



## Meeting minutes

### Canberra Environmental Biosecurity Roundtable 2017

#### Summary of main discussion

##### Item 2 – Welcome

Jo Laduzko (Host), from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, welcomed all attendees to the event and outlined the program for the day.

##### Item 3 – Action items – Jo Laduzko, Assistant Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources

Action items have been well progressed with all items either completed or ongoing.

##### Item 4 – Terms of Reference (TOR) – Jo Laduzko, Assistant Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources

The TOR were presented to the room.

There was discussion on how to get people to attend and present at the roundtable meetings. One idea was to include environmental stakeholders in the regional biosecurity roundtable meetings. Attendees noted they would like to more influence on the agenda.

Attendees were asked to vote on acceptance of the TOR. **TOR were endorsed by overwhelming majority of attendees.**

##### Item 5 – Biosecurity system overview and updates – Jo Laduzko, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources; Paul Murphy, Department of the Environment and Energy (DoEE); Andrew Cox, Invasive Species Council.

##### Jo Laduzko, Assistant Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources

- The biosecurity system involves prevention activities to detect, respond to, and manage pests and diseases.
- The complex opportunities for import pathways (deliberate and accidental) are high.
- International obligations mean zero risk is not possible.
- 2015-16 statistics on interceptions demonstrate the need to remain vigilant.
- Xylella case study; Xylella was difficult to detect, there was a broader role of community in helping detect and control potentially affected species in Australia.
- Trade and passenger movements continue to increase; however, resourcing constraints continue.
- Ever changing and broad mega-trends mean the department needs to be flexible and in how we approach biosecurity risk.
- Biosecurity understanding is lacking, even in some key sectors, and this can lead to compliance issues.
- We need to look at empowering some groups to do more.
- Biosecurity space is not static – lots of revitalisation of regulatory framework (Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity (IGAB) review and National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement review (NEBRA), national research and development priorities, weeds and pest animals strategies, Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper). There are enormous opportunities due to white paper - however, funds are time bound.

## Summary of main discussion

- IGAB review is a roadmap. Recommendations from this and NEBRA review will need to be worked through together with all stakeholders.
- We can be most effective through shared responsibility where we try to work together and align interest for individuals, business and government. Whole of system approach is needed more than ever by:
  - better prioritisation of research, development and extension(RD&E)
  - everyone playing their part
  - increasing focus on pre and post border activities
  - greater focus on risk awareness, preparedness and surveillance.
- We want to better engage industry and the broader community through:
  - clearer, more consistent and accessible information and support
  - having better environmental and peri-urban outcomes
  - encouraging farmers in surveillance and reporting
  - better opportunities to participate in decision-making
  - supporting industry to hold members to account for non-compliance.

### **Paul Murphy, Assistant Secretary, Department of the Environment and Energy**

- The Department of the Environment and Energy:
  - supports the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources' role in biosecurity and seeks to highlight the importance of environmental biosecurity
  - is looking forward to the results of the National Stocktake of Environmental Biosecurity Activities
  - manages a lot of properties including Antarctica and Macquarie Island
  - receives funding from Landcare and are involved in eradication activities like yellow crazy ants
  - is judicious about its engagement as it has very few resources; participates in NBC and subcommittees, participates in reviews, has input into national plans such as Ausvetplan and Marine pest plan
  - has been developing baits for feral cats; after 20 years of development we are now starting to commercialise the Curiosity® broadscale, humane feral cat bait
  - has prepared 14 threat abatement plans since 2014
  - worked closely with the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources on the tramp ant plan
  - relies on the plant assessments done by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources. Live animals and plants cannot be imported unless they are on the live import list. There are new applications to this list every year

### Some discussion from attendees included:

- the challenge of prioritising environmental pests before they reach Australia. It was suggested that this gap could be filled by environmental agencies
- myrtle rust discussed as a case in point – some non-government organisations want more engagement around this
- IGAB and NEBRA review has highlighted the need for better resourcing of environmental biosecurity.

### **Andrew Cox, Chief Executive Officer, Invasive Species Council**

- The government's response to senate inquiry into environmental biosecurity was a significant event yesterday.
- Attendance at today's event shows a maturing in this area of environmental biosecurity.

## Summary of main discussion

- Everyone has a role in sharing and co-designing the system to manage biosecurity threats.
- State of the Environment report suggests that threats to environment are worsening.
- Environmental biosecurity impacts can not be measured in dollars, so it can be hard to describe and get buy-in.
- At pre-border there is:
  - good risk-based system in place
  - no systematic list of risks and priorities to the environment
  - opportunities for better governance through IGAB review, community surveillance, risk projects with secured funding.
- At the border there is:
  - some identified priorities such as bans on importing meat products, honey, seed which also serve to keep out environmental pests and diseases
  - opportunities – better governance, IGAB review, community surveillance.
- At post-border there is:
  - contingency planning, eradication and threat abatement plans
  - opportunities – better governance, easier triggering of NEBRA review, and targeted eradications.
- Currently there is no driver for environmental biosecurity preparedness.
- There are opportunities for community led monitoring, more biological control – particularly the transition to management phases post establishment of pests.

### Wrap up of morning themes

- There is an option for community focused and driven action, especially where national deeds cannot be invoked.
- We need to increase biosecurity resonance with community.
- There are challenges in controlling pests, while technology to eradicate catches up.

### **Item 6 – Update: Environmental biosecurity work the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources is undertaking – Elyse Herrald-Woods, Assistant Director, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources**

- There are unique challenges with environmental biosecurity.
- Increased interest in environmental biosecurity from variety of areas and the department acknowledges that a more strategic approach is important to build better relationships with environmental stakeholders.
- The department has concern regarding all pests whether agricultural or environmental – it is not possible to manage one sector and not the other.
- Environmental biosecurity is not an explicit agenda item on the NBC biosecurity roundtables; however, it did come through strongly.
- The Invasive Plants and Animals Committee Australian Pest Animal Strategy and Australian Weeds Strategy will soon be available.
- Response to Senate Inquiry on Environmental Biosecurity is available on the department's website.
- The IGAB review report is expected in July 2017.

## Summary of main discussion

- There needs to be an increase in understanding and strengthening management of environmental biosecurity. This could be done by:
  - joining environmental roundtables and NBC regional biosecurity roundtables
  - undertaking a stocktake of environmental biosecurity activities to report on environmental biosecurity activities and identifying gaps
  - prioritising environmental pests and diseases project.

### Item 7 – Morning tea

### Item 8 – Workshop: Encouraging community reporting – Karina Keast, Director, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources

During this workshop, attendees were asked to consider why people do not report biosecurity hazards.

Key ideas included:

- people don't know that something needs to be reported
- reporting might result in costs for person
- might not get the desired response when reported
- might be judged for letting the pest in
- don't know who/where to report.

Attendees then considered ideas to overcome these barriers:

- Don't be ill-defined – need targeted approaches
- Targeting children/educating children
- Citizen science apps – has to be easy to use and find and preferably some evidence that something has happened with info provided (e.g. Snap Send Solve – City of Sydney app)
- Competitions/prizes for reporting
- Messaging to focus on reporting if don't know what it is/it's odd (and need to incentivise this sort of reporting not treat it as nuisance)
- Need to demonstrate consequences to community. It needs to resonate with them.

### Item 9 – Presentation: Centre for Invasive Species Solutions – Andreas Glanznig, Chief Executive Officer, Centre for Invasive Species Solutions (CISS)

- Invasive Animal CRC is wrapping up and evolving into CISS.
- Some achievements from the Invasive Animal CRC include:
  - CRC provided stable funding model to develop new technologies that required medium term investment, such as new biocontrol agents and toxins
  - Ensured national coordinated approach
  - Created first rabbit biocontrol agent in 20 years (calicivirus)
  - 8 years of carp biocontrol research.
- CISS officially opens on Monday 3 July 2017
  - There will be two national priorities with four keys areas defined by a wide number of member industries.

## Summary of main discussion

- The scope has broadened to include weeds.
- Prospective members and partnerships of CISS include Australian and international governments, industry bodies, CSIRO and universities.
- Work covers off on all key points of the invasion curve and keen to sustain community engagement (e.g. digital citizen science).
- CISS will include five programs:
  - Incursions
  - Integrated land management
  - Biocontrol
  - Management systems and tools
  - Community engagement and education.
- Ongoing innovation needed to continue effective biosecurity risk management:
  - Innovation research has been identified as major driver behind success of pest animal strategy.
  - Innovation does not happen unless government, industry and community brought together.
- Environmental DNA testing is now cheaper and more sensitive for aquatic surveillance than other methods.
- Another key area of research is pathway risk analysis – next wave of risks including snakes, birds, spiders traded illegally.
- Genetic resistance is a big problem of biocontrol which requires a long-term view as the lead time is generally 10 years for biocontrol.
- Wild dog scan is a remote automated digital sensing system being used for wild dog alert project through facial recognition.
- It is important to maintain capability within employees. Our balanced researcher program has a high percentage of graduates remaining in invasive species space and this is considered an integral part of CISS in future.

### **Item 10 – Workshop: National Environment and Community Biosecurity RD&E Strategy – Dr Andy Sheppard, Research Director, CSIRO**

- National Environmental and Community Biosecurity RD&E Strategy:
  - was developed under Schedule 8 of IGAB
  - CSIRO was contracted to prepare the strategy
  - has been recognised by NBC
  - launched in 2016
  - needs to be owned and implemented by an agency or have an organisation champion.
- The strategy is intended to:
  - characterise and prioritise pathways
  - improve approaches to communications
  - develop detection and surveillance techniques
  - review eradication containment tools
  - increase public awareness of the impacts of pests, weeds and diseases and influence behaviours.

Questions/discussion of where to next with strategy:

- There are only indirect means of measuring if the strategy is working, as there is no implementation plan or strategy owner.

## Summary of main discussion

- Lessons could be learnt from the implementation of other strategies in other committees to design a low-cost alternative to the implementation recommendations.
- Ongoing environmental RD&E forum suggested.
- Make sure historic knowledge is not lost when trying to maintain or increase staff capability.
- Explore links to National Environmental Science Programme hubs – especially threatened species hub, marine biodiversity hub. Biosecurity hub for NESP suggested.
- There is an opportunity to raise as a priority under \$1.1b National Landcare Programme – there is a building community capacity component of this and public consultation occurring on the priorities in the next few months.

### Item 11 – Lunch

### Item 12 – Roundtable discussion: How to better communicate and engage on environmental biosecurity – Milena Rafic, Assistant Director, Department of the Environment and Energy

- Discussion on how we can better communicate and engage on environmental biosecurity:
  - The message on environmental biosecurity is getting out – there is more attendance at this forum and there is interest coming from new sectors.
  - Connecting on environmental biosecurity with farmers and industry needs improvement.
  - There is increased environmental NGO participation in decision-making on environmental biosecurity and in existing biosecurity forums.
  - We have to be smart about communication in order for it to be effective.
  - There is often a focus on pests that are already here with environmental NGOs, we need to work harder to move it to the left hand of invasion curve.
  - Positive ministerial government leadership is critical.
- Discussion around incentivising involvement:
  - Many people are looking for opportunities to contribute in the environmental sector.
  - Need to give them something clear to contribute to and provide them with feedback when they do contribute.
  - People value a clear view of leadership.
  - Wildlife Health Australia has become a sustainable model of leveraging a vast community of people – it is about getting the relationship management aspect right.
- Discussion around how to engage with corporate Australia, especially in contributing to costs where it is otherwise not a cost-sharing exercise:
  - Better engagement with corporations in environmental biosecurity is required when setting conditions under EPBC Act assessments.
  - There are cases of socially responsible corporates: BHP with Earthwatch (three-way split to fund bush blitz with DoEE), Chevron with Barrow Island.
  - RDCs bring in corporate funding.
  - Mining companies have environmental employees which could be engaged.
- Other discussions:
  - Ecological restoration sector should be engaged – Society for Ecological Restoration Australia (SERA) and Ecological Society of Australia.
  - There has been past research into community engagement but there needs to be a better plan.
  - State environmental agencies need to be better engaged.

## Summary of main discussion

### **Item 13 – National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement (NEBRA) – Karina Keast, Director, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources**

- NEBRA has been activated five times. Two of these have resulted in eradications and the remaining three are still in progress.
- A review of NEBRA happens every five years since signing of agreement (2017 being a review year).
- The current review emerging themes include:
  - increased involvement of environmental agencies
  - increased involvement of NGOs – fragmented groups can make engaging more difficult
  - increased transparency around NEBRA – providing info on what it is, how long it's been around, what its aims are and where to find information on it.

#### Questions/discussion:

- Off-deed responses do occur for some incursions that are not responded to under NEBRA e.g. red-witchweed.
- Discussion of similarities between biosecurity responses and first-responses to emergencies - use similar response arrangements e.g. Australian Incident Management System in first-response and Biosecurity Incident Management System in biosecurity response.

### **Item 14 – Event Wrap-up – Dr Rachel Melland, President, Council of Australasian Weed Societies**

- Thanked departments. As a group of environmental leaders we need to work out why we are here, in regards to what we can best achieve together, and how we can most efficiently improve environmental weed management and biosecurity in Australia for the long term.
- This forum will be help in continuing to build a network of environmental stakeholders.
- There is a need for ownership of a long term strategy and actions for weed biosecurity and management in Australia.
- The notion of shared responsibility can lead to no one taking responsibility or being accountable - but if we can agree on roles and responsibilities amongst a room full of leaders, and amongst other environmental leaders not present, then people and groups can get on board as part of a strongly lead system, and we can all have an understanding of who is accountable for what.

**Jo Laduzko closed the meeting.**

**The next meeting will be held on 16 November in Sydney.**

**Meeting close**

**Item 15 – Afternoon tea**