

2021-22 Declared Pest Rate consultation

Consultation outcome for the 2021 Declared Pest Rate. This is an annual process to gauge landholder perception on the DPR and RBG operations.

Consultation outcomes

Statistical overview

The 2021 consultation process for the Declared Pest Rate (DPR) has provided useful feedback for both the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (the Department) and Recognised Biosecurity Groups (RBGs). Consultation concluded on 16 May 2021.

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 the DPR in particular, and RBG operations in general. This information is used to inform decisions regarding the DPR and make improvements to the processes of developing and delivering group operational plans.

DPIRD received 85 valid* submissions across all 14 RBG areas with a proposed rate. This represents a response rate of 0.383 per cent from 22,187 landholders.

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.

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

The overall results are shown below.

Table 1 – Overall responses*

Response	Number of submissions received	As percentage of total landholders (22,187)
Supportive	12	0.054%
Not supportive	65	0.293%
Neutral	8	0.036%
Total	85	0.383%

*A small number of submissions that were incomplete or duplications were not included in the analysis.

Table 2 - Responses by RBG*

RBG	Supportive	Not supportive	Neutral	Total responses	As percentage of landholders in RBG area	As percentage of total landholders (22,187)
Blackwood Biosecurity Inc. (BBI)	2	1	1	4	0.085%	0.018%
Carnarvon Rangelands Biosecurity Assoc. (CRBA)	0	0	0	0	0.000%	0.000%
Central Wheatbelt Biosecurity Association (CWBA)	1	0	0	1	0.151%	0.004%
Eastern Wheatbelt Biosecurity Group (EWBG)	2	0	0	2	0.098%	0.009%
Esperance Biosecurity Association (EBA)	0	0	0	0	0.000%	0.000%
Goldfields Nullarbor Rangelands Biosecurity Assoc. (GNRBA)	0	0	0	0	0.000%	0.000%
Kimberley Rangelands Biosecurity Assoc. (KRBA)	0	0	0	0	0.000%	0.000%
Leschenault Biosecurity Group (LBG)	2	13	3	18	0.606%	0.081%
Meekatharra Rangelands Biosecurity Assoc. (MRBA)	0	0	1	1	1.235%	0.005%
Midlands Biosecurity Group (MBG)	1	0	0	1	0.103%	0.005%
Northern Biosecurity Group (NBG)	0	0	0	0	0.000%	0.000%
Peel Harvey Biosecurity Group (PHBG)	1	43	0	44	0.542%	0.198%
Pilbara Regional Biosecurity Group (PRBG)	0	0	0	0	0.000%	0.000%
Southern Biosecurity Group (SBG)	0	0	0	0	0.000%	0.000%
Not attributed to an RBG*	3	8	3	14	N/A	0.063%
Total	12	65	8	85		0.383%

*Not all submissions provided an address to attribute to a local government or an RBG area.

Themed response to comments received

102 submissions were received. After removal of duplicates and incomplete submissions a total of 85 valid submissions were left identifying 174 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 the concept of a community based approach for pest management. This objection also pairs with resistance to paying a rate for something they believe they are already doing. Other comments included frustration with neighbours for not controlling pests or paying a rate when they feel they have no pests on their property.

Response

The introduction of a DPR 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 actions and responsibility through coordinated group effort.

The Department will continue to promote and help 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 questioned how they can access RBG's operational plans and pointed out that this might lead to a perception that RBG lack transparency.

Response

Expenditure on delivering operational plans is detailed in RBG annual reports and audited financial statements, which are submitted to the Department. These plans are also tabled at each RBG's own Annual General Meetings (open to the public). The possibility of how this information could be provided more easily is also being investigated.

Success of the RBG model is dependent of landholders seeing value. The Department will continue to work with RBGs to improve how this value is demonstrated through improving the Declared Pest Rate – RBG model. The Department has commenced a project to Strengthen Community Action to Manage Declared Pests. This project was initiated in response to feedback from a wide range of stakeholders, and will provide an opportunity these stakeholders to inform how the DPR-RBG model could be strengthened, including its governance. Initial engagement has commenced with a comprehensive landholder and land manager pest management survey in July 2021.

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

Historically, 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) delivered this approach and had over 300 staff to do so, funded by State Government.

Given resources available to governments at all levels need to deliver best value for money, a more strategic approach was adopted a decade ago. The Department now sets 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 DPR-RBG model is based on a community coordinated approach and is 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 DPR-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 alongside the project: Strengthening Community Action to Manage Declared Pests