

National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement (NEBRA) Five Year Review



Submission from Pastoralists & Graziers Association of WA

17 March 2017

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The Pastoralists and Graziers Association of WA (PGA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the 5 year review of the National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement (NEBRA).

The PGA recognizes that the concurrent Review of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity (IGAB) being undertaken by the Department of Agriculture & Water Resources also addresses environmental biosecurity / NEBRA issues¹.

PGA Background:

The PGA is a non-profit industry organisation established in 1907, which represents primary producers in both the pastoral and agricultural regions in Western Australia. Members include pastoral leaseholders and freehold farmers through the full spectrum of some of Australia's largest corporate pastoral groups to family-owned companies and trusts and individual landholders in Western Australia. PGA primarily represents broad acre producers of livestock, grains and wool.

The PGA's core and guiding principles are self-reliance, property rights, free markets, competition, small government and reduced regulations.

PGA and Biosecurity:

Effective animal and plant biosecurity is of enormous interest and critical importance to PGA members. On farm production and the ability to trade produce, both domestically and internationally, could be partially or completely undermined by pest, weed or disease incursions.

PGA members are active participants in Australia's Biosecurity system in a number of ways:

- Financial contributors through numerous industry levy programs that help fund state and federal government biosecurity organizations, programs and activities;
- Participate as members of various state and national biosecurity governance bodies; and
- Plan, fund, implement and practice biosecurity measures as an integral component of their on-farm production activities and within their supply chains.

The PGA recognizes that the national biosecurity system has two major goals; one to protect agricultural production and the second to protect environmental values. The agricultural biosecurity framework is complex and well developed compared to the environmental biosecurity framework². PGA members are all contributors through compulsory industry levies and contributions to the agricultural biosecurity framework.

¹ The PGA has elected not to make a submission in response to the IGAB Review Draft Report.

² See Table 3 in W. Craik *et al.*, *Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity Review Draft Report*, 2016, p 34.

The disproportionate development of the two biosecurity frameworks largely reflects the historical importance of agricultural industries to state and national economies, as well as, the capacity of agricultural industries to fund biosecurity programs. However, the relatively poor development of environmental biosecurity governance and programs is a potential risk to agricultural industries. An incursion within the environmental estate has the potential to eventually impact on agricultural industries.

Consequently, the PGA does support improving the NEBRA system so the probability of detecting and eradicating environmental biosecurity risks is increased, thereby preventing them becoming a future threat to agriculture.

However, the PGA has a number of caveats. These include:

- An enhanced NEBRA system needs to be far more transparent and accountable than the current system;
- Businesses³ that economically benefit directly from the environmental estate should be approached to help fund an enhanced NEBRA⁴;
- An enhanced NEBRA is kept as Lean⁵ as possible to prevent agency growth and ensure maximum productivity⁶;
- A wide range of stakeholders should be considered as part of the surveillance network⁷
- Eradication programs should recognize and leverage off non-government control efforts.

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³ For example: tourism, real estate and bio-prospecting.

⁴ Analogous to how agricultural businesses fund non-NEBRA components of National Biosecurity system.

⁵ LEAN means creating more value for customers with fewer resources (<https://www.lean.org/WhatsLean/>)

⁶ The PGA believes that the IGAB framework is overly complex and could be Leaner.

⁷ This could include Pastoralists in remote regions of Western Australia.