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National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program (SEQ) Steering Committee  
Thursday 14 July 2022

Online Teams Meeting  
11.30am – 1.00pm (AEST) / 9.30am – 11.00am (AWST)

MINUTES – EXTRAORDINARY MEETING 3/2022  
(FAST Draft Plan)

Attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wendy Craik, Chair</li><li>• Malcolm Letts, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (QLD)</li><li>• Jo Laduzko, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Commonwealth Government</li><li>• Scott Charlton, Department of Primary Industries (NSW)</li><li>• Nigel Ainsworth, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (VIC)</li><li>• John van Schagen, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (WA)</li><li>• Marcelle O'Brien, Department of Natural Resources and Environment (TAS)</li><li>• Miles Dixon, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (ACT)</li><li>• Nathan Rhodes, Department of Primary Industries and Regions (SA)</li><li>• Mike Richards, External Financial Consultant</li></ul>
Apologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rae Burrows, Department of Natural Resources and Environment (TAS)</li><li>• Anne Walters, Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade (NT)</li><li>• Andrew Langford, Director Strategy and Science, NRIFAEP</li></ul>
Other Attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Graeme Dudgeon, General Manager, NRIFAEP</li><li>• John Robertson, General Manager, Invasive Plants and Animals (QLD)</li><li>• Eddie Jebreen, Director, FAST, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (QLD)</li><li>• Chris Hollingdrake, Manager, Communication and Engagement, NRIFAEP</li><li>• Maria Hauff, Principal Engagement Officer, FAST, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (QLD)</li></ul>
Observers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Andrew Bishop, Department of Natural Resources and Environment (TAS) on behalf of Rae Burrows</li></ul>
A/Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kiri Funnell</li></ul>

The meeting opened at 11.30am (AEST).

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## Introduction

QLD member, Malcolm Letts (Acting Chair), obtained agreement from all members to act as an Independent Chair in Wendy Craik's partial absence for the meeting.

Introductions:

- new Secretariat to replace Camilla Wakefield – Kiri Funnell, Senior Policy Officer for the National Red Imported Fire Ant Program (NRIFAEP)
- new member to act as proxy for Jasmyn Lynch (ACT) until 16 September 2022 – Miles Dixon, Assistant Director, Invasives, Biosecurity and Agriculture Policy of the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate for the ACT Government
- new Director, Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce (FAST) - Eddie Jebreen, previous Director, Assessment and Monitoring for Fisheries and Forestry.

Declarations of interest:

- Acting Chair requested John Robertson be appointed as Acting QLD member for the meeting – no objections received
- John Robertson has been replaced on the Steering Committee to separate Governance arrangements for the eradication program (Program) and FAST, given the Director FAST reports to John's role as General Manager, Invasive Plants and Animals (QLD)
- Malcolm Letts (QLD), Nathan Rhodes (SA) and Rae Burrows (TAS) are members of the National Biosecurity Committee (NBC). Acting Chair advised that the Steering Committee will be making significant recommendations to the NBC regarding the future of the Program. It is important for Steering Committee members to engage closely with their NBC representative to ensure they are briefed on the advice and recommendations provided by this committee.

Meeting objectives:

- discuss the various key elements of the feedback received from the Steering Committee to the FAST Draft Plan
- determine key points for discussion and resolution at the workshop planned for Day 2 of the next Steering Committee meeting in August, particularly in relation to the interface between the eradication program and the FAST program.

The aim of the workshop in August is to contribute to formulating a plan that meets the needs of cost share funding partners.

## Context

Origins of FAST:

The independent evaluation recommended that work be undertaken to suppress the fire ant population in the non-eradication areas within the overall eradication zone, to:

- reduce the risk of spread from high infestation areas back into the eradication zone and beyond
- make the task of eradication more achievable once the eradication activity moved to that area
- reduce the circle of eradication.



#### Context:

The Acting Chair met with Terry Hill, Acting Director-General of Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) who suggested incorporating pre-eradication in with suppression to minimise the risk of movement outside high infestation areas. More emphasis will be placed on pre-eradication in future.

Points raised in the discussion included:

- eradication is a shared responsibility across governments, industry, and the community and this will become increasingly relevant as eradication activity moves into urban areas
- the suppression and eradication programs operating alongside each other creates some challenges including messaging and task allocation while taking advantage of learnings from the eradication program; clear governance arrangements are critical.

#### Feedback:

From the feedback received by Steering Committee members, key areas were identified for discussion, to be explored further at the workshop:

##### 1) Eradication Program responsive treatment transition to Queensland

Discussion included the following points:

Responsive treatment detracting from priorities and performance within the eradication program, and the allocation of costs associated with treatment in the suppression area.

Whether resources are adequate for a single responsive team from the eradication program to undertake responsive treatment in the suppression area at cost to the suppression program and its impact on eradication program resources.

FAST would initially struggle to manage the large responsive program in its entirety. The possibility of transitioning responsive treatment in the suppression area over to FAST will be explored.

Resources for the eradication team are already stretched; it may be necessary to contract out response treatment to third parties while investigating cost recovery from householders and industry groups.

##### 2) Prioritising FAST treatment areas – criteria

Criteria include high infestation areas, distance from the containment boundary and the decision process needs clarity. FAST intends on working with the Program to understand the Program's priorities in targeting areas for pre-eradication within the suppression area.

Targets and KPIs for performance may differ for pre-eradication compared with an engagement, self-management and suppression approach.

*(The Chair joined the meeting during this part of the discussion and agreed the Acting Chair to continue chairing the meeting).*

##### 3) FAST performance reporting



Determining metrics for adequate levels of suppression and monitoring the success of the FAST program is required. For boundary suppression, on-ground reduction in infestation rates may be appropriate. For self-management, rates of engagement, uptake, in-kind support from landholders and uptake of strategies for transitioning to self-management may be appropriate.

Self-management might be encouraged through reporting infestation and density of infestation by suburb as it may encourage landholders, who may encourage their neighbours, to participate in self-treatment to retain property value.

Alternative bait distribution and surveillance mechanisms like drones, are being investigated for use in highly urbanised areas. This work provides opportunity for a more effective biological operational model to transition areas from suppression to eradication, but it also highlights the importance of social buy-in.

#### 4) FAST financial accountability

FAST will establish a model that enables tracking of activity and cost allocation which is employed contemporaneously with activity.

#### 5) Eradication Program compliance

FAST will struggle to take on compliance at this stage.

Cost share partners are concerned about potential dilution of resources for the eradication program if the Program undertakes compliance activity on behalf of FAST. Self-management may provide an incentive for voluntary compliance as a sales benefit; the development sector will need to be engaged.

Regulations as well as potential schemes like a RIFA property index, will be helpful. Vic has a noxious weed incentive plan which leads to local council rate reductions. There is also potential to work more closely with organisations such as Urban Development and the Property Developers Council, given the correlation between infestation and property development.

#### 6) Risk management

This includes labour and procurement across both programs, e.g., procurement delays leading to issues purchasing bait.

### Next steps:

#### 1) Determining the long-term plan for eradication from urban areas?

The current assumption is that a very high rate of compliance and a mechanism to incentivise householders to check their backyards and report that back are necessary.

#### 2) Who is the intended target audience for the current FAST Draft Plan?

This plan will be endorsed by the FAST taskforce and used to implement FAST, but the target audience is:

- the Steering Committee and jurisdictions
- the FAST taskforce which includes local government, other Queensland Government departments and key stakeholders, chaired by the Director-General.



The Chair advised the FAST program needs to be finalised within the next six months. The Steering Committee needs to be comfortable with the FAST program. Reporting and reviewing arrangements between the two programs need agreement in advance.

A brief explaining governance reporting arrangements etc between both programs was requested by the Chair.

### 3) Draft Response Plan

On the agenda for discussion at the next Steering Committee meeting, including both the eradication program and the FAST program with one session focused on the 2022-23 Work Plan and another session focused on the 2023-27 Response Plan.

## Other business:

### Operational review:

KPMG have been engaged to review the Program for maximum efficiency, who will interview various people including the Chair of the Steering Committee and other members if you wish to participate. An initial report is expected within six weeks with a final report by the end of September.

### Recruitment:

The Chair has approved approximately 80% of requests for recruitment for the ramp-up, mostly in operations. The operational review may identify some cost savings. This will not affect the labour required to carry out treatment.

The new Executive structure over the Program has been approved to fill three SES level vacancies within Biosecurity QLD.

Andrew Langford, Director of Strategy and Science (NRIFAEP) has replaced Andrew Turley. Dan Smith, Program Manager (NRIFAEP) will be managing the ramp-up and he will update the Steering Committee at the next meeting on the progress.

### Steering Committee member recommendation:

The Steering Committee Chair recommended all members consider Bronwyn Harch as a potential Steering Committee member. She was the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President of Research and Innovation for the University of Queensland.

## Workshop items

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| 1. | Responsive treatment - transition to Queensland <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Propose a FAST program structure to maximise eradication efforts</li><li>• Cost recovery.</li></ul> |
| 2. | Prioritising FAST treatment areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Criteria for prioritising responsive treatment.</li></ul>   |
| 3. | FAST performance reporting  |



Workshop items	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is considered adequate levels of suppression?</li> <li>• What metrics will be used to monitor success of the program, examples to be provided.</li> </ul>
4.	Financial accountability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will shared resources be tracked?</li> </ul>
5.	Compliance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impacts on the eradication program</li> </ul>
6.	Risk management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labour resources</li> <li>• Procurement delays.</li> </ul>

Action items	Responsibility	Target	Status
1. Targets and KPIs for reporting	FAST	Nov 2022	Closed (August workshop)
2. Determine the operational delivery model	FAST / Program	Nov 2022	Closed (August workshop)
3. Establish a model to track and report on in-kind contributions	FAST	Nov 2022	On-going
4. Liaise with Finance to discuss requirements for tracking and reporting in-kind contributions	FAST	Nov 2022	On-going
5. A brief that explains the relationship between the eradication program and FAST and how they will operate alongside each other	FAST	Nov 2022	Closed (August workshop)
6. Final FAST Plan within six months	FAST	Nov 2022	On-going

Meeting closed 13.00pm (AEST).