

23 February 2017

Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity Secretariat
Department of Agriculture and Water Resources
GPO Box 858
Canberra City ACT 2601

Dear Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity (IGAB) Review Panel

ZOO AND AQUARIUM ASSOCIATION (ZAA) SUBMISSION: IGAB REVIEW DRAFT REPORT

Please find attached a submission to the Panel on the IGAB Draft Report regarding wildlife health, environmental biosecurity and the role of Australian zoos in national biosecurity.

The Zoo and Aquarium Association (ZAA) is the peak body representing the zoo and aquarium community throughout Australasia. The Association has 99 member organisations, primarily in Australia. Our role includes liaison with the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources on issues of animal health, biosecurity and importation of zoo animals. The ZAA employs a part time Veterinary Officer with responsibilities in these areas. The Australian zoo industry has a strong and active engagement in industry biosecurity as well as an active and longstanding role in environmental biosecurity.

Australian zoos are well aware of their biosecurity responsibilities; our industry has developed a robust "National Zoo Biosecurity Manual" <http://www.zooaquarium.org.au/index.php/press-releases/reference-materials/> and we provide training and advice to our member zoos on biosecurity issues. The industry, coordinated by the Zoo and Aquarium Association (ZAA) has worked with Animal Health Australia to update the AUSVETPLAN Enterprise Manual for Zoos <https://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/ZOO3.0-11-FINAL1Oct14-1.pdf>.

Both these documents, whilst primarily focusing on biosecurity within the industry sector, acknowledge and provide information and guidance on environmental biosecurity management.

Australian zoos have a strong influence on the environment, including environmental biosecurity, in a variety of ways, including:

- Zoos take in, treat and release thousands of orphaned, sick and injured free-ranging wildlife annually
- Zoos undertake post mortem investigation of individual dead wildlife

- Zoos investigate disease and mortality events in free-ranging wildlife, and provide input into health and biosecurity aspects of management of many free-ranging wildlife populations e.g. Tasmania devils, orange-bellied parrots, Bellinger River turtles
- Zoos provide safe isolation holding of confiscated exotic wildlife species
- Zoos participate in breed-for-release programs for threatened native species

Over **14 million visitors** attend Australian zoos annually, with over 600,000 students being formally educated each year through zoo programs. Zoos engage with visitors to promote community awareness and behaviour change, particularly in the areas of sustainability, conservation and environmental awareness. There is huge potential for zoos to engage with biosecurity agencies, to advocate more strongly on environmental issues.

Zoos play an active a role in wildlife disease surveillance, which forms an important part of environmental biosecurity, including, but not limited to, the national zoo-based wildlife disease surveillance program (www.zooaquarium.org.au/index.php/zoo-based-wildlife-disease-surveillance-pilot-project and <https://wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au/ProgramsProjects/ZooBasedWildlifeDiseaseSurveillance.aspx>) a cooperative effort by the ZAA and Wildlife Health Australia, and now in operation for almost seven years.

We would be happy to discuss this submission with you in more detail if needed and hope that our submission helps you with this important work.

Sincerely,



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ZOO AND AQUARIUM ASSOCIATION (ZAA) SUBMISSION: INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT ON BIOSECURITY REVIEW DRAFT REPORT

The zoo industry agrees that biosecurity is a very important part of our national framework and should be appropriately resourced and funded from national resources. Shortfalls in national biosecurity endanger human and domestic animal health, livestock and trade and perhaps most importantly, Australia's unique flora, fauna and complex natural ecosystems.

The zoo industry agrees that far greater emphasis on environmental biosecurity, and integration of these concerns into the wider biosecurity sphere, are required. Our industry feels that we have skills and expertise to offer in this area. We would suggest greater clarity around the term and scope "environmental biosecurity", as lack of clarity seems to have hindered processes in the past five years since the launch of IGAB. It appears that a "siloing" effect has occurred, with environmental biosecurity being seen as compartmentalised from animal and plant biosecurity, whereas in fact all aspects of the environment (whether introduced, production animals and plants, or native species and environments) exist in a continuum and interact on each other.

Australia's animal biosecurity processes are largely focused on livestock biosecurity, which we believe is a short-sighted and dangerously limited view of the situation. Concepts and practicalities in the biosecurity sphere should be widened to include all aspects of plant, animal and environmental biosecurity relevant to our country.

The Australian zoo industry has traditionally been expected to provide a "pro bono" role in environmental biosecurity, for example providing advice and services such as caring for, assessing and releasing wildlife, providing biosecurity and animal health advice to wildlife carers and threatened species biologists, assisting with wildlife disease risk assessments, responding to wildlife mass mortalities and disease outbreaks, and providing facilities and expertise to house and assess confiscated and exotic wildlife when seized by authorities. In many cases, until recently, there has been little support from government agencies or other sectors in this area. Whilst zoos are happy to continue to play a role in this area, we suggest that the need for such services should be included in an assessment of national biosecurity requirements, and such services should be appropriately provided by qualified and funded agencies, which may include zoos.

In particular, we support recommendations 8, 9 10 and 11 of the review report. In addition, the Zoo and Aquarium Association strongly endorses the submission of Wildlife Health Australia with respect to environmental biosecurity, and in particular the challenges associated with investigating and managing disease in the wildlife space.