



National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program (SEQ) Steering Committee
Thursday 21 November 2019
41 George Street, Brisbane Queensland
8.30am – 2.00pm

MINUTES — MEETING 10

ATTENDANCE

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Attendees | Wendy Craik, Chair John Robertson, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF), (QLD) Sarah Corcoran, Department of Primary Industry and Resources, (NT) – by phone Bruce Christie, Department of Primary Industries (NSW) Karina Keast, Department of Agriculture, Australian Government (C'wealth) Lloyd Klumpp, Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (TAS) John van Schagen, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, (WA) Michael Rosier, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, (VIC) – by phone |
| Program Presenters | Graeme Dudgeon, A/General Manager Brian Bond, Executive Officer Sarah Mitchell, Finance Officer Ross Wylie on behalf of Chair, Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) Julie Fullerton, Manager, Community and Stakeholder Engagement Ben Westlake, A/Manager, Policy, Governance and Compliance (Policy) Tim Powe, Manager, Self-Management Project |
| Observers | Malcolm Letts, Deputy Director-General/Chief Biosecurity Officer, Biosecurity Queensland, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) |
| Secretariat | Sonia Marsanic, Policy Officer, (NRIFAEP) |
| Apologies | Jo Laduzko, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (C'wealth) Kerrian Nobbs, Senior Policy Officer, (NRIFAEP) |

MAIN DISCUSSION, AGREED OUTCOMES AND FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

The Steering Committee "Closed Session" commenced at 8.30am.

The meeting opened at 9.00am.



Agenda Item 1 - Introduction

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed Karina Keast (C'wealth) and acknowledged Sarah Corcoran (NT) and Michael Rosier (VIC) were joining via teleconference.

The Chair provided an overview of the day's agenda.

Minutes for Meeting 9 were approved with one minor amendment.

Minutes for the Budget teleconference were amended to reflect that modellers were not engaged at the time of the meeting, and the action required was to engage modellers.

The minutes as amended were taken as a correct record, with all actions having been completed, ongoing or on the agenda.

Right to information (RTI) requests were discussed and it was agreed that the Steering Committee meeting minutes will be published from this meeting.

Red Imported Fire Ant (RIFA) significant detection reports will be finalised and provided to the Steering Committee. No further significant detections have occurred.

The Steering Committee:

- **APPROVED** the minutes of Meeting 9 with minor amendments.
- **APPROVED** the minutes of the out-of-session teleconference - 2019/20 Budget Plan.
- **AGREED** the Steering Committee minutes will be published from this meeting onwards.
- **NOTED** the significant detection reports will be finalised and distributed to the Steering Committee.

| Agenda item 1 - Action items | | Responsibility | Target | Status |
|------------------------------|---|---|-------------|---------|
| 1 | Secretariat to publish approved minutes for Meeting 10 and future meetings on behalf of the Steering Committee. | Secretariat until SC website is created | 20 Feb 2020 | Ongoing |

Agenda Item 2 - Efficiency and Effectiveness Review

There was a brief review of the Efficiency and Effectiveness Review discussion that took place on 20 November 2019.

The Steering Committee agreed that the report provided by Mr Wonder was very thorough and very useful to the Program.

It was agreed that the Steering Committee would publish Mr Wonder's report as soon as practicable, along with a statement from the Steering Committee noting how the Program will be using the recommendations for further improvement. Prior to the release, the National Biosecurity Committee and Ministers of the jurisdictions will receive a briefing outlining how the Program will respond and responses to potential "frequently asked questions" for their use as required.

All priority recommendations were agreed to and have been allocated to relevant individuals or groups within the Program for implementation. An indicative timetable for future discussion has also been noted.

Non-priority recommendations will be discussed in detail at the next Steering Committee meeting in February 2020.



A sub-committee of the Steering Committee will be established to oversee the implementation of the recommendations and report on progress. The sub-committee will include Steering Committee members and Program staff.

John Robertson (QLD), John van Schagen (WA) and Lloyd Klumpp (TAS) nominated themselves to be members of the sub-committee. Karina Keast (C'wealth) stated they will send a representative for the sub-committee and it was agreed that one of the newly appointed directors of the Program would be involved.

Specific recommendations raised were:

- the establishment of a Steering Committee website
- contract staff remuneration - difficult to implement (e.g. payment based on hectares treated). It was agreed that other ways to encourage efficient work performance should be considered
- the composition of the Steering Committee – with a skills matrix to be developed and discussed at the next meeting in February 2020. the composition of the Steering Committee With a skills matrix will be developed and discussed at the next meeting in February 2020.

The Steering Committee:

- **AGREED** that the report was very thorough and the recommendations were appropriate.
- **AGREED** that the final report should be published.
- **CONSIDERED** further feedback should be provided to the author.
- **AGREED** on the composition of a sub-committee of the Steering Committee to oversee progress of the review recommendations.
- **NOTED** that a matrix of Steering Committee skills would be discussed at the next meeting.
- **AGREED** with the priority recommendations provided in the review.

| Agenda item 2 - Action items | | Responsibility | Target | Status |
|------------------------------|--|---|------------------|-----------|
| 2 | Efficiency and Effectiveness Review "priority only recommendations" formally accepted by the Steering Committee. | Steering Committee | 24 December 2019 | Ongoing |
| 3 | Efficiency and Effectiveness Review Report to be published along with Questions and Answers and a statement from the Steering Committee and Program. | Steering Committee /Program General Manager | Early 2020 | Ongoing |
| 4 | Priority recommendations allocated to relevant business area and date set for further discussion/progress. | Program General Manager | November 2019 | Completed |
| 5 | Non-priority recommendations discussed in detail and allocated to business areas for implementation. | Steering Committee | 20 February 2020 | On Agenda |
| 6 | Sub-committee to be established to oversee the completion of the review recommendations. | Steering Committee | 20 February 2020 | On Agenda |
| 7 | Completion of Steering Committee skills matrix - C'wealth to provide existing matrix. | C'wealth | 20 February 2020 | On Agenda |



Agenda Item 3 - General Manager's Update and Omnibus

The General Manager provided an update on the Program, including:

- the Annual Report which is currently being compiled by an external editor. This has delayed its presentation to the Committee - the Report will include reference to audited financial statements.
- there will be four quarterly performance reports each year along with the Annual Report
- the risk assessment of movement controls for fire ant carriers will soon be put out to tender
- the Mobility Project – Proof of Concept was successfully completed by the end of September 2019 and a Project Manager will be employed to manage the project. The first iteration is planned to be in use in the field by the end of this financial year
- responsive treatment with toxicant bait has improved response times following public reports of fire ant infestations. The backlog of public reports and response period has been reduced by adopting a 'first responder is the only responder' approach, using toxicant bait
- an update was provided on operational inputs and also the current difficulties when helicopters were diverted to fire control.

The General Manager also provided a brief update on the SAG consideration of treatment strategy. The Program's treatment processes must be adaptive to ensure the effective and efficient use of resources. The SAG has acknowledged that there may need to be a treatment effectiveness/cost efficiency trade off.

The Steering Committee:

- **NOTED** the General Manager's update on the Program.
- **DISCUSSED** the risk assessment for movement controls.
- **DISCUSSED** the mobility project and **NOTED** its likely completion date.
- **AGREED** the use of toxicant bait was a valuable approach to reducing the responsive treatment backlog and timeliness.
- **NOTED** the current difficulties with resourcing and procurement.
- **NOTED** quarterly adjustments would be made to the budget if required to allow flexibility and adaptability of the Program.
- **AGREED** the Annual Report needs to revisit the goals of the 10-year plan and state that proof-of-freedom will occur after the 10 years of the Program.
- **AGREED** that proof of freedom needs to be clearly justified and spelled out.

| Agenda Item 3 - Action items | | Responsibility | Target | Status |
|------------------------------|--|-----------------|------------------|---------|
| 8 | First generation of the Mobility Project to be operational in the field. | Project Manager | June 2020 | Ongoing |
| 9 | Annual Report Draft to be circulated to Steering Committee | General Manager | Mid-January 2020 | Ongoing |



Agenda Item 4 – Financial Update

The Steering Committee received an update on finances from the General Manager and the Finance Officer, Sarah Mitchell. Discussion related to:

- arrangements currently underway for a further \$12.6M to be brought forward when required by the Program
- the year to date underspend of \$3.4M was as a result of treatment delays.

The Steering Committee requested an update be provided for any financial year adjustments to the budget as required, to ensure that only what is required is brought forward.

The provisional annual budget of \$70.2M, including the additional \$12.6M, was approved by the Steering Committee subject to the above.

The Steering Committee requested a report on the efficiencies that will provide future savings. Modelling will help to understand current and forecast fire ant infestation, and estimate the effort required to be translated into a practical costing model developed by the Program. The modelling will provide a basis on which to estimate costs.

It was noted that at least 75 per cent of expenditure goes directly into operations.

A capital update was provided. The Steering Committee was asked to approve the erection of a macropod exclusion fence at the Wacol helicopter site, while some Macropods are relocated. Currently, it is unsafe to land at this site due to an increase of Macropod numbers.

The Steering Committee:

- **APPROVED** the indicative budget for 2019-20 subject to successful funding resolution between Queensland and the Commonwealth.
- **NOTED** the NRIFAEP financial performance report.
- **NOTED** the Capital Program update and **APPROVED** Macropod exclusion fencing at Wacol.
- **CONSIDERED** the focus required for the upcoming financial audit. Further details will be provided in an out of session brief, including the Terms of Reference and the Procurement Strategy.
- **AGREED** a report be provided to the Steering Committee on the efficiencies that will provide future savings.

| Agenda item 4 - Action items | | Responsibility | Target | Status |
|------------------------------|--|-------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|
| 10 | Circulate indicative 2019-2020 Annual Budget approval paper to Steering Committee for approval by each member. | Secretariat | November 2019 | Completed – Approved 10/1/2020 |
| 11 | Following the modelling on the current and forecast fire ant infestation being completed and a Practical Costing Model being developed, the Program provide a report to the Steering Committee on the efficiencies that will provide future savings. | Strategy Director | June 2020 | Ongoing |



Agenda Item 5 – Business Improvement Plan

The Program’s Executive Officer provided an update on the Business Improvement Plan (BIP). A business improvement register has been developed for managers to track the improvements that are being made as a result of the audits conducted earlier this year. All actions are on track to being completed.

The Issues and Risk Registers are updated and managed by the management team and updates will be included in the monthly reports to the Steering Committee. The Executive Officer will develop a summary in order to create focus on the priority items.

A timeline has also been developed to align future planning in relation to surveillance, treatment and budget plans. The Steering Committee also requested that achievements be highlighted in the reports.

The Steering Committee:

- **ACKNOWLEDGED** the work that was conducted by the Executive Officer on the BIP.
- **REQUESTED** monthly reports on the progression of the BIP.
- **NOTED** the scale of the BIP and **ENDORSED** a list of priorities and achievements to be the focus of the monthly reports.

| Agenda Item 5 – Action Items | | Responsibility | Target | Status |
|------------------------------|--|------------------|---------|---------|
| 11 | Monthly reports on the progress of the business plan to be provided to the Steering Committee. | Business Manager | Monthly | Ongoing |

Agenda Item 6 – Regulatory Amendments

The Steering Committee was provided with an update by the A/Policy and Compliance Manager, Ben Westlake on the regulatory amendments in motion to alter the existing biosecurity zones to protect eradication areas and align with the Program’s current practices. The amendments are expected to be in place by March 2020.

The Steering Committee agreed with the proposed changes including the development and use of a guideline regarding the movement of soil. It was also noted that a communication campaign to inform people of the changes is crucial for the success of the changes and to provide businesses time to understand the changes before they are implemented.

It was noted that compliance effort will need to increase as a result of the changes.

The Steering Committee:

- **ENDORSED** the proposed regulatory amendments and refinement of movement controls.
- **NOTED** that the role of the communication team is important for the appropriate information being shared with the public and industries.
- **NOTED** and **DISCUSSED** consequent increase in compliance responsibilities.

| Agenda item 6 - Action items | | Responsibility | Target | Status |
|------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|------------|---------|
| 12 | Biosecurity zones - changes in the Regulations | Policy and Compliance Manager | March 2020 | Ongoing |



Agenda Item 7 – Self-Management Plan/Progress

The General Manager and Tim Powe, Self-Management Project Manager, provided an update on the Self-Management Project. The team have trained 250 Pest Management Technicians (PMTs) to date, including technicians from a range of business areas and local councils.

Self-management training has been provided to members of high-risk industries such as property developers, turf farms and Biosecurity Instrument Permit (BIP) holders, encouraging them to use their own bait and comply with permit conditions.

The Steering Committee were advised that there is an increase in the number of PMTs treating fire ants. However, not all PMTs are reporting to the Program. The Program is working closely with PMTs to ensure the obligation of reporting is understood and complied with.

Other matters discussed included the requirement for having baits commercially available to PMTs and the general public. The use of trained PMTs for hard to access sites such as electrical areas, airports and development sites have also delivered benefits by allowing members of these businesses to treat their own areas without the need to organise special access for Program employees.

The Steering Committee:

- **NOTED** and **DISCUSSED** the excellent progress of the self-management project.

| Agenda item 7 - Action items | | Responsibility | Target | Status |
|------------------------------|-----|----------------|--------|--------|
| | Nil | | | |

Agenda Item 8 – Remote Sensing Surveillance Progress

The Steering Committee was provided with an update on the progress of the Remote Sensing Surveillance Project. Images were presented to the Steering Committee to show the quality of imaging the new camera system provides to detect RIFA nests. Despite the trial taking place at the warmer time of the year (unfavourable), the results obtained were promising.

Final analysis is being conducted with Outline Global with results due in January 2020. With further iterations of image capture and ground-truthing, the accuracy of the technology will improve.

The Steering Committee:

- **NOTED** the progress of the Remote Sensing Surveillance Project and the first iteration of imagery.
- **NOTED** the completion of the field trials, data collection and imagery capture.
- **NOTED** and **ENDORSED** the recruitment of the Project Coordinator for three years to make the project operational.

| Agenda item 8 - Action items | | Responsibility | Target | Status |
|------------------------------|-----|----------------|--------|--------|
| | Nil | | | |



Agenda Item 9 – National Exotic Invasive Ant Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) Update

The Steering Committee was provided with an update on the progress made by the National Exotic Invasive Ant Scientific Advisory Group, including:

- Proof-of-freedom – SAG agreed a staged approach for clearance will be required as the treatment has been staged. Discussions were held with Dean Anderson from New Zealand who created a model for staged clearance of tuberculosis in possums, which can be utilised by the Program. Dave Ramsay from the Arthur Rylah Institute has also been in discussion with the Program’s modellers to determine the best way forward for Proof of Freedom.
- Sampling methods will be put in place by May 2020 to determine how effective the treatment has been so far.
- SAG endorsed a fifth round of treatment in Area 1. Areas that have not received all rounds of treatment will be targeted.
- SAG endorsed the idea of having 20 odour detection dogs as in the 10-year plan, if the budget allows.
- SAG had lengthy discussions in regards to the nursery self-assessment tool and measures SAG deemed appropriate to minimise the risk of fire ant movement through carriers.

The Steering Committee:

- **NOTED** the progress made by the SAG since the last Steering Committee meeting.

| Agenda item 9 - Action items | | Responsibility | Target | Status |
|------------------------------|-----|----------------|--------|--------|
| | Nil | | | |

Agenda Item 10 – Risk Management Sub-Committee Update

The Steering Committee was provided with an update on the Risk and Issues Registers which are associated with the Business Improvement Plan. All risks have been mitigated through recent processes put in place.

The Steering Committee will be notified when risks change and why.

The largest current issue is the lack of aircraft available for treatment due to the Queensland fires.

The Steering Committee:

- **NOTED** the updated Risk Management Plan.
- **DISCUSSED** and **NOTED** the current issues listed in the Registers and **ACCEPTED** the progress.

| Agenda item 10 – Action Items | | Responsibility | Target | Status |
|-------------------------------|-----|----------------|--------|--------|
| | Nil | | | |



Agenda Item 11 – Community Collaboration and Industry Reference Group - Update

The Manager, Community and Stakeholder Engagement provided a snapshot of the most recent team activity and how the public has responded.

Key issues discussed included:

- selling the success stories
- strategy and communication limitations due to budget constraints
- self-management
- changes to biosecurity zones
- communicating with non-treatment areas.

Feedback is requested from the Steering Committee in December 2019 on the draft Communication and Engagement Plan 2019-21.

Matters raised included:

- the structure of the commination team as it has been heavily weighted toward engagement and needs a greater focus of communication
- a large communication effort will be required for the change of the biosecurity zones - an industry forum has been planned for 12 December 2019 at Summerset Regional Council's request to promote awareness of movement controls and biosecurity zones as well as self-management
- education and general awareness training are continuing and preparation of material to support the compliance team, once all the regulatory changes take effect, is underway
- negative media has been less apparent in recent times. The public continue to be very supportive of the Program.

The Steering Committee:

- **NOTED** the progress of the Community Collaboration and Industry Reference Group and the strategic plan.
- **AGREED** to provide feedback on the Communication and Engagement Plan by December 2019.
- **NOTED** the use of local champions to help promote the importance of RIFA eradication.

| Agenda item 11- Action items | | Responsibility | Target | Status |
|------------------------------|--|--------------------|-----------------|-----------|
| 13 | Provide feedback on the Communication and Engagement Plan by first week of December 2019 | Steering Committee | 6 December 2019 | Completed |

Agenda item 12 – NRIFAEP Steering Committee Independent Website

The C'wealth member confirmed that the National Biosecurity website can be used as a portal to host the Steering Committee webpage and will investigate forms/templates which may be required for rapid media release time frames, maintenance and location in the website.

The Steering Committee:

- **NOTED** that the C'wealth member will follow up.

| Agenda item 12 – Action items | | Responsibility | Target | Status |
|-------------------------------|---|-----------------|-------------|---------|
| 14 | C'wealth to provide an update to the Chair out-of-session prior to February 2020 meeting. | C'wealth member | 20 Feb 2020 | Ongoing |



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The Steering Committee:

- **NOTED** that the C'wealth member will follow up.

| Agenda item 12 – Action items | | Responsibility | Target | Status |
|-------------------------------|---|-----------------|-------------|---------|
| 14 | C'wealth to provide an update to the Chair out-of-session prior to February 2020 meeting. | C'wealth member | 20 Feb 2020 | Ongoing |

Agenda item 13 – OTHER BUSINESS

The Communique will not be required as the Minutes of each meeting will now be published on the web.

| Agenda item 13 – Action items | | Responsibility | Target | Status |
|-------------------------------|-----|----------------|--------|--------|
| | Nil | | | |

The meeting closed at 1.30pm.

The next meeting will be held on 20 February 2020.