

**2008 Meeting
Geneva, 1-5 December 2008**

**Meeting of Experts
Geneva, 18-22 August 2008**

Item 5 of the agenda

**Consideration of national, regional and
international measures to improve biosafety
and biosecurity, including laboratory safety
and security of pathogens and toxins**

COMMUNICATION ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SSBA REGULATORY SCHEME

Submitted by Australia

1. An education and awareness raising program has been developed to promote recognition and understanding of the new regulatory scheme, and to ensure that the regulated community is able to comply with their obligations under the **National Health Security Act 2007**, its associated regulations and the security sensitive biological agents (SSBA) Standards. The education and awareness raising program has used a variety of media to communicate with our stakeholders including meetings, workshops, newsletters, a survey and a dedicated website.

Branding

2. The laboratory sector is regulated by a variety of government agencies and non-government organisations. It was important for the national authority to establish itself as a distinct and important regulatory body. Branding is an effective way of establishing a persistent, unique identity. The branding for the SSBA Regulatory Scheme has been applied to all our communications with stakeholders.

Survey

3. A survey was developed to help the national authority determine our stakeholder base. A targeted approach to distribution was adopted and the survey was sent to potential stakeholders through governing or professional bodies and over-arching organisations. To date the national authority has received 291 responses identifying 57 organisations that handle or intend to handle SSBA. Ninety-eight organisations advised that they do not handle, nor intend to handle SSBA but would like to be kept informed of developments with the regulatory scheme.

Website

4. The national authority has developed a variety of mechanisms to keep our identified stakeholders informed. A website¹ and email address² have been established. The email account is monitored during business hours by the national authority. The website is regularly updated and both the web and email address have been highly promoted to the stakeholders.

Newsletter

5. A regular newsletter is sent to stakeholders and is posted on the SSBA website. The newsletters contain up-to-date information for the stakeholders on the development of the regulatory scheme.

Consultation

6. The national authority has established two committees to provide formal advice during development and implementation of the regulatory scheme. The Implementation Advisory and Consultative Committee has members from Australian Government agencies with an interest in this area. This committee provides perspective on broader Australian Government policies and aligning the SSBA Regulatory Scheme with existing government regulatory bodies. A smaller working group, the Regulation and Standards Working Group, was established with experts to provide further advice on the development of the Regulations and SSBA Standards. These committees have provided advice and fora for consultation that has enhanced the development of the regulatory scheme.

7. The National Counter Terrorism Committee's CBRN Security Subcommittee has been tasked to oversight the implementation of the regulatory scheme and provide jurisdictional commentary and advice.

8. Jurisdictional Law Enforcement and Counter Terrorism Agencies workshops were held in April and May 2008. The aims of the workshops were to provide the respective agencies with updated information regarding the SSBA Regulatory Scheme, to assist with developing agreed processes for enforcement, and to ensure smooth notification of reportable incidents and events. The workshops were very valuable, providing clarification of many issues.

9. The draft SSBA Standards opened for public consultation in June 2008. Workshops were held in six capital cities in an effort to facilitate the consultation process. The workshops were very successful in engaging our stakeholders. A great deal of constructive feedback was produced and is being incorporated into the revised SSBA Standards.

10. The national authority has also been consulting regularly with the Public Health Laboratory Network (PHLN). PHLN is a collaborative group of laboratory representatives. The aim of PHLN is to provide strategic advice and share expertise at the national level in order to enhance the national capacity for the laboratory based detection and surveillance of agents and vectors of communicable diseases in Australia. PHLN meets monthly by teleconference and has

¹ www.health.gov.au/ssba

² ssba@health.gov.au

two face-to-face meetings per year. PHLN have provided feedback on the feasibility of some of the practical components of the regulatory scheme and this has been invaluable. The national authority has also consulted with the Sub-Committee on Animal Health Laboratory Standards, a subcommittee of the Animal Health Committee and PHLN's equivalent for veterinary and agriculture laboratories.

11. The national authority will also consult with the First Ministers' Departments in each State and Territory.

Road show

12. The National Authority will be hosting a road show in every Australian capital city in September 2008. The aim of the road show is to provide stakeholders with updated information regarding the SSBA Regulatory Scheme including the **National Health Security Act 2007**, the NHS Regulations, SSBA standards, the National Register and guidelines. This will ensure that regulated stakeholders are prepared for the new regulatory scheme when it is introduced in January 2009.

13. The road show will involve presentations by the national authority, the Australian CBRN data Centre, local law enforcement agencies and representatives from each local First Ministers' Department. This will ensure that the information presented is nationally consistent but also provides tailored local context. Each participant at the road show will receive a folder containing fact sheets about the regulatory scheme to be used for future reference. The road show will also provide insight into the regulated community's attitudes toward the new regulatory scheme and help to prepare for the training workshops scheduled for November 2008.

Training

14. Training for stakeholders affected by the SSBA Regulatory Scheme will be provided in November 2008. The training will be scenario based and will cover the practical components of what stakeholders will need to do to comply with the scheme when it starts in January 2009. This will include use of the National Register, and compliance with the SSBA Standards using the Security Risk Templates.
