



National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program (SEQ) Steering Committee  
Friday 10 December 2021  
Teleconference  
(AEST) 11.00am – 12.30pm

ATTENDANCE

Attendees	Wendy Craik, Chair Jo Laduzko, Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (C'wealth) Scott Charlton, Department of Primary Industries (NSW) Nigel Ainsworth, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (VIC) John van Schagen, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (WA) Marcelle O'Brien, Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (TAS) John Robertson, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) (QLD) Anne Walters, Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade (NT) Mike Richards, External Financial Consultant Jasmyn Lynch, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (ACT)
Observers	Malcolm Letts, Deputy Director-General/Chief Biosecurity Officer, Biosecurity Queensland, (DAF) Graeme Dudgeon, General Manager Brett Turville, Director Operations Jacqui King, Director, Invasive Plants and Animals Carmel Kerwick, A/General Manager, Strategy and Legislation Sarah Mitchell, Manager, Business Support and Governance
Secretariat	Sonia Marsanic, Policy Officer, Biosecurity Queensland
Apologies	Rae Burrows, Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (TAS) Nathan Rhodes, Department of Primary Industries and Regions (SA)

The meeting opened at 11.00am (AEST).



## MAIN DISCUSSION

The Chair welcomed members to the extraordinary Steering Committee meeting, noting Rae Burrows as an apology.

Malcolm Letts provided an update from the Agriculture Senior Officials' Committee (AGSOC) meeting held on 9 December 2021, regarding consideration of paper "National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program Steering Committee Recommendations on the Future of the Program".

AGSOC raised concerns in relation to clarity of recommendation (e). It was noted this was resolved by separating the recommendation into three clear parts:

- **AGREE** by (mid-February 2022) to bring forward \$95M of existing approved funding for the first year 2022/23 of a revised initial five year eradication program.
- **NOTE** that the details of the Program for the subsequent four years will be developed over the course of 2022/23 and presented to AGSOC by January 2023, with an estimate at this stage, of \$165 to \$200M per annum with detailed costings to be refined on the basis of further investigation, identification of potential savings and results.
- **NOTE** that the Program will be subject to annual review by AGSOC against specific stop/go triggers tied to Program KPIs with a major review after three years.

AGSOC agreed to all of the other recommendations without revision and provided support for the paper and acknowledged the stated timeframes. A decision from AGSOC is still required before an update can be provided to the Agricultural Ministers' Meeting (AMM) in early 2022.

Members discussed the integration of local government responsibilities and how this will be investigated and implemented, with strategic projects focusing on targeting hot spot areas. It is expected local government negotiations will require at least six months before responsibilities can be clearly outlined. It was noted the Program is currently working with the City of Gold Coast and Brisbane City Council, particularly for the Oxley Commons development, which will provide a range of fire ant awareness and collaborative benefits.

Members agreed the Steering Committee will need to consider new/revised KPIs for the next financial year, including some in relation to local government involvement and their triggers.

Malcolm Letts also provided an update on the progress of bringing forward funding and the 30 June 2022 budget. Following South Australia not agreeing to bring forward funds, there is a shortfall of approximately \$4M for the current financial year. Western Australia still has not provided an official response due to treasury processes, which was noted. John van Schagen is to follow up.

The members noted, pending the final shortfall, operational activities may need to be adjusted in the fourth quarter based on spending to date in the third quarter.

It was noted the Program will be pursuing funding for 2022-23, as well as the Task Force seeking funding and these will require submissions to the Queensland Cabinet Budget Review Committee.



Graeme Dudgeon provided an overview of the operational considerations that will be required this financial year. An update was also provided on the procurement status of the remote sensing cameras, noting there is a delay in obtaining the new equipment which would delay the planned scale-up of remote sensing surveillance in June 2022. Considerations pending the AGSOC decision will include how efficiently scaling up of the Program can be done, as well as how the Program's processes might change.

Malcolm Letts also noted the Program will continue with preparing a new cost-shared response plan and the Taskforce will need to prepare a response plan for 2022-23.

The Chair stated consideration needs to be given to the future structure of the Steering Committee and the governance structure which will require revision, taking the Taskforce into account.

The members also noted further planning should be completed regarding Option C, which will ensure there is no delay to the transition from Option A to Option C if a trigger leads to this in the future.

#### The Steering Committee:

- **AGREED** to the changes made to Recommendation (e) presented to AGSOC
- **NOTED** a decision from AGSOC is pending
- **NOTED** the need to consider new/revised KPIs for the next financial year, including some in relation to local government involvement and their triggers
- **NOTED** the \$4M shortfall for 2021-22 which may result in revision of the work plan and operational activities
- **NOTED** the Program will continue developing the cost-shared response plan and the Task Force response plan for 2022-23.

Action items		Responsibility	Target	Status
1.	Follow up Western Australia response to bring forward funding – currently not confirmed.	John van Schagen	Feb 2022	Update will be provided Feb Mtg.
2.	Draft KPIs and triggers for 2022-2023 financial year.	Program/ Task Force	Feb 2022	To be included in 2022-23 response plan.

The Chair noted the next meeting is planned for late February 2022.

Meeting closed 11.40am (AEST).