

Final report

Project title:

Mushroom industry crisis and reputation risk management

Project leader:

Leah Dennis

Delivery partner:

Australian Mushroom Growers Association

Major Sub-contractors: Porter Novelli (and FleishmanHillard)

Report author/s:

Leah Dennis

Project code:

MU20006

Date:

18 June 2026

Disclaimer:

Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited (Hort Innovation) makes no representations and expressly disclaims all warranties (to the extent permitted by law) about the accuracy, completeness, or currency of information in this final report.

Users of this final report should take independent action to confirm any information in this final report before relying on that information in any way.

Reliance on any information provided by Hort Innovation is entirely at your own risk. Hort Innovation is not (to the extent permitted by law) responsible for, and will not be liable for, any loss, damage, claim, expense, cost (including legal costs) or other liability arising in any way (including from Hort Innovation or any other person's negligence or otherwise) from your use or non-use of the final report or from reliance on information contained in the final report or that Hort Innovation provides to you by any other means.

Funding statement:

This project has been funded by Hort Innovation, using the mushroom research and development levy and contributions from the Australian Government. Hort Innovation is the grower-owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australian horticulture.

Publishing details:

Published and distributed by: Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited
ABN 71 602100149

Level 15
141 Walker Street
North Sydney NSW 2060

Telephone: (02) 8295 2300

www.horticulture.com.au

© Copyright 2026 Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited

Contents

Public summary	4
Keywords	5
Introduction	5
Methodology	6
Results and discussion	7
Outputs	8
Outcomes	9
Monitoring and evaluation	12
Recommendations	14
Intellectual property	14
Acknowledgements	15
Appendices	15

Public summary

The Mushroom Industry Crisis and Reputation Risk Management Project (MU20006) was established to strengthen the Australian mushroom industry's preparedness, resilience and response capability in the face of emerging food safety, biosecurity, workforce, environmental and reputational risks. Delivered by the Australian Mushroom Growers' Association (AMGA) in partnership with Porter Novelli (later, FleishmanHillard) and specialist food safety consultant Clare Hamilton-Bate, the project was implemented over a five-year period from 2021 to 2026.

During the final milestone period (December 2025 – May 2026), following the 100 per cent acquisition of the Clemenger Group by Omnicom in November 2025, the Porter Novelli brand was retired and the sub-contracted public relations team transitioned to FleishmanHillard (FH). The FH team was reintroduced to the Project Reference Group (including Hort Innovation), AMSAFE Committee and AMGA Board, as senior members of the Porter Novelli team previously working on the AMGA departed the organization.

The project recognised that in an increasingly complex and fast-moving media environment, industry reputation can be significantly impacted by real or perceived incidents. The Australian mushroom industry therefore required a structured framework to identify risks early, prepare appropriate response mechanisms, build stakeholder capability and ensure coordinated action during potential crises. Building on the foundations established through the previous reputation risk management project (MU18007), MU20006 focused on continuous improvement, industry engagement, monitoring, training and preparedness.

A key achievement of the project was the industry reputation issues management during the Erin Patterson investigation and trial. Based on the independent review conducted by 3E Consulting in January 2026, the Erin Patterson (Gippsland mushroom poisoning) case served as the ultimate "stress test" of the Mushroom Industry Crisis and Reputation Risk Management Project (MU20006). The review concluded that the project functioned exactly as intended and demonstrated the value of having a mature crisis preparedness framework in place before a major incident occurs. A key finding was that the response was proportionate, disciplined and deliberately restrained, rather than reactive. From the earliest stages, the team activated existing crisis management protocols, increased monitoring activities, coordinated stakeholders and maintained clear communication channels. Importantly, the project team avoided creating additional attention on the commercial mushroom industry while the issue remained centred on wild mushroom foraging and a criminal investigation. The review specifically noted that several potentially damaging scenarios were avoided through strict adherence to the Reputation Risk Management Framework.

A significant component of the project was industry capability building. Media and crisis management training was delivered to AMSAFE members, while grower engagement, such as webinars and podcasts, increased awareness of industry risks, crisis communication protocols and individual responsibilities during potential incidents. The project also strengthened communication pathways between growers, industry representatives and Hort Innovation to support rapid and coordinated responses when required.

Overall, MU20006 has delivered a stronger, more informed and better-prepared industry. Through enhanced planning, monitoring, stakeholder engagement, training and communication resources, the project has improved the industry's ability to identify, mitigate and respond to reputational risks while protecting consumer trust and supporting the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of the Australian mushroom industry.

Keywords

Crisis management, reputational risk management.

Introduction

The Mushroom Industry Crisis and Reputation Risk Management Project (MU20006) was established to strengthen the Australian mushroom industry's preparedness, resilience and response capability in the face of emerging food safety, biosecurity, workforce, environmental and reputational risks. Delivered by the Australian Mushroom Growers' Association (AMGA) in partnership with Porter Novelli (later, FleishmanHillard) and specialist food safety consultant Clare Hamilton-Bate, the project was implemented over a five-year period from 2021 to 2026.

During the final milestone period (December 2025 – May 2026), following the 100 per cent acquisition of the Clemenger Group by Omnicom in November 2025, the Porter Novelli brand was retired and the sub-contracted public relations team transitioned to FleishmanHillard (FH). The FH team was reintroduced to the Project Reference Group (including Hort Innovation), AMSAFE Committee and AMGA Board, as senior members of the Porter Novelli team previously working on the AMGA departed the organization.

The project recognised that in an increasingly complex and fast-moving media environment, industry reputation can be significantly impacted by real or perceived incidents. The Australian mushroom industry therefore required a structured framework to identify risks early, prepare appropriate response mechanisms, build stakeholder capability and ensure coordinated action during potential crises. Building on the foundations established through the previous reputation risk management project (MU18007), MU20006 focused on continuous improvement, industry engagement, monitoring, training and preparedness.

Over the life of the project, a comprehensive reputation risk management framework was maintained and regularly updated to reflect emerging risks and changing operating conditions. The project established and supported the AMSAFE committee as the industry's central crisis preparedness and response body, developed risk registers and stakeholder engagement plans, delivered ongoing media and reputation monitoring, and provided strategic advice on emerging issues affecting the industry.

A key achievement of the project was the industry reputation issues management during the Erin Patterson investigation and trial. Based on the independent review conducted by 3E Consulting in January 2026, the Erin Patterson (Gippsland mushroom poisoning) case served as the ultimate "stress test" of the Mushroom Industry Crisis and Reputation Risk Management Project (MU20006). The review concluded that the project functioned exactly as intended and demonstrated the value of having a mature crisis preparedness framework in place before a major incident occurs. A key finding was that the response was proportionate, disciplined and deliberately restrained, rather than reactive. From the earliest stages, the team activated existing crisis management protocols, increased monitoring activities, coordinated stakeholders and maintained clear communication channels. Importantly, the project team avoided creating additional attention on the commercial mushroom industry while the issue remained centred on wild mushroom foraging and a criminal investigation. The review specifically noted that several potentially damaging scenarios were avoided through strict adherence to the Reputation Risk Management Framework.

A significant component of the project was industry capability building. Media and crisis management training was delivered to AMSAFE members, while grower engagement, such as webinars and podcasts, increased awareness of industry risks, crisis communication protocols and individual responsibilities during potential incidents. The project also strengthened communication pathways between growers, industry representatives and Hort Innovation to support rapid and coordinated responses when required.

Following the 2023 wild mushroom poisoning incident, the project delivered a suite of consumer-facing communication resources, including fact sheets, digital assets, website content and educational materials designed to clearly distinguish commercially grown mushrooms from wild mushrooms and reinforce consumer confidence in the safety of Australian-grown mushrooms.

During the final reporting period (December 2025 – May 2026) the AMGA and major sub-contractor FleishmanHillard (FH) continued to progress all work related to crisis and reputation risk management for the Australian mushroom industry including:

- Recap and refresh the Reputation Risk Management Framework
- Reassessment of industry risks that threaten industry reputation & updated holding statements

- One-on-One Media training workshop for AMGA personnel
- Delivery of a Farm Reputation Risk Management recorded webinar and reputation risk management template
- Continued media monitoring
- Monitoring of Simon Patterson (Erin Patterson's ex-husband's) memoir release

Methodology

The Mushroom Industry Crisis and Reputation Risk Management Project (MU20006) applied a continuous improvement methodology designed to identify, assess, mitigate and respond to emerging industry risks while building long-term industry capability. The methodology was delivered through three interconnected phases: Crisis Management Planning, Watch–Act–Extend, and Review and Evaluation.

Step 1: Review the Industry Risk Environment: The project commenced with a comprehensive review of the Australian mushroom industry's operating environment, existing crisis management systems and emerging risks. This included assessment of food safety, product quality, workforce, environmental, supply chain and reputational risks, together with broader political, social, economic and regulatory factors affecting the industry.

Step 2: Update and Maintain the Reputation Risk Management Framework: Existing risk management plans developed under previous projects were reviewed and updated. This included maintaining the industry Reputation Risk Management Framework, establishing clear escalation procedures, defining stakeholder responsibilities, identifying key spokespersons, and developing response protocols and communication resources for use during potential incidents.

Step 3: Establish Governance and Industry Oversight: The AMSAFE Committee and Project Reference Group (PRG) were maintained as the primary governance structures for the project. These groups provided strategic oversight, reviewed emerging risks, monitored project progress and ensured alignment with industry priorities and Hort Innovation requirements.

Step 4: Develop Risk Registers and Stakeholder Engagement Plans: Comprehensive risk registers were developed and regularly reviewed to identify emerging threats and opportunities. Stakeholder mapping and engagement plans were also maintained to ensure effective communication and coordination with growers, industry representatives, regulators, media and other key stakeholders during both normal operations and crisis situations.

Step 5: Monitor Industry and Media Activity: A proactive monitoring program was implemented throughout the project. Traditional media, digital media, social media channels and industry intelligence sources were continuously monitored to identify potential issues before they escalated. Monthly media and reputation reports were prepared and provided to AMSAFE and industry leaders. As per step 6, perceived or actual crisis issues were immediately escalated using the Reputation Risk Management Framework (AMSAFE).

Step 6: Provide Ongoing Risk and Crisis Management Support: The project team maintained an ongoing "watching brief", providing strategic advice and support to the industry as issues emerged. This included risk assessment, stakeholder mapping, message development, media response planning and communication support where required.

Step 7: Build Industry Capability Through Training: Media and crisis management training was delivered to AMSAFE members, AMGA Directors and other industry stakeholders to strengthen spokesperson capability and improve industry readiness. Training included crisis simulations, interview preparation, message development, media engagement techniques and practical response exercises.

Step 8: Deliver Industry Extension and Education Activities: Grower engagement was conducted nationally to increase awareness of industry risks, explain crisis management processes and reinforce the role of growers in early issue identification and reporting. These sessions included a conference presentation, podcasts and webinars. They provided

assurance of the AMSAFE program, importance of industry and local farm crisis and reputation plans, and practical guidance on managing media enquiries and social media activity during potential incidents.

Step 9: Develop Consumer Communication Resources: Targeted communication materials were developed to address emerging consumer concerns and misinformation. This included the development of fact sheets, digital content, website resources, social media assets and educational materials supporting industry responses to issues such as wild mushroom poisoning incidents.

Step 10: Review, Evaluate and Improve: The project adopted a continuous improvement approach. Risk management plans, monitoring systems, training programs and communication resources were regularly reviewed and refined. An independent review towards the end of the project, along with workshop evaluations, stakeholder feedback, media analysis and independent project reviews were used to assess effectiveness and identify opportunities for improvement, ensuring the industry remained prepared for future challenges.

Results and discussion

The Mushroom Industry Crisis and Reputation Risk Management Project (MU20006) successfully delivered a comprehensive and proactive framework to strengthen the Australian mushroom industry's preparedness, resilience and response capability to emerging risks and crisis events. Over the five-year project period, the industry transitioned from having a foundational reputation management framework to a more mature, structured and continuously monitored system capable of identifying, assessing and responding to a broad range of reputational threats.

A key achievement of the project was the management of the Erin Patterson investigation and trial. Based on the independent review conducted by 3E Consulting in January 2026, the Erin Patterson (Gippsland mushroom poisoning) case served as the ultimate "stress test" of the Mushroom Industry Crisis and Reputation Risk Management Project (MU20006). The review concluded that the project functioned exactly as intended and demonstrated the value of having a mature crisis preparedness framework in place before a major incident occurs. A key finding was that the response was proportionate, disciplined and deliberately restrained, rather than reactive. From the earliest stages, the team activated existing crisis management protocols, increased monitoring activities, coordinated stakeholders and maintained clear communication channels. Importantly, they avoided creating additional attention on the commercial mushroom industry while the issue remained centred on wild mushroom foraging and a criminal investigation. The review specifically noted that several potentially damaging scenarios were avoided through strict adherence to the Reputation Risk Management Framework.

The project team performed ongoing maintenance and refinement of the Australian Mushroom Industry Reputation Risk Management Framework. Through annual reviews, risk assessments and stakeholder consultation, the framework remained relevant to the changing operating environment and emerging risks facing the industry. The establishment and ongoing support of the AMSAFE Committee provided a dedicated governance structure for monitoring risks, coordinating responses and facilitating communication between industry stakeholders.

The project's continuous monitoring and intelligence-gathering activities proved highly valuable. Monthly media and reputation reports enabled the industry to remain informed about emerging issues, consumer sentiment, media narratives and broader trends that could affect the reputation of Australian-grown mushrooms. This proactive approach improved industry awareness and allowed risks to be identified and managed before they escalated into significant crises.

Industry capability and preparedness were significantly enhanced through the delivery of crisis management and media training programs. AMSAFE members, industry leaders and growers gained increased confidence and understanding of their roles and responsibilities during potential incidents. Workshop feedback consistently demonstrated improved awareness of risk management principles, crisis communication protocols and the importance of timely issue reporting. The project helped establish a culture of preparedness across the industry, ensuring that key stakeholders were better equipped to respond effectively during challenging situations.

The project also demonstrated its practical value during periods of heightened public attention. Following the nationally significant wild mushroom poisoning incident in 2023, the project team successfully developed and deployed consumer communication resources to address misinformation and reinforce confidence in commercially grown mushrooms. The

creation of fact sheets, website content, social media assets and educational materials provided the industry with credible, science-based resources that continue to serve as evergreen communication tools during future wild mushroom seasons.

Overall, the project achieved its intended outcomes by strengthening industry preparedness, improving stakeholder capability, enhancing risk identification and monitoring processes, and providing the Australian mushroom industry with a robust and sustainable framework for managing reputation and crisis risks. The knowledge, resources and governance structures developed through MU20006 will continue to provide long-term value to growers, industry organisations and levy payers beyond the completion of the project.

Outputs

A summary of the project's outputs is listed in Table A below.

Table A. Output summary

Output	Description	Detail
Crisis Management Planning	Review, assess and understand the operating landscape, confirm knowledge/gaps, review and establish risk management plans and monitoring systems (social and traditional).	Annually refreshed reputation risk management plan with identified key risks and management and response protocols, stakeholder map, key personnel and responsibilities, pre-approved content for media (including ready-to-go social media content), and escalation procedures. • Program logic and monitoring evaluation plan, following all Hort Innovation templates (delivered MS102) • Risk register and management plan, following all Hort Innovation templates (delivered MS102) • Refreshed AMSAFE committee & PRG with new terms of reference (delivered MS102)
Watch, Act & Extend	The PR teams resources to be made available around-the-clock to provide counsel, prepare materials and deliver on-the-ground support as required.	The PR team delivered a "watching brief" with a monthly reporting cycle, and where available on call, but also scanning the industry's environment and sharing knowledge and intelligence to ensure the most effective state of readiness. (MS190 AMSAFE Monthly Media Reports; refer appendix A) The PR team conducted crisis reputational issues management during the Erin Patterson investigation and trial, which spanned several years. During the trial, the PR team were constantly on-call, conducted multiple AMSAFE meetings, collaborated with Hort Innovation's marketing team and their agencies, to ensure the response was calm, considered and well-coordinated. The project team delivered multiple extension outputs such as podcasts, webinars, conference presentations, fact sheets. Media training was provided annually AMSAFE nominated industry personnel, which was conducted annually. (Refer appendix C for media training delivered June 2026) The project also delivered an educational webinar and templates for growers to understand the importance of implementing a reputational risk management framework in their own businesses.
Consumer communication assets	In light of the wild mushroom poisoning incident, consumer	Fact sheet: DOWNLOAD HERE YouTube animated video: WATCH HERE

	communication assets were developed to further protect the reputation of the safety of commercially grown mushrooms.	The fact sheets were printed and disseminated directly to growers to be distributed to customers and retailers, and were used as a supporting resource for the Hort Innovation sampling events. The Video and fact sheets were made available on the AMGA and Australian Mushrooms websites.
Independent Review	An independent review of the projects risk management plan, supporting outputs and issues management.	Independent review completed in January 2026, found that MU20006 successfully delivered a mature, industry-wide crisis and reputation risk management capability that functioned effectively under one of the most significant reputational threats ever faced by the Australian mushroom industry. (Appendix H)

Outcomes

A summary of the project's outcomes is listed in the table below, supported with monitoring data collected to provide evidence of outcomes as per the project's M&E Plan.

Table B. Outcome summary

Outcome	Alignment to fund outcome, strategy and KPI	Description	Evidence
Australia's mushroom industry is prepared and ready to respond in the event of an issue.	Mushroom Strategic Plan (2022-2026) Outcome 2: The Australian mushroom industry has improved profitability, efficiency and sustainability through innovative production systems, reduced costs and effective risks management Strategy & KPI: Not listed.	The project commenced with a comprehensive review of the Australian mushroom industry's operating environment, existing crisis management systems and emerging risks. This included assessment of food safety, product quality, workforce, environmental, supply chain and reputational risks, together with broader political, social, economic and regulatory factors affecting the industry. Reputation Risk Management Framework, established with clear escalation procedures, stakeholder responsibilities, key spokespersons identified, and response protocols developed. and communication resources for use during potential incidents.	Development of The Reputation Risk Management Plan, which was reviewed and updated annually. Risk Management Plan as of 5 May, 2026 (Document is confidential - Appendix J – to be redacted before publication) Holding statements for known issues reviewed and updated annually and provided ad hoc when required (Confidential appendix J & K) Media monitoring and reporting conducted monthly and reported within each milestone. The media monitoring for this milestone period is provided in Appendix A. AMSAFE Committee (PRG) meetings each milestone period to remain abreast of emerging risks. AMSAFE

			and the AMGA Board consistently consulted throughout the industry crisis. (Appendix G) Independent review completed in January 2026, found that MU20006 successfully delivered a mature, industry-wide crisis and reputation risk management capability that functioned effectively under one of the most significant reputational threats ever faced by the Australian mushroom industry. (Appendix H)
The Australian mushroom industry understands the crisis management plan and practical steps required to manage any crisis – small or large.	Mushroom Strategic Plan (2022-2026) Outcome 2: The Australian mushroom industry has improved profitability, efficiency and sustainability through innovative production systems, reduced costs and effective risks management Strategy & KPI: Not listed.	Throughout the life of the project, the team delivered a multichannel approach to engaging with and educating mushroom industry participants to ensure they were aware of the value of the AMSAFE, and what the project has delivered in support of the industry, and to ensure were aware of the AMSAFE protocols.	Grower compliance to the AMSAFE protocols was tried and tested during the Erin Patterson trial, with great success, as reported in the Independent Review. (Appendix H) In addition to annual articles in MushroomLink, an AMSAFE advertisement was included in every edition of the AMGA Journal. PR expert, Patrick McClelland and food safety expert, Clare Hamilton-Bate delivered a 'Keep Calm and Carry On' three-episode podcast series, syndicated through major podcast outlets. Available HERE PR experts Patrick McClelland and Lydia Bilton presented at the AMGA Conference in Auckland. VIEW HERE Patrick McClelland and Leah Dennis (nee Bramich) presented a webinar on the management of the Erin Patterson case.

The Australian mushroom industry will understand the key risks facing its industry and the pre-emptive measures and mitigation strategies to help reduce the risk of a crisis occurring.	Mushroom Strategic Plan (2022-2026) Outcome 2: The Australian mushroom industry has improved profitability, efficiency and sustainability through innovative production systems, reduced costs and effective risks management Strategy & KPI: Not listed.	Through monthly media monitoring reports, the AMGA can keep ahead of emerging risks. Through consultation with the AMSAFE Committee and the AMGA Board, emerging risks have been identified, and response materials have been prepared and included in the Reputation Risk Management Plan.	Risk Management Plan as of 5 May, 2026 in (Document is confidential - Appendix J – to be redacted before publication) As above, continuous communication to industry in the form of articles, advertisements, webinars, podcasts and conference attendances.
A demonstrable increase in knowledge and skills among key industry stakeholders about crisis management and key industry risks.	Mushroom Strategic Plan (2022-2026) Outcome 2: The Australian mushroom industry has improved profitability, efficiency and sustainability through innovative production systems, reduced costs and effective risks management Strategy & KPI: Not listed.	FH will develop a recorded presentation / video to be published on the AMGA website (members section) covering risk management planning.	Independent review completed in January 2026, found that the Risk Management Plan functioned effectively under one of the most significant reputational threats ever faced by the Australian mushroom industry. Industry stakeholders (most importantly, growers) implemented AMSAFE protocols by not engaging with media, and referring all enquiries to the AMGA (Appendix H) In addition to the industry stakeholders proven understanding of the industry crisis and reputation risk management program, FH delivered a recorded educational webinar with supporting templates, to educate growers of the importance of a reputation risk management and escalation protocol for their own farm operations – refer appendix D & E.
Key spokespeople understand today's media environment and how to maximise messaging opportunities during interviews, particularly in	Mushroom Strategic Plan (2022-2026) Outcome 2: The Australian mushroom industry has improved profitability, efficiency and	Annual one-on-one media training workshops ensured key industry spokespeople continued to increase in knowledge and skills.	Media training conducted annually throughout the live of the project, with the final session delivered on 22 June 2026. Scenarios provided

the event of a crisis.	sustainability through innovative production systems, reduced costs and effective risks management Strategy & KPI: Not listed.	PN & FH provided ongoing guidance about responding to issues including workplace incidents at farms.	in appendix C. Mushroom Farm Reputation Risk training delivered via recorded webinar – refer appendix D & E.
Up-to-date and relevant industry information to better inform decision-making.	Mushroom Strategic Plan (2022-2026) Outcome 2: The Australian mushroom industry has improved profitability, efficiency and sustainability through innovative production systems, reduced costs and effective risks management Strategy & KPI: Not listed.	Monthly media reports on issues affecting the mushroom industry to keep the industry abreast of emerging issues. Perceived or actual reputational issues escalated immediately, as per Risk Management Framework (AMSAFE) protocol.	Monthly media reports conducted throughout the life of the project and reported in each milestone period. Monthly media reports for this milestone period included as Appendix A. Independent review completed in January 2026, found that the Risk Management Plan functioned effectively under one of the most significant reputational threats ever faced by the Australian mushroom industry. (Appendix H)

Monitoring and evaluation

Table C. Key Evaluation Questions

Key Evaluation Question	Project performance	Continuous improvement opportunities
Effectiveness: 1. To what extent has the project achieved its expected outcomes?	Have the project team delivered the agreed upon output of documents?	Yes, the project team has delivered all agreed outputs, and provided over 200 hours of additional support during the Erin Patterson (EP) investigation and trial.
	Have project team provided consistent reporting?	Yes, monthly media reporting delivered. Constant reporting (sometimes on the hour) during the EP investigation and trial.
	Have AMGA been given adequate consultation of occurring events within the industry?	Yes. AMSAFE committee formed. AMGA Board included throughout the EP issues management.
	To what extent has the project helped to identify, refine and evolve the risk mitigation strategy for industry?	Annual review of Reputation Risk Management Plan and holding statements. Holding statements developed for newly identified risks.

	Can the AMGA – alongside Hort Innovation – communicate effectively in the event of an issue in a timely, coordinated manner?	Yes, as evaluated and reported in the independent review.
	Has the project’s crisis management training and capacity building helped inform the industry about how to act in the event of a recall or issue with reputational impact for the industry?	Yes, as evidenced by the EP issues management, and reported in the independent review.
	Does the industry have core key messages prepared across a range of industry risk areas?	Yes, as per Reputation Risk Management Plan
Relevance 2. How relevant was the project to the needs of intended beneficiaries?	To what extent has the project teams consultation enabled AMGA to be adequately prepare for any event that may impact the mushroom industry?	AMSAFE, AMGA Board and Hort Innovation kept updated and regularly consulted during crisis PR meetings held throughout the EP issues management.
	Did the project provide new insight into the risk of the mushroom industry?	Yes, the EP case was an unprecedented ‘black swan’ issue
	Was the entirety of the industries stakeholder’s reputation covered in the project teams assessments?	Yes, as evaluated and reported in the independent review.
	Have industry members participated in and valued the extension workshops conducted?	Nominated industry stakeholders were identified for annual media training.
Process appropriateness: 3. How well have intended beneficiaries been engaged in the project?	To what extent have the PR team and the AMGA Board been in contact?	The AMSAFE/PRG are the appointed advisory panel for this project. The AMGA Board have been engaged when a crisis or risk has been identified, with regular meetings.
	Have regular project updates been provided?	Annual articles via MushroomLink, several engagement extension activities delivered (podcast, webinars, conference presentations)
	Have the PR team’s staff been available for immediate assistance?	Yes. Responses during the EP issues management were immediate, with multiple meetings and calls with the AMGA each day.
Process appropriateness: 4. To what extent were engagement processes appropriate to the target audience/s of the project?	Did the project engage with mushroom growers, to provide an appropriate risk assessment?	Yes. The AMSAFE Committee (PRG) and AMGA Board of which all directors are growers, representing over 95% of industry production, were regularly consulted throughout the life of the project/
	Did the project identify key risks areas and transfer that knowledge on to those in need?	Yes. Monthly media reporting. AMSAFE/PRG meetings, Erin Patterson issue management.
	Did growers/AMGA members gain a better understanding of the external	Yes. Via media training, media monitoring and particularly

	communication and media environment?	throughout the Erin Patterson case.
	Was the work provided adaptable based on situational need for AMGA?	Yes – clearly evidence provided via the handling of major issues the including Erin Patterson case, death in Clunes, Enoki reclassification and recalls
Efficiency 5. What efforts did the project make to improve efficiency?	Did the project continually enhance previous projects and outputs, refining response procedures that best reflect industry needs?	Yes. The project team reviewed the Reputation Risk Management Framework was reviewed annually, along with holding statements for identified potential risks.

Recommendations

The independent review found that MU20006 successfully delivered a mature, industry-wide crisis and reputation risk management capability that functioned effectively under one of the most significant reputational threats ever faced by the Australian mushroom industry. The Gippsland mushroom poisoning incident and subsequent Erin Patterson trial provided an unprecedented real-world test of the program's systems, governance, monitoring and communication frameworks. The review concluded that the program operated exactly as intended, helping the industry maintain public confidence, avoid misinformation, preserve retailer confidence and prevent inappropriate association between commercial mushroom production and the incident. While this incident was unprecedented, it firmly verifies the need for industry investment in crisis and reputation risk management. It is therefore recommended that Hort Innovation continue funding this program beyond 2026.

Future investment should build upon the strong foundations established through MU20006 by maintaining industry monitoring and preparedness activities, strengthening succession planning and stakeholder communication, and incorporating lessons learned from the Patterson case. Continued funding will help ensure the Australian mushroom industry remains prepared, resilient and capable of protecting both consumer trust and industry reputation in the face of future challenges.

The review found no major deficiencies requiring correction. Instead, all recommendations focused on strengthening future capability, continuity and stakeholder understanding. These recommendations and key learnings should be considered in the new iteration of a Mushroom Industry Crisis and Reputation Risk Management investment. Refer to the Independent Review (appendix H) for further detail on these recommendations:

1. Improve Information Flow and Stakeholder Visibility
2. Reduce Reliance on Key Individuals
3. Formalise Media Engagement Protocols
4. Conduct Formal After-Action Reviews
5. Clarify Expectations Around Recovery and Marketing
6. Increase Awareness of Emergency Management Systems

Intellectual property

'No project IP or commercialisation to report'

Acknowledgements

The AMGA would like to acknowledge the work of the major subcontractors, Porter Novelli (now FleishmanHillard) who delivered the outputs for this project, particularly during the Erin Patterson investigation and trial. In particular, Porter Novelli's former senior staff, Patrick McClelland and Lydia Bilton, who worked tirelessly monitoring and managing the incident, like 'a duck on water' – extremely busy under the surface but ensuring the industries calm and careful response.

We also acknowledge the AMSAFE Committee (PRG) for volunteering to support the project team as representatives of the mushroom industry throughout the life of this five-year project.

Appendices

- Appendix A – Monthly reports December 2025-May 2026
- Appendix B – Announcement of PR team refresh (Porter Novelli now operating as FH)
- Appendix C – Media training – Scenario Brief (Training delivered 22 June 2026)
- Appendix D – Mushroom Farm Reputational Risk Management Webinar (Slides)
- Appendix E – Mushroom Farm Reputational Risk Management Webinar (Script)
- Appendix F – Enoki mushroom recall
- Appendix G – AMSAFE/PRG meeting (7 May) Agenda
- Appendix H – Independent Review of MU20006 Mushroom Industry Crisis and Reputation Risk Management (3E Consulting)

Appendix A – AMSAFE Monthly reports December 2025 – May 2026

AMSAFE Monthly Media Report – December 2025

FOOD SAFETY AND TRACEABILITY

BBC News, [Warning against mushroom foraging in California after fatal poisoning](#), 10 December

- A warning from California health authorities has been issued after a sharp rise in mushroom poisonings, with at least one death and multiple cases of severe liver damage linked to the deadly death cap mushroom.
- The California Poison Control System has identified 21 amatoxin poisoning cases across northern California since mid-November, a surge driven by the region's rainy season, which creates ideal growing conditions for death caps near oak and hardwood trees.
- Health officials say several patients, including children, suffered acute liver injury, and at least one person may require a liver transplant.
- The mushrooms are often mistaken for edible varieties because they look, smell and taste similar, increasing the risk for foragers.
- Authorities warn the danger is statewide, with the California Department of Public Health urging people not to forage for wild mushrooms at all during this high-risk period.

FleishmanHillard insights: The risks associated with mushroom foraging remain a concern for health and food safety authorities globally. It's important to note that reports of global mushroom foraging did not make reference to the Erin Patterson case, and commercial mushrooms were not implicated.

PRODUCT QUALITY AND RETAILER STANDARDS

7News, [Australians becoming more food conscious, buying direct from farm and casting aside traditional supermarkets](#), 6 December

- A new 7NEWS investigation has found Australians are increasingly turning away from major supermarkets and choosing to buy direct from farmers and wholesalers, driven by concerns over quality, price and the true origin of their food.
- Many shoppers are now prioritising "food provenance" - wanting to know exactly where their produce and meat come from. Farmers Pick co-founder Josh Ball says consumers are "waking up" and seeking more sustainable, trustworthy options while supporting growers directly.
- Farmers Pick, which rescues and sells produce rejected by supermarkets for cosmetic reasons, reports that four in 10 Australians are switching or planning to switch away from supermarkets.
- Supermarket distrust is escalating sharply. Roy Morgan data shows Woolworths and Coles have recorded their highest levels of distrust since tracking began, with Woolworths falling 239 places and Coles 237 places in brand rankings by late 2024. Researchers warn that distrust is far more damaging to consumer behaviour than low trust alone.
- Despite the upheaval, industry operators say buyer sentiment is shifting positively. Josh Ball argues that while the food system remains "broken", Australians now have easier access to affordable, transparent and sustainable alternatives - and that this shift marks a promising reset in how the country buys and values its food.

FleishmanHillard insights: This article suggests that people increasingly want to buy direct from growers, which offers opportunities for growers to diversify sales channels. However, the majority of Australians still rely on supermarkets for convenience and range, so mushrooms need to maintain strong retail presence.

WORKFORCE AND INDUSTRY BEHAVIOUR

Produce Plus, [Queensland fresh produce pumps \\$6bn into the economy, new report finds](#), 5 December

- A new report from Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers (QFVG) has found that the state's horticulture sector now contributes more than A\$6bn a year to their economy and supports almost 45,000 jobs.
- The Economic Contribution of the Queensland Horticulture Industry report, released in November, estimates the sector's farm-gate value has grown to A\$4.61bn in 2024/25, up from A\$4bn in 2020/21.
- QFVG interim CEO Joe Moro said the findings underline horticulture's role as an economic engine for regional Queensland, noting that "when growers thrive, towns thrive", with wealth generated on farms flowing directly into local businesses and community life.
- Queensland now produces one-quarter of Australia's fresh fruit and vegetables and leads the country in bananas, pineapples, ginger, avocados and strawberries. The state's climatic diversity supports year-round supply and national food security. The report also highlights the sector's efficiency, producing 40 per cent of Queensland's irrigated agricultural value while using just 10 per cent of the state's irrigation water and 3 per cent of its land.
- Moro said the report gives growers a stronger basis for advocacy as they face rising costs, labour shortages and policy pressures. He argued that policymakers must rely on real data to safeguard farm viability, workforce access and supply chain resilience, ensuring the industry can remain globally competitive. QFVG will use the report to shape its ongoing engagement with government and industry partners.

FleishmanHillard insights: The publication of reports such as this help to facilitate understanding of the real value of Australian agriculture to state economies. This kind of economic review can also be useful for industry reporting, submissions or advocacy campaigns where the AMGA needs to show how mushrooms contribute to agriculture's overall value.

BROADER INDUSTRY ISSUES

The Conversation, [The way Australia produces food is unique. Our updated dietary guidelines have to recognise this](#), 3 December

- Australia's National Health and Medical Research Council is updating its dietary guidelines for the first time in 12 years to include sustainability, reflecting growing international trends in linking diet and environmental impact.
- The revision aims to move beyond global load indicators - which measure factors like greenhouse gas emissions, land and water use, pollution, and biodiversity loss - and incorporate metrics specific to Australia's unique landscapes, climates, and farming systems.
- Researchers emphasise that local indicators are crucial for accurately assessing trade-offs. For example, plant-based diets may lower greenhouse gas emissions but increase pressures on soil and biodiversity, while mixed diets can reduce soil and biodiversity impacts but produce more methane from livestock.
- Ultimately, the revised guidelines seek to ensure that recommended diets reflect the realities of local production systems and help Australians make choices that are good for both their health and the environment.

FleishmanHillard insights: If Australian dietary guidelines begin to incorporate sustainability metrics, all food sectors, including mushrooms and fresh produce, could be evaluated not just on health nutrition but on environmental footprint and production context. That would make it increasingly important for both individual mushroom growers and the mushroom industry overall to understand and articulate their sustainability profiles (water use, emissions, inputs, etc.).

GOVERNMENT AND POLICY

ABC News, [Australia's new land clearing, regrowth laws spark concern among farmers](#), 7 December

- A new debate has emerged over Australia's updated environmental laws, with farmers warning the changes could restrict their ability to manage land responsibly.
- The reforms - negotiated between Labor and the Greens - tighten controls on land clearing and introduce larger penalties for breaches, prompting strong backlash across regional Queensland.
- Producers argue that periodic clearing of native vegetation such as brigalow, mulga, boree, gidgee and eucalypts is essential for sustainable land management, especially in scrub country where regrowth must be controlled to maintain pasture health. Cattle producer Josh Phelps said the laws take a "blanket" approach that fails to account for long-standing rotational practices, where mulga country is cleared every 10–20 years to support both stock and vegetation.
- Under the new rules, clearing is not banned outright, but federal approval is required if proposed activity risks harming nationally protected environmental matters, including threatened species.
- Environment Minister Murray Watt said the changes simply bring agriculture into line with industries such as mining and housing, and clarified that clearing within 50 metres of waterways in the Greater Barrier Reef catchment will also require approval.
- Farmers, however, say the policy does not reflect on-ground realities. Phelps argued that the system overlooks the people managing the land and their expertise, stressing producers are "not asking to knock down a heap of country" but to continue sustainable maintenance.

FleishmanHillard insights: The tightening shows that environmental compliance for primary producers is a growing policy expectation. As the debate around reform continues, Porter Novelli will monitor industry sentiment.

AMSAFE Monthly Media Report – January 2026

FOOD SAFETY AND TRACEABILITY

Food Safety News, [More than 20 poisonings, 1 death reported in California linked to wild mushrooms](#), 11 January

- California health authorities have issued an urgent statewide warning after an outbreak of amatoxin poisoning linked to foraged wild mushrooms, with at least one confirmed death and multiple cases of severe liver damage.
- Since early December 2025, the California Poison Control System has identified 21 confirmed cases, clustered mainly in the Monterey and San Francisco Bay Areas, though officials warn the risk extends across the state.
- Several patients, including children, have required intensive care, with at least one person potentially needing a liver transplant, highlighting the severity of the outbreak.
- The poisonings are believed to be caused by death cap mushrooms, growing commonly around the hardwood trees in these areas.
- The California Department of Public Health is doing what they can to warn the general public, advising them to avoid foraging wild mushrooms entirely during the high-risk winter season.

FleishmanHillard insights: The risks associated with wild mushroom foraging remain a concern all over the world and consistent messaging from authorities continues to discourage the activity. It's important to note that commercial mushrooms have not been implicated.

PRODUCT QUALITY AND RETAILER STANDARDS

The Australian Financial Review, [Woolworths, Coles could face price gouging lawsuit within 12 months](#), 12 January

- The ACCC expects to launch court action against Coles and Woolworths for alleged price gouging under new laws, with the first case likely to begin within the next 12 months.
- ACCC chair Gina Cass-Gottlieb has said the regulator would closely monitor supermarket pricing from the start date and expects the chains to adjust their behaviour, but believes legal action is still likely given the importance of the new powers to consumers.
- These comments come as the ACCC is already heading to trial against both retailers over claims they misled shoppers by raising prices before promoting them as “discounts” through campaigns such as Woolworths’ *Prices Dropped* and Coles’ *Down Down*.
- The ACCC alleges Woolworths misled consumers on 266 products and Coles on 245 products between 2021 and 2023, with potential penalties of up to \$50 million per breach or 30 per cent of turnover at the time of the breach.
- Coles and Woolworths deny wrongdoing, arguing price rises were driven by supplier cost increases during the inflation surge, not excessive profit-taking, and both say they will contest the cases in court.
- While the new price gouging laws are backed by the government as a way to deliver “a fairer go” for shoppers, legal experts and the Law Council have warned the measures may be overly blunt, noting the ACCC previously stopped short of finding price gouging despite high supermarket profits.

FleishmanHillard insights: The potential legal action against Australia’s largest supermarkets acts to highlight the importance of achieving a healthier balance between suppliers, retailers and consumers. Over recent months, we’ve tracked media articles about spiking national distrust of both Coles and Woolworths, and deepening support for Australian growers and producers.

WORKFORCE AND INDUSTRY BEHAVIOUR

Country News, [Too hot to harvest: rising heat threatens farm labour and food security](#), 30 December

- Rising temperatures are emerging as a major, under-recognised risk to Australian agriculture, with heat stress threatening farm productivity, labour availability and long-term resilience more than technology can easily offset.
- Newly released CSIRO research shows worker productivity drops by 2–3 per cent for every degree above 20°C, and under a +2°C warming scenario Australian horticulture would need around 4 per cent more labour just to maintain current output.
- While automation and robotics are advancing, researchers say they cannot fully replace human labour for delicate crops, where judgement, dexterity and decision-making remain critical – and the cost of technology puts it beyond reach for many growers.
- Regional impacts are stark: in cooler regions like Victoria’s Yarra Valley, labour costs could rise nearly 5 per cent, while in hotter areas such as Queensland’s banana industry, labour needs could increase by up to 9 per cent, requiring thousands of additional workers each month.
- Heat stress compounds existing pressures including labour shortages, an ageing workforce, reliance on migrant labour, and rising costs, raising concerns that only large agribusinesses will be able to afford adaptation measures such as altered work hours, cooling infrastructure and protective equipment.

FleishmanHillard insights: Research of this kind is shifting climate change from being viewed primarily as an environmental or humanitarian issue to an immediate business risk. These figures could be useful for industry reports, submissions or advocacy campaigns where the AMGA needs to illustrate the associated effects and impacts.

BROADER INDUSTRY ISSUES

ABC News, [Magic mushroom use rises despite concerns about little known paralysis syndrome](#), 28 December

- Researchers are warning about a little-understood condition known as “wood-lover paralysis”, linked to the use of certain wild “magic mushrooms”, which can cause sudden muscle weakness, loss of mobility and potentially dangerous breathing complications.
- The syndrome has been most strongly associated with the native Australian mushroom *Psilocybe subaeruginosa*, commonly known as subs or gold tops, which grow on woody material and are difficult to distinguish from poisonous look-alike species.
- A survey of 392 mushroom users found 42 per cent reported experiencing weakness after consuming fungi, with the vast majority of cases linked specifically to wood-growing species rather than more common dung-growing mushrooms like *Psilocybe cubensis*.
- Scientists do not yet know what causes wood-lover paralysis, though one hypothesis is that certain mushrooms produce an additional hallucinogenic compound due to duplicated genes, highlighting major gaps in medical understanding.
- With psychedelic use rising in Australia and some people turning to illicit substances due to the high cost and limited access to regulated psychedelic therapies, researchers and clinicians are calling for better harm-reduction guidance, awareness among health professionals, and stronger pathways into legitimate treatment settings.

NT News, [Researchers to trial psilocybin as hope for ‘screwdriver behind the eye’ cluster headaches](#), 22 January

- A new Australian study highlights the devastating impact of cluster headaches - often referred to as “suicide headaches” - a rare neurological condition affecting about one in 1,000 Australians

and causing extreme, recurrent pain that can leave sufferers unable to work or function.

- A survey of more than 200 Australians with cluster headaches, conducted by the George Institute for Global Health, found only 6 per cent believed their current treatments were fully effective, while one in four had not sought specialist care and most were managed solely by GPs rather than neurologists.
- The findings come as the George Institute receives \$800,000 in federal funding to investigate psilocybin - the active compound in magic mushrooms - as a potential treatment, with 62 per cent of sufferers expressing interest in clinical trials and strong openness to psychedelic-based therapies.
- Researchers believe cluster headaches may be linked to dysfunction in the hypothalamus and are exploring whether psilocybin can help “reset” this system, while stressing trials will be closely monitored due to potential side effects such as hallucinations, nausea and changes in blood pressure.

FleishmanHillard insights: The above articles capture the range of high-profile coverage that wild and controlled psychedelic mushroom are receiving in Australia. Reporting remains totally disconnected from commercial mushrooms, though do speak to their medicinal properties.

GOVERNMENT AND POLICY

Energy Magazine, [Farmers plea for stronger climate action amid bushfires and floods](#), 16 December

- Farmers for Climate Action has called on Australia’s political leaders to place the needs of rural and regional communities at the centre of the nation’s clean energy transition, warning that climate extremes are already devastating farming districts.
- The group recommends establishing a national, cross-sectoral authority to support climate change adaptation, aiming to boost investment and resilience in rural communities.
- Farmers are urging science-aligned climate policies to rapidly reduce greenhouse gas emissions this decade and chart a pathway to net zero that safeguards regional Australia.
- The open letter highlights recent extreme events, including Victorian bushfires, Queensland floods, and persistent rainfall deficiencies, as evidence of worsening climate extremes impacting farmland, infrastructure, livestock, and communities.
- The campaign emphasizes accountability and genuine collaboration with farmers to ensure the long-term viability of agriculture and the landscapes it relies on.
- Over 1,300 supporters, including Professor Snow Barlow, have signed the letter, which has been formally tabled to the Prime Minister, Opposition Leader, and state leaders, calling for pragmatic, science-led action for a sustainable agricultural future.

FleishmanHillard insights: Hardly the first call of this kind from Australia’s agricultural sector - the debate around energy and environmental policy reform continues. FleishmanHillard will flag major changes in industry and government sentiment.

AMSAFE Monthly Media Report - February 2026

FOOD SAFETY AND TRACEABILITY

Fresh Plaza, [Canada recalls enoki mushrooms over Listeria risk](#), 3 February

- There's been another recall of imported enoki mushrooms in Canada due to a case of possible contamination with *Listeria monocytogenes*.
- The affected mushrooms were distributed in British Columbia and may well have reached other parts of the country.
- No illnesses have been reported. Despite that, the recall is a Class 1, the most serious category, indicating a potential health risk. The Canadian Food Inspection Authority (CFIA) is continuing its investigation and monitoring product removal from the marketplace.
- Recent recalls in the US have occurred, when Taiwanese enoki mushrooms were recalled.

FleishmanHillard insights: The risk of listeria remains a concern for industry bodies and food safety authorities across the globe. FSANZ is continuing to monitor imported enoki given the risk of listeria contamination. This is an issue FleishmanHillard is closely monitoring.

PRODUCT QUALITY AND RETAILER STANDARDS

The Guardian, [Bitter taste: per-unit pricing of Australian supermarket fruit and veg leaving customers out of pocket](#), 11 February

- Supermarkets including Woolworths, Coles and Aldi are increasingly selling fresh produce by the item rather than by weight, creating confusing pricing that can make smaller or per-piece items significantly more expensive per kilogram.
- For example 'Kids' bananas' sold in 5-bunches at Woolworths cost \$3.70, but weigh 530g, making the per-kilogram price \$6.98 - almost double the loose cavendish bananas at \$3.50/kg.
- Other produce, such as cucumbers, melons, lemons, and leafy greens, show similar wild variations in per-unit versus per-kilogram pricing, often without average weight or per-kilogram information displayed.
- Online shopping exacerbates the issue somewhat, as Woolworths charges fixed per-item prices regardless of actual weight, while Coles and Aldi adjust prices online for weight, but inconsistencies remain.
- Industry experts argue per-unit pricing without "true weight reconciliation" disadvantages consumers and that technology exists to price accurately by weight. Consumer advocates call for mandatory per-kilogram pricing in stores and online.

FleishmanHillard insights: Pricing information may be useful for upcoming reports, submissions, or advocacy campaigns where regulators need to illustrate hidden costs. As the ACCC's action against the supermarkets continues, we'll continue to monitor for changes in public sentiment.

WORKFORCE AND INDUSTRY BEHAVIOUR

ABC News, [Report points to exploitation, Medicare and visa concerns in Pacific islander jobs scheme](#), 5 February

- A new report by Peter Mares for the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute highlights ongoing issues in the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme, including exploitation, overcrowded accommodation, limited worker rights, and being tied to a single employer.
- Key recommendations include giving PALM workers greater ability to change employers, national regulation of labour hire, simplified rules for employers, and access to Medicare for workers.
- Employers report that the scheme provides reliable labour and supports both in business operations and regional communities, while the scheme also strengthens Australia's diplomatic

ties in the Pacific.

- Despite benefits, critics warn that 'bad actors' within the scheme create risks of abuse, underpayment, and disengagement, demonstrating the need for ongoing monitoring and reform.

FleishmanHillard insights: The debate around fairness in the PALM scheme has become more prominent in the past few months. As findings become clearer, the government will likely be forced to act sooner rather than later. The PALM scheme remains crucial in filling labour gaps in regional and rural Australia. We will continue to monitor for changes in public sentiment.

BROADER INDUSTRY ISSUES

The Conversation, [We ate space mushrooms and survived to tell the tale](#), 3 February

- In August 2024, 36 vials of edible mushroom mycelium were launched aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket to the International Space Station (ISS).
- This was an experiment led by Swinburne University of Technology, with 12 Haileybury College students helping design and prototype the payload.
- The species sent aboard included lion's mane, turkey's tail and cordyceps - all known for their potential brain, gut and immune health benefits.
- The mycelium remained sealed in specialised packaging for about a month in microgravity before returning to Earth.
- Once replanted in Australia, the fungi successfully produced fruiting bodies, including healthy lion's mane mushrooms. The research contributes to understanding how to produce reliable, nutritious food for long-duration space missions.

FleishmanHillard insights: The Australian project is one of the first of its kind, furthering the suggestion that mushrooms could be a practical, low-resource crop for future lunar or deep-space missions. The inclusion of mushrooms as part of these scientific experiments or trials are generally positive news stories and appears to have no adverse impact on, perception of mushrooms at retail.

GOVERNMENT AND POLICY

The Australian, [Australia told to follow US in treating food as strategic security asset](#), 19 February 2026

- Australia is being urged to formally link its defence and agriculture policy, following a new United States agreement between the Department of Defence and Department of Agriculture.
- The US has recently moved to embed food production into national security planning under its National Farm Security Action Plan.
- Council member Andrew Henderson, of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, says Australia risks a "structural blind spot" if there isn't a stronger link made between the Department of Defence and the agricultural sector.
- Experts warn that while Australia produces more food than it consumes, it remains heavily dependent on imported inputs such as fertiliser, fuel and pesticides.
- ANU National Security College expert associate Jennifer Parker suggested considering a national security adviser-style role to coordinate a whole-of-government strategy.
- The government says national security considerations will form part of its food security strategy and that it is committed to strengthening supply chain resilience.

FleishmanHillard insights: Fears over how Australia will manage agriculture and food insecurity during a potential regional conflict continue to appear in the major metro news outlets and industry trade media.

AMSAFE Monthly Media Report – March 2026

FOOD SAFETY AND TRACEABILITY

9news.com.au, [Warning issued as deathcap mushrooms flourish after wet weather](#), 23 March

- Australians are being warned not to forage wild mushrooms following wet weather that has led to increased growth of deathcap mushrooms across parts of the country.
- Deathcap mushrooms are found in Canberra, Melbourne, Adelaide, and parts of NSW and Tasmania, and are almost impossible to distinguish from safe wild mushrooms.
- Children and pets are considered particularly high-risk; with the Food Safety Information Council advising parents, pet owners and caregivers to remove any suspicious mushrooms found in backyards.
- The article references the Erin Patterson case, and the fact that she's currently appealing her sentence, though it is only a brief mention.

FleishmanHillard insights: Coverage of wet weather increasing wild mushroom poisoning risks is likely to continue. The annual focus on the risks of foraging wild mushrooms, assists in the differentiation from the commercial mushroom crop. FleishmanHillard will also monitor closely for stories such as these that make mention of Erin Patterson, particularly coverage that pertains to her appeal.

Other Articles:

- **SBS News**, [Fresh death cap mushroom warning for foragers as weather could lead to fungi flourishing](#), 23 March
- **Yahoo News**, [Aussies urged to check their backyard after weather event triggers dangerous outbreak: 'Be very careful'](#), 23 March

PRODUCT QUALITY AND RETAILER STANDARDS

The Guardian, [Digital price tags bring online-style 'dynamic pricing' to supermarkets](#), 4 March

- Australian retailers are adopting electronic shelf labels (ESLs), digital screens replacing paper price tags, with Woolworths having already installed around 17 million tags across over 600 stores.
- The technology enables "dynamic pricing", adjusting prices in real time based on supply, demand and other variables, raising concerns that supermarkets could raise prices at peak shopping times or charge individual customers different prices based on personal data.
- Former ACCC chair Allan Fels warned that ESLs "open the door to personalised pricing," where different consumers pay different prices for the same product at the same time.
- In the US, unions and Democratic senators have called for a ban on ESLs in large grocery stores, citing risks of "surveillance pricing" combining facial recognition, AI and big data. One investigation found one US grocery app charged some customers up to 23 per cent more based on personal data
- Australian retailers are legally permitted to use dynamic or personalised pricing provided they do not mislead consumers or discriminate on protected characteristics. The new price-gouging laws take effect from July 2026.

FleishmanHillard insights: This issue is another layer to the ongoing public scrutiny of supermarket pricing behaviour in Australia and is likely to attract further attention from regulators. For horticulture, dynamic pricing of produce could cut both ways, enabling faster markdowns to reduce waste, but also potentially enabling price increases during high-demand periods or periods of limited supply. The flow of price increase advantage back to suppliers has not been discussed and presents another interesting element to the ESL debate.

WORKFORCE AND INDUSTRY BEHAVIOUR

ABC News, [Labour Hire Authority links worker exploitation in the Yarra Valley to organised crime](#), 18 March

- Victoria's Labour Hire Licensing Commissioner Steve Dargavel has flagged links between organised crime and dodgy labour hire operators in the Yarra Valley, warning the horticulture industry against engaging with unlicensed providers.

- Legal action has been launched against apple grower Sanders Apples, labour hire business Dombin Workforce and its director, with potential fines of up to \$19.5 million in total for alleged licence fraud and unlicensed operations.
- A Fair Work Ombudsman report found that the Yarra Valley and Mornington Peninsula had the highest workplace non-compliance rates in horticulture, with 83 per cent of employers and 100 per cent of labour hire firms investigated found to be in breach of their obligations under the Fair Work Act.
- Unlicensed operators are primarily targeting temporary migrant workers, who authorities say are reluctant to report exploitation due to visa vulnerability. Some workers are being paid below the award rate, which itself sits at or near the poverty line.
- The Fair Work Ombudsman and Labour Hire Authority met with Yarra Valley growers and industry groups, calling for greater collaboration between growers and labour hire entities to ensure compliance with employment standards.

FleishmanHillard insights: These systemic workforce compliance issues extend concerns held within the PALM worker scheme. As growers and suppliers look to cut corners in an economically challenging time, it's the employee who bears the brunt of the impact. As political pressure mounts, FleishmanHillard will continue to monitor for changes to sentiment in reporting.

Other Articles:

- *The Weekly Times*, [Top Victorian apple grower faces Supreme Court action](#), 18 March (attached)

BROADER INDUSTRY ISSUES

News.com.au, [Worker dead in mushroom farm tragedy](#), 12 March

- 24-year-old Jesse Upton tragically died in a workplace accident at Costa Adelaide Mushrooms, at Monarto South.
- Paramedics were called to the mushroom farm following an incident at Costa's composting facility, though their attempts to resuscitate him were unsuccessful.
- Police and industry regulator Safework SA are investigating the death, though it is in no way being treated as suspicious.
- In a statement, Costa Group confirmed it is fully cooperating with authorities and has offered support to the worker's family, workmates and friend. The company stated it is committed to reviewing on-site operational and safety incident procedures.

FleishmanHillard insights: Coverage of Mr Upton's death has so far been focused entirely on the tragedy of the accident. It is conceivable that this incident will create more conversation around standards of workplace safety at similar facilities, though this isn't likely to occur until after full findings from SA Police and Safework SA are made public.

GOVERNMENT AND POLICY

EuroFruit, [Fresh produce tariffs cut as Australia and EU finalise FTA](#), 24 March 2026

- Australia and the European Union concluded negotiations on a free trade agreement on 24 March 2026, signed by Prime Minister Albanese and European Commission President von der Leyen in Canberra.
- Once fully implemented, this agreement means that 94.8 per cent of the value of Australia's agricultural exports will enter the EU completely duty-free.
- Tariffs on frozen and preserved mushrooms will be eliminated over three years, alongside tariffs on a range of other vegetables including onions, carrots, potatoes, beans and sweetcorn.
- Peak body AusVeg welcomed the deal, with CEO Michael Coote noting it would benefit onion grower-exporters in particular, while also flagging ongoing challenges for vegetable producers from the Middle East conflict and surging production costs.

FleishmanHillard insights: The inclusion of mushrooms in the tariff elimination schedule is a great result for the Australian mushroom industry, opening up a significant export opportunity. The agreement is yet to pass through

some domestic processes before it is brought into effect.

INTERNATIONAL COVERAGE OF INTEREST / FOR AWARENESS

New York Times, [How healthy are mushrooms?](#)

- A look at the significant health benefits of mushrooms and the best way to enjoy them

The Times, [The shroom boom: how fungi moved from the table to the wardrobe](#)

- New research and a sustainability drive in the fashion world mean your next It-bag - or couture extravagance - could be made from a mycelium leather

FleishmanHillard insights: In consideration the ever-proliferating impacts of the United States' war with Iran, please also find attached a summary paper on the recent Agriculture Industry Roundtable. Hosted by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), this meeting covered a range of key issues which are now and will undoubtedly continue to affect the Australian horticulture in the months ahead.

AMSAFE Monthly Media Report - April 2026

FOOD SAFETY AND TRACEABILITY

1. **7news.com.au**, [Deadly mushrooms spreading across backyards as weather cools down](#), 20 April
 - Australians across Canberra, Melbourne, Adelaide, parts of NSW and Tasmania are being warned not to forage wild mushrooms following wet weather that has led to increased growth of deathcap mushrooms.
 - Children and pets are considered particularly high-risk, with the Food Safety Information Council advising parents and caregivers to remove any suspicious mushrooms found in backyards.
 - The article linked above makes no reference to the Erin Patterson case. This could suggest that media coverage is moving past its attention to the subject.

FleishmanHillard insights: Coverage of mushroom poisoning risks is likely to continue as the cooler, wet weather continues to encourage wild mushroom growth. FleishmanHillard will monitor closely for stories such as these that publicise the risks associated with foraging.

Related articles:

- **The Canberra Times**, [Fatal fungi: health alert as mushroom season begins](#), 20 April
 - **Yahoo News**, [Health authorities urge people to avoid foraging as hundreds call poisons hotline for help](#), 20 April
2. **ABC News**, [Mushroom murderer's estranged husband Simon Patterson writing memoir](#), 20 April
 - Simon Patterson is preparing to release a memoir about his experience following the high-profile mushroom poisoning case involving his ex-wife, Erin Patterson. A formal announcement, including publisher and release timeline is expected soon.
 - Allegations that Simon Patterson himself may have been poisoned were not included in the Supreme Court trial, after related charges were dropped pre-trial, a point he previously expressed frustration about. This is expected to form a part of the book's focus.
 - Erin Patterson's ongoing appeal proceedings mean the book will likely have to remain legally sensitive, undoubtedly influencing both timing and messaging around this release.

FleishmanHillard insights: Simon's book will likely focus more on his relationship with Erin and his parents. It's unlikely to delve further into evidence pertaining to the poisonings not already submitted and discussed in court.

Related articles:

- **The Age**, [Simon Patterson to write memoir after mushroom murder case](#), 18 April
- **Yahoo News**, [Estranged husband of Australian mushroom murderer Erin Patterson to pen memoir about case](#), 18 April

PRODUCT QUALITY AND RETAILER STANDARDS

The Guardian, [Aussie suppliers call for grocery price hike to combat fuel crisis](#), 4 April

- AUSVEG is urging supermarkets to increase their farmgate prices to offset surging input costs driven by the fuel crisis and global instability.

- Rising costs, particularly fuel and fertiliser, are forcing producers to adjust planting schedules and scale back production, threatening Australia's future supply.
- AUSVEG Chief Executive Michael Coote warned that without fairer pricing and access to critical inputs, the availability of fresh Australian vegetables will decline.
- Growers have called on supermarkets to accept "genuine, evidence-based" price increase requests, while also seeking government support to prioritise access to essential farm inputs.
- Supermarkets including Woolworths and Coles acknowledged supplier requests but emphasised the need to balance grower viability with cost-of-living pressures for consumers.
- Industry leaders warn that inaction could drive a shift toward cheaper imported frozen and processed vegetables, reducing reliance on local produce.

FleishmanHillard insights: This warning from AUSVEG signals a broader concern - food security and sovereignty will be eroded if domestic production becomes unviable. If shortages can't be accounted for by retailers and government together, Australia will lose more growers and farmers than it can afford to.

WORKFORCE AND INDUSTRY BEHAVIOUR

The Weekly Times, [Young leader Malkah Lara Muckenschnabl a finalist for community achiever award](#), 28 April

- Malkah Lara Muckenschnabl is using her experience as an immigrant to tackle workforce challenges in Australian agriculture, after witnessing her mother struggle to find relevant work despite strong expertise.
- She argues the issue is not a lack of jobs, but a disconnect between skilled workers and employers, leading to underemployment in the sector.
- Muckenschnabl has worked with AgriFutures Australia and evokeAG to advocate for attracting and retaining young people in regional agriculture.
- Already, she has been able to contribute to major regional initiatives, including projects with the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal, the Regional Energy Accord, and youth strategy development for Ballarat.

FleishmanHillard insights: Malkah's work demonstrates the need to shift toward modernising recruitment and career pathways, as traditional models struggle to connect with a new generation. FleishmanHillard will continue to monitor for coverage that speaks to innovation in this space, particularly as pressure mounts on temporary migrant working schemes.

BROADER INDUSTRY ISSUES

The Australian, [What are adaptogens and why are they turning up in our skincare?](#), 31 March

- Adaptogens, including herbs and mushrooms used in traditional systems like traditional Chinese medicine are gaining traction in skincare for their ability to help regulate stress and support skin health.
- The global adaptogen market is booming, valued at ~A\$12.6bn in 2025, driven by rising consumer focus on stress, burnout and overall wellness.
- Beauty brands such as Youth To The People and Lesse are incorporating adaptogens into products, combining them with active ingredients to enhance skin resilience and reduce reactivity.
- Mushrooms are positioned as a core subset of adaptogens, with growing prominence in skincare for their ability to help regulate stress responses and support overall skin health.
- Functional fungi such as reishi, chaga, turkey tail and snow (tremella) mushroom are highlighted for their antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and deeply hydrating properties, particularly for sensitive or reactive skin.

FleishmanHillard insights: Adaptogens sit at the centre of the beauty-meets-wellness trend, where skincare is being reframed as part of overall health rather than just aesthetics. Functional mushrooms' use in skincare is unlikely to influence consumer sentiment when it comes to grocery selection, but worth flagging the media interest in this growing consumer trend.

GOVERNMENT AND POLICY

SBS News, ['We haven't learned anything': A looming 'crunch' for Australia's food system](#), 20 April

- Australia has secured around 20 per cent of its urea fertiliser needs for the current farming season, but remains 1.25 million tonnes short, leaving supply vulnerable if disruptions continue.
- More than 85 per cent of Australia's fertiliser is imported, with much of it traditionally shipped through the Strait of Hormuz, exposing the sector to geopolitical risk amid Middle East conflict.
- Fertiliser prices have more than doubled in seven weeks, adding significant cost pressure just as winter crop planting ramps up and demand peaks.
- Australia currently has no domestic urea manufacturing capacity, following the 2023 closure of the Gibson Island facility, increasing reliance on volatile global supply chains.
- Experts warn this is the third major supply chain shock in five years, highlighting structural weaknesses in Australia's food production system, rather than isolated disruptions.
- Broader concerns are emerging about soil degradation and long-term sustainability, with 75per cent of agricultural land showing signs of decline and overuse of synthetic fertilisers contributing to soil health issues.

FleishmanHillard insights: As before, attention in the storytelling is shifting from the fertiliser shortage itself to fertilizer cost impacts and concern of a structural food security risk, driven by Australia's heavy reliance on imported inputs. FleishmanHillard will flag coverage that reports on these issues, particularly any stories that place responsibility for recovery on government or industry.

Other articles:

- ***The Australian Financial Review*, [Growers search for solutions as fertiliser supply in doubt](#), 10 April**
- ***news.com.au*, [Australia's quiet lifeline amid supply chaos as Indonesia says it will keep sending fertiliser and urea](#), 7 April**

Appendix B – Team refresh (Porter Novelli now operating as FleishmanHillard)

From: Australian Mushroom Growers Association <admin@amga.asn.au>
Sent: Monday, 9 February 2026 1:16 PM
To: Kura Antonello <kura.antonello@amga.asn.au>
Subject: AMSAFE - Changes to Porter Novelli



- AMSAFE UPDATE - CHANGES TO PORTER NOVELLI

Dear AMSAFE Member,

In December 2025, structural changes came into effect within Porter Novelli's parent company.

Porter Novelli, previously part of the Clemenger Group, is now wholly owned by Omnicom following its acquisition of the remaining 12.5 per cent stake. This has resulted in the creation of Omnicom Oceania, bringing together around 70 agencies across Australia and New Zealand.

As part of simplifying how clients access our collective expertise, Omnicom decided to consolidate several of its communication firms. As a result, the Porter Novelli brand was retired in Australia at the end of last year, and our communications services now sit under sister company FleishmanHillard and Eleven.

FleishmanHillard has taken on all the work Porter Novelli currently delivers, while combining with Eleven to offer an even broader end-to-end capability.

Team Bios



Laura Hill – Managing Partner, Engagement and Regions

Laura has more than 23 years' experience across the corporate, not-for-profit and government sectors.

Previous senior leadership roles at Oxfam, NAB and CARE Australia shaped Laura's passion for helping clients to adopt and roll-out values-based communications to realise strategy, protect and enhance brand, and manage crises and reputation challenges. Laura currently leads FleishmanHillard communications and issues management programs across agribusiness, health and government.



Victoria Fruean – Director, Corporate Communications

Victoria brings more than 15 years' experience working with global and local brands across a broad range of sectors including retail, property, business, telco, FMCG, manufacturing, health and consumer technology.

In previous roles, Victoria has led corporate communications and brand reputation campaigns for brands such as ESR Australia, SPC Global, UNSW Science, IDP, Blackmores, Spotlight Retail Group.



Alice Proud – Senior Business Manager

Alice brings eight years of experience in corporate communications, stakeholder engagement and public relations.

Over the course of her career, Alice has built a diverse skill set, having worked across a range of sectors including government, health, not-for-profit, Aboriginal affairs, and consumer brands.



Patrick Condon – Senior Consultant

Patrick joined Porter Novelli in 2024 as a graduate consultant, with prior experience in both media management and merchandising. He has a passion for communications work, taking a particular interest in the specifics of semantics.

His client portfolio is comprised of organisations across technology, agribusiness and education sectors.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns.

Kind regards,

Leah Dennis (née Bramich)
Chief Executive Officer

M: 0450 504 675
E: leah.dennis@amga.asn.au



www.australianmushroomgrowers.com.au

BRIEFING NOTE

DATE: Monday, 22 June 2026

CLIENT: AMGA

SUBJECT: Media training – group media scenarios

Scenario 1

Leah Dennis - CEO: Australian Mushroom Growers Association

Media outlet: ABC News / ABC Radio National

Journalist reaching out for interview:

Name: Justine Longmore - Lead Rural Reporter in Victoria (ABC News)

Areas of interest:

- Food safety
- Agriculture and supply chains
- Corporate accountability

Audience:

Australian consumers, supermarket shoppers, families, regulators, policymakers

Issue:

Several people across Victoria have reported food poisoning after consuming pre-packaged mushrooms purchased from major supermarkets.

The Department of Health Victoria has confirmed 24 suspected cases of listeria, with 8 hospitalisations.

While the source has not yet been formally confirmed, Oyster Mushrooms are being heavily discussed online after several consumers posted photos of the products on social media.

Major supermarkets have pulled multiple mushroom products from shelves 'as a precaution'.

AMGA has received multiple media requests as public concern grows and #MushroomRecall begins trending on social media.

Outlets likely covering the story:

- ABC News
 - 7News
 - 9News
 - 10News
 - The Age
 - Newscorp mastheads
 - Daily Mail Australia
 - news.com.au
-

Reporter questions:

- Consumers are worried mushrooms may have made people seriously ill. Why should Australians trust mushroom products right now?
- Has AMGA identified which growers supplied the affected mushrooms?
- Were food safety protocols followed, or has there been a breakdown in the supply chain?
- Is this a failure of growers, distributors, or retailers?

MELBOURNE
280 LITTLE COLLINS ST
MELBOURNE, VIC 3000

SYDNEY
LEVEL 4, 137 PYRMONT ST
PYRMONT, NSW 2009

[FleishmanHillard.com.au](https://www.fleishmanhillard.com.au)

- How often are mushrooms tested for contamination and what is the process?
 - Can consumers safely eat the mushrooms they have at home?
 - Are you concerned this will damage consumer confidence in the mushroom industry?
 - Should there be stricter regulation of fresh produce safety?
-
-

Scenario 2

Kura Antonello - Marketing and Communications Manager: AMGA

Media outlet: news.com.au / The Daily Telegraph

Journalist reaching out for interview:

Name: Brielle Burns – Journalist (news.com.au)

Areas of interest:

- Local and international current affairs
- Human interest
- Breaking news

Audience:

Mass consumer audience, social media users, younger demographics, lifestyle media

Issue:

Australian Mushrooms ambassador, celebrated international chef, author and media personality, Jason Roberts - who has 89,000 followers on social media - has come under fire after videos resurfaced showing him making highly offensive comments during a livestream.

The comments are being widely condemned as sexist and discriminatory.

Jason has fronted multiple campaigns for Australian Mushrooms and a handful for AMGA over the past 12 months, including a national recipe campaign aimed at younger Australians.

Social media users are now tagging Australian Mushrooms, AMGSA and Jason's personal Instagram handle, demanding the organisation sever ties immediately.

Several brands have already ended partnerships with the influencer.

Outlets likely covering the story:

- news.com.au
- Daily Mail Australia
- Mamamia
- Pedestrian TV
- The Daily Telegraph
- Sunrise / The Morning Show
- The daily Aus

Follow-up questions:

- Was AMGA aware of Jason's past behaviour?
 - What was the due diligence process that took place before partnering with him?
 - Will you be terminating the partnership?
 - Does AMGA share the views expressed by Jason?
 - How can AMGA claim to represent Australian families while partnering with Jason?
 - What would you say to consumers who have been upset and offended by Jason's comments?
 - Have growers expressed concern about the partnership?
 - How are you responding to the current calls for boycott across social media?
-
-

Scenario 3

Rosalie Daniel: R&D Manager – AMGA

Media outlet: The Australian / Country Hour / Farm Weekly

Journalist reaching out for interview:

Name: Anna Vidot (ABC Rural / Country Hour)

Areas of interest:

- Biosecurity threats
- Agriculture
- Disease outbreaks
- Industry preparedness
- Government response

Audience:

Growers, agricultural industry, regulators, rural communities, policymakers

Interview context:

A suspected outbreak of an exotic fungal pathogen affecting mushrooms has been identified at a commercial mushroom facility in Queensland.

Early reports suggest the pathogen may be **Dry Bubble Disease (aggressive strain)** or a previously unseen imported contaminant.

The affected farm has halted production, and authorities are investigating whether spores have spread via compost, equipment, or staff movement.

Speculation across the industry and broader community is escalating, with claims the outbreak could devastate Australian mushroom production.

Industry concern is growing over potential supply shortages and rising prices.

AMGA is being asked to comment on the severity of the threat and whether Australia's mushroom industry is adequately protected.

Outlets likely covering the story:

- ABC Rural / Country Hour
- The Australian
- Farm Weekly
- Stock Journal

Follow-up questions:

- How serious is this outbreak, and are we looking at a major threat to Australia's mushroom industry?
 - Has the disease spread beyond the initial facility?
 - Could this affect mushroom availability in supermarkets?
 - Was this caused by a biosecurity failure?
 - How vulnerable is Australia's mushroom industry to imported disease?
 - Are current biosecurity protocols strong enough?
 - Could growers face major financial losses?
 - What support is available to affected growers?
 - Should the public be worried about eating mushrooms?
-
-

Appendix D – Mushroom Farm Reputational Risk Webinar (Slides)

AMGA

JUNE 2026

PROTECTING YOUR FARM, YOUR REPUTATION AND OUR INDUSTRY



AMGA

Hort
Innovation

MUSHROOM
FUND

Reputation Risk Management for Australian Mushroom Growers
| AMSAFE - Safeguarding Our Future



WHY REPUTATION MATTERS



“Outrage is an expected norm. Accusation-driven media is catalysed by social media. Speed of response is critical”



AMGA

Hort
Innovation

MUSHROOM
FUND

2

WHEN REPUTATION RISK BECOMES REALITY



FOOD SAFETY

Erin Patterson mushroom case

2023 poisoning case involving death caps - not commercially grown mushrooms - generated intense, sustained national media coverage affecting the entire mushroom category



BIOSECURITY

Varroa Mite response

National biosecurity response to Varroa mite - not mushrooms - demonstrated how biosecurity issues in agriculture affect industry confidence and supply chain trust broadly



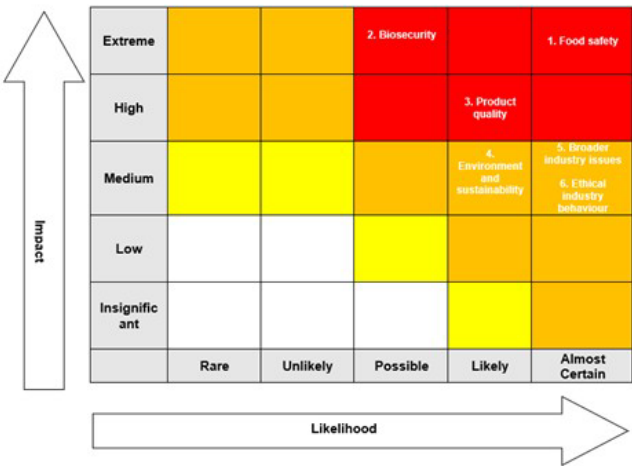
ETHICAL CONDUCT

Fair Work & labour hire

Investigations into Fair Work compliance and labour hire practices in horticulture placed the sector under sustained scrutiny - reputational damage that extended beyond individual farms

WHAT COULD GO WRONG

Reputation risks mapped by likelihood and impact



YOUR PRACTICAL REPUTATION RISK CHECKLIST

KNOW YOUR RISKS



☐ What are the most likely issues on our farm?

KNOW WHO MAKES DECISIONS



☐ Who will be called?

☐ When to notify the AMGA or regulators?

CONTACT LISTS



☐ Keep contact lists current - emergency, AMGA, retailers, regulators, AMSAFE

TRAIN STAFF

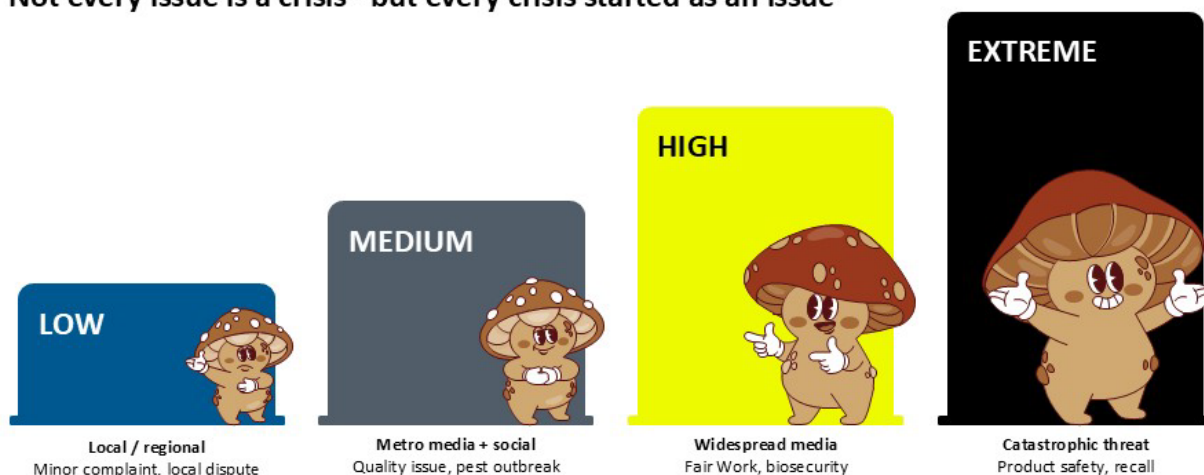


☐ How to escalate an issue

☐ Who they report concerns to

WHEN TO ESCALATE

Not every issue is a crisis - but every crisis started as an issue



WHEN TO ESCALATE

Not every issue is a crisis
- but every crisis started
as an issue

AMSAFE
GROWERS COMMUNICATION STRATEGY
HOW TO PROCEED IN A CRISIS
AMSAFE protects the assets and wellbeing of the Australian mushroom industry

1

**SAY NOTHING TO MEDIA**

- Refer all enquiries to AMSAFE
- Refer all media to AMSAFE

2

**CALL 0457 440 298**

- If you are in a crisis
- If you are experiencing difficulties that could become a wider crisis
- If you are not coping with a crisis

3

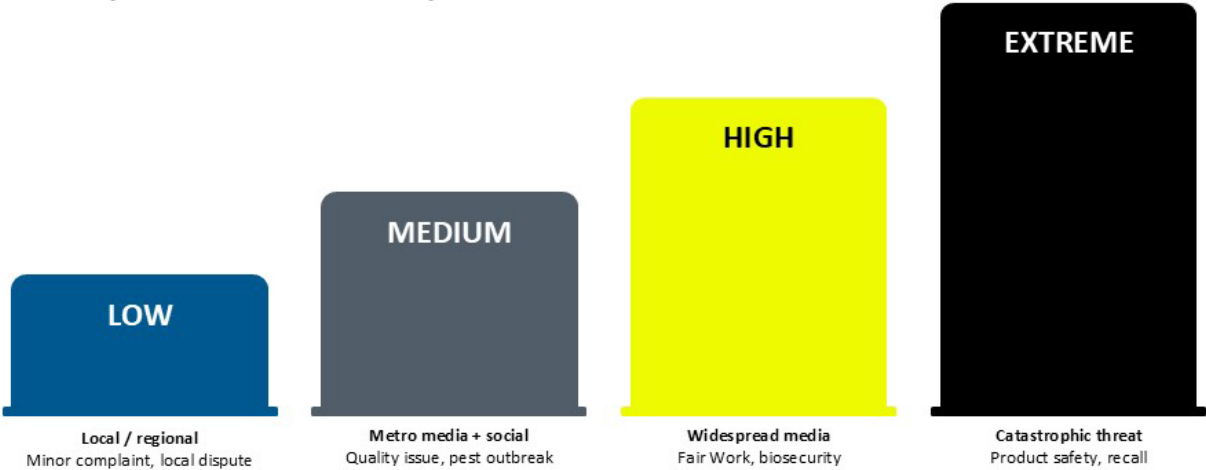
**FOLLOW THE LEADER**

- Wait for AMSAFE to issue you with the 'one message' to communicate

Australian Mushroom Safety (AMSAFE) is a crisis management service available to all industry. The service is open 24/7. This is a confidential and non-judgemental service. Please do not disclose information and to you in publicly available crisis logs.
CALL: 0457 440 298 

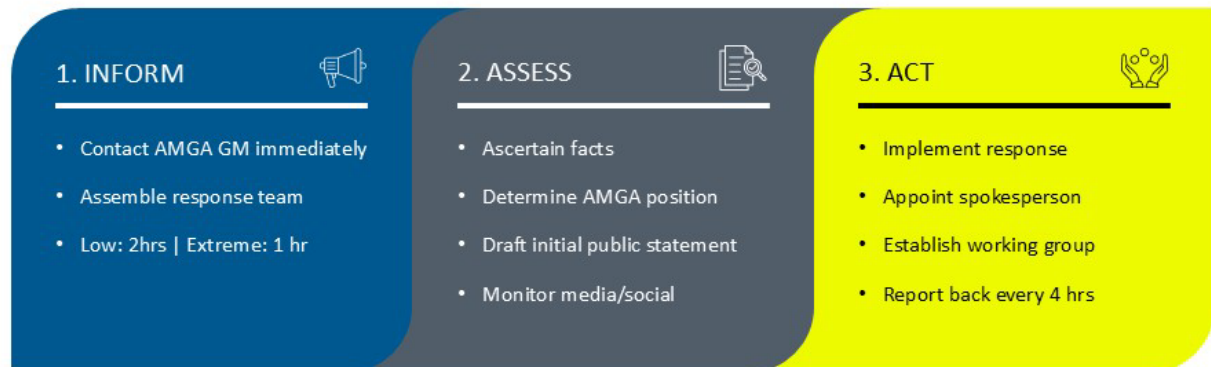
WHEN TO ESCALATE

Not every issue is a crisis - but every crisis started as an issue



AMSAFE SUPPORT

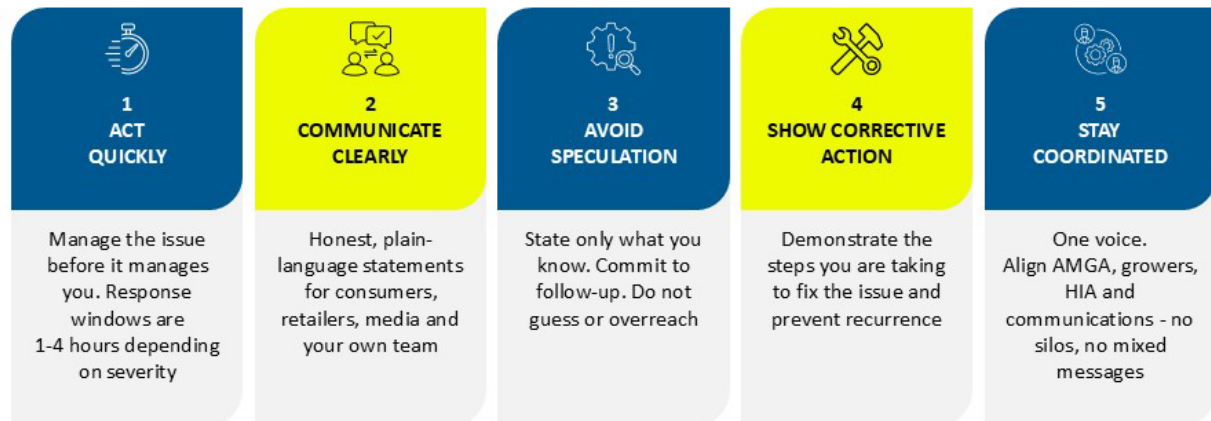
A three-stage response protocol - proportionate to every level of risk



AMSAFE Hotline: 0457 440 298 | AMGA GM: Leah Dennis - leah.dennis@amga.asn.au | 0450 504 675

WHAT A GOOD RESPONSE LOOKS LIKE

Five principles that define an effective reputation response



START SIMPLE



KNOW YOUR RISKS

Complete your farm-level risk register



KNOW YOUR CONTACTS

Save the AMSAFE number and AMGA GM



KNOW YOUR RESPONSE

Have a holding statement ready before you need it

If in doubt - call AMSAFE: 0457 440 298

AMGA has developed templates and resources you can download from [\[https://australianmushroomgrowers.com.au/reputation-risk\]](https://australianmushroomgrowers.com.au/reputation-risk) and adapt for your own business, including:

- Reputation risk assessment templates
- Escalation frameworks
- And contact lists





THANK YOU

Appendix E – Mushroom Farm Reputational Risk Webinar (Script)

BRIEFING NOTE

DATE: 10 June 2026

CLIENT: Australian Mushroom Growers Association

SUBJECT: AMGA reputation risk management webinar script – V3

Working title: Protecting your farm, your reputation and our industry

Audience: Predominantly small to medium Australian mushroom growers, including growers with limited formal risk management systems, while remaining relevant to larger operators and QA / HR personnel.

Tone and style: Practical, calm, grower-centric, conversational, non-corporate.

Recommended format: Presenter-led with supporting slides and simple visuals/icons. Aim for approximately 10 minutes.

OPENING (0:00 – 1:00)

Slide 1 – Title slide

Visual:

Australian mushroom farm imagery. Headline: Protecting your farm, your reputation and our industry

FH, AMGA and HIA Mushroom Fund logos on title slide.

Script:

Hi everyone, and thanks for taking the time to watch this short session.

Whether you run a large operation with dedicated QA teams, or a small family farm where everyone pitches in across picking, packing and deliveries, this session is about one thing: How to protect your business and your reputation, when something goes wrong.

Because in today's media landscape, reputation issues move fast.

So, what could go wrong on your farm? It could be a food safety concern. A worker safety incident. A biosecurity issue. AgriChemical issue, or even a single social media post spreading misinformation online.

An issue on one farm, could erode confidence in the entire Australian mushroom industry.

And the reality is, most reputation crises don't start because people intended to do the wrong thing. They escalate because businesses weren't prepared for how quickly issues spread. So, while you're working to contain the crisis issue, you need to also work to contain the potential reputational fall out, not only for your business but the broader mushroom industry too.

That's why the Australian Mushroom Growers Association has developed the *Reputation Risk Management Framework* and *AMSAFE response process* – to help growers not only manage the issue itself but also manage the reputational impact that may follow for both their farm and the broader industry.

This session is not about creating more paperwork. It's about making sure you know:

- What could go wrong,

- Who to contact,
 - What to say,
 - How to respond in the first few hours - both operationally and reputationally..
- Because those first few hours matter most.

WHY THIS MATTERS (1:00 – 2:15)

Slide 2 – “Why reputation matters”

Visual:

Simple graphic showing “Issue → Social Media → Media → Retailers → Consumers”.

Script:

When people hear the words “risk management”, they often think about insurance, audits or compliance.

But reputation risk is different. It’s about trust.

Trust from retailers. Trust from consumers. Trust from regulators. Trust from your workers.

And once trust is damaged, it can be difficult – and expensive – to rebuild.

The AMGA Reputation Risk Management Framework puts it simply: A crisis is an issue that hasn’t been contained.

In other words, the goal is not to eliminate every risk – because farming always involves risk.

The goal is not just to manage the operational issue – it’s to stop that issue becoming a reputational crisis.

And we’ve seen this happen across Australian agriculture.

Slide 3 – Case studies

Visual:

Three tiles:

- Erin Patterson mushroom poisoning case
- Varroa mite response
- Fair Work and labour hire investigations

Script:

Think about the attention around the Erin Patterson mushroom poisoning case.

Even though commercial mushroom growers had nothing to do with the incident, the entire mushroom category became part of the public conversation overnight. Growers suddenly faced questions from friends, customers and communities.

Or look at the Varroa mite outbreak in the honey bee industry. One biosecurity issue quickly became a national issue affecting supply chains, public confidence and industry reputation.

And across horticulture more broadly, labour hire and worker exploitation stories have damaged trust in industries that rely heavily on seasonal workers.

These examples remind us of something important: Sometimes the issue starts on your farm. Sometimes it starts somewhere else. But the reputational impact can still land on your business.

That’s why preparation matters.

And that's an important distinction. A grower's first priority will always be managing the operational issue - whether that's food safety, worker safety, biosecurity or product quality. But alongside that, there also needs to be a focus on managing reputation.

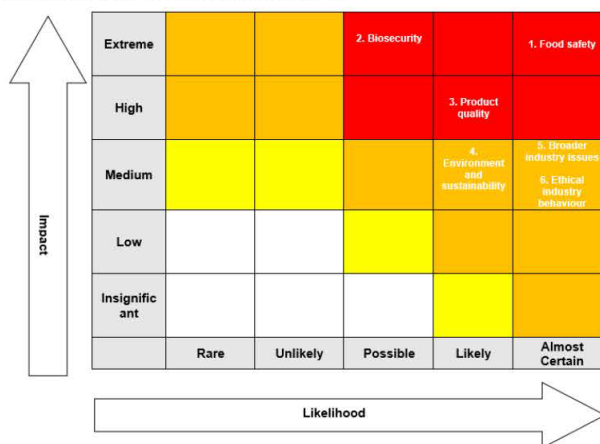
Because even when the operational issue is contained, reputational damage can continue if communication is delayed, inconsistent or unclear. That's why reputation risk management should sit alongside every other form of risk management on farm.

WHAT RISKS SHOULD GROWERS THINK ABOUT? (2:15 – 4:15)

Slide 4 – “What could go wrong?”

Visual:

Simple AMGA risk matrix with icons.



Script:

The AMGA Reputation Risk Management Framework identifies six key risk areas growers should think about.

The first is food safety – things like contamination, residues, recalls, foreign objects, or confusion around imported or wild mushrooms.

Second is biosecurity – pests, disease, imported materials, or anything that could threaten Australian mushroom production.

Third is environment and sustainability – including run-off, packaging, carbon footprint and resource availability.

Fourth is product quality. Because mushrooms are largely unbranded, issues with shelf life, labelling, packaging or presentation can quickly affect confidence across the whole category.

Fifth is ethical industry behaviour – including worker safety, Fair Work compliance, labour hire, certification and modern slavery risks.

And sixth is broader industry issues – things like workforce shortages, supply chain disruption, climate impacts, data breaches or industry infighting.

And across all of these risks is the growing challenge of misinformation online – including AI-generated content and false claims spreading quickly on social media.

The key question for every grower is simple: if one of these issues happened on our farm tomorrow – would you know what to do first?

WHAT SHOULD EVERY GROWER HAVE IN PLACE? (4:15 – 6:30)

Slide 5 – “Your practical reputation risk checklist”

Visual:

Checklist graphic.

Script:

The good news is this does not need to be complicated.

Every grower – regardless of size – should have a simple reputation risk plan covering a few key things.

First: Know your risks.

Ask yourself:

What are the most likely issues on our farm?

- Food safety?
- A worker injury?
- A social media complaint?
- A biosecurity concern?
- An environmental issue?

Second: Know who makes decisions.

If something happens at 6am on a Saturday, who decides:

- Who gets called,
- When to notify the AMGA or regulators

Third: Keep contact lists current.

You should have:

- Emergency contacts,
- AMGA contacts,
- Retailer contacts,
- Regulator contacts,
- And the AMSAFE contact details readily available.

And fourth: Train your staff.

Your team should understand:

- How to escalate an issue,
- And who they report concerns to

ESCALATION AND THE ROLE OF AMGA / AMSAFE (6:30 – 7:45)

Slide 6 – “When to escalate”

Visual: TBA – Low to extreme scale OR AMSAFE poster

Script:

One of the most important parts of the AMGA Reputation Risk Management Framework is escalation. Growers do not need to handle major issues alone.

The key principle is simple: If you think an issue could affect consumer confidence, retailers, regulators, media attention, or other growers – escalate early.

Do not wait for certainty.

The AMGA Reputation Risk Management Framework encourages growers to contact AMGA immediately if a significant issue is identified.

That allows the industry to:

- Understand what is happening,
- Coordinate accurate information,
- Support affected growers,
- And prevent misinformation spreading.

Slide 7 – AMSAFE support

Visual:

Simple “Inform → Assess → Act” flowchart.

STAGE 1: INFORM

1. LOW	2. MEDIUM	3. HIGH	4. EXTREME
Action If a grower / stakeholder has identified a risk, contact AMGA CEO immediately	Action If a grower / stakeholder has identified a risk, contact AMGA CEO immediately	Action If a grower / stakeholder has identified a risk, contact AMGA CEO immediately	Action If a grower / stakeholder has identified a risk, contact AMGA CEO immediately
Who • AMGA CEO	Who • AMGA CEO	Who • AMGA CEO	Who • AMGA CEO / Chair • HIA • Board • External resource (PH grower liaison or coordinator)
Next step Assemble required team, respond within 2 hours	Next step Assemble response team within 2 hours	Next step Assemble response team within 1 hour	Next step Assemble response team within 1 hour

Script:

The AMGA Reputation Risk Management Framework follows three stages: Inform. Assess. Act.

That means:

- Identify the issue quickly,
- Establish the facts,
- Assess the level of risk,
- And coordinate the right response.

. Importantly, managing the operational issue and managing the reputational impact must happen together.

For example, if there is a food safety issue:

- Regulators may need to be notified,
- Product may need to be isolated,
- And communications may be needed to reassure retailers and consumers.

Managing the issue matters and protecting trust and confidence matters too.

And remember – early communication with AMGA and AMSAFE is designed to protect growers, not punish them.

WHAT GOOD RESPONSE LOOKS LIKE (7:45 – 8:45)

Slide 8 – “What good response looks like”

Visual:

Five simple icons.

Script:

In almost every agricultural crisis, the businesses that recover best tend to do five things well.

They:

1. Act quickly to manage the issue,

2. Communicate clearly and honestly,
3. Avoid speculation,
4. Show corrective action,
5. And stay coordinated throughout the response.

What usually causes damage is:

1. Silence,
2. Delay,
3. Inconsistency,
4. Or defensive responses.

You do not need to have every answer immediately.

But people will expect:

- Accountability,
- Transparency,
- And evidence that the issue is being managed.

That is true whether you are dealing with:

- A recall,
- A staff complaint,
- A contamination concern,
- Or a viral social media allegation.

The AMGA can support you during an incident, so please alert them early.

CLOSING AND CALL TO ACTION (8:45 – 10:00)

Slide 9 – “Start simple”

Visual: Grower at farm gate / checklist.

Script:

To finish up, the key message is this:

You do not need a complicated corporate crisis manual.

What matters is having a simple, practical plan that helps you act quickly under pressure.

If you are a smaller grower, start with the basics:

- Identify your top risks,
- Create a contact list,
- Train your staff,
- Prepare a simple escalation process,
- And know when to contact AMGA and AMSAFE.

If you are a larger operator, this is an opportunity to review and strengthen existing systems.

Because protecting your reputation protects:

- Your relationships,
- Your workers,
- Your customers,
- And the long-term strength of the Australian mushroom industry.

AMGA has developed templates and resources you can download from
[<https://australianmushroomgrowers.com.au/reputation-risk>] and adapt for your own business, including:

- Reputation risk assessment templates,
- Escalation frameworks,
- And contact lists.

We encourage every grower to take the time to review these materials with the people in your business responsible for operations, QA, HR or communications.

Thanks again for your time – and for the role you play in protecting the integrity and reputation of Australian mushrooms.

ENDS

Appendix F – Enoki Mushroom recall

From: Leah Dennis <leah.dennis@amga.asn.au>

Sent: Thursday, 30 April 2026 5:02 PM

To: Alice Proud (Omnicom) <alice.proud@omc.com>; Patrick Condon (Omnicom) <pcondon@omc.com>

Subject: FW: Food Recall (FSANZ 2026/26) - Concordia Traders (AUST) Pty Ltd - Enoki Mushroom 350g - Food Incident Forum Notification [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi Alice and Patrick,

FYI – Another imported enoki recall.

Kind regards,

Leah Dennis (née Bramich)
Chief Executive Officer

M: 0450 504 675

E: leah.dennis@amga.asn.au



www.australianmushroomgrowers.com.au

The Australian Mushroom Growers Association is the not-for-profit peak industry body that represents our Aussie mushroom growers.

From: Food Recalls <Food.Recalls@foodstandards.gov.au>

Sent: Thursday, 30 April 2026 4:39 PM

Cc: Food Recalls <Food.Recalls@foodstandards.gov.au>

Subject: Food Recall (FSANZ 2026/26) - Concordia Traders (AUST) Pty Ltd - Enoki Mushroom 350g - Food Incident Forum Notification [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Dear all,

Concordia Traders (Aust) Pty Ltd is conducting a Consumer recall. The details are as follows:

Product recall date: 30/04/2026

FSANZ food recall reference: FSANZ 2026/26

Reason for recall: Microbial (*Listeria monocytogenes*) contamination.

Product details						
Product name	Size	Packaging description	Date marking		Batch number	Barcode
Enoki Mushroom	350g	soft plastic packaging	Use By	USE BY 24052026	24052026	9329999008165

Retailers										
Product name	NSW	ACT	QLD	VIC	TAS	SA	NT	WA	National	Online
Enoki Mushroom	Asian grocers			Asian grocers		Asian grocers				

Production, import and export details						
Product name	Manufactured in Australia	Manufactured State/territory	Imported	Country of origin	Exported	Exported to
Enoki Mushroom	No	Not applicable	Yes	Korea, South	No	Not applicable

Consumer level recalls are published on the [FSANZ website](#).

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards,

Claire

Food Safety Response Team

Tel +61 2 6228 8226 and press #1

www.foodstandards.gov.au

Level 4, 15 Lancaster Place Majura Park, ACT 2609

PO Box 5423, Kingston ACT 2604



We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and the Māori as tangata whenua of Aotearoa New Zealand, and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures.

This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom they are addressed.

If you have received this email in error, please notify us immediately by return e-mail and delete all copies. That error does not constitute waiver of any confidentiality, confidentiality, privilege or copyright in respect of information in the e-mail or attachments.

Scanned by Office 365 Email Gateway at Food Standards ANZ.

Appendix G – AMSAFE May 7 meeting agenda

AMSAFE/PRG Meeting

Project: MU20006 – Mushroom Industry Crisis and Reputation Risk Management

Date: 7 May 2026

AGENDA:

Introduce the new PR team (Alice)

Overview of Risk Management Plan and updates (Alice)

Media Training and workshop decision - as per contract requirements below (Leah)

EXTEND PROGRAM

A further requirement under the program is the delivery and review of training workshops (including media training) for AMSAFE. Porter Novelli has conducted media and risk management training for more than five years.

We will continue to do this with AMSAFE members covering:

1. Recap and refresh the Reputation Risk Management Framework
2. Reassessment of industry risks that threaten industry reputation
3. Media and communication skills and techniques
4. On camera testing and critique

We will also conduct two hour workshops with growers and industry members, to ensure they are willing and ready to inform the AMGA in the event of an issue. At these workshops, the agenda will:

1. Outline the importance of risk and why it is vital the industry acts
2. Explain the Issues Management Framework and AMSAFE program, reaffirming growers' vital role in that system
3. Unpack key areas of risk, how the industry is prepared and how we can support growers if they inform the AMGA in a timely matter
4. Outline the basic fundamentals of issues communication, and what they as growers/workers should do in the event of an issue. It's about informing them how to act if approached by media (e.g. say nothing and refer on), what to say (or not say) on social media, reaffirming the risk management protocols etc.

Specialist consultant Clare Hamilton-Bate will provide technical advice at these sessions. Where possible, we will align the program with *Mushroom Food Safety Extension and Adoption (MU20000)*. Our program includes nine workshops for the duration of the contract and will always look to collaborate/align with other industry events – e.g. at the AMGA conference, Hort Connect

