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Australian Banana Industry Congress 2025

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Public Summary

The 2025 Australian Banana Industry Congress, held from 6–8 August at RACV Royal Pines Resort on the Gold Coast, delivered a revitalised, future-focused event that strengthened industry connections, showcased leading research and highlighted opportunities for banana businesses across Australia.

Congress addressed a clear industry need: access to current R&D, market insights and practical tools that support long-term resilience in a rapidly changing environment. A total of 370 delegates attended, including 75 banana growers, the latter being an increase on the previous event. Guided by a grower-led committee and shaped around the theme Recharge, Reconnect and Regenerate, the program aimed to provide practical value alongside entertainment and opportunity for connection.

Highlights included:

- Pip Courtney, ABC Landline presenter, as MC.
- A dedicated Science Symposium showcasing cutting-edge banana research.
- A two-day plenary program featuring expert speakers on marketing, variety development, succession planning, workforce challenges, global TR4 insights and more.
- Networking events including the Banana Women's Luncheon and the Banana Ball.

New efforts in 2025 focused on:

- Addressing affordability by keeping grower costs low through:
 - A subsidised ABGC Grower Member rate
 - New registration categories
 - The 'Back a Grower' sponsorship opportunity and 'Win your way to Congress'
- Increasing timely, issues-based content on topics like workforce, variety development, technology and the changing chemical landscape.
- Continuing to include grower-led content, supported by video as needed.

Key Outputs

- A comprehensive program with respected national and international speakers
- Panels on soil health, new variety pathways and reporting requirements
- Industry recognition celebrating excellence across the supply chain
- Communications including social media, e-bulletins, website, video recordings, magazine coverage and branding

Key Outcomes

Feedback showed strong engagement. Of surveyed delegates:

- 28.57% rated their experience as excellent; 46.03% as highly satisfactory.
- All attendees reported gaining knowledge of banana R&D, with 18.97% gaining “a great deal” and 31.03% “a lot.”

Recommendations

Banana Congress remains a unique and valuable opportunity to bring together growers, researchers and supply-chain partners. It's increasingly rare, given time pressures and biosecurity considerations. Continued consultation - particularly with non-attendees - is recommended to ensure future events best serve industry needs.

Keywords

Bananas; Banana Congress; Australian banana growers; banana research; banana events; banana industry

Introduction

Australia's banana industry is a major contributor to national horticulture, valued at almost \$700 million. Bananas remain one of Australia's most frequently purchased fresh produce items, consumed by approximately 90 per cent of households.

Production is dominated by Far North Queensland, which accounts for around 94 per cent of national supply. New South Wales contributes roughly 4 per cent, with commercial farms stretching from the Nambucca Valley to the Queensland border. Western Australia (2 per cent) and the Northern Territory (less than 1 per cent) make up the remainder, with Carnarvon a key growing region in WA. While Cavendish remains the dominant variety at around 97 per cent of production, interest in Lady Fingers, Ducasse and other specialty varieties continues to grow. The susceptibility of Cavendish to major pests and diseases—particularly Panama disease tropical race 4 (TR4)—underscores the industry's need for ongoing research, innovation and varietal diversification.

Against this backdrop, the Australian Banana Industry Congress continues to play a critical role for the sector. It remains the only event of its kind, bringing together growers, researchers, supply-chain partners, marketers and government representatives under one roof. In an environment where time pressures, geographical distance and biosecurity constraints increasingly limit face-to-face engagement, Congress provides a rare and invaluable opportunity for knowledge sharing, collaboration and relationship building. For researchers and scientists, Congress offers direct access to growers—the people implementing innovations on the ground. Growers, in turn, gain practical insights into R&D, business performance, marketing trends and peer-to-peer learnings that support long-term resilience.

The 2025 event was the 16th Congress and marked 30 years since it was first held (also on the Gold Coast.) Over this time, ABGC has developed a strong foundation of expertise in planning, stakeholder engagement and event delivery. This includes maintaining comprehensive records, grower feedback, and long-standing relationships with partners across government, Hort Innovation, research organisations and the supply chain. As the national peak body for banana growers, ABGC ensures the event is guided by grower priorities at every stage. ABGC again partnered with professional conference organiser MCI Australia to deliver the administrative and logistical components of the 2025 Congress.

This project was delivered by the same ABGC team responsible for BA22000 (Banana Industry Communications), ensuring strong alignment with existing industry communication channels and seamless knowledge transfer. Key personnel included Communications Manager Amy Spear, Communications Officer Skye Orsmond, with guidance from Congress Chair and Lakeland banana grower Paul Inderbitzin.

In addition to the personnel mentioned above, the 2025 Program Committee included: Jen Crema (Tully-based grower, Banana Women's Luncheon coordinator), James Howe (Lakeland grower, ABGC Director), Tayla Mackay (Tully grower, ABGC Director), Doriana Mangili (Carnarvon grower, ABGC Director), Jade Buchanan (Innisfail grower), Steven Norman (NSW IDO), Tegan Cavallaro (QLD DAF), Dr Rosie Godwin (ABGC R&D Manager), Kathryn Dryden (Stakeholder Engagement and Advocacy Manager) and Sarah Strutt (Hort Innovation).

The team approached the 2025 event knowing it had to drive up grower engagement, so increased focus was placed on

accessibility, practicality and drawcard content/speakers.

Methodology

Consideration of previous feedback

Planning for 2025 began with thorough consideration of feedback on previous Banana Congresses. This resulted in:

- A location that provided an opportunity for people to step away from their farms
- A venue that could provide a ‘banana-central’ experience at a reasonable cost
- A trial of a new date - August is traditionally a quieter time for banana growers
- A focus on reengaging exhibitors and sponsors, including ample opportunity to network
- Continued focus on practical R&D and insights that can be applied on farm

Development of program

The 2025 Program Committee met roughly once a month to develop a program that was relevant, engaging and fit-for-purpose (budget, availability, mix of content). The first meeting was held in June 2024, with a final meeting held in October 2025 to reflect on the event.

Congress administration

MCI Australia was engaged to help ABGC deliver a Congress that was well-coordinated and on-budget. They secured contracts with venues and speakers, under the guidance of ABGC, and led sponsorship/exhibitor procurement.

Promotion and wider grower input

Promotion for the 2025 event drew on a wide range of targeted communication channels to build grower interest and momentum. Early promotion began with the August 2024 edition of Australian Bananas magazine, which featured initial event information and a specially designed Congress ‘save-the-date’ air freshener—a memorable prompt to register. The refreshed bananacongress.org.au website also went live at this time, providing core event details and a prospectus for exhibitors and sponsors.

A comprehensive communications plan was developed to guide the campaign, incorporating magazine features in every edition leading up to the event, regular industry e-bulletins, media releases, web updates, targeted phone calls, presence at industry meetings and a strong social media focus. Key milestones, including registration opening, were supported by SMS.

Social media played an expanded role in 2025, with dedicated posts profiling each speaker to showcase the breadth and value of the program. Grower and influencer Miki Buchanan further boosted reach by creating a peer-focused video encouraging fellow growers to attend. Personalised content from Lakeland grower and Congress Chair, Paul Inderbitzin, was also used across channels to reinforce the grower-led nature of the event and highlight its relevance.

Media releases distributed throughout the project were picked up by key horticultural publications including Fresh Plaza and Good Fruit & Vegetables, extending the event’s visibility beyond existing ABGC networks.

Importantly, ABGC’s strong on-ground presence supported direct, face-to-face promotion. Staff regularly out on farms were uniquely positioned to share event information, answer questions, and gather feedback that helped refine both program development and promotional messaging.

Sponsors and industry partners were provided with a ‘media kit’ which empowered them to promote the event within their own networks.

Together, these coordinated activities ensured that promotion for the 2025 Congress was wide-reaching and tailored to maximise engagement across the industry.

Engagement

The Program Committee recognised the importance of engaging small and diverse growers to shape an event that genuinely reflected their needs and addressed long-standing perceptions around Congress attendance. While several smaller and emerging growers were invited to formally join the committee, the organisers acknowledged the practical challenges these growers face in stepping away from day-to-day farm operations. As a result, an engagement strategy was implemented to ensure their voices were represented throughout planning and delivery.

In line with recommendations from the 2024 Banana Congress review, the project team undertook a series of targeted activities, including:

- Working closely with identified grower ambassadors, who promoted the value of Congress within their communities while providing feedback to the Program Committee.
- Attending relevant industry meetings and regional events, enabling face-to-face conversations. Examples include the FNQ Field Day at Mareeba and Banana Grower Association (BGA) meetings in NSW and QLD.
- Making individual phone calls to targeted growers to test ideas, gather insights and share event information.
- Using ABGC's extension and field teams, who work daily with a diverse range of growers, to share information, gather feedback and identify emerging themes.
- Engaging ABGC Board members to promote Congress and canvass perspectives through their networks.
- Tapping into existing grower groups and communities, both in person and online—including local Banana Growers' Associations, the Banana Women's Network and active social media groups.

At the event

Science Symposium

Guided by ABGC's Research and Development Manager, Dr Rosie Godwin, and the National Banana Extension and Development Program, the Science Symposium was held on Wednesday 6 August. The event provided a dedicated forum for banana researchers, including many working on Hort Innovation-funded projects, to present their findings to peers and science-focused growers. Content from the Symposium was also incorporated into the plenary sessions in the following days, ensuring strong visibility and continuity for current banana R&D across the full Congress program. This included 'Science Speed Talks' and posters set up in the tradeshow.

Plenary

The plenary program was developed with growers to ensure it delivered relevant, engaging and practical content. The Program Committee curated sessions covering emerging technology and innovation, current R&D, key industry issues, marketing trends and more. High profile names like Jana Pittman and Billy Collett brought an additional layer to the program, delivering entertaining content that was still relevant to delegates. MCI Australia provided specialist input on session scheduling, program flow and audience experience, supporting ABGC to deliver a seamless and impactful plenary. Little touches, like a throwable microphone and integrated app, helped make Congress more approachable.

Social Events (not funded by Hort Innovation)

Although not levy-funded, the social components of Congress remained a critical part of the event experience. The Banana Ball, Banana Women's Luncheon and a tradeshow-focused networking evening allowed delegates to relax, reconnect and strengthen relationships across the industry. These informal opportunities for discussion and peer connection complemented the more technical elements of the program and were considered highly valuable by growers and supply-chain attendees alike.

Project reach and target audience

The 2025 Australian Banana Industry Congress attracted delegates from all major banana-growing regions - including Far North Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia. The project effectively engaged its core target audience: primarily commercial banana growers, but also researchers, extension officers, agronomists, government representatives, supply-chain partners, marketers and service providers.

Post-Event

Following Congress, ABGC has worked closely with MCI Australia to undertake comprehensive analysis of attendance, partnerships, program performance and budget outcomes. Surveys and post-event reporting captured detailed feedback—particularly from growers—to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement.

Results and discussion

The 2025 Australian Banana Industry Congress, held from 6–8 August at the RACV Royal Pines Resort on the Gold Coast, attracted a total of 367 delegates, including 75 growers, representing a strong cross-section of the industry from local, regional and national levels. For the first time, ABGC offered a subsidised rate for grower members, alongside new ticket pricing options designed to make attendance more accessible.

The Congress program included:

- A Science Symposium with a record turnout, showcasing Australian and international R&D projects, including levy-funded initiatives and TR4 research.
- A two-day plenary program featuring expert speakers on marketing, banana variety development, succession planning, workforce challenges, supply chain management, and global TR4 insights.
- Networking and social events, including the Banana Women's Network Luncheon with a guest speaker, the Banana Ball, and tradeshow-focused evening.
- The Banana Congress app, enhanced with gamification features, encouraged greater interaction in the tradeshow and across the event program.
- New initiatives, including early-morning yoga, a focus on first-time attendees and tailored program content, supported inclusivity and peer-to-peer learning.
- Levy-funded R&D projects were highlighted via presentations, posters, and interactive displays, providing direct exposure to innovation and practical tools for on-farm application.

Survey Results:

- Overall experience: 28.57% rated it as Excellent, 46.03% as Highly Satisfactory.
- Knowledge gained from banana R&D: 18.97% 'a great deal,' 31.03% 'a lot,' 32.76% 'a moderate amount,' 17.24% 'a little,' and 0% 'none at all.'
- Science Symposium ratings: 10.17% Excellent, 30.51% Highly Satisfactory, with about 50% N/A (selective attendance).

Discussion

The 2025 Congress results demonstrate strong industry engagement and a clear value proposition for growers, researchers, and supply-chain stakeholders. The event successfully facilitated networking across all parts of the banana industry, combining structured sessions, informal meet-ups, and social events to strengthen relationships and encourage peer-to-peer learning. Initiatives to support first-time attendees, reduce financial barriers, and diversify participation began to make inroads.

The integration of R&D content throughout the program, including the Science Symposium, plenary sessions, posters, and interactive displays, significantly increased awareness and understanding of levy-funded research, Hort Innovation initiatives, and practical on-farm applications.

Congress also highlighted the importance of grower-led and inclusive program development to ensure content remains relevant, engaging, and actionable. The introduction of a subsidised grower rate, gamification within the app and new social events facilitated broader participation and interaction.

Outcomes indicate that well-designed, grower-focused events can deliver tangible benefits, including:

- Enhanced awareness of research and best practice.
- Access to peer-to-peer knowledge exchange and networking.
- Opportunities to observe and adopt innovations in production, supply chain, and workforce management.

Outputs

Table 1. Output summary

Output	Listed in M&E Plan: • Yes • No	Description	Evidence and data
Program logic and M&E plan	Yes	Program logic (with linkage to Hort Innovation and industry/fund objectives) as well as a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan.	Presented as part of Milestone 102. Details from the M&E plan are incorporated into this Final Report. Program Logic is included again at Appendix 1.
Project risk register	Yes	A risk register will be developed by the project team and MCI Australia, providing detail on management strategies.	Presented as part of Milestone 102 and included again in this report (Appendix 2).
Stakeholder engagement and communication plan	Yes	A comprehensive plan for how the project plans to drive stakeholder engagement and communication, to improve Congress delivery.	Presented as part of Milestone 102. The plan was developed to guide the process, but we remained flexible throughout, adjusting to suit the needs of growers and taking advantage of opportunities as they arose.
Develop a Congress program that showcases key levy projects and allows for attendees to interact with the relevant experts and Hort Innovation personnel	Yes	A Program Committee should be formed to develop an engaging, relevant program for 2025 and ensure there is ample opportunity for growers, key stakeholders (including Hort Innovation) and supply chain representatives to interact.	The Program Committee was formed and met on a monthly basis to discuss speaker and panel ideas for the plenary, as well as additional ways to engage with the audience. Hort Innovation's valued representative on this committee was Sarah Strutt. The complete program is presented as Appendix 3.
Develop a communications plan for the event that promotes registrations prior to the event and then further distributes outputs from the event (such as presentations) to growers through various other channels.	Yes	A detailed plan which includes all available communication channels and ideal frequency.	Presented as part of Milestone 102. As mentioned above, a comprehensive communications schedule promoted registrations and involvement in Congress. This plan was designed to be dynamic - continually adjusted and added to, and focused on reaching a broad cross-section of industry. Outputs from Banana Congress have been shared via a range of channels, including Australian Bananas magazine, ABGC and Congress websites, e-bulletins and social media. This includes distribution of recorded presentations.
Create a post-event survey of attendees	Yes	A considered, targeted survey was developed and sent to all	A summary of the survey results is presented in Appendix 4.

		attendees following Banana Congress 2025.	
Consideration of establishment of a project reference/working group	Yes	ABGC believes committees that take in a wide range of experiences are essential to delivering Congress. As such, two committees were formed: a Program Committee and a Management Committee.	<p>Two key working groups were established by ABGC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Committee, comprising ABGC directors and senior project personnel. • Program Committee, combining ABGC directors, staff, industry stakeholders and – most importantly – growers. This committee met approximately once a month from July 2024 in the lead up to the 2025 event.
Status reports	Yes	Updates on planning progress	Provided as per milestone schedule, with this submission providing the final update.
Final report	Yes	A comprehensive final report upon delivery of the event and conclusion of the project.	Current document.
Contract a reputable events management company	Yes	Contract a reputable events management company to assist in the planning and execution of Congress.	ABGC contracted MCI Australia to assist in project delivery. Though MCI Australia has a proven track record of delivering our industry event, a competitive tender process took place prior to work beginning on the 2025 Congress. MCI was again successful in securing the contract.
Meetings with sponsors and exhibitors	No	Meetings to ensure all expectations of sponsors and tradeshow exhibitors are met.	MCI Australia's partnership manager, Aiden Coates, had ongoing contact with existing and prospective sponsors and exhibitors. The Congress Chair, Paul Inderbitzen, and ABGC's Supply Chain Engagement Manager Andrew Burns were also involved in these conversations.
Review data of past surveys of Congresses to evaluate the successes of each	Yes	Review data from post-Congress feedback survey of delegates conducted in 2023.	<p>All past data was reviewed and helped to inform discussions for this plenary program. Key themes included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need to allow for some 'hot topic' / current industry issues – we deliberately allocated and left open certain spaces for as long as possible to ensure we could include 'current' issues. • Sustainability and robotics/agtech – inclusion of topics like soil health and our 'Ripe Ideas' section ensured these themes were covered.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspirational speakers are a valued part of the program – in 2025 we welcomed Jana Pittman. Jana also provided some practical advice around overcoming adversity and finding ways to work through complex, high stress situations. • Practical, grower-led topics – the soil health panel, workforce options presentation and insights into reduced chemical inputs are good examples of this. Even our snake-handling opener had some very important information to share with growers! <p>A lot of past survey respondents also noted the importance of socialising and networking at Congress.</p>
Branding/collateral	No	In 2023, Banana Congress introduced new branding intended for use across multiple events. This approach not only supports cost-efficiency but also aligns with sustainability goals by allowing materials to be reused. The branding is contemporary and flexible, and was refreshed with colours and design elements inspired by the event's location on the Gold Coast.	<p>The 2025 Banana Congress branding was rolled out via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website (www.bananacongress.org.au) • Dedicated event app • E-bulletin announcements • Social media • Australian Bananas magazine articles and advertisements • Sponsor/exhibitor packs • Merchandise options • Panels and digital assets at the event <p>Examples of these outputs can be found in Appendix 5.</p>

Photos/images/other audio-visual material

- Videos of Congress presentations can be accessed [here](#).
- Photos from Congress can be accessed [here](#).
- Videos produced for Congress can be accessed [here](#).

Outcomes

Table 2. Outcome summary

Outcome as listed in M&E Plan	Alignment to fund outcome, strategy and KPI	Description	Evidence
Increase industry knowledge and understanding of best practice and emerging production and supply chain information in relation to R&D project outcomes and outputs	This outcome aligns to industry outcomes 1, 3 and 4.	The 2025 Australian Banana Industry Congress delivered a dynamic program showcasing best-practice management and emerging issues across production and the supply chain. This included levy-funded project presentations, posters and plenary sessions. In collaboration with the industry's R&D Manager and the National Development and Extension Program, the Banana Scientific Symposium was presented alongside Congress. The Program Committee focused on securing engaging, relevant speakers—from both within and outside the industry—to ensure a compelling and informative plenary program was delivered.	<p>The complete program is included as Appendix 5.</p> <p>Survey results showed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All respondents gained at least 'a little' knowledge of banana R&D, almost 19% gained a great deal and all other respondents gained 'a moderate amount' or 'a lot'. • Over 60% of respondents felt that what they learnt at Congress could be applied to their banana business • Feedback indicated sessions that covered farming with reduced inputs, soil health and variety development were among the most popular
Increase participants' confidence in undertaking practice change by influencing their attitude and aspirations	This outcome aligns to industry outcomes 1, 3 and 4.	In addition to developing an engaging and comprehensive plenary program, the Committee should provide grower-led discussions, case studies and opportunities to ask questions in casual settings. Practice change that is relatable while still being aspirational is key – Congress should deliver something that everyone can take back onto their farm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plenary program developed with grower input and under the guidance of chair Paul Inderbitzin (grower from Lakeland) • Program balanced plenary and structured social sessions with time for networking and conversation • Over 60% of respondents felt that what they learnt at Congress could be applied to their banana business
Provide avenues for participants to further investigate R&D outcomes and innovations that have been presented once the conference is over so that they are encouraged to adopt	This outcome aligns to industry outcomes 1, 3 and 4.	The program should be designed with ample time for networking, giving delegates the chance to build meaningful connections, exchange details, and explore peer-to-peer learning opportunities. Several R&D projects will be showcased through posters and	<p>As the communications delivery partner for the banana industry, ABGC has ensured strong integration between Congress content and ongoing grower communication channels.</p> <p>The Banana Congress app allowed delegates to keep key information at their fingertips, offering tools to take</p>

said innovations and practices		<p>exhibitions, encouraging continued conversations beyond the stage. Key contacts and information sources will also be shared to support ongoing collaboration.</p> <p>In addition, the ABGC Communications team will use various channels to continue communicating innovation and R&D outcomes showcased at Congress so that all growers have access to, or are reminded of, these topics.</p>	<p>notes and connect with R&D providers.</p> <p>Post-event, videos have been made available on the Banana Congress website, giving delegates the flexibility to revisit content at their convenience.</p>
Facilitate the development of networks with existing industry members, researchers, suppliers and service providers	This outcome aligns to industry outcomes 1, 3 and 4.	<p>The Scientific Symposium and Congress Plenary Program have been carefully designed to foster existing and new networks. Popular social events and flexible options for adjacent meetings continue to bring together participants from all parts of the supply chain. This year, the team trialed some new initiatives- such as a welcome for first-time attendees and early-morning activities - while still offering the much-loved options like the Banana Bar and Banana Ball. The traditional options, along with the new additions, aim to ensure that all delegates felt welcome and could connect in ways that suit their preferences and schedules.</p>	<p>The Banana Scientific Symposium and Banana Congress were promoted together and integrated into the registration process to encourage attendance across both events.</p> <p>Networking was embedded throughout the program, including coordinated social events such as the Welcome Drinks, Banana Women's Luncheon and Banana Ball.</p> <p>Casual networking opportunities were supported through venue layout, breaks and accessible shared spaces.</p> <p>A new plenary and tradeshow layout was implemented to maximise delegate interactions and engagement across all sessions. This received mixed feedback, but we felt it was important to try something new.</p>
Increased awareness of R&D investments and related programs within the banana industry, as well as greater understanding of the levy system and Hort Innovation membership	This outcome aligns to industry outcomes 1, 3 and 4.	<p>A key priority of the 2025 Congress was to enhance grower and stakeholder understanding of levy-funded R&D initiatives and the role of Hort Innovation as a grower-owned organisation. These messages were integrated throughout both the Scientific Symposium and the plenary program, highlighting how levy investments support research, marketing and industry development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hort Innovation was featured prominently in the plenary program and exhibition space • Levy-funded projects and programs were showcased through presentations, posters and interactive displays, with posters given priority positioning • Appropriate recognition of Hort Innovation was included throughout the event • Post-event survey responses indicated strong knowledge gains: 18.97% of delegates reported gaining 'a great deal' of knowledge from banana

			<p>R&D, 31.03% 'a lot,' 32.76% a moderate amount, and 17.24% 'a little.'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Science Symposium was well-received, with 10.17% rating it as Excellent and 30.51% as Highly Satisfactory. • 26.32% of respondents indicated the gained 'a lot' of knowledge about banana marketing, with a further 38.60% gaining a moderate amount. See Appendix 4 for more. • Previous Congress surveys show similar outcomes, confirming that the event effectively raises awareness of R&D investments and related programs.
Plenary program and keynote speakers that broaden the knowledge of growers and other industry stakeholders including greater insight into current international and domestic Panama TR4 science and research; banana industry supply chain, best practice, emerging risks and opportunities	This outcome aligns to industry outcomes 1, 3 and 4.	The 2025 Congress plenary program was designed to expand delegate knowledge across key areas, including international and local Panama TR4 science, the banana supply chain, best-practice management, and emerging risks and opportunities. The program also emphasised peer-to-peer learning, ensuring sessions were both engaging and relevant for growers and other industry stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On Panama TR4 - internationally recognised expert Prof Altus Viljoen (Stellenbosch University) shared updates, alongside latest Australian developments including a grower decision tool for managing the disease • A local banana research company presented for the first time, demonstrating the variety development process and their progress • The BMP team, working with ABGC's Comms Officer, curated a panel and discussion on soil health • Workforce, chemical inputs and other emerging risks and opportunities were highlighted • Hort Innovation presentations emphasised banana category and supply chain engagement
Growers believe Banana Congress is stimulating and engaging, and a worthwhile investment of their time and funds	This outcome aligns to industry outcomes 1, 3 and 4.	The 2025 Congress was designed with grower input at its core, ensuring the program was relevant, engaging and provided meaningful opportunities for connection. Efforts focused on reducing barriers to participation while	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grower input was gathered through surveys, one-on-one conversations, phone calls, ABGC networks, and through the Program Committee, informing program design and delivery.

		<p>delivering content and experiences that growers valued and could apply on-farm.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiatives such as subsidised registration, the ‘Back a Grower’ campaign, and hosting the event during a quieter time at a family-friendly venue helped increase accessibility. The program provided structured and informal networking opportunities, grower-inclusive panels, and presentations linked to real on-farm outcomes. New approaches supported first-time attendees and those preferring different networking styles. Post-event access to presentations and resources allowed growers to revisit content and share insights with their teams. Targeted communications—including grower ambassadors and direct calls—highlighted the value of attending and reinforced key takeaways.
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Monitoring and evaluation

Please see Appendix 6 for detailed M&E questions and responses

The 2025 Banana Congress was assessed for its effectiveness, relevance, engagement processes and efficiency, with results indicating that the event strongly met its intended outcomes and delivered significant value to growers and industry stakeholders.

Effectiveness

Congress effectively enhanced understanding of key research findings, industry issues and emerging risks. Face-to-face engagement, particularly peer-to-peer discussion, proved highly impactful, with 82.8% of survey respondents reporting they gained at least a moderate amount of R&D knowledge. A further 62.7% said they were likely or very likely to apply what they learned to their business. Practical sessions such as reduced-input farming, soil health and compliance were well received. Awareness of R&D investments, levy systems and Hort Innovation membership also increased, supported by strong representation from levy-funded projects across the program and a prominent presence from Hort Innovation.

Relevance:

The Congress program was directly aligned with grower needs, featuring grower-led sessions, practical topics, and engaging updates from researchers and supply-chain experts. Stakeholders benefited from industry insights and opportunities for collaboration. Efforts to broaden attendance included discounted grower rates, the Back a Grower initiative, consideration of event timing, and networking incentives. These supported participation from at least 27 growers who had not attended the previous event.

Engagement Processes:

Growers were engaged through targeted communications, personal outreach, and multiple learning formats. Grower

attendance rose and, across the board, satisfaction levels were high, with most rating their experience as Highly Satisfactory or Excellent. Congress website access also lifted for this event, recording over 9,700 users.

Efficiency:

Planning emphasised value for money, accessibility and relevance, with strong collaboration across industry projects. Engagement methods were diversified to reach different demographics, and committee processes were streamlined and inclusive.

Overall, the project delivered a highly relevant, engaging and collaborative industry event that strengthened knowledge, connections and industry cohesion.

Recommendations

Continue hosting in-person events

Congress is a rare opportunity for face-to-face interaction among growers, researchers and supply-chain partners. It is recommended that events of this kind continue, as they play a vital role in building relationships, sharing R&D and strengthening industry cohesion.

Review timing, location, length and format

To maintain accessibility and relevance, future events should consider alternative timing, program length, location and delivery formats.

Enhance engagement with non-attendees

Additional effort should be placed on consulting growers and stakeholders who did not attend. Understanding barriers – such as cost, travel, time away from farm, program relevance, or other practical challenges – is crucial.

Expand access to presentation content

Further investigation is recommended into increasing the availability of video recordings and digital resources for those unable to attend in person. This is already happening to some extent, but can certainly be built upon.

Strengthen peer-to-peer learning opportunities

Peer-to-peer learning remains one of the most effective and trusted avenues for knowledge exchange in the banana industry. Future events should explore additional mechanisms to encourage growers speaking directly with other growers, both formally and informally.

Deliver events that reflect the diversity of the industry

With growers differing in age, farm size, location, cultural background and experience, further effort should be made to ensure Congress and similar events are designed to meet the needs of this diverse community. This was our goal at Congress 2025, particularly drawing on recommendations from Hort Innovation's 2024 review, but more can still be done.

Intellectual property

No project IP or commercialisation to report

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Program Logic

Appendix 2 – Risk Management Plan (Risk Register)

Appendix 3 – 2025 Banana Congress Program

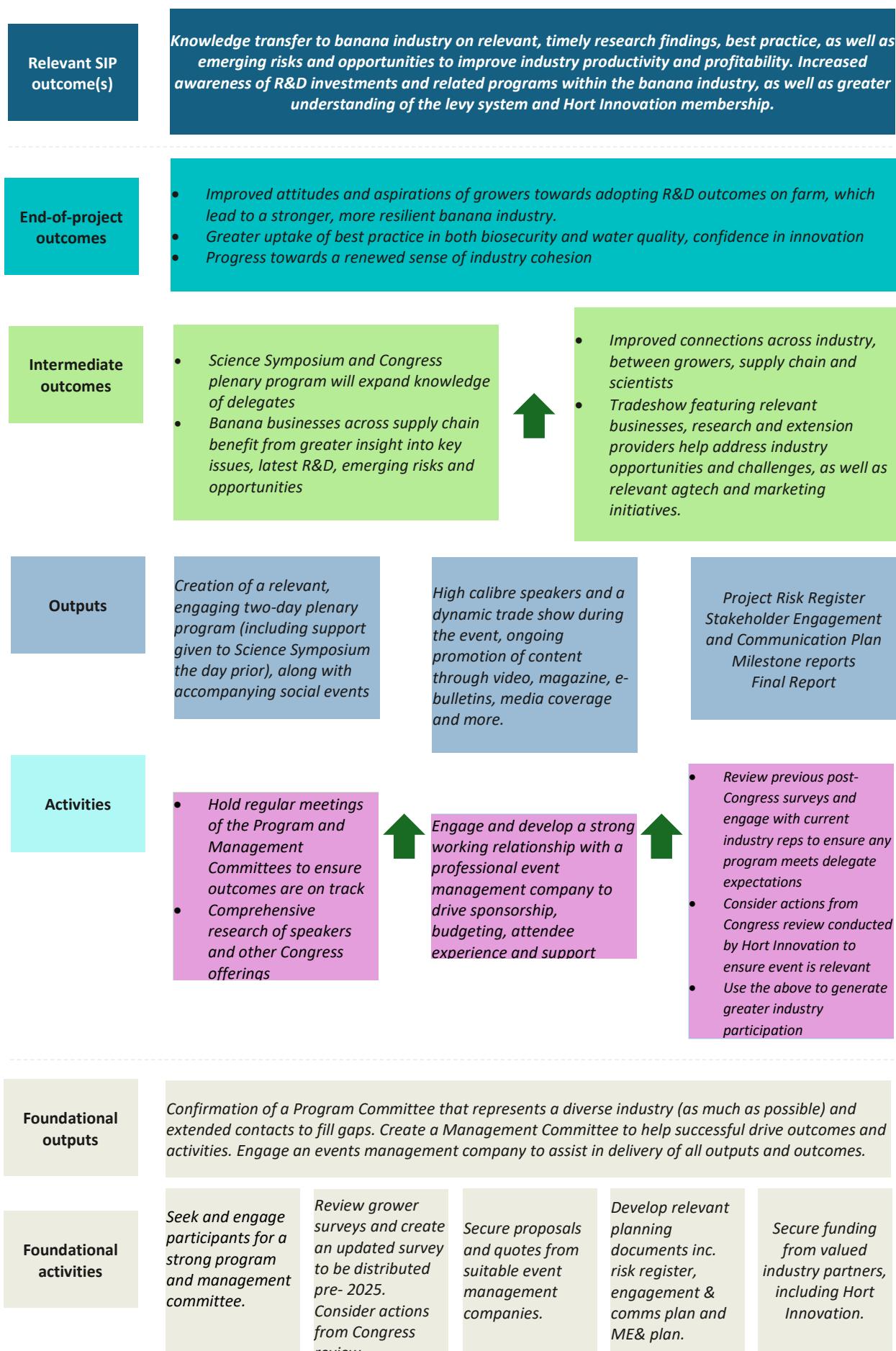
Appendix 4 – Post-event survey results summary

Appendix 5 – Output/branding examples

Appendix 6 – Key Evaluation Questions (full table)

Appendix 7 – Final Statement of Receipts and Expenditure

Appendix 8 – Magazine article reflecting WA grower experiences



Appendix 2: Risk Management Plan (Risk Register) / BA24002

It should be noted that in addition to our own Risk Management Plan, the subcontracted event organiser - MCI Australia - has conducted their own risk analysis.

The risk	Potential causes/sources	Potential impacts	Controls	Likelihood with controls in place (Risk likelihood scale)	Consequence with controls in place (Risk consequence scale)	Treated risk assessment (Risk assessment matrix)	Risk evaluation (Is the level of risk acceptable)	Responsible person/s
Loss of key project personnel	Illness, resignation	Loss of key crucial knowledge or skills; event left short-staffed; potential delays in deliverables	Other staff informed and trained, ready to step-in and take on additional responsibility if required	Remote	Minor	Low	Yes	Amy Spear (ABGC Communications Manager), along with ABGC's CEO
Subcontractor does not deliver	Issues within sub-contractor company	Loss of crucial skills; resources and data; potential delays in deliverables	Contract requiring deliverables – if not met, terminated and another sub-contractor employed; ABGC involved in entirety of process, able to take over if needed.	Remote	Minor	Low	Yes	Amy Spear

Low grower attendance	Growers can't find time or funds, growers not interested in program, growers aren't aware of event	Sponsors left unhappy; growers don't receive crucial knowledge and info; reputational damage to ABGC and the event	Feedback from last Congress acted upon; Program and management committee focused on delivering exciting event; Strong and varied communication plan to ensure industry is across the event ; Competitions/ incentives to get on board; Professional events company employed to assist with issues	Unlikely	Major	Medium	Yes	Amy Spear, Congress Program Committee
Growers unhappy with event	Program does not cater to / interest growers	Reputational damage to ABGC and Congress; future attendance lowered	Strong program and event delivered; Excellent communication throughout planning and delivery; Quick management of minor issues at the event if/when they arise; Professional events company	Unlikely	Major	Medium	Yes	Amy Spear, Congress Program Committee

			employed to assist with issues					
Wet weather – outdoor exhibition and events	Excessive storms/rain at Gold Coast venue	All plenary and exhibition is indoors; potential off- site tours with outdoor components affected	All plenary sessions are inside the RACV Royal Pines Resort. Welcome Reception is on the Benowa lawn, however an alternative room will be used in the event of extreme weather event. Any changes communicated promptly to attendees. Professional events company employed to assist with issues	Possible	Minor	Medium	Yes	Congress Management Committee / event subcontractor

Low sponsorship interest	Worry over grower numbers, program doesn't appeal, companies limited by time/finances	Budget affected; future Congress attendance affected	Professional events company MCI Australia employed to target and manage sponsors, with ABGC guidance; Clear, positive dialogue with potential sponsors; Strong program to back- up approaches and demonstrate grower interest	Possible	Major	High	Yes	Amy Spear / event subcontractor
Sponsors unhappy with event	Not enough growers present, not enough grower engagement	Future Congress sponsorship could be down; reputational damage to the event and to ABGC	Professional events company MCI Australia employed to target and manage sponsors, with ABGC guidance; Clear, positive dialogue with potential sponsors; Strong program to back- up approaches and deliver grower attendance; Feedback from previous events taken on-board	Unlikely	Major	Medium	Yes	Amy Spear, Congress Management Committee / event subcontractor

Lack of speaker availability	Clashes with other events/commitments, budget restrictions	Program not strong – potential attendees lose interest; reputational damage to event	Identify a range of potential speakers, including back-ups; Approach as soon as possible and enact contingency plans if needed; Professional events company employed to assist with issues	Unlikely	Insignificant	Low	Yes	Amy Spear / Congress Program Committee
Speaker cancellations	Flight delays, illness, personal issues	Unable to deliver on promised/promoted content	Communicate with speaker to ensure there's no other way we can assist them to get to Congress (if appropriate); Inform any relevant sponsors or attendees if needed; Program Committee to reschedule / shuffle if needed; Professional events company employed to assist with issues	Possible	Minor	Medium	Yes	Congress Management Committee

Availability of accommodation	Venue overbooking/limiting allocation	Potential attendees housed off-site; potential attendees elect not to come	Work with MCI Australia to identify nearby, alternate accommodation if needed and provide transport options; MCI Australia to liaise with venue to ensure best possible outcome	Possible	Major	High	Yes	Congress Management Committee
Injury or illness sustained at Congress / in Congress venue	Accident, existing health condition (inc food allergies)	Serious injury sustained to attendee; potential law suit if proper processes not followed	Professional events company employed to assist with issues; Emergency contacts supplied for all attendees; Venue consulted for input and emergency plans; Attendees asked to provide any dietary requirements	Possible	Major	High	Yes	Congress Management Committee

Excessive alcohol consumption leading to injury or poor decision	Alcohol a social events, attendees partaking in drinking outside of these	Serious injury sustained to attendee; potential law suit if proper processes not followed; reputational damage to industry	Professional events company employed to assist with issues; Emergency contacts supplied for all attendees; Experienced conference venue chosen (inc employees with RSA); ABGC staff on site	Unlikely	Major	Medium	Yes	Congress Management Committee
Bump in/out timeframe and resources inadequate	Clashes with other events, multiple deliveries of resources	Sponsors and exhibitors left unhappy; exhibition hall not properly set-up for start of Congress	Professional events company employed to assist with issues; MCI Australia to communicate clearly and promptly with all exhibitors to ensure any timeframes/requirements are known in advance	Unlikely	Moderate	Medium	Yes	Congress Management Committee

Presentation technology failure	Blackout, software failure, connection issues	Speakers unable to give presentations as planned; delay to program; perceived lack of professionalism	Professional events company employed to assist with issues; MCI Australia has sound and lighting expert on site; Venue staff on hand to help with their systems; MCI Australia, with ABGC, to communicate with speakers re any requirements in advance; MC to communicate with audience as appropriate	Possible	Minor	Medium	Yes	Congress Management Committee
Site Tour bus transfer for delegates	Accident on bus	Serious injury or death as a result of road accident	Professional events company employed to assist with issues; Professional bus drivers/vehicles contracted to provide service; Emergency contacts provided for all attendees; ABGC staff	Possible	Minor	Medium	Yes	Congress Management Committee

			travelling with tours					
Biosecurity at Congress and on Site tours	Footwear/other items brought from infected properties, not observing biosecurity at site	Pests or disease transferred either on farm or at Congress	ABGC R&D Manager and Government staff consulted; Biosecurity advice provided on Congress website and in program	Possible	Major	High	Yes	Congress Management Committee
Emergency on-site – fire or other threat	Incident within the venue or nearby	Depends on scale of emergency – injury or even death, loss of assets, interruptions to program	Work with events company and venue to advise attendees of emergency exits and procedures; If minor emergency does occur, Congress Management Committee to make decisions re program	Unlikely	Moderate	Medium	Yes	Congress Management Committee

BANANA CONGRESS 2025

DRAFT PROGRAM MATRIX

	Wednesday 6 August 2025	
0730 - 0900 hours	Royal Poinciana Room	
0800 - 0845	REGISTRATION	
0845-1015	TEA/COFFEE AND NETWORKING Session 1 (THEME: The Gene Scene)	
0845 - 0900	Welcome and introduction Rosie Godwin Research and Development Manager, Australian Banana Growers' Council & Tegan Cavallaro Senior Development Horticulturist, Department of Primary Industries	
0900 - 0920	Banana Fusarium wilt research at Stellenbosch University: An overview Altus Viljoen Professor in Plant Pathology, Stellenbosch University 15 mins + 5 mins Q&A	
0920 - 0930	Development of resources to accelerate the genetic improvement of banana and support long-term industry resilience. Robert Henry Professor Of Innovation In Agriculture, University Of Queensland & Emily Rames Research Scientist, QLD Department Of Primary Industries 10 mins	
0930 - 0940	Identifying Resistance Genes in Wild Banana Elizabeth Aitken Professor in Plant Pathology, University of Queensland 10 mins	
0940-0950	QCAV-4: a Cavendish banana with Fusarium wilt tropical race 4 resistance – now approved for commercial cultivation in Australia Anthony James Senior Research Fellow, Queensland University of Technology 10 mins	
0950-1000	Towards a consumer-acceptable Goldfinger banana via gene editing Jacinta Watkins Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Queensland University of Technology 10 mins	
1000-1015	Combined Q&A 15 mins	
1015 - 1045	Morning tea	
1045-1235	Session 2	
	THEME: Variety Show	
1045-1055	New varieties for Australian banana growers Jeff Daniels Principal Horticulturist, QLD Department Of Primary Industries 10 mins	
1055-1105	Uncovering the hidden genetic diversity of Mus a acuminata ssp. banksii in Northern Queensland, Australia Steven Janssens Senior Researcher, Meise Botanic Garden 10 mins	VIDEO: Pre-record
1105-1115	Combined Q&A 10 mins	
	THEME: Protect and detect	
1115-1125	The enduring benefits of excluding plant diseases Andre Drenth Program Leader Crop Protection, University of Queensland 10 mins	
1125-1135	Strengthening Australian banana biosecurity through validated diagnostics of exotic fungal and bacterial diseases Lilia Carvalhais Senior Postdoctoral Research Fellow, University of Queensland 10 mins	
1135-1145	Improvement of Panama disease diagnostics with high-throughput sequencing Edward Gilding Senior Molecular Biologist, Department Of Primary Industries 10 mins	
1145-1200	Combined Q&A 15 mins	
1200-1210	Small RNA sequencing as a high throughput screening tool for banana viruses Kathy Crew Principal Plant Pathologist, QLD Department of Primary Industries 10 mins	
1210-1220	Diversity of banana wilt associated phytoplasmas and their diagnostics Mignon De Jager Phd Student, QAAFI Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation 10 mins	
1220-1230	Combined Q&A 10 mins	
1230-1235	Wrap-up of morning and instructions about lunch	
1235-1400	Lunch	
1400-1455	Session 3	
	THEME: Mites, flights and challenges that keep you up at night	
1400-1410	Facing challenges to achieve a quality future Ingrid Jenkins Senior Horticulturist, Department of Primary Industries 10 mins	
1410-1420	A review of the interactions between birds and bats and bananas – implications for the Australian banana industry Stewart Lindsay Team Leader of Banana Production Systems, QLD Department of Primary Industries 10 mins	
1420-1430	Survival of the Mite Predator Stethorus fenestralis After Exposure to Banana Fungicides Daniel Farrell Entomologist, QLD Department of Primary Industries 10 mins	
1430-1440	A deep dive into the SBFS complex Kathy Grice Principal Experimentalist, Department of Primary Industries 10 mins	
1440-1455	Combined Q&A 15 mins	
1455-1525	Afternoon tea	
1525-1630	Session 4	
	THEME: Ground truths	
1525-1535	Revealing the Risks of Fusarium Wilt Subtropical Race 4 Janet Roberts Phd Student, QAAFI Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation 10 mins	
1535-1545	Have You Got Soil Health Covered? The Role of Ground Cover in Banana Farm Soils Hazel Gaza Senior Soil Ecologist, Department Of Primary Industries 10 mins	

1545-1555	Phosphorus in banana plant tissue under different levels of soil P Alex Lindsay Senior Research Agronomist, Department of Primary Industries 10 mins
1555-1610	Combined Q&A 15 mins
1620-1630	Wrap up and close including post event evaluation Rosie Godwin & Tegan Cavallaro
1700	RECONNECT + RECHARGE Venue: ABGC Lounge ABGC Meet-Up From 5pm drop by the ABGC Lounge for a glass of bubbles on your way to Welcome Drinks. Let us know if it's your first Congress and we'll introduce you to some friends!
1730 - 1930 hours	Venue: Podium Lawns Welcome reception THEME: A touch of yellow
	Thursday 7 August 2025 - TROPICAL DRESS
700	REGISTRATION
730	Tea and coffee open Exhibition hall - Royal Benowa Ballroom Venue TBC
0715 - 0815 (15 mins breakfast + 45 mins pres)	Cypress 1 & 2 Mackay's sponsored breakfast session Unbending Resilience Pat Farmer
	Title: TBC Speaker: Pat Farmer Marathon Athlete and Former Politician MC: TBC
	RECONNECT
0830 - 0915 45 mins	SESSION 1A - WELCOME (WE DON'T BITE!) Snake Bite first aid and awareness with a milking demonstration Billy Collett Australian Reptile Park, Bondi Vet Talk time 45 mins
0915-0925 10 mins	OFFICIAL OPENING Introduction from Banana Congress MC Pip Courtney Landline host
0925-0935 10 mins	VIDEO: Bananas - feeding the nation, fuelling communities STATE OF THE INDUSTRY Leanne Erakovic Chief Executive Officer, Australian Banana Growers' Council
0935-1015 40 minutes	SESSION 1B - INTERNATIONAL INSIGHT The global status of Fusarium wilt TR4 and international efforts to deal with the disease Altus Viljoen Professor in Plant Pathology, Stellenbosch University 30 mins talk time + 10 min Q&A
1015-1045 30 mins	Exhibition hall - Royal Benowa Ballroom MORNING TEA
1045-1055 10 mins	Royal Benowa Ballroom RECHARGE
1055-1115 20 mins	SESSION 2 - MAKING YOUR MARK(ET) Introduction to session (hosted by MC) Innovation in horticulture: Can we reinvent banana? Robert Henry Professor Of Innovation In Agriculture, University of Queensland 20 mins talk time
1115-1130 15 mins	The Long Game: A decade of banana breeding towards TR4 resistance Naomi Abbott Technical Officer, NQ Banana Research 15 mins talk time
1130-1150 20 mins	Plant Breeders Rights from a growers perspective Gavin Scurr Managing Director, Pinata Farms 20 mins
1150-1205 15 mins	PANEL: What does it take to get a new variety onto the shelf and into homes? Panel members: Naomi Abbott Technical Officer NQ Banana Research Altus Viljoen Professor in Plant Pathology, Stellenbosch University Gavin Scurr Managing Director, Pinata Farms Robert Henry Professor Of Innovation In Agriculture, University of Queensland
1205-1405 120 mins	LUNCH
	Venue: Videre Restaurant, RACV Royal Pines Banana Women's Luncheon Sarah Corcoran Chief Executive Officer, Plant Health Australia
1405-1415 10 mins	SESSION 3: RIPE IDEAS Backing Bananas - Innovation, Investment and Impact Andrew Francey General Manager - Industry Service & Delivery, Hort Innovation 10 mins and will host the 'ripe ideas' section
1415-1430 15 mins	Banana de-handling prototype Dr Chris Lehnert Senior Lecturer, Australian Cobotics Centre (10 mins + 5 mins questions)

1430-1445 15 mins	Future of aerial spraying **Insert Liddle's logo** VIDEO: 2 min video plays Matthew Harper Chief Executive Officer, Aerial Application Association of Australia (10 mins) Rhett Heffernan Agricultural Pilot, Liddles Aerial Spraying joins for 5 min Q&A	VIDEO: RIPE IDEAS - liddles aerial spraying
1445-1455	Freeze-dried Bananas Doriana Mangili Business Manager, Sweeter Banana Co-operative 10 mins	
1455-1500 5 mins	VIDEO: Drones in action Join us on the NSW mid-north coast to speak to a grower and operator about using drones in bananas. (5 min video)	VIDEO: RIPE IDEAS - drone video
1500-1530 30 mins	SIXTY SECOND SCIENCE (POSTER PITCHES)	
1530-1610 40 mins	REGENERATE Exhibition hall - Royal Benowa Ballroom AFTERNOON TEA & SCIENCE POSTER SESSION Royal Benowa Ballroom	
1610 - 1615	VIDEO: Meet some local growers Take a virtual trip to the Cooly Community Markets, where Northern NSW growers Steve and Robyne Edwards have developed a loyal customer base. You'll also step onto the Everest's farm just across the border from our Congress venue.	VIDEO: meet some NSW growers
1615 - 1705 50 mins	SESSION 4 - SETTING UP FOR SUCCESS Succession planning John Moor Owner, Growmoor Biological 35 mins talk time + 15 min Q&A	
1730 - 1830 hours	Exhibition hall - Royal Benowa Ballroom Tradeshow Exhibition Evening Special guest: Thomas Flegler , Dolphins / Queensland NRL player Thomas comes from a banana growing family and played his first footy for the Tully Tigers. He's recently taken on some banana ambassador roles and we're delighted he can join us for a bit of fun during the Tradeshow Exhibition Evening.	

Friday 8 August 2025		
0700	REGISTRATION	
0730	Tea and Coffee open Exhibition hall - Royal Benowa Ballroom	
0715 - 0815 45 mins		Cypress 1 & 2 ABGC members only grower meeting *pre-registration required
		6:30AM – GET ACTIVE (More to come!)
	Royal Benowa Ballroom	
	RECONNECT + REGENERATE	
0830 - 0835	MC Welcome to Day 2 (update on Tradeshow competition?) VIDEO: Powering the next generation	VIDEO: Package 1_V2
0835 - 0905 30 mins	SESSION 5A - WHERE TO FOR WORKFORCE Workforce: Challenges, risks and opportunities Steve Burdette Executive Officer, Approved Employers Australia 20 mins + 10 min Q&A	
0905-0950 45 mins	SESSION 5B - UNDERSTANDING THE BANANA CATEGORY TO DRIVE DEMAND Presented by Hort Innovation **Insert logo** Emma Day Senior Marketing Manager, Hort Innovation 15 mins Andrew Burns Supply Chain Engagement Manager, ABGC 15 mins Belinda Van Schaik Head of Marketing, Hort Innovation 15 mins	
0950 - 1020 30 mins	Exhibition hall - Royal Benowa Ballroom MORNING TEA Royal Benowa Ballroom REGENERATE	
1020- 1050 30 mins	SESSION 6 - FUTURE-FOCUSSED FARMING Farming with reduced inputs Peter Wren-Hilton Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Platform 10 and Wharf42 20 mins + 10 min Q&A	
1050-1150 60 mins	PANEL: Solving the soil health puzzle Facilitator John Pickering Chief Behavioural Scientist, Evidn - panel facilitator Panelists Simon Mattson Educator/Consultant, Regen Ag John Pickering Chief Behavioural Scientist, Evidn - panel facilitator Dr Neil Wilson Director of Research Microbiology, Metagen Stephen Lowe Grower Michael Russo Marlin Blue Bananas, Grower Peter Inderbitzin Grower, Red Valley Farms, Lakeland	

1150-1200 10 mins	Assessment of an integrated risk tool to aid Panama disease management Tony Pattison Senior-principal Nematologist, Department of Primary Industries 10 mins
1200 - 1330 90 mins	Exhibition hall - Royal Benowa Ballroom LUNCH BREAK Royal Benowa Ballroom
	REGENERATE
1330-1410 40 mins	SESSION 7 - ON TRACK FOR A BRIGHT FUTURE Carbon - what's coming & how to prepare Noel Ainsworth Principal Horticulturist, Department of Primary Industries 10 mins 25 Years of Trusted Assurance: From Problem-Solving to Future-Proofing Jane Siebum Chief Executive Officer, Freshcare 20 mins - including 5 min discussion at end Driving Practical Change in a Complex Compliance Landscape Kathryn Dryden Stakeholder Engagement & Advisory, ABGC 10 mins
1410-1520 70 min	Change the beat of your drum Jana Pittman Commonwealth Champion- Athletics Sponsored by Arcella Bananas Home of Tropicana 60 min keynote + 10 min Q&A
1520 - 1530 10 mins	Closing Address Paul Inderbitzin Congress Chair, Australian Banana Growers' Council
	Venue TBC
	RECONNECT + REGENERATE
1900 - late	Banana Ball and Industry Awards featuring new award categories

BA24002 - Appendix 4 - Survey Results Summary



Post-event survey summary

63 participants

Please rate your overall Congress experience

Excellent	28.57%
Highly satisfactory	46.03%
Satisfactory	23.81%
Average	1.59%
Poor	0%

Key factors that attracted you to attend Congress

Scientific Program Content	39.68%
Industry exhibition	26.98%
Professional development	41.27%
Networking opportunities	85.71%
Low registration price - ABGC GM rate	11.11%
Venue and location appeal	14.29%
Recommended by colleagues	15.87%
Others	6.35%

How would you rate the Congress topics and presentations overall?

Excellent	17.46%
Highly satisfactory	46.03%
Satisfactory	26.57%
Average	7.94%
Poor	0%

How much knowledge do you feel you have gained about Banana marketing?

A great deal	3.51%
A lot	26.32%
A moderate amount	38.60%
A little	24.56%
None at all	7.02%

How much knowledge do you feel you have gained from Banana R&D?

A great deal	18.97%
A lot	31.03%
A moderate amount	32.76%
A little	17.24%
None at all	0%

Do you feel what you have learnt from the Congress can be applied to your business?

Very likely	11.86%
Likely	50.85%
N/A	25.42%
Unlikely	11.86%
Very unlikely	0%

Are you planning to attend Banana Congress 27?

Yes, I will attend	65.08%
No I won't attend	4.76%
N/A	25.42%

BA24002 - Appendix 5 - Outputs/Branding examples



Table 3. Key Evaluation Questions

Key evaluation questions	Project-specific questions
Effectiveness	
1. To what extent has the project achieved its expected outcomes?	<p><i>To what extent has Banana Congress enhanced qualitative (and quantitative where possible) understanding of relevant research findings, key issues, emerging risks and opportunities to improve industry productivity and profitability?</i></p> <p>Banana Congress provides an opportunity to deliver a range of banana-focussed research and information to a targeted audience. It takes people away from the farm or business to learn, and encourages conversations with peers and subject experts.</p> <p>For this reason it is a highly effective way to enhance both qualitative and, to an extent, quantitative understanding of key issues and opportunities to improve productivity and profitability.</p> <p>While update of new practices can take some time, these face-to-face updates – particularly with other growers – contribute to the process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 82.8% of post-event survey respondents said they gained a moderate amount, a lot, or a great deal of knowledge about Banana R&D. • 62.7% of respondents say they are likely or very likely to apply what they learnt at Congress to their banana business. • Feedback also indicated that practical sessions like ‘farming with reduced inputs’, the soil health grower panel and compliance were largely well received.
<p><i>To what extent has Banana Congress increased industry awareness and understanding of R&D investments and related programs, levy systems and Hort Innovation membership improved?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition to previously mentioned gains in R&D knowledge, post-event survey respondents indicated that 68.4% of respondents gained at least a moderate amount of knowledge around banana marketing (funded and delivered by Hort Innovation.) • The program (including Science Symposium, Plenary and posters) featured a large range of speakers from Hort-Innovation (levy) funded projects, from banana variety development through to the impact of pests and diseases. These were acknowledged throughout and thus raised awareness of these investments and systems. In addition, Andrew Francey (General Manager, Industry Service & Delivery) hosted the Ripe Ideas panel on innovation. • Recognition of Hort Innovation as the Principal R&D partner throughout, including on the website, app, in printed material and more. • Hort Innovation had a strong delegate presence at Congress as well as an exhibition space, enabling the team to engage directly with other attendees. 	
Relevance	

Key evaluation questions	Project-specific questions
2. How relevant was the project to the needs of intended beneficiaries?	<p><i>To what extent did Banana Congress meet the needs of commercial banana growers (levy payers), supply chain representatives, research providers and other industry stakeholders</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Delivery of a relevant and engaging plenary program</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Commercial banana growers (levy payers) <p>From the Science Symposium to the Banana Ball, Congress is designed first and foremost with growers in mind. In the plenary program, fellow growers (of bananas and other crops) presented as part of Making your Mark(et), Ripe Ideas, and Solving the Soil Health Puzzle. This is in response to feedback about peer-to-peer learning. In addition, key on-farm topics like workforce, chemicals and compliance were included in the program.</p> ○ Supply chain representatives & other industry stakeholders <p>Supply chain representatives and other industry stakeholders benefit from a wealth of banana related updates as part of the program, as well as opportunities to hear from keynote speakers including Jana Pittman and Billy Collett. They are involved in crafting the plenary program and take part as presenters – for example, the CEO of Freshcare or Steve Burdette from Approved Employers Australia.</p> ○ Research providers <p>In addition to the Science Symposium, researchers benefit from updates provided as part of the plenary program as well as insights into key banana farming issues that may shape their work.</p> • <i>Increasing awareness and understanding of R&D investments, outcomes and best practice updates</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Congress experience is designed to increase awareness of R&D investments and practice updates. This is through the Science Symposium, plenary program and, perhaps most effectively, through opportunities to network. Key investment providers and extension experts are part of the Congress experience, from Hort Innovation, through to Banana BMP and the National Banana Development and Extension Program. 82.8% of post-event survey respondents gained at least a moderate amount of knowledge of R&D. • <i>Engaging with a broad range of growers to ensure valuable networking, enhancing understanding of innovative practices and promoting a more cohesive industry</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A number of efforts were made to ensure a broad range of growers could attend growers including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Addressing affordability and timing constraints

Key evaluation questions	Project-specific questions
	<p>where possible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introducing new networking opportunities (acknowledging the limited time in the program) and incentives to engage ▪ Re-introducing the 'Back a Grower' sponsorship option to enable sponsors to bring a grower who hadn't been before, as well as the Win your Way to Congress incentive. ○ At least 27 growers who didn't attend the previous event (2023) attended in 2025. ● <i>Providing opportunity for collaboration between growers, researchers and supply chain representatives with the goal of having a better-informed industry to improve farm productivity</i> ○ The Program was designed to not only present updates, innovation and inspiration – but also allow time to discuss the information. A successful Congress not only delivers what's on stage, but facilitates conversations throughout the 3-day event. Efforts are made to encourage people to engage with Science Posters, for example, with a dedicated afternoon tea. We also tried some slightly out-of-the-box ideas for our event, like a Yoga class in the morning acknowledging late nights networking in the Banana Bar are not for everyone. These shared experiences promote collaboration and cohesion.
Process appropriateness	
3. How well have intended beneficiaries been engaged in the project?	<p><i>To what extent were target levels of engagement of levy payers achieved?</i></p> <p>Levy payers were invited to engage with Congress in a variety of ways including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Through industry communications delivered by ABGC (e-bulletins, magazine, social media, SMS, website) ○ Targeted phone calls and meeting attendance to gather feedback and shape the process ○ Attendance at the event, supported by a subsidy or through a marketing initiative ○ 75 growers attended the event, an increase on the previous event in Cairns (66). ○ The majority of post-event survey respondents indicated they had a Highly Satisfactory or Excellent experience at Congress. 63% of respondents rated overall topics and presentations Highly Satisfactory or Excellent. 28.6% indicated they were satisfactory.
	<p><i>To what extent were new engagement strategies used to engage a broader section of industry?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In the lead-up to the 2025 event, we made a determined effort to use

Key evaluation questions	Project-specific questions
	<p>new engagement strategies, including using grower ambassadors and through a broader social media campaign. We highlighted speakers and social events with tiles and videos across all platforms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> These methods were very successful, particularly embracing growers like Miki Buchanan with an existing social media presence. Further work is needed to embrace next generation growers, new growers and growers from a diverse range of backgrounds. This work will build on the 2025 efforts.
	<p><i>Were communication and engagement processes audience-appropriate?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New initiatives outlined above were combined with tried-and-tested methods like SMS and targeted phone calls, as well as the suite of industry communications, were audience appropriate. The challenge, as with all industries, is that there is a shared focus in the banana industry but a huge variation in farm size, experience and backgrounds. While our communication and engagement processes were appropriate, they can – and should – be built on for any future events. The dedicated Congress website received 33,132 views and 9754 users, showing significant year-on-year growth. This indicates improved reach and potentially more effective communications to reach our audience.
	<p><i>Have regular project updates and outcomes been provided through linkages with the industry communication program?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, key Congress personnel also deliver the industry communications program (ABGC Communications Manager and Communications Officer) – an added bonus in ensuring strong linkages and regular sharing of updates/outcomes. Examples of magazines are below, but the program included regular e-bulletins, dedicated e-bulletins, social media, website and more. <div data-bbox="743 1365 1151 1657"> </div>
4. To what extent were engagement processes appropriate to the target audience/s of the project?	<p><i>Did the project engage with the target audience through an effective and preferred learning style?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Previous post-event surveys, as well as surveys throughout this project, provided insight into preferred learning styles. This information was supplemented with face-to-face conversations, targeted phone calls and meetings with the Program Committee. Peer-to-peer learning is consistently recognised as a popular learning style, but it can be challenging to deliver due to a reluctance to be on stage sharing thoughts – which is understandable! It was still a goal to

Key evaluation questions	Project-specific questions
	<p>have growers as part of the plenary program, and we did this through ensuring potential presenters were comfortable and offering the option of a video presentation where needed.</p> <p><i>How accessible was the event to industry levy payers?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The location and dates were chosen based on industry feedback – a destination that provided a chance to ‘get away’ from the farm and a month that was traditionally quieter for growers. The Gold Coast was chosen for its ease of access to various travel options, including both Brisbane and Gold Coast airports. ○ While every effort was made to keep costs down, and to offer subsidies and special ‘grower rates’, it is still a big investment of time and money for many growers, particularly smaller businesses. ○ This will be considered in future event planning, and also illustrates why it is so important that communication of the content extends beyond the physical event. ○ Of those who attended, and completed the post event survey, 90.15% felt value for money was at least Satisfactory, with over 50% rating it has Highly Satisfactory or Excellent.
	<p><i>To what extent did this project collaborate with other industry projects in order to better engage the target audience, and deliver strong outcomes?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The project worked very closely with other industry projects to deliver Congress. ○ In particular, the Congress project team works hand-in-hand with the National Development and Extension Project and the Industry R&D Manager to deliver research components, including the Science Symposium and Science Speed Talk sessions. ○ The project ensures all those contributing to industry projects are aware of the event, and have the opportunity to deliver updates or information in a way that suits. On top of that, Congress offers opportunities for all those working on industry projects to network with peers and growers, which is one of the most effective ways of ensuring strong outcomes.
Efficiency	
5. What efforts did the project make to improve efficiency?	<p><i>What efforts did the project make to improve communication to a broader range of industry?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increased use of social media, including grower ambassadors ○ Targeted use of text, phone calls and face-to-face meetings (with the latter often still the preferred method of receiving information for growers) ○ Engaging with ABGC team members and other industry projects to reach a wider audience ○ Consideration of different segments of the industry, including younger growers, people from culturally diverse backgrounds, different sized farms and more <p><i>What efforts were made to ensure value for money, for all delegates?</i></p>

Key evaluation questions	Project-specific questions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Primarily, the program aimed to deliver a highly relevant, engaging program for delegates, with plenty of opportunity for networking. While other initiatives help – promotions, grower discounts and more – ultimately it is the program line-up that delivers value, or otherwise. Post-event survey results indicate this was largely achieved.○ Value for money is considered in every aspect of planning. Even the location – the Gold Coast – was chosen due to its family-friendly nature, ensuring growers could add to their experience if they wished. <p><i>What efforts were made to better engage and work with the Program and Management Committees?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Program meetings were kept to time, and were designed to be a 'friendly' space where all ideas could be put on the table○ Meeting wrap-ups – sometimes including interactive voting or feedback mechanisms – were sent to all committee members, regardless of whether they could make the meeting○ Committee members were encouraged to text or call at any time, noting that they are already time-poor



Statement of Receipts and Expenditures

BA24002

From 6-Mar-25

To 8-Nov-25

Project Title

Banana Industry Congress 2025

Is this a final Statement of Receipts and Expenditure?

Yes

	Budget (LOP)	Budget (to date)	Actual	Variance
Receipts				
HIA Managed Funds	100,000.00	100,000.00	80,000.00	20,000.00
Funds not managed by HIA	590,937.20	590,937.20	559,573.92	31,363.28
Receipts from use/disposal of Assets/Capital Item(s)				-
Total Receipts	\$ 690,937	\$ 690,937	\$ 639,574	\$ 51,363

Expenditures					
<u>Funds managed by HIA</u>					
Venue Rental	36,300.00	36,300.00	40,682.82	-	4,382.82
Speakers	63,700.00	63,700.00	65,304.67	-	1,604.67
				-	-
				-	-
Sub-total	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 105,987	\$ (5,987)	

Funds not managed by HIA					
Printed matter and promotional material	48,640.00	48,640.00	45,340.57		3,299.43
Marketing and promotion	13,727.27	13,727.27	7,614.56		6,112.71
Technical equipment - congress/exhibition costs	55,900.00	55,900.00	60,742.40		-4,842.40
Photography	5,000.00	5,000.00	8,750.00		-3,750.00
Material for participants	15,030.00	15,030.00	10,355.00		4,675.00
Transportation/shuttles	7,500.00	7,500.00	-		7,500.00
On-site Staff	15,650.00	15,650.00	14,840.91		809.09
Pre-congress expenses	7,010.00	7,010.00	7,010.00		0.00
Host and Committee Expenses	1,500.00	1,500.00	1,443.16		56.84
Meals and social activities	234,414.55	234,414.55	225,557.94		8,856.61
Exhibition built areas	22,559.09	22,559.09			22,559.09
Various (Insurance/Finance/Sponsorship/Freight)	18,520.90	18,520.90	12,874.33		5,646.57
Reserve/provision	7,280.60	7,280.60	1,988.06		5,292.54
Organisation Fee	\$ 136,588	\$ 136,588	\$ 123,759		12,828.81
Advertising			\$ 4,616		-4,616.20
Video			\$ 4,670		-4,670.00
Booths			\$ 448		-448.22
Promotional products			\$ 13,150		-13,149.59
Gifts and Awards			\$ 690		-690.08
Science Symposium/Soil Health speaker			\$ 2,690		-2,690.00
ABGC staff attendance			\$ 11,984		-11,984.23
Sub-total	\$ 589,321	\$ 589,321	\$ 558,525	\$ 30,796	
Total Expenditure	\$ 689,321	\$ 689,321	\$ 664,512	\$ 24,808	
Surplus/(Deficit)	\$ 1,617	\$ 1,617	\$ (24,938)	\$ 26,555	

Notes:

Reasons for material expenditure variance (budget minus actual)

Additional Disclosure(s)

In-Kind Contribution

Description	<u>Amount</u>
Item 1	0
Item 2	0
Item 3	0
Total	<u>\$</u> -

Capital Item(s)/Project Asset(s)

Cost of asset at the time of purchase:	\$ -
If known, provide estimated Market Value of the asset at disposal or at the end/termination of the project:	\$ -
Book Value of assets as of the cut off date as per your books of account:	\$ -
Revenue, if any, from assets:	\$ -
Proceeds from Sale/Disposal of assets:	\$ -
Proposed Fate of Asset:	e.g. Sell

Notifiable Sub-contractor

Name of Supplier	ABN
MCI Australia	76 108 781 988

Declaration of Authorised Person

I/We Certify that:

- The expenditure included in the statement of expenses and the additional disclosure for capital items (if any) were for the purpose stated and agreed in the Project/ Study Tour / Conference Fund Agreement;
- All invoices, receipts or other records relating to the expenses of the Project have been obtained and will be retained for at least 7 years from the date in which this project expires or terminates
- This statement of receipts, expenditure and the additional disclosure for asset/capital items (if any) are accurate and true records of our Project/Study Tour/Conference; and
- The funds have not been used for any marketing, internal or external agri political activity.



3/12/2025

Signature of Authorised Person / Date

Leanne Erakovic

Name

On Milestone payment		Action Required (HIA PM to fill up):	
Budget (LOP)	\$ 100,000	<input type="checkbox"/> Pay next milestone	<input type="checkbox"/> Others, please provide details below
Budget (start to cut-off date)	\$ 100,000		
Actual Funds Received from HIA	\$ 80,000		
Actual Expenditure (to date)	\$ 105,987	<input type="checkbox"/> Issue invoice on unspent fund	
Actual Expenditure/Actual Funds received	1.324843625		
On Asset(s)			
Book Value	\$ -		
Market Value	\$ -		
Proceeds of disposal of Asset	\$ -		
Revenue from the use of Asset	\$ -		
Fate of Asset	e.g. Sell		
PM Signature/date:			

CONGRESS, CARNARVON-STYLE

Tegan Cavallaro, Department of Primary Industries

It has been a few months since growers and industry stakeholders gathered on the Gold Coast for the 2025 Australian Banana Industry Congress.

Recently, we caught up with two Western Australian growers, Chris Collins and Les Ball, who attended the event, to reflect their key takeaways and insights gained from stepping away from their farms to participate in the three-day event.

It didn't take long for these growers to express how valuable they found attending the event. Les, who has been growing bananas in Carnarvon for three years, shared, "I'm relatively new to the industry, so it was fantastic to listen to all the presentations—I thought it was all really insightful." Chris added, "One of the main takeaways for me was being reminded that many of the challenges we face are the same across different growing regions. TR4, for instance—it was helpful to learn how it's being managed and to be reminded about the threat it poses."

When asked which sessions, speakers, or presentations stood out, Les shared, "I really enjoyed it all. The Science Symposium was great. For me—I found the soil health and phosphorus

presentations interesting. It was also valuable to be reminded about TR4 and gain an international perspective on it. It certainly reinforces the importance of on-farm biosecurity for us in WA." He also added "Jana Pittman was a great guest speaker, very inspiring."

Chris said, "I really enjoyed the soil health panel session with the growers. It was fantastic to hear a practical perspective on what growers are doing in this space. The variety session was also great, and the presentation by Naomi Abbott from NQ Banana Research was excellent. I now have a much better understanding of the importance and challenges of maintaining other plant characteristics, like yield and eating quality, while developing a plant with resistance to TR4." Chris also mentioned "The snake guy, Billy Collett - what a character! He was a great opening guest speaker."

Both Chris and Les also noted that, while they don't face the same challenge of managing leaf diseases in WA, the event reignited their interest in exploring the use of drones for applying foliar nutrients.

Both growers agreed that a key highlight of attending was the opportunity to connect and network with other growers and those who support the industry. Chris shared, "The growers I spoke with, no matter where they're from, were

like-minded and great to talk to. While many things are different for us growing bananas in Carnarvon, most challenges are the same—we all face similar issues." Les added, "It was also valuable to reaffirm connections with the DPI and ABGC staff that support the industry."

When asked what they would recommend to others, particularly WA growers considering attending a future Congress, Les said, "It's definitely worth going. You always pick up one or two things that can make a difference. Things are always evolving and changing, and attending is a good way to learn about new things."

Chris added, "If you get the chance to go, go! It really opens your eyes to a lot of things we aren't exposed to in WA."

"It's a fantastic week—very social and a good opportunity to see what's going on in the world of bananas."

Both growers were partly supported to attend Congress by the National Banana Development & Extension Program with support from ABGC. They are happy to continue to share their experiences and knowledge gained from attending the event with fellow Carnarvon growers.



Tegan Cavallaro (DPI), Chris Collins, Les Ball, Rosie Godwin (ABGC).



Chris Collins was also recognised with an industry Award of Honour at the Banana Ball.

The National Banana Development and Extension Program (BA19004). This project has been funded by Hort Innovation, using the banana research and development levy, co-investment from the Department of Primary Industries and contributions from the Australian Government. Hort Innovation is the grower-owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australian horticulture.