The Trust Trap: Building trust in an age of doubt

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Plant Biosecurity Communications Manager

Department of
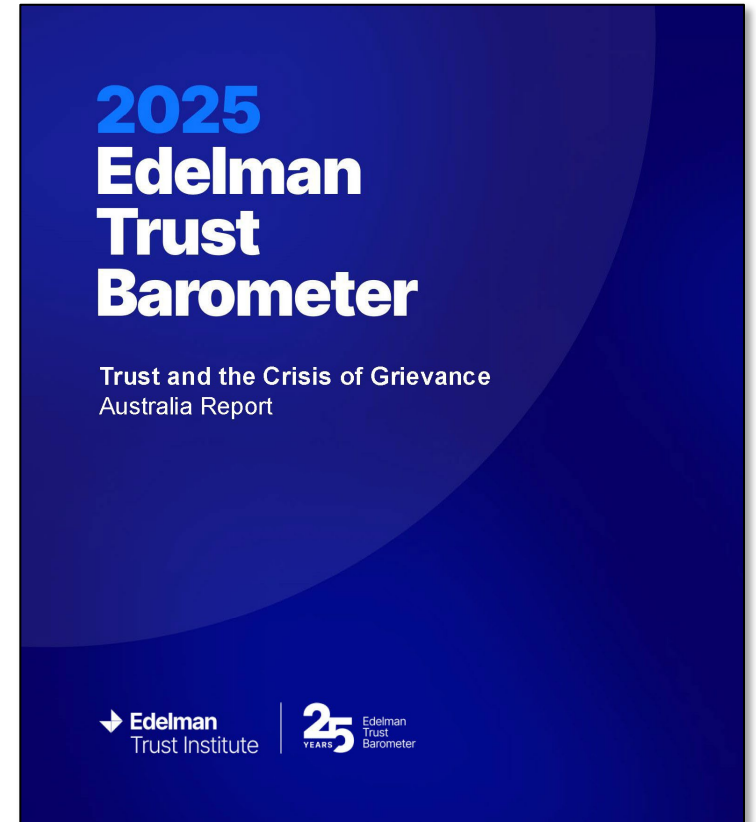**Primary Industries and
Regional Development**

GOVERNMENT OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

**Protect
Grow
Innovate**

Global rise in distrust

- A higher sense of grievance instils a zero-sum mindset
- How do we build trust to support surveillance activities?

47%
of Australians trust Government

37%
of Australians trust Media

69%
Worry government, business and media purposely mislead the public

2025
Edelman
Trust
Barometer

Trust and the Crisis of Grievance
Australia Report

Edelman
Trust Institute
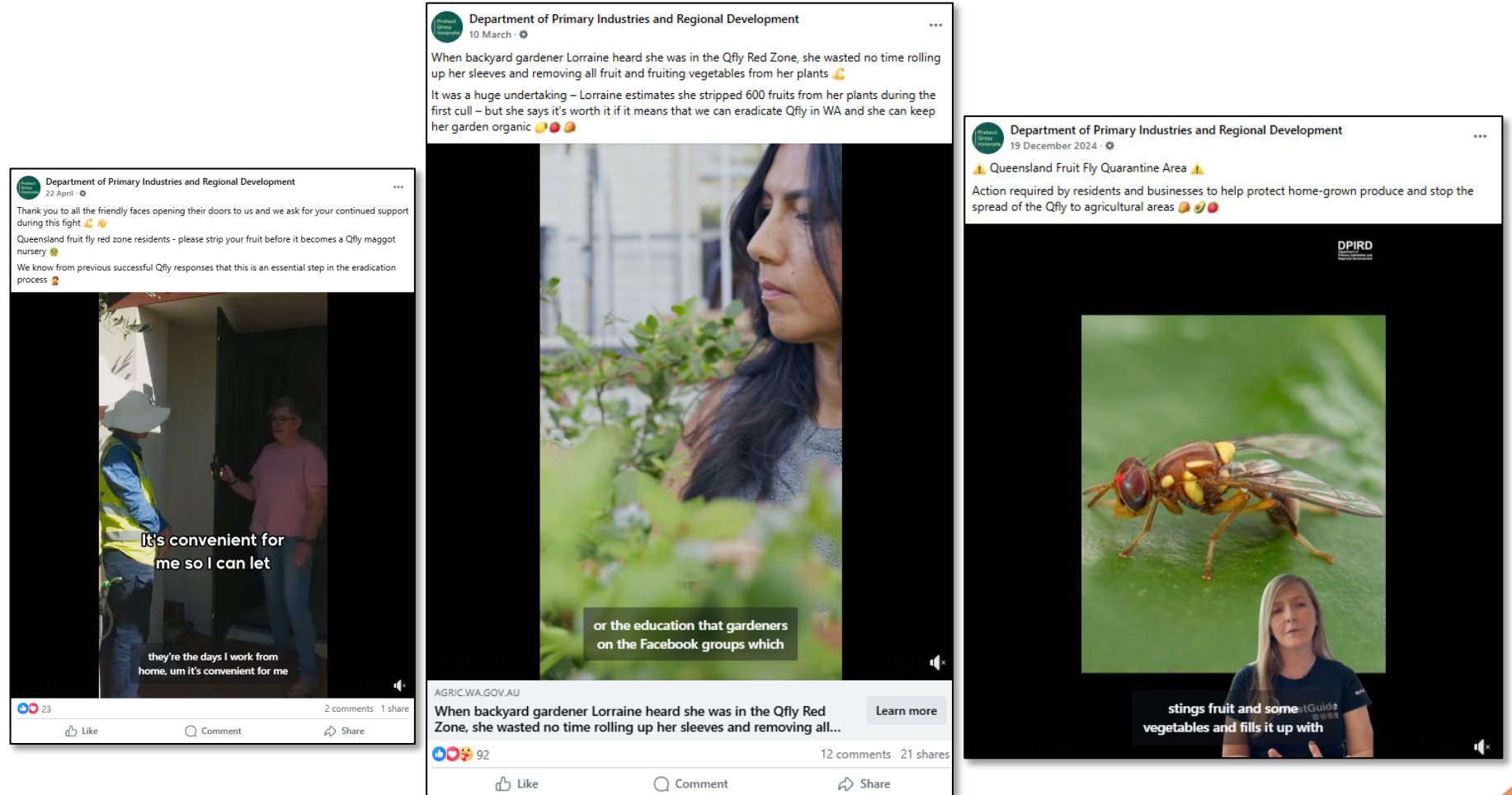
25 YEARS

Edelman
Trust
Barometer

So, who do Australians trust?

77%

of Australians trust scientists

66%

of Australians trust their neighbours

We need to talk about the word 'surveillance'

The word surveillance can evoke:

- a perception of looking for wrongdoing
- Concerns about loss of freedom or privacy
- Concerns about government overreach

How do we reframe surveillance in the context of biosecurity so it is viewed as protection rather than control?

Make it personal and localised

- Use localised, personalised framing
- Highlight direct benefits

The State Government is calling on Western Australians to

We understand that removing all host fruit from your garden is a sacrifice - it is a temporary measure but a powerful one.

If Qfly is not eradicated, we risk losing the ability to grow and enjoy our own produce, leading to a significant loss in the quality and enjoyment of our home gardens.

We look forward to working with you to keep WA's gardens and horticultural industries thriving.

wa.gov.au/qfly

Use traps as public engagement tools

- Traps are conversation starters
- Be transparent - the public often wants to be part of the surveillance efforts
- Adopt traps / DIY traps
- How can data be shared while protecting privacy?
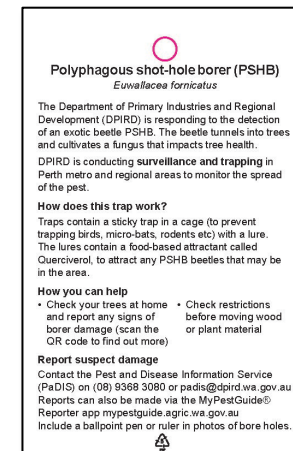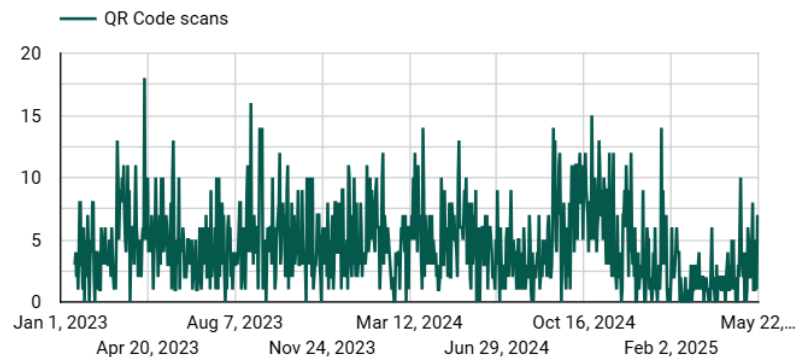
Community Champions and trusted businesses

- Empower stakeholders bring them on the journey

- Who do people look to as a leader or benchmark?
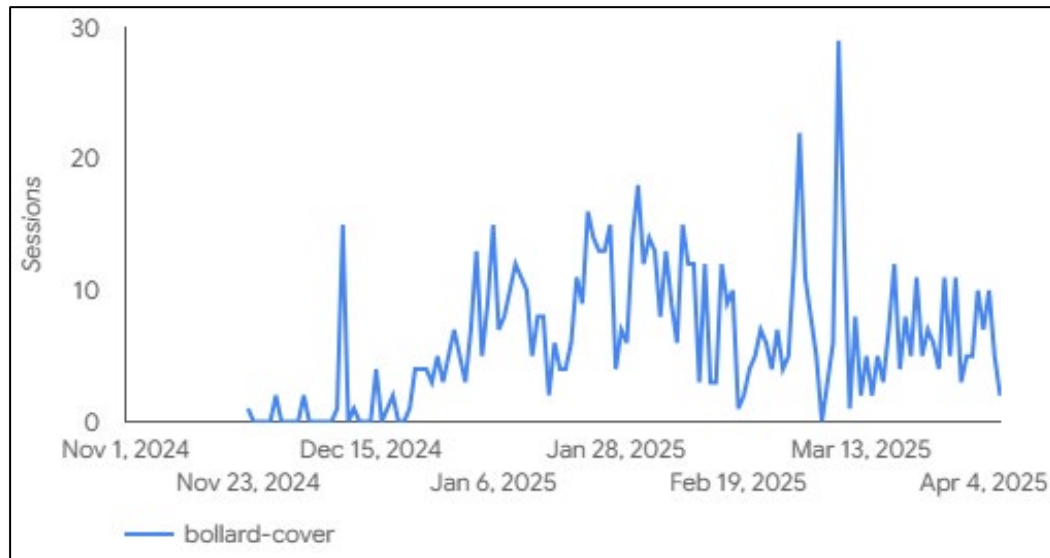
Start with a chat, not a checklist

- Face-to-face engagement is the most effective way to gain trust and obtain social license.

- Make surveillance relational, not just transactional

- Interactions aren't always one-and-done

Summary

- Trust can be hard to gain but easy to lose

- Make it personal – what's in it for them?

- Invite collaboration – turn surveillance into an exciting shared mission

- Use social proof to show others are participating

- Make surveillance not just technically sound, but people-ready

Thank you

dpird.wa.gov.au