
2020-21 Declared Pest Rate consultation

The 2020 Declared Pest Rate consultation concluded on 29 June 2020.

Consultation outcomes

Statistical overview

The 2020 consultation process for the Declared Pest Rate (DPR) has provided useful feedback for both the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (Department) and Recognised Biosecurity Groups (RBGs). Consultation concluded on 29 June 2020.

Before determining a rate, the Minister for Agriculture and Food is required to consult with owners of the land to be rated, as described in the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management (Declared Pest Account) Regulations 2014 (the Regulations).

The annual process for consultation enables the Department and RBGs to gauge landholder perception on RBG operations in general, and the proposed declared pest rate in particular. This information is used to make improvements to the processes of developing and delivering group operational plans.

The Department received 174 submissions across all 14 RBGs proposing a rate. This represents a response rate of 0.7 per cent from 22,123 landholders.

The response rate from landholders who received individual letters was low, with only 18 submissions received from these areas. The majority of submissions were from areas where letters were not sent and were received in response to the published Public Notice.

Issues raised have been grouped into three main themes – Objection to the rate, Governance and Community based approach. Responses to each of these themes are provided below.

The Kimberley Pilbara Cattlemen's Association, Shire of Murray, Serpentine Jarrahdale and Boyup Brook shires were the only organisational submissions. All others were from individual landholders.

Submissions were classed as either 'supportive', 'not supportive' or 'neutral' of the proposed DPRs.

The overall results are shown in the tables 1 and 2, below.

Note: 1,907 individual letters inviting comment were sent to landholders in the Northern, Carnarvon Rangelands, Central Wheatbelt and Midlands Recognised Biosecurity Group areas. Landholders in the remaining areas were invited to comment through advertising of the Public Notice. 83 returns were received, of these, 60 were from the Midlands RBG area. The Department will continue to work with the seven Local Governments in that area to update those landholder's details.

Table 1 – Overall responses

Response	Number of submissions received
Supportive	6
Not supportive	154
Neutral	14
Total	174

Table 2 - Responses by RBG

RBG	Supportive	Not supportive	Neutral	Total responses
Blackwood Biosecurity Inc. (BBI)	0	3	0	3
Central Wheatbelt Biosecurity Association (CWBA)	0	0	2	2
Leschenault Biosecurity Group (LBG)	0	0	0	0
Northern Biosecurity Group (NBG)	1	0	0	1
Peel Harvey Biosecurity Group (PHBG)	1	77	4	82
Southern Biosecurity Group (SBG)	0	0	0	0
Eastern Wheatbelt Biosecurity Group (EWBG)	2	0	1	3
Pilbara Regional Biosecurity Group (PRBG)	0	0	0	0
Carnarvon Rangelands Biosecurity Assoc. (CRBA)	0	2	0	2
Esperance Biosecurity Association (EBA)	0	0	0	0
Meekatharra Rangelands Biosecurity Assoc. (MRBA)	0	0	0	0
Goldfields Nullarbor Rangelands Biosecurity Assoc. (GNRBA)	0	0	0	0
Kimberley Rangelands Biosecurity Assoc. (KRBA)	0	1	0	1
Midlands Biosecurity Group (MBG)	1	7	5	13
Not attributed to an RBG*	1	64	2	67
Total	6	154	14	174

*submission did not provide address to attribute to local government or RBG.

Themed response to comments received

174 submissions were received, identifying 257 issues. The Department has grouped the submissions into three main themes and provided responses below.

1. Objection to the rate

It appears in some areas there is still some resistance to the rate and a community based approach for pest management. Correspondents objected to being required to pay for work on someone else's land when they manage or control pests and weeds on their own land or don't have declared pests or weeds on their land.

These comments suggest these respondents don't see value in paying a Declared Pest Rate or don't fully understand the RBG model.

Response

The introduction of a Declared Pest Rate in the State's Southwest has been a significant change in how pest management services are delivered. It is not unexpected that there is resistance to change.

Landholders both private and public are required under the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007 (BAM Act) to control declared pests on their land.

The formation of groups in Western Australia does not replace individual private or public landholder responsibilities to control declared pests on their land under the BAM Act. Instead it provides a way to fund programs and activities that add value to individual landholder responsibility through coordinated group effort.

The Department will continue to promote and build a better understanding of the community based approach both through the RBGs and directly with landholders.

RBGs also provide community opportunities to have input. Landholders can and are encouraged to contact their local RBG direct to learn more about what services the groups offer and how they can be involved.

2. Governance

A number of respondents expressed concern with access to RBG operational plans and questioning a lack of transparency.

Response

Expenditure on delivering operational plans is detailed in RBG annual reports and audited financial statements, which are submitted to the Department and published on the Department's website and tabled at each RBG's own Annual General Meetings (open to the public).

RBG activities are always intended to enhance and complement landholder efforts, not replace them. Where landholders don't have the skills or motivation to carry out pest management, RBGs may allocate funds to activities other than on-ground control, such as training and education. The circumstances for each RBG vary, and therefore their modus operandi and activities will not be the same.

The Department will continue to work with RBGs and the community to address landholder concerns relating to governance and transparency of RBG operations.

A coordinated approach also requires synchronised participation by all land managers including Local and State Government. RBGs work with government agencies to ensure they are involved in a coordinated response to priority declared pests.

Success of the RBG model is dependant of landholders seeing value. The Department will work with RBGs to reinforce that pest management can be challenging for individual landholders when the species is widespread, and is best addressed when the community, industry and government work together. In line with the principle of shared

responsibility, and to support landholders meet their obligations under the BAM Act, the WA Government matches all funds raised via the Declared Pest Rate – doubling the amount available for each RBG for use in their area.

3. Community based approach

Responses indicated some landholders preferred a government led model driven by regulation and compliance for the management of declared pests.

Response

Traditionally, governments across Australia have committed significant resources to address the consequences of pests and diseases, and have operated across the biosecurity continuum. This was an enforcement approach led by government requiring a high level of staff time and resources. In Western Australia, the former Agricultural Protection Board (APB) adopted this approach and had over 300 staff to do so.

Given resources available to governments at all levels are limited, a more strategic approach is adopted. The Department is responding by setting priorities for declared pests based on risk of impact criteria and the position on the generalised invasion curve, and by requiring a community coordinated approach be adopted for widespread and established pests that transgress property boundaries.

Consistent with change in other jurisdictions, the Department is:

- moving away from a traditional, heavy reliance on enforcement as a means to manage the impacts of established pests;
- placing a greater emphasis on utilising other tools and assisting industry/community to better manage the impacts themselves; and
- working more collaboratively with those stakeholders directly affected by or who are responsible for the control of established pests.

For industry and community stakeholders, this provides an opportunity to:

- identify and implement the most appropriate means by which to manage the impacts of established pests that affect their assets and businesses; and
- operate more closely in partnership with government and at a landscape scale.

The Department applies regulatory procedures for compliance enforcement under the BAM Act that support a community based approach.

The management of established pests and diseases is a shared responsibility between landholders, community, industry and government.

Summary

The management of established pests and diseases is a shared responsibility between landholders, community, industry and government.

While individual landholders have the responsibility to control declared pests on their land, collaboration between all stakeholders can improve the effectiveness of programs to manage established pests.

The RBG model is based on a community coordinated and led approach, which is nationally recognised, and is successfully used to effectively manage widespread and established pests. This approach provides an opportunity for landholders and groups of landholders to form community groups (that can become RBGs), to identify and manage those pests that most affect enterprises and the environment particular to their region.

The RBG model does not replace a landholder's (including Local, State and Commonwealth Government land managers) obligation to control declared pests under the BAM Act. The success of a RBG is dependent on

landholder participation.

The Department will continue to improve understanding of the model through engaging with stakeholders. The Department will also continue work with RBGs to address issues raised during the consultation process.

For more information, including FAQs, visit <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/bam/recognised-biosecurity-groups> .



Important disclaimer

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