



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF
PLANT HEALTH

2020

THE AUSTRALIAN IYPH 2020 PROJECT

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Executive Summary

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly declared 2020 the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH). The year was a once in a lifetime opportunity to raise global awareness on how protecting plant health can help end hunger, reduce poverty, protect the environment and boost economic development.

Australia had an important role to play in this year, as a member of the global plant health network and one of 184 contracting countries to the UN's International Plant Protection Convention.

An Australian chapter of the IYPH was initiated by Australia's Chief Plant Protection Officer and financially supported by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment and five Research and Development Corporations.

The objectives for the Australian IYPH were to:

- increase awareness of the importance of plant health
- emphasise the importance of involvement by the broader community
- promote the work of the Research and Development Corporations (RDCs) and governments in contributing to Australia's plant health
- coordinate and communicate the IYPH activities and events across Australia.

In February 2020, an IYPH Event Coordinator was appointed to implement the Australian IYPH Communication and Engagement Strategy, guided by the Australian IYPH Steering Committee and using the Australian IYPH website as a central portal to disseminate information of IYPH activities and events.

To start the year, the first official event was the Parliament House launch, held on the 6th February. The Federal Minister for Agriculture, Mr David Littleproud opened the year and a special video message from the Director General of FAO, Mr Qu Dongyu, was played, celebrating the exemplary work by Australia to protect plant health. He also expressed his support and solidarity to Australian with the recent devastation and loss caused by the January 2020 bushfires.

Twelve activities were planned across the year, in collaboration with RDC's, federal and state government departments and other industry bodies however, the COVID-19 pandemic prohibited many of the planned public events, through travel restrictions and closure of public facilities due to health risks. Although this was unfortunate timing, the general concept of biosecurity gained significant public awareness throughout the year, as many Australian's daily lives were affected by this pandemic.

To adapt to the changing environment, five digital projects were initiated, while continuing to coordinate and develop projects planned for the eventual relaxing of COVID-19 restrictions.

One online project was 'Everyday Plant Health Heroes' which aimed to highlight the people often working 'behind the scenes' on plant health. Forty five profiles of plant biosecurity practitioners ranging from school students to researchers to CEOs were developed and published on the IYPH website to raise awareness on how the biosecurity community keeps our plant life healthy.

A partnership was developed with the Queensland government 'DAF Hermitage School Science competition' which has involved over 100,000 high school aged students, since it was initiated in 1997. To create awareness of the IYPH, two conference registration sponsorships were provided to the successful students, to enable them to travel to a relevant plant health conference, to further their interest in plant health as a potential career.

In Tasmania, a primary school student was sponsored, to assist in replanting the school wetlands, to promote a healthier environment to grow the local bee population. IYPH partnered with this school project which was already underway and in collaboration with GreenLife Industries Australia, donated suitable plants to complete the project successfully.

A larger project commenced in November, installing an IYPH Bush tucker Garden at Cobargo Primary School. In partnership with the Royal Botanic Gardens community greening education team, this project was developed to support a community that had been severely affected by the January 2020 bushfires.

This project is dedicated to the late Dr Kim Ritman, who spent his career elevating the importance of plant health, both in Australia and through his global biosecurity networks. Kim's enthusiasm and commitment to IYPH created the momentum to initiate this project. Our intention was to collaborate around the country, particularly with the broader community, to deliver on his original concept of promoting the importance of plant health to Australian's lives.



Michelle Portelli

Australian International Year of Plant Health Coordinator

Background

On 20 December 2018, the UN General Assembly, proclaimed 2020 the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH). Through this they resolved:

to invite all Member States, organizations of the United Nations system, other international and regional organizations and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, individuals and other relevant stakeholders, to observe the International Year, as appropriate, through activities aimed at raising awareness of the importance of plant health and the economic, social and environmental impact of plant health on food security and ecosystem functions, and to share best practices in this regard.

The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) determined that the slogan for the year would be Protecting Plants, Protecting Life.

The year is a once in a lifetime opportunity to raise global awareness on how protecting plant health can help end hunger, reduce poverty, protect the environment, and boost economic development. It will also highlight the vital role of national and regional plant health organizations in protecting plants from deadly pests and diseases.

In 2019, an Australian IYPH Steering Committee was established to oversee IYPH activities throughout the year and to ensure there was good connection back to the FAO IYPH initiative. The steering committee was originally led by the late Dr Kim Ritman, Australia's Chief Plant Protection Officer.

The steering committee included representatives from the following organisations and committees:

- The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE, Chair)
- Plant Health Australia (PHA)
- The Plant Biosecurity Research Initiative (PBRI)
- AusVeg
- GreenLife Industries Australia
- Plant Health Committee
- The Australian Chief Environment Biosecurity Officer (DAWE)

In Australia, many organisations contribute to the biosecurity system with opportunities to promote the valuable work being done, particularly the partnership between industry and government, through the Plant Biosecurity Research Initiative (PBRI) and more broadly.

This project aimed to raise the profile of the work the RDCs, PHA and the Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment (DAWE) do to protect vital and thriving plant industries which supply food, wine, fibre, shelter and medicine to Australian people, environment and international markets.

Significant investments are made in capability building and building industry resilience to respond to pest and disease risks. Awareness among farming and business audiences and some segments of the general public is high, however there was a desire by members of the Steering Committee to broaden the engagement with all Australians.

DAWE supported and funded the development of a dedicated IYPH Website for Australia to provide a centralised hub of tools, contacts and events around the country for interested people to take plant health action. The website was created and maintained by Plant Health Australia (PHA).

Many of the activities, stories and events developed with in the IYPH project were uploaded to the website throughout the year, with the assistance of dedicated PHA staff.

Australian IYPH Project Objectives

- Attract the attention of Australia's political leaders and the national media and to engage with the community, state leaders and stakeholders.
- Increase awareness of the importance of plant health in all aspects of life
- Emphasise that the broader community can play a role in plant health and biosecurity
- Promote the RDCs and government's role in contributing to Australia's enviable position around the globe of having a strong plant health system
- Amplify a range of IYPH related activities and events that will be run by stakeholders and the community

Implementation of the Communication and Engagement Strategy

Communication Strategy

A comprehensive communications and engagement strategy, funded by DAWE, was developed by Plant Health Australia (PHA). This strategy provided the framework for how engagement and communication with our stakeholders, partners, government departments and the general public would be implemented. The strategy highlighted our key targets, our stakeholders and the messages we wanted to present.

The communication strategy provided the following elements to facilitate the implementation of the strategy,

- a situation analysis
- audience segmentation and recommended approaches
- stakeholder identification and priorities
- key messages
- recommended activities and channels
- themes for stories, media and social media
- the launch and potential collaborative events
- An action plan and timeline

IYPH Key messages

A key approach in the strategy was to create intrigue about plants being essential to life and bring in plant health themes, primarily focusing on the people contributing to the biosecurity system and benefits to individuals.

United Nations Key Messages

- It is risky to bring plants and plant products across borders as this may spread plant pests and diseases.
- Make trading in plants and plant products safe without setting up unnecessary barriers.
- Keep plants healthy to protect the environment and biodiversity.
- Protect, manage and restore terrestrial and marine environments to keep plants healthy.
- Invest in plant health organizations and phytosanitary research and development.
- Healthy plants are crucial for ending hunger and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
- The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) provide guidance and lead global efforts to ensure plant health.
- Many of these messages will not resonate with audiences in Australia so the following messages have been crafted.

Appointment of IYPH Coordinator

Five RDCs (AgriFutures, CRDC, GRDC, Hort Innovation and Wine Australia) supported the appointment of a full-time, experienced events coordinator, Ms Michelle Portelli. Michelle was employed to coordinate and deliver a series of IYPH events and activities across 2020 which was aligned to the UN messages of 'Protecting Plants, Protective Life'.

The main role of the coordinator was to liaise with the Australian Steering Committee and to implement the Communication and Engagement Strategy using the IYPH website as a central portal to disseminate information of IYPH activities and events.

COVID-19 Disruption

Unfortunately, the year 2020 saw unexpected disruptions to business across the world, caused by the global pandemic, COVID-19. Major changes occurred to public events and Australian borders were closed.

With only a few events delivered pre-COVID, IYPH re-focussed efforts to social media as a means to continue to connect with stakeholders and the general public.

New initiatives that aligned to the Communication and Engagement Strategy were introduced and work with social media channels increased, to provide an extended reach.

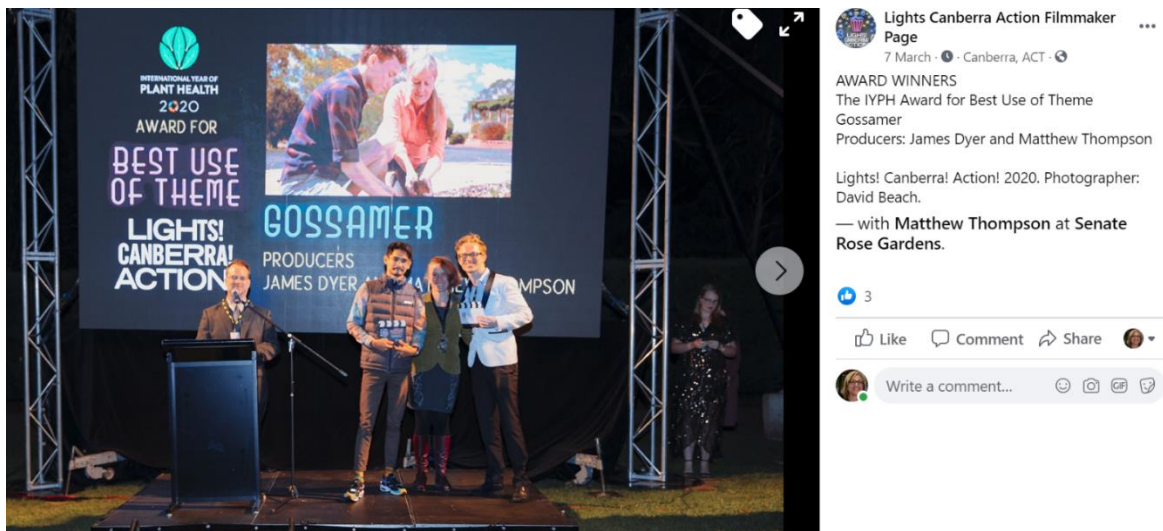
IYPH Activities

The following section describes the project activities which align to the four central pillars of the Communication and Engagement Strategy.

Key Pillar 1: General public awareness activities

1.1 Lights!Canberra!Action! film festival

With 2020 being the International Year of Plant Health, the organisers of the Enlighten Festival Canberra, dedicated their Film Festival, Lights!Canberra!Action to IYPH with the festival theme of 'Planted'. The opening of the film festival was held on Saturday 7th March at the Senate Rose Garden, Canberra. The IYPH project sponsored the 'Best Use of Theme' Category, and the prize was presented by Dr Susanna Driessen to the producers of the winning film "Gossamer" James Dyer and Mathew Thompson. The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment sponsored an IYPH themed display in the Neon Night Garden during the Enlighten festival.



[Presentation of Award](#)

[Gossamer \(Film\)](#)

1.2 Questacon Biosecurity Exhibition

School-age children were a target audience in the IYPH Communications and Engagement Strategy. Questacon, Canberra was selected to work with, due to their high-profile interaction with school students and high volume of children visiting the museum each year. Approximately 130,000 (mainly year 5-6) students from across Australia participated in excursions to their Canberra Centre.

Questacon has a dedicated demonstration space suitable for an IYPH exhibition, that had previously been used to engage students and families in joint government activities with CSIRO and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, to raise awareness of their mission and objectives. They also had a number of other programs that lent themselves well to IYPH activities with children.

In late February 2020, work began on an exhibition for IYPH with the Questacon Team and staff members from DAWE. It was decided that the exhibition would be a six-piece installation covering the following pests:

- Giant African land snail
- Citrus canker
- Myrtle rust
- Gypsy moth
- Prickly Pear, Wandering Trad
- Fruit Fly

Pest images were purchased and the installation was near completion for the exhibit but unfortunately the project was placed on hold due to COVID-19. The project was postponed and may still go ahead with the assistance of DAWE next year, when restrictions on numbers are lifted for the museum.

This exhibition could also become a part of Questacon's travelling exhibitions.



1.3 School Bee Habitat Project

Scotch Oakburn College, Launceston, Tasmania

In early October, the IYPH event coordinator identified a young student from Scotch Oakburn College in Launceston who was undertaking a large plant health related project. Eve Chugg, a year 8 student, set herself a task of replanting the wetlands of her school and building bee hotels, to encourage more native bees into the area. She demonstrated an understanding of the importance of plant health for pollinators and was seen as a role model for other students.

The IYPH coordinator worked with the school to determine how Eve could be assisted in her project. GreenLife Australia coordinated nursery growers in the area to donate plants to the project and organised for their journalist to interview Eve. An article written for the GreenLife Industries Australia newsletter, with images of the great work Eve is doing in the International Year of Plant Health can be found here [GreenLife Industries Australia Article](#).



Eve installing a bee hotel at Scotch Oakburn College's North Esk Wetlands (Image: Mark Hassell)








Eve with local nurseryman, David Allan from Allan's Garden Centre. David has donated plants to Eve's wetlands proje including the *Tasmannia lanceolata* (Mountain Pepper) pictured here (Image: Mark Hassell)

1.4 DAF Hermitage Science Competition (Qld)

The Hermitage Research Facility is the oldest agricultural research facility in Queensland, commencing operations in 1897. In 1997 the Hermitage Research Facility celebrated its centenary year. As part of the commemoration, a competition was developed as an activity that schools could participate in to help celebrate the facilities centenary. To date over 100,000 students have participated in the competition.

Partnering with the school program, two of the winners of the competition were sponsored to support a trip to attend a plant health conference or symposium, to further their interest into the sciences and hopefully encourage them to pursue a career in plant health. The competition provided widespread exposure for the year, whilst also promoting the messages of the year.

Five of the students were also featured in the [Everyday Plant Health Heroes profiles](#).

 <p>Michelle Springolo</p> <p>Award recipient at the 2019 and 2020 Hermitage Schools Plant Science Competition</p> <p>November 5, 2020</p> <p>Read More</p>	 <p>Yasmine Brockhurst</p> <p>Award recipient at the 2019 Hermitage Schools Plant Science Competition</p> <p>November 5, 2020</p> <p>Read More</p>	 <p>Liam Brockhurst</p> <p>Award recipient at the 2019 and 2020 Hermitage Schools Plant Science Competition</p> <p>November 5, 2020</p> <p>Read More</p>	 <p>Charlotte Tonissen</p> <p>Award recipient at the 2020 Hermitage Schools Plant Science Competition</p> <p>November 5, 2020</p> <p>Read More</p>	 <p>Ebony King</p> <p>Award recipient at the 2019 and 2020 Hermitage Schools Plant Science Competition</p> <p>November 5, 2020</p> <p>Read More</p>
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1.5 Twitter

With the inability to hold live events, IYPH turned to social media as a means of promoting and sharing the messages of IYPH.

The twitter account @IYPH2020 was established, and through this account we were able to share upcoming virtual events, webinars, podcasts, virtual walks and the IYPH Everyday Plant Health Heroes profiles.

The account was set up in March 2020, and within a nine-month period, we have grown to over 210 followers, with followers across the world.



[@IYPH2020 twitter account](#)

1.6 Facebook

Facebook was used in the IYPH project as another social media channel to promote the events, messages and people within the industry. Although Facebook is not as effective a tool as twitter in reaching people, we still had success in gaining followers and raising awareness of the year. For the full website click on the link below.

The screenshot shows the Facebook interface for the 'International Year of Plant Health 2020 Australia' page. At the top, there are login fields for 'Email or phone' and 'Password', with a 'Log In' button and a link for 'Forgotten account?'. The page header features the Facebook logo and the IYPH 2020 logo. The main content area includes a cover photo of cotton plants, a post titled 'everyday heroes' with a photo of a man and text about plant health research, and a 'Photos' section with a large image of cotton plants and the IYPH 2020 logo. The right sidebar shows a 'Community' section with 38 likes and 43 followers, and an 'About' section.

[IYPH 2020 Facebook Page](#)

Key Pillar 2: Australia IYPH website content and key activities

2.1 IYPH Website

An integral part of the Communications and Engagement Strategy was to build a comprehensive IYPH Website. Funded by DAWE and created by Plant Health Australia, the website was the key social media channel for the promotion of all IYPH events.

The website was created to be a centralised hub of tools, contacts and events around the country for people interested in plant health. Amongst the many items added to the website were news articles, resources including posters, brochures, videos, activity books and web banners.

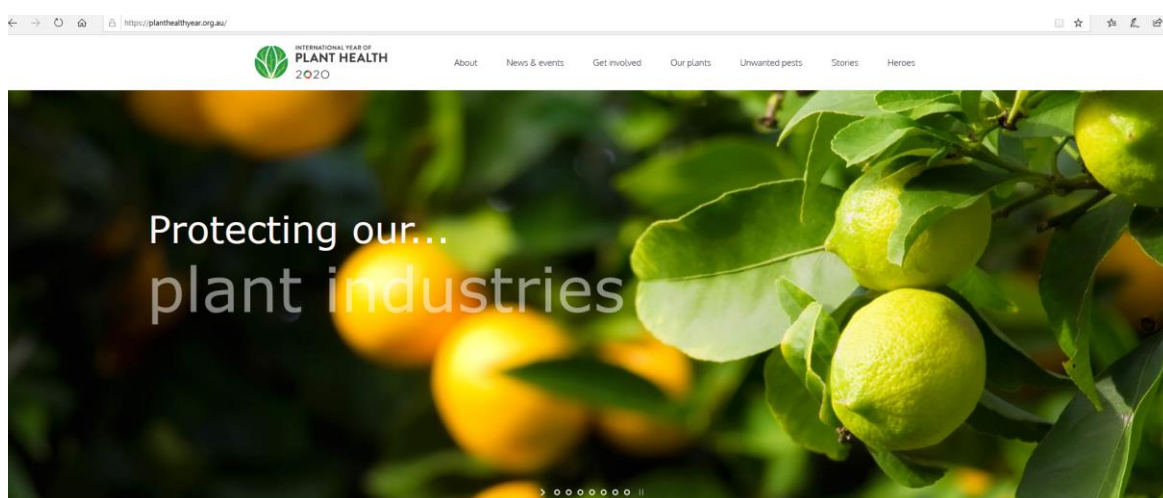
All events around Australia were to be calendarised for the year, but due to COVID-19, we were limited as to few live events. We uploaded many relevant and interesting Webinars, Seminars, virtual walks and articles relating to plant health.

The major IYPH social media campaign found on the website was the Everyday Plant Health Heroes. This campaign showcased a variety of people from the Australian plant health community, their roles and what influenced them to work with plants.

Plant Health Australia not only developed the website but have continued to maintain it and assist with all communication requirements. Appendix 1 demonstrates the growth and interest in the website.

[IYPH 2020 Australian Website](#)

See Appendix 1: IYPH 2020 Website Statistics



The International Year of Plant Health is being celebrated in Australia in 2020

The theme of the year is 'Protecting Plants, Protecting Life' because plants impact our lives every day.

The IYPH2020 is being led globally by the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization – visit their site.

2.2 Launch of IYPH 2020 in Australia

The Australian IYPH was officially launched on 6 February at Parliament House, Canberra, with the active participation of local and international governments, plant health authorities and exponents of the private sectors and industries. Mr David Littleproud, Federal Minister for Agriculture of Australia, spoke at the IYPH opening ceremony at Australia's Parliament House, inaugurating a rich program of events and activities Australia is putting in place throughout the year at the national level.

The Director General of FAO, Mr Qu Dongyu, welcomed the Australian initiative with a special video message, highlighting the exemplary effort made by the country to protect plant health even in critical situations, and expressing FAO's solidarity for the terrible bushfires that are destroying farms and biodiversity in the country.

According to the Acting Australian Chief Plant Protection Officer, Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, Dr Gabrielle Vivian-Smith, the threat that plant pests and diseases pose to Australia's agricultural systems and biodiversity is growing. "It is imperative that we prevent, prepare for and respond effectively to pest threats in Australia and assist others in our region and beyond to benefit from our knowledge and expertise," stressed the Chief Plant Protection Officer, encouraging the Australian phytosanitary community to make plant health systems stronger and champion the importance of plant health in 2020.

Mr John Wood, Chair of the Rural Research and Development Corporations emphasised the value of biosecurity and collaborative plant health research for farmers. "As a farmer we rely on science everyday - for the biosecurity and quarantine provisions to protect our borders; right through to the pathology to protect our crops. Everyday world class scientists and officials are working to protect our livelihoods and protecting our industries.

The role of Finland as a strong advocate for International Year of Plant Health was recognised at the event which was attended by the Deputy Ambassador of Finland to Australia, Ms Katja Karppinen.

The execution of the launch required a collaboration of effort with significant in-kind support from Hort Innovation and the DAWE team. Activities such as sourcing the venue, organising security, sourcing and ordering IYPH event bags, designing and sourcing IYPH2020 pins, organising audio visual, as well as catering and staging.

Ensuring all the appropriate dignitaries and ministers were invited, members of industries, CEO's of Research and Development Corporations, public service members and the staff to ensure all parties were looked after on the day. This is only a small example of the work, but work that took months to make the event look seamless. Staff worked well into the night on the day prior to the launch and were onsite before daylight to ensure the success of the event. The launch was a major success, and a true reflection of the months of hard work by a significant team of people.



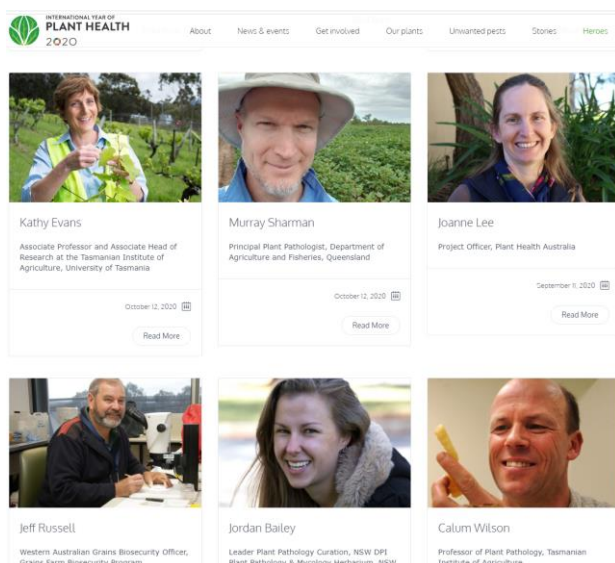
Left to right Mr Greg Fraser, Chief Executive Officer of Plant Health Australia; Dr Jo Luck, Director of Plant Biosecurity Research Initiative; The Hon David Littleproud; Mr Andrew Metcalfe, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment; Dr Gabrielle Vivian-Smith, Acting Australian Chief Plant Protection Officer; Mr Tim Lester, Executive Officer of the Council of Rural Research and Development Corporations; Mr John Woods, Chair of the Council of Rural Research and Development Corporations.

2.2 Everyday Plant Health Heroes

To generate awareness of the people supporting Australia’s high plant health status, the online ‘*Everyday Plant Health Heroes*’ was created.

A brief list of questions was designed, aiming to provide an insight into plant health careers. People working in e.g. State and Federal Government departments, RDCs, botanic gardens, peak industry bodies and school student were invited to participate.

There was a positive response with 45 profiles submitted and published online. A common theme amongst all ‘Heroes’ was the passion they had for their work and their natural environment.



To preview the full list of Everyday plant health heroes, click the link below.

[Everyday Plant Health Heroes](#)

Key Pillar 3: Leveraging and Supporting activities

(by Governments, Industry and Various PHA Stakeholders)

3.1 GreenLife Conference

The GreenLife Industry Australia National Conference and Field Day for 2020 was held in Perth from 3rd to 5th March. The event provided an opportunity for nursery industry participants to come together to connect with and learn from each other as well as hear and network with expert speakers.

In 2020, the conference theme was Healthy Plants, Healthy People which tied into the UN's International Year of Plant Health and contributed to raising awareness on how protecting plant health can support people through health and well-being, economic development, protecting the environment and food security.

The conference was attended by over 225 people from all sectors in the nursery industry. Over 35 speakers presented across a three-day program which featured two field tours and three industry networking events.

The IYPH Event Coordinator was invited to the event, to raise awareness of the year and to meet with industry partners. The Coordinator discussed the importance of the year, how it was essential to ensure proper biosecurity measure places were in place, and also how the industry could get involved in IYPH events throughout the year.

Through this conference, connections were established to support activities throughout the year such as donations of plants and additional support through social media channels and networks.



Ms Michelle Portelli (Australian IYPH coordinator) and Mr Steven Smith (Chair National Governance Committee for the Australian Plant Production Standard) attending the Green Life Conference, Perth February 2020. Photo courtesy of Ms Kobie Keenan (Communications Manager, Greenlife Industry Australia)

3.2 Podcasts and Webinar Participation

As part of the initiative to increase awareness, the International Year of Plant Health Event Coordinator was invited to do two podcasts and a webinar.

The key focus for the podcasts and webinar was to introduce IYPH to different industries and to publicise the messages of IYPH and the resources available to all industries in Australia if they chose to get involved in the year.

Green Cities, International Year of Plant Health and Nursery Data Podcast

soundcloud.com/theplantpod/episode-6-green-cities-international-year-of-plant-health-nursery-data

Onion Project Podcasts

soundcloud.com/user-341987951/international-year-of-plant-health

Biosecurity and Plant Health Update

youtube.com/watch?v=G_pAcZuDRdg

Key Pillar 4: Broad stakeholder engagement:

4.1 Cobargo School and Community Garden Project

A large school greening project was undertaken in a collaboration with the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney's Community Greening Team. Cobargo Primary School, NSW, was selected as part of a community that was seriously affected by the January bushfires, suffering devastating loss of lives and property.

A bush tucker garden is due to be completed in December and will be accompanied by an education program on indigenous plants with messaging on plant health tailored to the primary school aged children. The garden will ultimately be planted and cared for by the students and the school community with a series of education sessions leading up to the planting day.

The accompanying education program is underway and runs over a number of weeks. The garden will be completed by the 20th December. The ABC's 7.30 Report will be filming the garden as part of their greater bushfire recovery story.



Youth Community Greening Proposal - International Year of Plant Health

July 2020



Acknowledgements

The events undertaken throughout the International Year of Plant Health, and the event coordinator's role, would not have been possible without the financial support of the following organisations - AgriFutures, Cotton Research and Development Corporation, Hort Innovation, Grains Research and Development Corporation, Wine Australia and the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.

In-kind support from DAWE is gratefully acknowledged, including from the late Dr Kim Ritman, Dr Robyn Cleland, Dr Gabrielle Vivian-Smith, Gemma Bach, Dr Sophie Peterson, Mona Akbari and Joanne Pearce, in particular for their collaboration in delivering the launch.

Plant Health Australia staff have been integral to all activities in this project, from the development of the Communications and Engagement Strategy and IYPH website, to assistance with the launch and the Everyday Plant Health Heroes project - thank you to Mandy Gyles, Alexandra Lucchetti and Sharon Abrahams.

Thank you also to John McDonald and Kobie Keenan from Greenlife Industries Australia for their unwavering support of IYPH activities, such as organising articles, interviews and coordinating industry members' plant donations.

Brett Summerell, Director, Research and Chief Botanist, Australian Institute of Botanical Science, Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust NSW, was instrumental in assisting in the Cobargo Primary School Bush Tucker Garden and being an outstanding advocate for IYPH in Australia.

Callum Fletcher (AusVeg) and Andrew Bishop (Plant Health Committee Chair) are also acknowledged for their generosity of ideas and support throughout the year.

Finally, to Caitlin Morris from the communication team at Hort Innovation Australia. We acknowledge the many hours she committed to delivering the Australian Parliament House launch and we are grateful for her calm professionalism and dedication in the staging and logistics for this successful event.

Appendices

Appendix 1 IYPH 2020 Website Statistics

21 November 2019- 22 November 2020			
Users	12,615		
Sessions	15,641		
Sessions per user	1.24		
Pageviews	27,702		
Pages per session	1.77		
Session duration	1:18		
	92% new users		
	8% returning		
Top countries			
Australia	64% of visits		
United States	19% of visits		
India	2% of visits		
Technology			
Desktop	82%		
Mobile	15%		
Tablet	3%		
Acquisition			
Direct	65% of users		
Search engine	18%		
Referral	12%		
Social and email	5%		
Top 10 sources		Top pages	
Direct	65%	Home	47%
Google	17%	plant health stories	4%
Plant Health Australia	5%	plant health heroes	3.90%
Twitter	2%	events	3.40%
Facebook	2%	about	3.20%
Bing	1.20%	news	2.30%
Greenlife Industry Australia	1.00%	card for kids on plant pests	2.00%
DAWE	0.80%	get involved	2.00%
Baidu	0.70%	least wanted pests	1.90%
DPIRD NT	0.50%	school students	1.50%