



National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program (SEQ) Steering Committee
Tuesday 19 January 2021
Teleconference

ATTENDANCE

9.00 – 11.00am

Attendees	<p>Wendy Craik, Chair</p> <p>Shalan Scholfield, Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (C'wealth)</p> <p>Anne Walters, Department of Primary Industry and Resources (NT)</p> <p>John van Schagen, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (WA)</p> <p>Rosa Crnov, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (VIC)</p> <p>Justine Clarke, Chief Finance Officer, DAF (QLD)</p>
Program Presenters	<p>Graeme Dudgeon, General Manager</p> <p>Andrew Turley, Strategy Director</p>
Observers	<p>Malcolm Letts, Deputy Director-General/Chief Biosecurity Officer, Biosecurity Queensland, (DAF)</p> <p>Mike Richards, Biosecurity Queensland (DAF)</p> <p>Brett Turley, Operations Director</p> <p>Tom Roberts, A/Manager, Policy</p>
Secretariat	<p>Kerri Nobbs, Senior Policy Officer, (NRIFAEP)</p>
Apologies	<p>Jo Laduzko, Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (C'wealth)</p> <p>Scott Charlton, Department of Primary Industries (NSW)</p> <p>Nigel Ainsworth, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (VIC)</p> <p>Lloyd Klumpp, Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (TAS), John Robertson, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) (QLD)</p>



MAIN DISCUSSION

The meeting opened at 9.00am.

The Chair welcomed Steering Committee members, Shalan Scholfield on behalf of Jo Laduzko, Rosa Crnov on behalf of Nigel Ainsworth, Malcolm Letts, Mike Richards and Program staff to the teleconference and also noted apologies.

Graeme Dudgeon provided an overview of the paper presented to the Steering Committee. The Program proposes a major revision of the Ten Year Plan for eradicating fire ants be developed during 2021 for approval by AGMIN in early 2022. The revision will incorporate all Program learnings over the first four years of treatment, taking into account the 2021 surveillance season (winter) results from the first eradication area (Area 1 and the Western Boundary), results out of the second eradication area (Area 2), and operationalised remote sensing results, including its efficiency, effectiveness and cost.

Data collection is required to end FY 2020/21 to revise the Ten Year Plan by the end of calendar year 2021 for approval. Maintaining funding for FY2021-22 at \$60M is required to achieve Program aims. A shortfall of \$26.6M currently exists.

Approval is sought from the Steering Committee:

1. to request cost share partners bring forward additional funds for FY 2021-22 totalling \$26.6M
2. on the revised scope of work pending the extra money brought forward for this year.

New South Wales has proposed to bring forward contributions of \$6.13M in each of FY2022-23 to FY2023-24 to FY 2020-21 and 2021-22, respectively, totalling \$12.26M.

Relevant considerations include:

- Ten Year Plan costings were predicated on a much smaller area and on eradicating outwards from the centre of infestation. The Plan itself proposed a west to east rolling program.
- The first eradication area doubled in size in the early stages of the Program (given the spread westward of RIFA after the 2015 delimitation) while maintaining the same budget.
- Eradication treatment is "brute force" (ie broadscale) rather than the targeted spot treatment strategy used to cost the Program.

Reviewing the Ten Year Plan is consistent with one of the Plan Triggers ie that the cost of the Plan is likely to exceed \$411M. Consistent with the Plan, the National Biosecurity Committee (NBC) should be advised, and that a review (as required in the Plan and to be undertaken every two years) will occur this year.

Discussion and decision on the Plan's future would be best informed following a Plan review and revision based on lessons from the first four years of treatment, incorporating developments outlined above. Greater certainty is required than currently exists on the efficacy impact and cost of the treatments underway.

AgSOC is meeting later this week and can be advised of developments.

It is proposed that AgMIN considers the new plan early in 2022, provided it is endorsed by NBC and AgSOC.



OTHER ISSUES

- The Steering Committee discussed potential reviewers for the upcoming Efficiency and Effectiveness (E&E) Review. It was suggested that a different perspective from the excellent 2019 review undertaken by Mr Bernard Wonder would be useful.
- The 2019-2020 Annual Report and the 2020-2021 Quarter One Report are imminent. It was proposed that:
 - the weekly SitRep report (provided to the Queensland Minister) be provided to the Steering Committee in place of the detailed monthly report. A more concise monthly exception report will be provided.

The Steering Committee:

- **NOTED** the brief provided - Bring Forward of Funding for 2021-22 and Revised Scope of Work for 2020-21.
- **APPROVED** the revised scope of work subject to funding and agreement by NSW and Tasmanian members.
- **AGREED** the developments above be flagged at AgSOC later this week.
- **AGREED** the Chair would contact the NSW and Tasmanian members on the proposed approach.
- **AGREED** that an NBC Out of Session brief be prepared to:
 - seek to maintain the current level of response effort in order to fully test the response model and to maintain effectiveness
 - request jurisdictions bring forward funding to allow the current effort to be maintained for the next 18 months
 - agree to the preparation of a new response plan by the end of this calendar year.
- **AGREED** members would provide suggestions on appropriate consultants to conduct the E&E Review for discussion and decision in the February 2021 meeting.
- **AGREED** the detailed monthly report will be replaced by the weekly Sitrep report and a brief monthly exception report.

Action items		Responsibility	Target	Status
1.	Contact NSW and Tasmanian members to consult with them on agreed approach.	Chair	January 2021	Completed – Both supported the approach.
2.	NBC out of session brief be prepared as outlined above.	Program – Policy	27 January 2020	Completed
3.	Provide suggestions on appropriate consultants to conduct the E&E Review.	SC Members	February 2021	Completed
4.	Provide weekly SitRep Report to Steering Committee and a brief exception report.	Program / Secretariat	Ongoing	BAU

Meeting concluded at 10.15am.