National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program (SEQ) Steering Committee
Thursday 21 May 2020
Teleconference
10.00am – 1.00pm

# MINUTES – MEETING 12

## ATTENDANCE

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| Attendees | Wendy Craik, Chair<br><br>John Robertson, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) (QLD)<br><br>Anne Walters, Department of Primary Industry and Resources (NT)<br><br>Scott Charlton, Department of Primary Industries (NSW)<br><br>Jo Laduzko, Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (C'wealth)<br>John van Schagen, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (WA)<br>Nigel Ainsworth, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (VIC)<br>Lloyd Klumpp, Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (TAS)<br>Mike Richards, Chief Finance Officer, DAF (QLD) |
| Program Presenters | Graeme Dudgeon, A/General Manager<br><br>Andrew Turley, Strategy Director<br>Brett Turville, Operations Director<br>Sarah Mitchell, Finance Officer<br><br>Ross Wylie on behalf of Chair, Scientific Advisory Group (SAG)<br><br>Julie Fullerton, Manager, Community and Stakeholder Engagement<br><br>Heather Lesson, Manager, Policy |
| Observers | Malcolm Letts, Deputy Director-General/Chief Biosecurity Officer, Biosecurity Queensland, (DAF) |
| Secretariat | Kerrian Nobbs, Senior Policy Officer, (NRIFAEP) |

## MAIN DISCUSSION, AGREED OUTCOMES AND FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

The meeting opened at 10.00am.

## Agenda Item 1 - Introduction

The Chair opened the 12th meeting and welcomed Anne Walters as a member of the Steering Committee, representing the Northern Territory.  Sarah Corcoran stepped down as the Northern Territory representative, as she has been appointed as the Chief Executive Officer with Plant Health Australia in Canberra.  Anne has attended previous meetings and has a good understanding of the workings of the Tramp Ant Eradication Program and is currently leading the National Browsing Ant Eradication Program in the Norther Territory. The National Biosecurity Committee has been notified of the three changes to the Steering Committee, Anne Walters (NT); Scott Charlton (NSW) and Nigel Ainsworth (Vic).

The Chair also welcomed Mike Richards to the Steering Committee.  It was agreed in the previous meeting that Mike would be approached by the Deputy Director-General, Malcolm Letts to sit as a member of the Steering Committee.  Mike holds a Bachelor of Commerce (Finance and Accounting) and has over 44 years of experience in the Queensland public sector, including Queensland Treasury and the Justice Department. Mike is currently the Executive Director, Finance and Assess Management and Chief Finance Officer (CFO) for both DAF and the Department of Innovation and Tourism Industry Development and was until recently also the CFO for the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games.

Due to COVID-19, the meeting was condensed to a three hour meeting and discussion was on the priority agenda items. Other items to be discussed briefly, noted or comments to be provided Out-of-Session.

The Chair stressed that the Program needed to provide the meeting papers in the scheduled timeframe to allow members the appropriate time to consider them.

The Efficiency and Effectiveness Review Sub-Committee met on Monday, 18 May 2020. The Sub-Committee are generally impressed with the progress on the implementation of the recommendations for the Bernie Wonder report.

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

Minutes for Meeting 11 were taken as a correct record and approved, with all actions having been completed, ongoing or on the agenda.

Follow up actions were completed, to be dealt with in this meeting or on hold due to COVID-19.

The Steering Committee:

- **APPROVED** the minutes of Meeting 11.
- **AGREED** the Steering Committee minutes for Meeting 11 can be published to the web.

| Agenda item 1 - Action items | Responsibility | Target | Status |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Publish approved minutes for Meeting 11. | Secretariat | June 2020 | Completed |

## Agenda Item 2 – Steering Committee Operations

- **Terms of Reference (ToR)**
  The updated Terms of Reference were circulated to the Steering Committee members for review.
- **Skills Matrix**
- **Steering Committee Website**

The Steering Committee:

- o **NOTED** the item on the Terms of Reference, Skills Matrix and the Steering Committee Website
- o **AGREED** that Steering Committee members will respond in writing with their approval to the amended ToR.

| Agenda item 2 - Action items | | Responsibility | Target | Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2. | Provide approval of the amended ToR in writing to the Secretariat. | Steering Committee Members | 28 May 2020 | Completed |

## Agenda Item 3 - General Manager's Update and Omnibus

The General Manager discussed the major strategic decisions to be made for the Program.  The Program has presented itself a number of challenges within the Three Year Strategy and the Work Plan.  The Three Year Strategy is key to how the Program moves forward, the KPIs will drive the Program outputs and the first year of the KPIs is included in the Work Plan.

The Program was behind in treatment early in the year due to the fires and unavailability of aircraft; drought and dust, followed by wet weather.  The Program has responded well during COVID-19.  There has been less impact on availability of helicopters which has enabled the Program to be close to being on schedule.

The National Exotic Invasive Ant Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) was provided with an options paper to consider a treatment plan for the remainder of this treatment season to reduce risks around some of the high risk areas that haven't received the full complement of treatments.  SAG has considered the options and its recommendation will be presented to the Steering Committee out-of-session.

With the exception of one round of extra treatment in a very small overlap area in Area 1, close to the Area 2 boundary (which has been deferred to be included in Area 2 treatment), all planned treatment for this treatment season will be completed.

Community Pilots have been put on hold due to COVID-19 as they require face to face interaction with the community.

Steering Committee members were provided with a map of fire ant detections for February – April 2020 for discussion and proposed for publication.  It was suggested that a statement be provided with the map to clarify the legend, better clarification of the percentages and to include a map of Australia showing the extent that fire ants could have spread if the Program did not exist.

The Steering Committee:

- **NOTED** the General Manager's update on the Program, including:
    - o the impact of COVID-19
    - o management of the Program's strategic risks
    - o the Program's plans for 2020-2021
- **AGREED** for the web publication of the SE Qld Fire Ant Detection Map (February – April 2020) and a map of Australia showing the infestation area.

| Agenda Item 3 – Action items | | Responsibility | Target | Status |
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| 3. | Fire Ant Detection maps and statement to be published to the web. | Program | June 2020 | Completed |

| Agenda Item 4 – Financial Update |
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The Steering Committee received a financial update from the General Manager and the Finance Officer, Sarah Mitchell.  Discussion related to:

- the Program's financial performance as at April 2020, including spend on labour hire, helicopters and additional hire of 70 vehicles which are required for social distancing during COVID-19

- update on collaborative funding agreement – all jurisdictions have responded with the exception of Victoria, which has signed the agreement and it will be provided by 22 May 2020

- bring forward of funding if required in 2021.

 The Steering Committee:

- **NOTED** the General Manager's update on the status of the Program's funding.
- **NOTED** the Program's Financial Performance Report as at 30 April 2020
- **NOTED** the Capital Program update, including the review of the Wacol site.

| Agenda item 4 - Action items | | Responsibility | Target | Status |
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| 4. | Out-of-Session paper to Steering Committee on Capital Requirements | Program - Finance | June 2020 | In Progress |

| Agenda Item 5 – RIFA Eradication: Treatment Progress |
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Brett Turville provided an update on the treatment progress and monitoring results in Eradication Area 1; the issues relating to weather, availability of helicopters and landing sites; and gaps identified due to cropping and residents not being home.

He also advised of an update to the papers (paragraph f.) that the Western Boundary had received 216,163 hectares of treatment and Area 1 has now received 85,788 hectares.  Field treatment is ongoing, and aerial treatment in those areas has been completed, except for waste facilities and high density infestation which will commence on 28 May 2020.

The recommendation from the Efficiency and Effectiveness Review around remuneration to field staff was discussed.  There has been a significant improvement in the overall efficiency of field teams with the focus being on the culture, resources, relationships and structure amongst teams.

The Chair commended the team on an outstanding effort.

The Steering Committee:

- **NOTED** the update on the RIFA Eradication treatment progress.

| Agenda Item 5 – Action Items | Responsibility | Target | Status |
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| Nil | | | |

| Agenda Item 6 – RIFA Containment : Detections of Importance | | | |
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| This item will be covered Out-of-Session. | | | |
| Agenda item 6 - Action items | Responsibility | Target | Status |
| 5. Members to note/provide comments to this item out-of-session. | Steering Committee Members | 27 May 2020 | Completed |

| Agenda Item 7 – Program Strategy 2020 – 2023 |
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| The General Manager provided an overview of the Three Year Strategy, which, consistent with the 10 Year Plan, sets the Program some challenging targets over the next three years with numerous changes planned, including compressing eradication treatments into one treatment season, reducing treatment costs by 50 per cent and the commencement of remote sensing. |
| The Steering Committee was provided with Version 2 of the Three Year Strategy KPIs which addressed feedback received by members out-of-session. The KPIs and the strategy were discussed in detail. |

Discussions were held around:

- the clearance strategy
- the update to the Goals, Objectives and KPI document following Steering Committee feedback
- the link of the Three Year Strategy and KPIs with the objectives of the Program's 10 Year Plan
- the role of the Program outside of the SE Queensland infestation.

The Steering Committee:

- **NOTED** the update provided on the Program Strategy 2020-2023

- **AGREED** that Steering Committee members will provide feedback on the Three Year Strategy and KPIs to the Program prior to meeting being held on 29 May 2020

- **RECOMMENDED** the Program provide a mapping document to align the KPIs to the 10 Year Plan, the Three Year Strategy and the Work Plan

- **AGREED** a sub-team be created to work through the alignments of the KPIs with the Three Year Strategy, to include Commonwealth and Northern Territory members

- **AGREED** a teleconference meeting be arranged for next week to discuss the Three Year Strategy in detail with the Goals, Objectives and KPI document to ensure they align.

| Agenda item 7 - Action items | | Responsibility | Target | Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6. | Provide feedback on the Three Year Strategy and KPIs to the Program prior to the meeting being held on 12 June 2020. | Steering Committee Members | 27 May 2020 | Completed |
| 7. | Provide a mapping document to align the KPIs to the 10 Year Plan, the Three Year Strategy and the Work Plan. | Program Strategy Director | 25 May 2020 | Completed |
| 8. | Teleconference to be scheduled week commencing 25 May 2020 to further discuss the Three Year Strategy with the Goals, Objectives and KPI document to ensure they align with the 10 Year Plan and the formation of a sub-team to work on this project. | Secretariat | 25 May 2020 | Completed – Meeting being held on 12 June 2020. |

| Agenda Item 8 – Program Work Plan – 2020-2021 |
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The Steering Committee was provided with a draft of the Program's Work Plan for 2020-21. The Work Plan reflects the first year of the Three Year Strategy.  An update was provided on the eradication area and moving to clearance in Area 1 and the Western Boundary.  This area has to date received five treatments and there has been no reporting of ants and monitoring sites are clear.

It is planned to move onto Area 2, which will be dissected into smaller treatment areas (sub-areas ie. 2a; 2b; 2c).  Each area will receive four treatments in a single year.  The SAG recommended that the Program divide

the area in half and trial two treatment regimes, three IGRs followed by one toxicant; and one toxicant followed by three IGRs to see which is more effective (dependent on availability of bait).

SAG was provided with options for the remaining treatments for Area 1 and the Western Boundary and has provided its recommendation. An out-of-session paper will be provided to the Steering Committee on SAG's recommendation.

It is proposed to do targeted treatment along an area identified as high risk on the southern boundary, where suppression treatment is planned to prevent spread.  The plan for the Gold Coast area is to employ a comprehensive self-management strategy towards mobilising the community to self-treat fire ants.  Smaller scale community trials in Yarrabilba, Oxley and Ripley are also planned.

The Steering Committee:

- **NOTED** the WorkPlan, and agreed to discuss it again in the meeting being held on 29 May 2020 to align with the Three Year Strategy and the KPIs
- **AGREED** that members would provide any comments on the Work Plan to Andrew Turley prior to the 29 May meeting
- **NOTED** that SAG has provided a recommendation on the remaining treatment for Area 1 and the Western Boundary
- **AGREED** for the Program to provide an out of session paper on SAG's recommendation for remaining treatment for Area 1 and the Western Boundary.

| Agenda item 8 - Action items | | Responsibility | Target | Status |
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| 9. | Provide any comments on the Work Plan to the Program prior to 29 May meeting. | Steering Committee Members | 28 May 2020 | Completed |
| 10. | Provide out of session paper to Steering Committee with SAG recommendation for remaining treatment for Area 1 and the Western Boundary | Program - Science | 28 May 2020 | Completed |

| Agenda Item 9 – National Exotic Invasive Ant Scientific Group - Update | | | | |
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| This item will be covered Out-of-Session. | | | | |
| *Agenda item 9 - Action items* | | *Responsibility* | Target | Status |
| 11. | Members to note/provide comments to this item out-of-session. | Steering Committee Members | 27 May 2020 | Completed |

| Agenda Item 10 – Stakeholder Mobilisation |
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Andrew Turley provided an update on Stakeholder Mobilisation, including:

- impacts from COVID-19 on communication and engagement campaigns and training
- communication and engagement plan to mobilise high risk industries on forthcoming changes to biosecurity regulation and zone changes
- Communications, Media and Engagement Governance Proposal under development
- governance arrangements relating to communications.

Major community engagement campaigns are planned for the coming year:

- Biosecurity Zone Changes (commencing end of May 2020) - to continue to raise awareness with high risk industries about the restrictions in the movement of fire ant carriers in defined areas
- Lifestyle Campaign – to emphasise the risk that fire ants pose to the community's lifestyle and to mobilise residents to self-manage fire ants
- Gold Coast Self-Treatment Campaign – to mobilise the community to be doing self-treatment.

Research projects are being conducted to get baseline community data, to better understand and gauge community support and participation in self-management.

Steering Committee members were provided with a late paper on "Matters identified for Ministerial endorsement in the Discussion Paper" for discussion and endorsement.

The Steering Committee:

- **NOTED** the update on the impacts of COVID-19 on communication and engagement campaigns and training
- **NOTED** the forthcoming Communication and Engagement Plan to mobilise high risk industries on forthcoming changes to biosecurity regulation and zone changes
- **NOTED** the Communications, Media Engagement Governance Proposal is under development
- **DISCUSSED** and **ENDORSED** the matters to be included in a Ministerial brief addressing governance arrangements relating to communications.

| Agenda item 10 – Action Items | | Responsibility | Target | Status |
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| 12. | Policy paper for the Minister to be prepared covering the governance arrangements. | Strategy Director | June 2020 | Completed |

| Agenda Item 11 – Treatment Innovation: Self-Management |
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This item will be covered Out-of-Session.

| Agenda item 11- Action items | Responsibility | Target | Status |
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| 13. | Members to note/provide comments to this item out-of-session. | Steering Committee Members | 27 May 2020 | Completed |

| Agenda item 12 – Surveillance Innovation: Remote Sensing | | | |
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| This item will be covered Out-of-Session. | | | |
| Agenda item 12 – Action items | Responsibility | Target | Status |
| 14. Members to note/provide comments to this item out-of-session. | Steering Committee Members | 27 May 2020 | Completed |

| Agenda item 13 – Clearance and Proof of Freedom Progress | | | |
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| This item will be covered Out-of-Session. | | | |
| Agenda item 13 – Action items | Responsibility | Target | Status |
| 15. Members to note/provide comments to this item out-of-session. | Steering Committee Members | 27 May 2020 | Completed |

| Agenda item 14 – Business Systems and Intelligence | | | |
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| This item will be covered Out-of-Session. | | | |
| Agenda item 14 – Action items | Responsibility | Target | Status |
| 16. Members to note/provide comments to this item out-of-session. | Steering Committee Members | 27 May 2020 | Completed |

| Agenda item 15 – Other Business | | | |
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| The Chair raised the matter of the contract for the Chair of the Risk Management Sub-Committee which ends on 31 October 2020.  The Steering Committee discussed the possibility of an extension to the contract of the current Chair, Mr Alan Millis. | | | |
| The Steering Committee: | | | |
| • Agreed that Wendy Craik would contact Alan Millis to discuss an extension of his contract. | | | |
| Agenda item 15 – Action items | Responsibility | Target | Status |

| 17. | Contact Alan Millis to discuss an extension to his current contract as Chair of the RMSC. | Chair | 30 June 2020 | Completed – extension being progressed. |
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The next regular meeting will be held on 21 August 2020.  Members will be advised on duration and venue for the meeting closer to the time due to COVID-19.

The meeting closed at 1.00pm.