



Meeting minutes

Sydney Environmental Biosecurity Roundtable 2017

Summary of main discussion

Item 1 – Welcome

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

Item 2 – Department of Agriculture and Water Resources update – Lyn O’Connell, Deputy Secretary

- The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources works closely with colleagues from the Department of the Environment and Energy.
- The national biosecurity system is facing a number of new challenges, such as the increase in trade and passenger numbers and new players getting involved.
- Agriculture Ministers recently agreed to provide significant funding for the eradication of red imported fire ants in south-east Queensland, which is an acknowledgement that it is better to address pests and diseases early rather than trying to manage.
- The Australian Government is investing \$15 million in carp biocontrol research – however, there will need to be a significant investment from all governments if there is an attempt to eradicate carp.
- The Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper has funded a number of projects with an environmental protection component, including funding of the Indigenous rangers program.
- Communication on environmental biosecurity can be instructional in advising people what they can and cannot bring into Australia, and why.

Item 3 – Department of the Environment and Energy update – Milena Rafic, Assistant Director

- The Department of the Environment and Energy (the department) is an active participant in the national biosecurity system and works collaboratively with the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources.
- The department is a member of the National Biosecurity Committee (NBC), and many of its sectoral committees, sub-committees and expert groups.
- The department made joint submissions, with the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, to the independent review of the capacity of the national biosecurity system and its underpinning intergovernmental agreement and the review of the National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement (NEBRA).
- The department provides advice on a range of environmental biosecurity issues; however, its primary role is in asset protection. One of its key roles, maintaining the live animal import list, is a significant prevention activity.
- The department is responsible for developing, reviewing and updating Threat Abatement Plans for key threatening processes.
- Other activities which the department is also involved in include:
 - eradication programs (e.g. on Macquarie Island and Lord Howe Island)
 - managing invasive species in parks and reserves

Summary of main discussion

- National Environmental Science Program (NESP).

Item 4 – Environmental biosecurity stocktake – Amy Donaldson, Assistant Director (A/g), Department of Agriculture and Water Resources

- The stocktake was referred to at the previous Environmental Biosecurity Roundtable held on 29 June 2017.
- The purpose of this session was to provide an update on the stocktake and provide some of the preliminary findings and seek attendees' input on their environmental biosecurity activities.
- Recently there has been increased interest in environmental biosecurity, following the 2015 Senate Inquiry into environmental biosecurity, the National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement (NEBRA review and the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity Review. Submissions to these reviews suggested that the government's environmental biosecurity activities and investment were not transparent enough.
- Earlier this year, the NBC agreed to undertake a national stocktake of government activities relating to environmental biosecurity.
- The national stocktake only captures information on government investment and activities within the 2016/17 financial year.
- Twenty four government agencies contributed data to the stocktake – and the data provided by each of these agencies was varied.
- The stocktake is not an exhaustive list of government environmental biosecurity activities – and is likely to be an underestimation of activities and expenditure.
- The stocktake used the broad definition of environmental biosecurity endorsed by NBC earlier this year.
- The data collected from the stocktake was divided into activities that had a direct environmental biosecurity benefit and a supporting environmental biosecurity benefit.
 - Direct environmental benefit included activities with an identifiable benefit and investment could be estimated.
 - Supporting environmental biosecurity benefit means those activities that have multiple benefits, the benefits to the environment are not explicitly specified.
- Of the activities with a supporting environmental biosecurity benefit:
 - 44% were in prevention activities such as pre-border and border activities
 - 47% were in management activities, which included the Indigenous rangers program.
- Both the direct and supporting benefits were largely in relation to the management and response end of the spectrum.
- One of the gaps that has been identified in a preliminary analysis of the findings is preparedness. However, there is a plan in place to address this gap.
- Attendees were invited to participate in the stocktake and provide their email to the department or email the biosecurity roundtable inbox to register their environmental biosecurity activities. An email has been sent to representatives who agreed to participate in the stocktake seeking input on their environmental biosecurity activities. It is intended that this information will be provided to the NBC along with the national environmental biosecurity stocktake. The Invasive Species Council asked whether they would be able to gain access to a comprehensive report of the activities captured in the stocktake.

Summary of main discussion

- Response – this will be up to the NBC, when they consider the report in 2018.

Action item: (completed, November 2017)

- An email will be sent to those representatives who agreed to participate in the stocktake seeking input on their environmental biosecurity activities. Once provided, it is intended that this information will be provided to the NBC along with the national environmental biosecurity stocktake.

Item 5 – Morning tea

Item 8 (item 6 and 8 swapped) – NEBRA Review – Karina Keast, Director, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources

- The NEBRA review was released in August 2017, and the report is available from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources' website.
- The report made 16 recommendations across four key themes:
 - Increased involvement of environment agencies
 - Increased involvement of non-government agencies
 - Enhanced transparency
 - Consistency with the plant (EPPRD) and animal (EADRA) deeds
- The NEBRA Administrative Group, chaired by Jo Laduzko, will be reporting on the response to the NEBRA report to the Environment and Invasives Committee and the NBC.
- The department will be seeking business cases for the role of NEBRA Custodian, a role which is currently performed by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources.
- Participants were asked to discuss three of the recommendations (5, 10 and 13) and share their thoughts.
- Participants indicated there was an expectation that the NEBRA custodian will be able to identify priorities, identify a framework for engagement with stakeholders and provide information to the community on their obligations and contribution.
- There was some interest in possible interaction with the NEBRA custodian. Some groups were also interested in becoming a signatory; however, it was noted that, for some groups, resources are limited mostly to community outreach, expertise and volunteer work.
- All table groups supported the concept of 'transition to management' for NEBRA responses; however, many noted that there should be flexibility (longer) for the 12 month timeframe.
- Many groups believed that transition to management activities should be ongoing and focus on ongoing containment.
- Groups could see themselves playing a role in transition to management activities through research and advice, sampling, surveillance, engagement and awareness building.

Item 6 – National priority list of exotic environmental pests and diseases – Dr Sandra Parsons, Director, Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES)

- The driver for this project was the 2017 Priorities for Australia's Biosecurity System report, which recommended the development of three priority lists, for animals, plants and the environment, which are to be developed by 2020 and reviewed every five years.

Summary of main discussion

- The definition of environmental biosecurity for the priority list is the definition endorsed by the NBC in May 2017.
- The vision for the project is to support a strong biosecurity system that safeguards our diverse and unique environment, ecosystems and social amenity through the development of a national priority list of exotic environmental pests and diseases.
 - The development of a national priority list is one mechanism by which we will try to achieve this vision. There will also be a range of other activities undertaken to help reach this vision.
- The purpose of a national priority list is one of the issues up for discussion today; however, some of the key purposes that the department has identified are:
 - to facilitate awareness and engagement with stakeholders – including members of the community
 - to understand those pests and diseases with high impacts
 - to provide information to support the development of response and preparedness plans
 - to enable targeting of compliance and enforcement activities to prevent the entry, establishment and spread of high risk environmental pests and diseases.
- The scope of the environmental list is much broader than that of the animal and plant lists – and includes species from a wide range of taxa.
- There are nine stages of the project, and each stage will inform the future stages.
 - We are currently in stage 2 which involves consulting and reviewing the literature and drafting a discussion paper.
 - The next stage will involve hosting an expert technical workshop to determine the prioritisation methodology.
- The list will build on existing work and not duplicate effort. There are a range of priority lists that already exist, or are being developed, and these will inform the development of this list.
 - However, work will also focus on whether there are any gaps – i.e. are any taxa not currently on any existing lists.
- Attendees were invited to nominate exotic pests and diseases that their organisation considers as a concern and of any relevant prioritisation methodologies that should be considered. Information was to be provided to environmentalpestlist@agriculture.gov.au.
- Participants acknowledged that the purpose of the list was to help improve our biosecurity preparedness and our capacity respond to an incursion.
- When asked what would define a priority influence to act on a pest, three main criteria were suggested: impact level, feasibility of eradication/control and risk of spread.
- Participants noted that the list would be beneficial because it would help focus resources to manage responses or fund research, and raise awareness and act as a conduit to communicate with the community and aid in detection and response.
- Dr Parsons requested that attendees inform their networks of this project.
- Following the workshop activity Dr Parsons took questions from attendees. Information given in response to the questions is listed below.

Summary of main discussion

- The national priority list will not just be looking at the species level, this is dependent on the particular pest and disease, in some cases it will be appropriate to include pests and diseases at the genus level. Vectors will also be considered. However, this will be determined by the experts involved in the process.
- The inclusion of specific pests and diseases on the list will not prevent or affect activities being undertaken in relation to pests and diseases that are not on the list. The list is simply intended to be a mechanism to target communication, investment and activities.
- The development of priority lists assist with the overall preparedness and response capability of the system – this has been the experience in the forestry sector.
- International priority lists, methodologies and species of concern are also being considered as part of this process.
- The list will exclusively address exotic pests, which includes pests that are currently subject to eradication programs – but it will not cover pests and diseases that are established in Australia.

Item 7 – Priorities for Australia’s Biosecurity System report, next steps – Jo Laduzko, Assistant Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources

- There were 42 recommendations in the review report, all of which are intended to strengthen the national biosecurity system over the next five to ten years.
- It is noted that the biosecurity system does not discriminate between environmental pests and diseases and pests and diseases which impact agriculture or human health – these are all dealt with regardless of what they impact.
- There were six recommendations specific to environmental biosecurity:
 - Recommendation 7 – formalising arrangements between agriculture and environment agencies
 - Recommendation 8 – including explicit commitments in relation to environmental biosecurity in the refreshed Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity (IGAB)
 - Recommendation 9 – Establish the position of Chief Community and Environmental Biosecurity Officer
 - Recommendation 10 – Establishing a Community and Environmental Biosecurity Committee
 - Recommendation 11 – Developing three national priority lists for plants, animals and the environment
 - Recommendation 12 – Driving and coordinating the implementation of a national environment and community biosecurity Research Development and Extension (RD&E) strategy.
- The final position on the recommendations will be subject to governmental agreement and will be set out in the consolidated national response to the review report.
- As stated in the report, there is a need to work smarter and more efficiently to deal with the new and emerging challenges that are, and will be, facing the national biosecurity system.
- We have made some progress on the recommendations to date:
 - The NBC have agreed to replace the Invasive Plants and Animals Committee with the Environment and Invasives Committee
 - The NBC has agreed to establish an industry and community advisory group to provide advice to NBC

Summary of main discussion

- The national environment and community biosecurity RD&E strategy has been developed and work is being undertaken with the NBC to deliver RD&E outcomes that support the strategy's objectives
- The development of a national priority list of exotic environmental pests and diseases has commenced
- Engagement on a national biosecurity statement has commenced.
- There was a question from the floor as to the Chief Environmental Biosecurity Officer. It was noted that the government's position on this recommendation has not been finalised.
- The development of a national biosecurity statement through a collaborative drafting process has been endorsed by agriculture ministers.
- The process for developing the statement was agreed at the National Biosecurity Forum
- The next steps for the development of the statement are based on this agreement are:
 - a biosecurity workshop, to be held in March 2018 to agree to a draft statement
 - open public consultation on the statement
 - endorsement of the statement by NBC and industry and community in accordance with the process agreed at the workshop in February/March 2018
 - release of the statement in mid-2018 along with the consolidated national response to the Priorities for Australia's Biosecurity System report and the refreshed IGAB.
- A discussion was held on the purpose, benefit, scope and content of a national biosecurity statement and participants were asked to give feedback in table groups on A3 pages about what information they would like to see (or not) in the statement. And how they think the statement should be worded. A summary of their written comments is below.
 - Our engagement needs to be more tailored to the environment sector and the community.
 - We need to simplify the language in which we communicate to stakeholders.
 - We need to clearly define what shared responsibility means and what we expect from the environmental sector.
 - We need to use images, videos and language that connect with people's emotions/values and describe the dangers and consequences from exotic pests and diseases.
 - Participants agreed that a roles and responsibilities table should be part of the national biosecurity statement.
 - The statement, as currently drafted, does not touch people's hearts and will be unlikely to motivate people to act. It was suggested that the current statement is drafted in the form of a cost-benefit analysis (i.e. how an economist would view the national biosecurity system), which may not be the appropriate message for a community document.
 - There was a suggestion that we seek to emulate New Zealand's strategy, which utilises the powerful message of 4.7 million biosecurity officers – which is inclusive and resonates with the community.

Item 9 - Lunch

Summary of main discussion

Item 10 – The risks and costs of exotic pests to Australian forests – Dr Angus Carnegie, Principal Research Scientist, New South Wales Department of Primary Industries

- There are three key issues:
 - The need to engage the forestry industry in biosecurity, and illustrate the benefits of biosecurity
 - The need to engage government in forest biosecurity – there is particularly a need to better engage environment agencies in forest biosecurity
 - The need for shared responsibility.
- From a forestry perspective, there is a perception that national biosecurity is too agriculture-centric.
- History of risk shows that there is a steady increase in non-indigenous forest pests establishing in Australia.
 - 15% of non-indigenous forestry pests have caused significant impact on Australian forests.
- Forestry pests pose an ongoing risk – there are thousands of interceptions of forestry pests and diseases and there has been a steady increase in the number of detections, which could be the result of improved surveillance but also more people, cargo and vessels entering the Australian border.
 - 50% of the pests detected at the border are found on containers.
 - 40% of pests detected at the border come from China and Japan.
- Modelling of the costs of forestry pests found that – for the Pine Wilt Disease:
 - prevention would cost \$350,000 per year
 - eradication would cost \$10-30 million
 - impact on timber production would cost \$65-110 million. This demonstrates the benefits of timely intervention.
- A National Forest Biosecurity Surveillance Strategy has been developed, which was funded under the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper. It identifies environmental agencies as a key stakeholder in forest biosecurity.
- This involved a collaboration between the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, Plant Health Australia, forest industry, states and territories and Forest and Wood Products Australia.
- The impact of myrtle rust has been significant and has resulted in the death of a large number of trees and changes in biodiversity and ecosystems.

Item 11 – Yellow crazy ant eradication program, Scott Buchanan-Wet Tropics Management Authority and Dr Lori Lach, James Cook University

- The wet tropics are a 900,000 hectare region from Townsville to just below Cooktown, which consist mainly of rainforest and is home to:
 - 40% of Australian bird species
 - 60% butterfly species
 - 29% of frogs
- The Wet Tropics Management Authority is a statutory agency overseen by an independent board. The authority does not own or manage land but is responsible for developing management plans and working with land owners and managers.

Summary of main discussion

- The wet tropics are a world heritage area and have been valued at \$5.2 billion per annum (direct, indirect and non-specific).
- The wet tropics is vulnerable to a wide range of biosecurity threats due to its climate.
- In the 2001, yellow crazy ants were discovered in Cairns port. These were able to be eradicated.
- There were further incursions; however, once yellow crazy ants were deemed ineradicable, the Queensland government ceased all treatment activity.
- In 2013, the Wet Tropics Management Authority sought funding from the Commonwealth government to address the issue of yellow crazy ants – however, in the time taken to approve the funding, yellow crazy ants had spread a further 300 hectares, which made them more difficult to manage.
- Learnings from this project have included that investing in community engagement has been very successful – as it affects livelihoods, ability to play in their garden – makes people motivated to act.
- The impacts of yellow crazy ants include:
 - formic acid sprayed by the ants causes burns and temporary blindness
 - the ants attack eyes and soft tissues of dogs and other organisms
 - ants reduce the productivity of sugar cane
 - potential to decrease tourism.
- The Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program has benefited from several community champions. The champions were non-government, had been directly affected by the ants and were able to achieve a higher level of trust among the community – they had an authentic voice and were motivated by having to live with the problem.
- Additionally, a community taskforce was spearheaded by a local environmental group that helped obtain funding from local businesses and crowd sourced funding (\$20,000).
 - 116 local volunteers participate in monitoring, surveillance and treatment
 - Community action reduces the time taken to intervene.
- The project also involved engagement with the Traditional Owners of the land to both utilise their knowledge of the land and improve the capacity of Indigenous rangers.
- An international map demonstrates that there is a persistent and ongoing threat of yellow crazy ant incursions from our near international neighbours.
- A yellow crazy ant reference group was also established which is a large group representative of all stakeholders involved in eradication – including representatives from the pest control industry, residential neighbourhoods, land developers, tourism, conservation, Natural Resource Management (NRM) groups, research and the Invasive Species Council.
- Actions have resulted in a reduction in the number of yellow crazy ants.
- Yellow crazy ants are also present on Christmas Island and in Arnhem Land, but Cairns is the only location in Australia where there are attempts being made to eradicate at the landscape level.
- There is also collaboration with other countries who are affected with yellow crazy ants to ensure a best practice approach.

Summary of main discussion

Item 12 – Using technology and data analytics to minimise the impacts of recreation activities and reduce biosecurity threats – Mike Welling, CEO & Founder, WEJUGO

- Tourism/recreational activities create the potential to create a large footprint over a short period of time.
- Over-tourism is a significantly global problem that affects:
 - degradation of the environment
 - biosecurity
 - cultural impacts.
- There are some key trends related to this:
 - Low cost airlines and accommodations have enabled increased tourism
 - Recreation technology has supported the global tourism trend, supported by the availability of low cost technology, virtual environments and an environment where skills are less important
 - Social media – enables instant sharing of information and mass destination marketing.
- There were 1.2 million visitors to Australia from China in 2016 (284% increase over the last decade); this number is expected to continue to rise due to the increase of middle class in China.
 - Tourism to Australia is influenced strongly by environment and culture.
 - There is a risk that increased outback tourism will increase biosecurity risks to farmers and the environment.
- We are currently part of the 4th industrial revolution which is based on a demand for services rather than manufacturing and which is driven by data.
- Global problems need global solutions such as the international and Australian national Leave No Trace program – these are to be determined through:
 - collaboration
 - involving the community to create behaviour change
 - simple messages that are personal
 - peer leaders.
- If we move to new technological solutions (e.g. electronic declaration cards) we need to make sure that any notifications are timely, relevant, appropriate, consistent and non-invasive. A range of technologies are required, not just a single solution (be where the market is at the right time – this is where WEJUGO API can distribute across many apps/platforms)
- Community may be able to help government determine who is represented within the community.
- There is an opportunity for biosecurity messages to be communicated at different points – e.g. at the point of purchasing travel equipment – to reach a broader range of the community and be tailored to their specific needs.

Item 13 & 14 – Future engagement on environmental biosecurity and event wrap-up – Jo Laduzko, Assistant Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources

Jo Laduzko from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources led a workshop on future engagement on environmental biosecurity. The session was focussed on getting participants' views on how they would prefer consultation and engagement on environmental biosecurity issues to take place. Opportunities for future engagement

Summary of main discussion

will be increased through the formation of a new Industry and Community Advisory Group which will provide advice to the NBC.

With regards to the advisory group, participants feedback indicated that an advisory group should:

- be representative and reflect the views of all sectors within the community
- share information openly and engage with stakeholders
- provide community assurance and source technical advice, and
- set reasonable expectations & terms of reference.

Participants were asked to vote on their preferences for engagement through the environmental biosecurity roundtables next year. The majority indicated that they would like to see two environmental biosecurity roundtables run again next year (separate from the NBC biosecurity roundtables). The benefits of environmental roundtables as described by participants were: an environmental focus, expertise, less agriculture-focus and representation. Groups that participants felt were under-represented at roundtable meetings included: Indigenous, recreational and NRM. Forty-seven percent of attendees said they would attend both the NBC National Biosecurity Forum and environmental roundtables in 2018. In regards to format of the roundtables, 41 per cent voted to have a similar mix of presentations and workshops and 55 per cent voted for more open discussion and question time.

Meeting close

Item 15 – Afternoon tea