette & Associates
Jolene	Williams	Stonefruit Grower	Sunfruit Orchards
Stuart	Burgess	Manager, NFFC	Plant Health Australia
Chris	O'Connor	Fruit Fly Engagement Coordinator (NFFC Secretariat)	Plant Health Australia

Chairperson

The Council and the Executive Committee are chaired by an independent chair, Mr John Webster. Meetings are convened by the Chair and supported by the manager of the Council.

