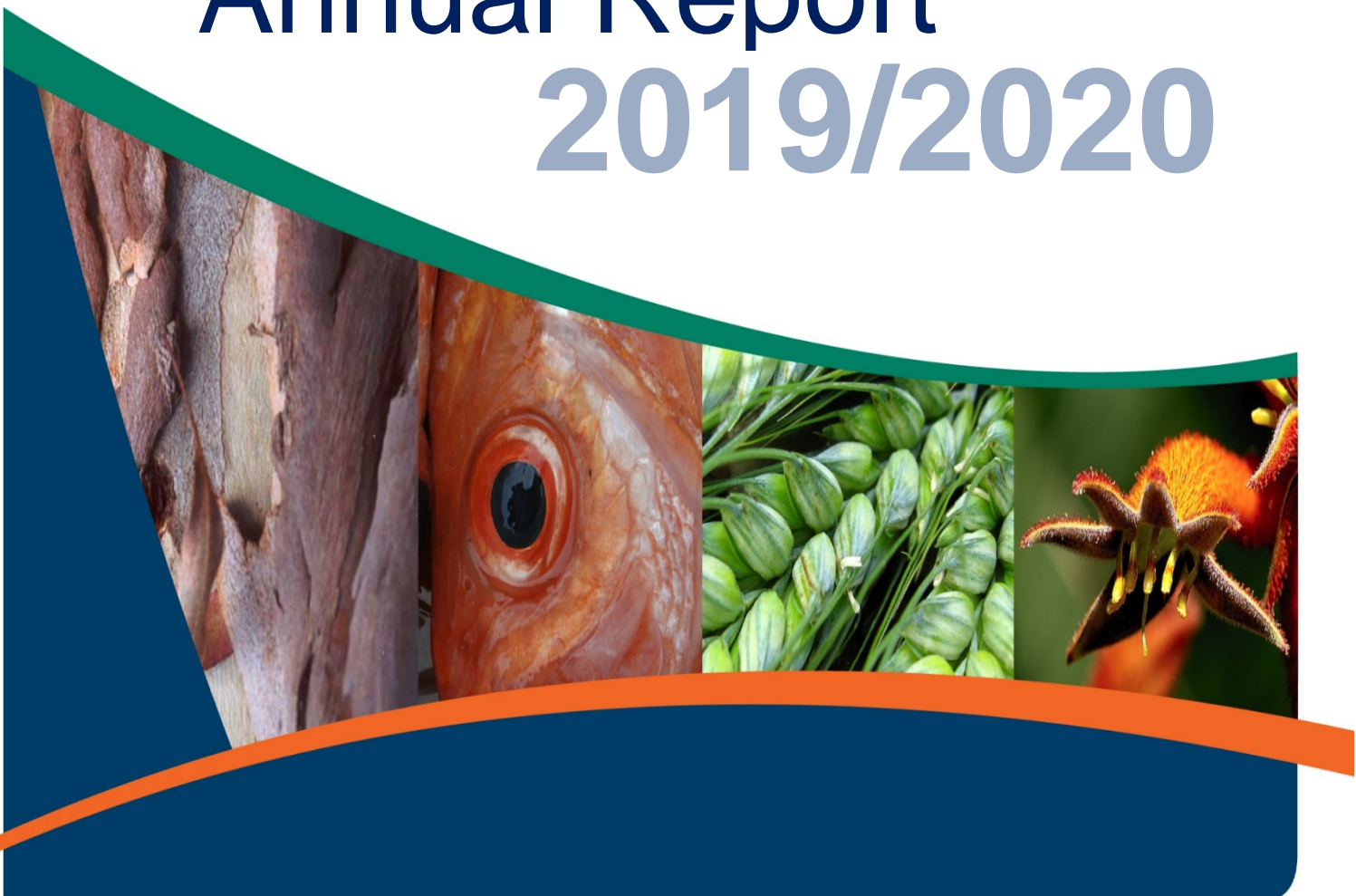




Biosecurity Council of Western Australia

Annual Report 2019/2020



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Images

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Chair's report

An effective biosecurity system is fundamental to Western Australia's economy, environment, social amenity and human health. Whilst our geographic isolation – an island within an island – provides us with a natural advantage, preventing pests and diseases from entering and establishing is a considerable task and an ever-changing challenge.

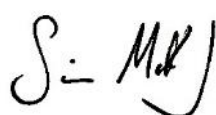
Over the past year, the Biosecurity Council has worked to develop strategic advice to Government to help secure Western Australia's biosecurity system. The system is complex, requiring decisive legislation, policy and processes, as well as participation from all Western Australians to make it work. It is also a science-based system that needs ongoing research and development to underpin its integrity and support prevention and preparedness activities into the future.

On that note, Council reviewed the status of, and gaps in, biosecurity research and development in Western Australia. Opportunities to strengthen biosecurity research and development were identified that, when implemented, we believe will deliver meaningful research and innovation to benefit the ongoing biosecurity of Western Australia.

We also worked on a number of other areas that highlighted the necessity of collaboration and cooperation on biosecurity. Biosecurity as a shared responsibility is a fundamental principle underpinning the Western Australian and, indeed, the national biosecurity systems – we each have a role to play in protecting our State and country from biosecurity threats. This includes cooperation, collaboration and contribution across and within Government, industries and communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought biosecurity to the fore for many Western Australians. The global pandemic has spurred public awareness and support for biosecurity objectives. However, it must not be forgotten that 'biosecurity' is much broader than human health – it is also the protection of our agriculture, aquaculture and forestry sectors, as well as our unique terrestrial and aquatic environments, from the negative impacts of pests, weeds and diseases. In fact, there are serious animal and plant diseases, such as foot and mouth disease and myrtle rust, that can impact our way of life – not unlike COVID.

With the heightened community awareness of the importance of Western Australia's biosecurity, there is immense opportunity to improve Government, community and industry cooperation, collaboration and contribution on biosecurity matters. Biosecurity is a shared responsibility and all Western Australians need to participate to ensure the resilience of our biosecurity system into the future.



Prof. Simon McKirdy
Chair, Biosecurity Council of Western Australia



The Biosecurity Council of Western Australia

Overview

The Biosecurity Council of Western Australia (the Council) was established in 2008 as a specialist advisory group to the Minister and Director General with responsibility for the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007* (BAM Act) – currently, the Minister for Agriculture and Food (the Minister) and the Director General of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD). Establishing a Biosecurity Council is a requirement of the BAM Act.

The principal role of the Council is to provide advice to the Minister and the DPIRD Director General on any biosecurity matter, whether referred to the Council by the Minister or Director General, or of its own motion.

The Council operates at a strategic level, with a long-term vision for effective biosecurity in Western Australia (WA) that considers national and international treaties and obligations. The advice provided by the Council is based on sound assessment and balances the needs of industry, community and government.

The principal role of the Council is to provide advice to the Minister for Agriculture and Food and the DPIRD Director General on any biosecurity matter.

Biosecurity matters on which the Council provides advice:

1. The requirements of a comprehensive and effective biosecurity system for Western Australia
2. Significant gaps in, or necessary improvements to, the biosecurity system
3. Opportunities to improve industry and public awareness and support for biosecurity objectives
4. Opportunities to improve government, community and industry cooperation and collaboration on biosecurity matters; and
5. Matters referred to the Council by the Minister or the Director General.

See Appendix A for the Council's instrument of appointment.

Membership

Current membership consists of the Chair and seven ordinary members. Membership is drawn from people who are experienced or actively involved in agriculture, silviculture, fishing, aquaculture, pearling or related commercial activities; natural resource management; environmental protection; or regional communities. Appointments are made by the Minister.

Prof. Simon McKirdy (Chair) has a long history in the biosecurity/quarantine area. He is currently Professor of Biosecurity at Murdoch University and Pro Vice Chancellor of the Harry Butler Institute. Prior positions held include the Biosecurity Science and Risk Manager for Chevron Australia and Chief Executive Officer of the Plant Biosecurity Cooperative Research Centre. Simon has worked on various biosecurity-related committees including seven years with the Plant Biosecurity Quadrilateral Scientific Collaboration Working Group, which included representatives from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States of America.

Ms Tina Thorne (Deputy Chair, until December 2019) until recently was the Executive Officer of the State peak aquaculture industry body, the Aquaculture Council of Western Australia. Prior to this position, Tina worked for the Department of Fisheries for more than 20 years with positions in the Regional Services Division, Aquaculture Program and Fish Health Section, and has broad experience in aquatic biosecurity policy, legislation, compliance and research. Tina has been appointed to

various Ministerial Advisory Committees, including the Aquaculture Development Council and the Rock Lobster Industry Advisory Committee.

Dr Regina Flugge (Deputy Chair, 2020) has a long history with natural resource management, including as a member of the Rangelands Regional Assessment Panel for the Natural Heritage Trust in the late 1990's. Regina has over 30 years of experience in environment and sustainable development roles and has worked in the education, government, not-for-profit and corporate sectors. Regina was Chair of Rangelands NRM, the largest natural resource management region in WA, to the end of April 2019. Regina's career includes substantial experience in the resources industry including 16 years in the Pilbara region. Regina also has a keen interest in environmental biosecurity following previous Ministerial appointments to the Conservation and Parks Commission, Conservation Commission of WA, Coastal Planning and Coordination Council and the Air Quality Coordinating Committee. In 2014 and 2015 Regina was a WA Finalist in the Telstra Business Women's Awards.

Mr Bradley Adams is a third-generation fisherman who has been involved in the commercial abalone industry all his life. Brad was a commercial abalone diver for many years and pioneered sea-based abalone culture technology. He is the founder and Managing Director of Ocean Grown Abalone Ltd, an ASX listed seafood company based in



Image 1. Timber plantation. Biosecurity is important for the ongoing productivity of Western Australia's timber and forestry industries.

Augusta. Brad has a keen interest in aquatic biosecurity as healthy marine ecosystems are essential to the future of sustainable fishing and aquaculture production of seafood. Brad was also a Director of the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (2009-2011)

and the Chair from 2011-2013. He currently serves as President of the Abalone Association of Australasia and is a director of the Aquaculture Association of Western Australia.

Mrs Michelle Allen (until December 2019) has a farming background and experience as a grain and livestock producer in the Northern Agricultural Region of Western Australia. She has been involved at local, State and national levels mainly in the fields of biosecurity, natural resource management and grains research and development. Michelle has 15 years' experience with biosecurity policy and regulation in WA, and served on the Agriculture Protection Board of WA (APB) for 11 years. The APB had statutory responsibility for the control and management of declared plant and animal pests in the State. During that time she chaired a Parliamentary Review of the WA Wild Dog Control Program. Michelle is an inaugural member of the Biosecurity Council.

Ms Nicole Batten is a Director of Batten Farms – an 8000 hectare broadacre grain and livestock property 500km north-east of Perth. She has worked in natural resource management and community development in the northern agricultural area of Western Australia for many years, and is a Councillor for the Shire of Chapman Valley. Nicole also sits on the Rabobank Local Client Council as well as the Grower Group Alliance board, and is the former National and State Chairperson for Partners in Grain (now known as Rural Edge). She is an Australian Institute of Company Directors member and heavily involved in her local grower group.

Dr David Bowran is a graduate of the University of Western Australia having completed his Bachelor of Science in Agriculture in 1978 and his Doctor of Philosophy (Agronomy) in 1990. David joined the WA Department of Agriculture in 1985 and spent 30 years working in a diverse range of roles with the Department. While primarily a Research Officer in the Weeds section for his early career, he went on to manage the Integrated Weed Management project and then became the Manager for the Grains program. David was also Acting Executive Director for Plant Industries within the Department for 15 months, with responsibility for Plant Biosecurity during that period. David has a strong interest in plant breeding, climate change and climate forecasting and how these disciplines interact in improving crop production. David currently has a small farm at York.

Prof. John Mackenzie has had a long involvement in biosecurity and global health security, with a strong background in human and animal viruses. Over recent years, John's interests have broadened to encompass global outbreak alert and response activities, including the development of international surveillance within the International Health Regulations, chairing the Steering Committee of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network and participating as a member of the WHO's Emergency Committee for COVID-19, instituted by the WHO Director General under the International Health Regulations. John is an advocate of the 'one

health' concept that recognises that the health of people, animals and the ecosystem are inextricably woven together. He initiated the international One Health Congress and is currently the Vice-Chair of the One Health Platform foundation. He co-wrote the proposal and served as the interim Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Biosecurity Cooperative Research Centre, was a member of the Commonwealth Biosecurity Advisory Council and has undertaken various consultancies for the Commonwealth Health Department and Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service.

Dr Kelly Pearce is a grain and prime lamb producer from Yealering in Western Australia along with her family. Kelly has had a 16-year career in Agricultural Research and continues to coordinate a number of regional science and innovation projects through her regionally-based business Wheatbelt Science Pty Ltd., and has recently taken up a position as a Research Fellow with the Australian Farm Institute. Kelly is also a Director of the Western Australian Meat Industry Authority, Grower Group Alliance and Farmers Mutual Limited, and a Committee member of the Corrigin Farm Improvement Group and the WA Sheep and Goat Industry Funding Scheme Management Committee. Kelly is a 2012 Nuffield Scholar and Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Mr Cliff Winfield is a third generation primary producer. He has held positions across the State in the Department of Agriculture and Department of Parks and Wildlife predecessors. He then moved to Manjimup to develop a vineyard and pulpwood plantation, and currently a citrus orchard. He has a long involvement in biosecurity management from local government, conservation agency and primary producer perspectives. Cliff is a keen advocate for community involvement

and using interpretation to communicate science objectives. Cliff is a Member of Manjimup Shire Council, a board member of the South West Catchments Council NRM, community member of the Geographic Names Committee, committee member of WA Citrus and a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

The membership of the Biosecurity Council is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of the terms of members of the Biosecurity Council of WA.

Name	Position	Expiry of term
Prof. Simon McKirdy ¹	Chair	30 June 2021
Ms Tina Thorne	Deputy Chair	31 December 2019
Dr Regina Flugge ²	Member/Deputy Chair	27 February 2021
Mr Bradley Adams ³	Member	30 June 2021
Mrs Michelle Allen	Member	31 December 2019
Ms Nicole Batten ⁴	Member	31 December 2021
Dr David Bowran	Member	27 February 2021
Prof. John Mackenzie	Member	27 February 2021
Dr Kelly Pearce ⁴	Member	31 December 2022
Mr Cliff Winfield	Member	27 February 2021

¹ Reappointed from 1 January 2020

² Appointed as Deputy Chair from 28 February 2020

³ Appointed from 20 April 2020

⁴ Appointed from 1 January 2020

Council activities in 2019/20

Overview

In order to develop constructive advice, it is important for the Biosecurity Council to understand the needs and challenges of industry, government and the community, and how changes to the biosecurity system might impact these groups. During 2019/20 the Council continued to monitor biosecurity-related developments at national and State levels and proactively engaged with industry, community and government on biosecurity matters. The key areas of advice that were progressed during the year were:

- biosecurity research and development
- border biosecurity
- the declaration of non-agricultural pests under the BAM Act; and
- recognised biosecurity groups and declared pest rates.

This section of the report documents the activities undertaken by the Council during the year.

Biosecurity research and development

Research and development (R&D) is crucial to managing WA's biosecurity risks and threats. There is, however, a perception that these risks and threats could be better recognised nationally to provide opportunities to access funding for R&D activities relevant to WA's biosecurity.

The Minister requested Council advice on opportunities to enhance biosecurity R&D funding in the State.

The Council engaged consultants to report on the status of, and gaps in, biosecurity R&D in WA and funding opportunities. A two-stage process was used:

1. A review of biosecurity R&D strategies and status reports at national and State levels
2. Consultation with a range of stakeholders involved in biosecurity in WA and interstate.

This information informed Council's analysis of the situation and its advice to the Minister, which was delivered in November 2019.

Through this work, it was highlighted that biosecurity in Australia is:

- a shared responsibility; and
- a science-based system that requires ongoing R&D to underpin its integrity.

With these in mind, Council concluded that WA needs to strengthen its involvement in the national biosecurity agenda. There are real opportunities to engage nationally and lead research and innovation that will benefit WA; however, to do this, WA first needs to clearly demonstrate its biosecurity science expertise.

Putting WA's science expertise and financial resources on the table will draw in more opportunities.

Council recommendations

Recommendation 1: WA, through DPIRD, establish, coordinate and drive a biosecurity R&D network across WA. DPIRD is in prime position to work with stakeholders to identify WA's biosecurity R&D priorities. Understanding the R&D priorities will enable DPIRD to drive the R&D agenda and, therefore, ensure meaningful biosecurity research and innovation that will benefit the State.

Recommendation 2: DPIRD establishes a baseline for its science capability that extends beyond 'response readiness' to engaging in

biosecurity research and innovation. An ongoing program of applied research and technology development is necessary for high-performing scientists to be attracted and retained in agencies, along with resourcing for them to engage externally. For WA to be perceived as an attractive R&D partner, drawing more opportunities to the State and taking strategic leads on national projects, it must attract and retain science excellence in-house.

The Council also identified seven opportunities to build WA's biosecurity science capability and enhance its R&D opportunities (Table 2).

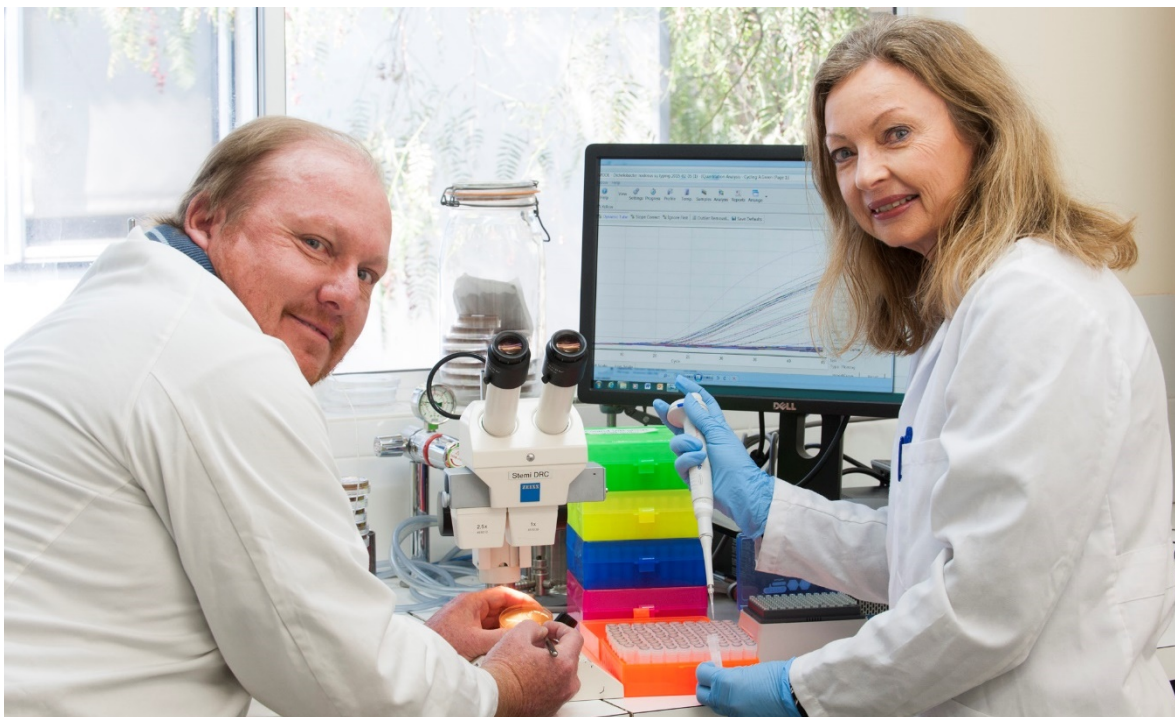


Image 2. DPIRD Diagnostic Laboratory Services staff testing new diagnostic methods for detecting livestock diseases.

Table 2. Opportunities for WA to engage in national biosecurity research and innovation, where WA has a comparative advantage.

Opportunity	Notes
<p>Tailor application of next generation sequencing to DPIRD policy and regulatory responsibilities, including validating emerging environmental DNA (eDNA) use by third parties. Engage with, and determine how the Australian National Phenome Centre can be effectively utilised for biosecurity</p>	<p>With DNA sequencing and ‘omics’ methodologies now widespread and affordable as a research tool, there is an ongoing challenge of how it is applied in a regulatory and trade sensitive environment. The new frontier of eDNA detection of invasive species is a particular challenge. WA has now opened the Australian National Phenome Centre, which is unmatched for capability in the southern hemisphere and arguably the world</p>
<p>Explore the possibility of a new collaborative entity in biosecurity risk assessment that commits to an ongoing risk assessment and prioritisation program suited to WA</p>	<p>While priority pest lists might usefully serve a national purpose, there is a widespread view that such lists have limited utility in WA. A better but not fully developed approach is to investigate and model categories of threats for a region/industry or the State</p>
<p>Explore how DPIRD can engage with: the National Biosecurity Committee working group’s national list of biosecurity research and innovation priority projects; relevant ‘innovation centres’; and with innovators in technology development</p>	<p>Biosecurity is on the cusp of a digital revolution. DPIRD has the opportunity to join this technology unfolding. This could be through direct partnerships, or it could be a role taken on by a State-based university</p>
<p>Accelerate the roll-out of MyPestGuide and consolidate this with a vision for strategic and targeted application to priority pest pathways</p>	<p>Among the various tools and apps in the name of citizen science, DPIRD’s MyPestGuide Reporter stands out. There is a larger, unfulfilled potential of the app</p>
<p>Commit science and resources for ongoing applied research in the areas of prevention, disinfestation and eradication techniques, for high priority biosecurity risks</p>	<p>This will help attract and retain quality scientists whilst also delivering positive biosecurity outcomes</p>
<p>Consider a small grants program that partners industry with innovators to transform biosecurity hygiene and control options</p>	<p>Research and innovation in the areas of prevention, disinfestation and eradication is very much in the industry’s best interest and largely a private good. This could be administered through the Industry Funding Schemes or as an ‘innovation challenge program’</p>
<p>Explore a collaborative program with national reach for research and innovation in safekeeping threatened native species</p>	<p>WA’s success at protecting native species from invasive plants and animals provides a strong foundation</p> <p>WA has a comparative advantage to lead nationally and engage globally, given the unique ecosystems and species that exist here</p>

Engaging in biosecurity research and innovation nationally will help build and retain WA’s science excellence – but it is important to be strategic in where efforts are placed.

Declared pest rates and recognised biosecurity groups

Issues around recognised biosecurity groups (RBGs) and declared pest rates (DPRs) continued to be raised with the Council by both individuals and organisations. The way the approach is being implemented is generating polarised views in some local governments/communities.

During the year, the Council prepared a paper to document the key issues relating to the DPR/RBG approach, based on its observations and understanding of how RBGs are implemented in WA.

The issues paper identified nine strategic issues relating to three key areas:

- Strategic intent of the DPR/RBG approach
- Implementing the DPR/RBG approach; and

- Operational issues relating to RBG operations, including pest management activities.

The issues paper, which made two recommendations, was provided to DPIRD in February 2020.

The Minister has since asked the Biosecurity Council to implement the recommendations.

Council recommendations

Recommendation 1: Undertake an independent review of the DPR/RBG approach, taking into account the nine issues identified in the issues paper.

Recommendation 2: Determine the return on investment for the State by undertaking detailed case studies (including benefit-cost analyses) on a number of diverse RBGs.



Image 3. Feral pigs feeding at a bait station. Feral pigs are just one example of the pest animals being targeted through recognised biosecurity groups.

Declaration of non-agricultural species under the BAM Act

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) raised concerns about the process of declaring non-agricultural pests under the BAM Act. In particular, DBCA highlighted that delays in making declarations was affecting its ability to undertake the actions necessary to address certain environmental pests.

Council spoke to key stakeholders to clarify the declaration process and challenges in relation to pests/diseases that have a primary impact upon WA's natural environment.

Recommendations were put forward by the Council to DPIRD and DBCA.

Council recommendations

Recommendation 1: Clarify the declaration process, including principles/criteria for declaration. This should be done collaboratively to ensure a shared understanding.

Recommendation 2: Ensure the Minister is aware that the Biosecurity Council (and others) are able to provide advice on declarations, in accordance with the BAM Act – if this will facilitate timely declarations.

Recommendation 3: The Biosecurity Senior Officers Group takes a more proactive role in working collaboratively to create multi-agency partnerships.

Recommendation 4: Provide opportunities for officers involved in biosecurity to actively engage and share intelligence around biosecurity issues. The goal is to create a more team-oriented and whole-of-government approach to biosecurity threats.



Image 4. Border checkpoint to stop and declare biosecurity risk material.

Border biosecurity

WA's long history of border controls and other biosecurity activities, coupled with the State's geography, has provided a relatively bio-secure State free from many pests and diseases found elsewhere in Australia. However, maintaining our biosecurity is becoming increasingly complex. With ever-increasing pressures on the border system, it is important that border biosecurity can adapt to the changing environment. Further, resource constraints mean it is more important than ever to ensure that border activities are being targeted in the most effective way.

Ausvet Pty Ltd were contracted to develop a draft report on WA's current border biosecurity system and ways that it may be improved. The draft report was reviewed and refined by a panel with expertise across plant, animal and aquatic biosecurity.

The Council are considering the report and expects to finalise its advice for the Minister and DPIRD in the 2020/21 reporting period.

Environmental biosecurity

During investigations of cross-agency collaboration, the Council identified a fundamental breakdown in situations where biosecurity actions span multiple State Government agencies – such as for environmental biosecurity. The reasons for this breakdown are complex. In late 2016 the Council resolved to further this work by looking at how environmental biosecurity is being addressed in WA.

The Council delivered its report on environmental biosecurity to the Directors General of DPIRD and DBCA in February 2018. The report made five strategic recommendations to support the integration of environmental biosecurity as a core function of DPIRD, with effective cross-agency collaboration to drive it.

During 2019/20, the Council's report was provided to the Minister for Agriculture and Food and the Minister for Environment, for consideration.

Biosecurity funding mechanisms

The Council has kept a watching brief on biosecurity funding mechanisms since it provided advice in this area in 2016. With the proposed review of the BAM Act, it is timely to review the current biosecurity funding mechanisms to identify gaps and opportunities. An important component of this work will be implementing the recommendations from the Council's work on the DPR/ RBG approach, as discussed above.

During the 2019/20 year, the Council developed its work plan to guide its investigations in this area. It will undertake the work during the next reporting period.

Biosecurity perceptions

Previous work undertaken by the Council highlighted biosecurity awareness as an important factor influencing and supporting WA's biosecurity system. However, no study has been undertaken to date to determine what 'biosecurity' means to Western Australians.

Government biosecurity communications often focus on the tactical/operational business (e.g. what to do with regard to specific pests); however, a long-term focus for communications is necessary to increase compliance, build engagement and improve public acceptance (social licence). Understanding how Western Australians perceive biosecurity is critical to inform policy and underpin biosecurity communication/extension/ education/engagement strategies that, when implemented, will have impact.

During 2019/20, the Council developed its work plan for this area, including liaising with organisations that have undertaken similar studies in other parts of Australia and overseas. Council will continue to develop the process for undertaking this area of work in 2020/21.

Quadruple bottom line of biosecurity

It is important to understand the value proposition of a bio-secure WA. This information can be used to help build biosecurity understanding across Government, industry and community, improve attitudes toward biosecurity and aid in resource allocation.

Analyses often focus primarily on the economic costs and benefits. However, in terms of biosecurity, the other less tangible aspects are just as important to understand and potentially more meaningful to much of the community. Being able to confidently articulate the social, environmental, cultural and economic (quadruple bottom line) value of WA's biosecurity system is critical.

During 2019/20, the Council developed its work plan for this area. It will continue to develop the process for undertaking this area of work during 2020/21.

Myrtle rust preparedness

Myrtle rust is a highly mobile plant pathogen that infects young, actively growing foliage of plants within the Myrtaceae family such as WA Peppermint (*Agonis flexuosa*), many eucalypt and melaleuca species and garden plants such as Geraldton wax,

bottlebrush and lilly pilly. The rust causes shoot dieback, reduced establishment of new plants and death in some species. It is established in eastern Australia but is not yet present in WA.

Ongoing Council discussions on the threat of myrtle rust, and its participation in a forest health workshop in February 2019, culminated in Council agreeing to prepare a briefing for the Minister detailing the risk to WA from myrtle rust and opportunities for preparedness activities.

Since that time, the Council participated in a DPIRD-led myrtle rust workshop. This gave the Council confidence that the Government agencies were taking a proactive, collaborative approach to myrtle rust prevention, preparedness and early detection. Council is maintaining a watching brief in this space.



Image 5. Myrtle rust on *Agonis* 'After Dark'.

Engagement

Interactions with Government

Biosecurity Senior Officers Group (BSOG)

As part of its role to advise the Minister and DPIRD Director General, the Biosecurity Council liaises with the BSOG. The BSOG is comprised of senior staff from State Government agencies that have biosecurity responsibilities including DPIRD (Chair), DBCA and the Forest Products Commission. The Department of Defence (Commonwealth) participates on the BSOG as an *ex officio* member. More recently, the following agencies have been invited to participate in BSOG meetings, given their involvement in biosecurity:

- the Department of Health
- the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation; and
- the WA Local Government Association (WALGA).

Throughout 2019/20 the Council continued to keep the BSOG informed of its work. Similarly, the BSOG, via its Chair, has actively participated at each ordinary Council meeting to provide Council with updates on the key issues and biosecurity activities at State and national levels.

Government-coordinated engagement and learning

The Council participated in the following government-coordinated activities during 2019/20:

- DPIRD's myrtle rust workshop (November 2019)

- National Biosecurity Committee's National Biosecurity Roundtable (November 2019); and
- Consultation with the Office of the Auditor General on its follow-up audit on managing the impact of plant and animal pests (November 2019).

Engagement with industry and community

Over the course of the year, the Biosecurity Council were invited to present at or participate in various industry and community events. The Council used these opportunities to highlight the role of the Council, the work being undertaken and, where appropriate, its recommendations on key issues. During 2019/20, this included:

- A presentation at the WALGA Pest Animal Biosecurity Management forum
- Presented to the steering committee for the formation of a Manjimup region biosecurity group
- Attended the National AgDay Forum
- Attended the nursery industry's Greenlife national conference; and
- Participated on the WA Feral Cat Working Group.

Website

Up-to-date information about the Biosecurity Council continues to be freely available on the [Biosecurity Council's webpages](#) on the DPIRD Agriculture and Food website.

Regional visit

The Biosecurity Council resolved to hold one of its meetings in a regional location each year. The intent of the regional visits is to:

- Engage with local/regional stakeholders on biosecurity
- Build networks/relationships with key biosecurity stakeholders
- Provide a conduit to government/agencies for local/regional stakeholders.

In August 2019, the Council held its first regional visit in Kununurra. The East Kimberley has a unique set of biosecurity challenges – it is an important horticulture growing region, there is a large pastoral presence, it adjoins the Northern Territory border and is in close proximity to Indonesia, it is a hub for tourism, it is a biodiversity hotspot and there are growing developments through the expansion of the irrigation area, major aquaculture projects and an increasing number of sea-going

vessels. The region had also been heavily involved in a recent biosecurity response to the exotic bacterial disease, citrus canker.

The visit enabled the Council to meet with a number of biosecurity stakeholders to discuss their views on the status of biosecurity in WA and biosecurity concerns.

Council took the opportunity to tour the Frank Wise Institute of Tropical Agriculture to see the research trials being undertaken and discuss biosecurity practices. It also visited the border checkpoint where frontline staff are tasked with ensuring biosecurity risk material does not enter WA.

The issues raised with the Council during the visit have been discussed with DPIRD and the Minister. Importantly, the visit helped Council better understand the needs and challenges of industry and how changes to the biosecurity system might impact these groups.



Image 6. Biosecurity Council members and consultant, Dr John Edwards (far left), at the Frank Wise Institute of Tropical Agriculture, Kununurra.

Meetings

During the 2019/20 year, the Biosecurity Council formally convened four times. It also held four half-day Council workshops and two virtual sessions. The Deputy Director General (Sustainability and Biosecurity, DPIRD) and the DPIRD Biosecurity Executive Director, were invited to attend each meeting.

Table 3 documents Council member meeting attendance.

It is important that the Council is aware of changing industry, community and environment needs, and of options for balancing the demands of different industries.

Furthermore, the Council must give appropriate consideration to national and international treaties and obligations. To support this, Council meeting agendas included presentations that address key biosecurity activities and issues. Table 4 lists the presentations made to the Council during 2019/20.

In addition to these, the Chair of the cross-agency BSOG provided an update on current biosecurity activities, advances and issues from both national and State perspectives at each meeting.

Table 3. Biosecurity Council member meeting attendance (2019/20).

Name	Meetings attended	Workshops attended	Zoom sessions
Mr Brad Adams ¹	1	1	2
Mrs Michelle Allen ²	0	0	N/A
Ms Nicole Batten ³	2	2	2
Dr David Bowran	4	4	2
Dr Regina Flugge	4	4	2
Prof. John Mackenzie	3	3	2
Dr Kelly Pearce ³	2	2	2
Prof. Simon McKirdy	4	4	2
Ms Tina Thorne ²	2	2	N/A
Mr Cliff Winfield	4	4	2

¹ Appointment term commenced 20 April 2020

² Appointment term ended 31 December 2019

³ Appointment term commenced 1 January 2020

Governance

As a Government board, the Biosecurity Council is conscious of the need for good governance systems and practices. During 2019/20, the Council abided by its Code of Conduct and acted with integrity, as set out in the Western Australian Public Sector Code of Ethics. Conflicts of Interest were

recorded and reviewed at each quarterly meeting.

Furthermore, the Council operated within the bounds of the Duty Statements set out for the Chair, Members and Executive Officer, and in accordance with the BAM Act and Instrument of Appointment (Appendix A).

Table 4. Presentations to the Biosecurity Council during 2019/20.

Date	Title	Name	Organisation
9 Aug 2019	East Kimberley biosecurity update	John Paul Slaven	DPIRD
9 Aug 2019	Biosecurity in the Kimberley	David Chemello	DBCA
9 Aug 2019	RDC role and biosecurity	Andrew Beer	Kimberley Development Commission
9 Aug 2019	The Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy: A biosecurity frontline	Cassandra Wittwer	Department of Agriculture
8 Nov 2019	Environmental biosecurity	Ian Thompson	Department of Agriculture
28 Feb 2020	Fall army worm update	Jessica Bennington	DPIRD
28 Feb 2020	Red imported fire ant update	Jessica Bennington	DPIRD
28 Feb 2020	Myrtle rust update	Jessica Bennington	DPIRD
28 Feb 2020	Inspector General of Biosecurity	Rob Delane	Department of Agriculture

Progress on past Council recommendations

This section reports on Government activities to address the unresolved recommendations made by Council over the past three years. The information on implementing the recommendations was provided to Council from the agencies.

Declared pest rates and recognised biosecurity groups (2020)

See the previous section for information on the advice provided to Government.

Implementing the recommendations

The Minister asked the Biosecurity Council to implement the recommendations. Through its work on Biosecurity Funding Mechanisms, Council will coordinate an independent review of the DPR/RBG approach and determine the return on investment for the State. This work will be undertaken during 2020/21 in collaboration with DPIRD.

Declaration of non-agricultural species (2020)

See the previous section for information on the advice provided to Government.

Implementing the recommendations

The BSOG will consider the Council's recommendations and how these can be implemented in 2020/21. Nevertheless, greater coordination, engagement and collaboration is anticipated now that the departmental restructures have been finalised.

Biosecurity R&D (2019)

See the previous section for information on the advice provided to Government.

Implementing the recommendations

The report was considered by the BSOG. It was generally agreed that establishing, coordinating and driving a biosecurity R&D network across WA is an important endeavour and should provide long-term benefits. Further consideration is required to determine how the Council recommendations can be realised.

Sustaining a biosecurity response (2019)

The Minister for Agriculture and Food requested the Council investigate the ability of the then Department of Agriculture and Food to sustain a high-level biosecurity response while retaining the integrity of its budget and other functions. With the amalgamation of the Department of Agriculture and Food into DPIRD, this work was expanded to help shape change in an agency with a larger biosecurity function and with broader skills, resources and regional presence.

In June 2019 the Council delivered its report on 'sustaining a biosecurity response' to the Minister and Director General of DPIRD.

Implementing the recommendations

DPIRD has made progress towards the findings in the report as part of a Departmental restructure and resultant change in reporting lines and composition of Incident and Emergency Management area. DPIRD continues to put in place actions and processes to support its ability to sustain a biosecurity response. Multiple biosecurity incursions since the report was delivered have provided further opportunity for the department to assess outcomes, review the suitability of structures and processes and identify areas in which further work is required.

Environmental biosecurity (2018)

As described previously, in late 2016 the Council resolved to further its work on cross-agency collaboration by focusing on how environmental biosecurity is being addressed in WA.

In February 2018 the Council delivered its report on environmental biosecurity to the Directors General of DPIRD and DBCA. The report was later provided to the Minister for Agriculture and Food and the Minister for Environment.

The report made five strategic recommendations to ensure the integration of environmental biosecurity as a core function of DPIRD, with effective cross-agency collaboration to drive it.



Image 7. Installing a camera to monitor feral animal movements.

Implementing the recommendations

Delivering environmental biosecurity outcomes across the State remains a challenge. DPIRD and DBCA continue to work together to facilitate greater collaboration and understanding of responsibilities, priorities and resource allocation relating to environmental biosecurity.

Further work is required to improve understanding of biosecurity as a shared responsibility and to clarify and embed the responsibilities of all stakeholders, including private landholders.

DPIRD continues to deliver control and eradication programs for specified environmental pests to prevent them establishing in WA, including red imported fire ant and browsing ant. DPIRD has also partnered with the Commonwealth Government on Indian Ocean Territory projects that address weeds and species of environmental and social concern, such as yellow crazy ants and macao paper wasps.

Biosecurity and market access (2017)

In late April 2017, the Minister requested advice from the Council on the capability and capacity of (the then) Department of Agriculture and Food for securing market access in a horticultural biosecurity incident. The Council used a recent incursion of tomato-potato psyllid as a starting point for advising on how agency capability could be improved for future biosecurity incidents.

In June 2017 the Council put forward 11 recommendations. These were designed to help address staff capacity and capability issues and support the preparedness of the department for future market access negotiations.

Implementing the recommendations

As documented in the 2018/19 Annual Report of the Biosecurity Council, many of the recommendations have been implemented by DPIRD.

DPIRD continues to build its industry networks through its involvement with industry biosecurity advisory committees.



Image 8. Inspecting a fruit fly trap.

Cost of Council operations in 2019/20

The direct costs of the Council's operation during the 2019/20 reporting year amounted to \$209 403 (Table 5).

Executive Officer and administrative support was provided by DPIRD, as well as other services to the Council such as accounting and general support.

Table 5. Biosecurity Council of Western Australia expenditure for 2019/20.

Description	Total \$
Board fees	118 988
Consultancies	67 062
Travel expenses	19 481
Meeting/workshop expenses	2 385
Fees and registrations	1 023
Communication services	236
Printing/consumables	228
TOTAL	209 403

Notes:

1. Data sourced from the accounting records of DPIRD.
2. Costs of executive, accounting, administrative and other general support are not included.

Direction for 2020/2021

The Council has two major pieces of work planned for 2020/21:

- Advice to Government on the effectiveness of border biosecurity activities.
- Advice to Government on mechanisms for funding biosecurity in WA. This includes an independent review of the DPR/RBG approach, as requested by the Minister.

In addition, the Council will undertake initial investigations to:

- Better understand how Western Australians perceive 'biosecurity' and their role in pest and disease prevention, surveillance and response; and
- Identify the value proposition of biosecurity actions for invasive species in WA.

Following the success of its regional visit to Kununurra, the Council plan to hold its 2020/21 regional visit in Augusta. The south-west region is home to a large and diverse horticultural sector, aquaculture enterprises as well as livestock, all for which biosecurity is important. In

addition, it is a biodiversity hotspot with large tracts of natural bushland and aquatic environments making environmental biosecurity paramount.

The recent introduction of DPRs in the area has been a cause of contention for some. With Council working to provide advice on biosecurity funding mechanisms, including the DPR/RBG approach, it will be timely to visit the region and hear first-hand from biosecurity groups and associated stakeholders

The BAM Act review is planned to commence in 2020/21. Council anticipate this to be a key feature on its 2020/21 agenda. In addition to providing advice on the operation of the BAM Act, the Council look forward to providing feedback on the review's scope and terms of reference.

The Council will actively maintain its good relationships with the BSOG, DPIRD and senior biosecurity staff across agencies. It will also continue its program of holding its quarterly meetings at different locations to help strengthen relationships across the sectors involved in addressing WA's biosecurity – agriculture, fisheries, environment and forestry.



Acronyms

APB	Agriculture Protection Board
BAM Act	<i>Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007</i>
BSOG	Biosecurity Senior Officers Group
DBCA	Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions
DNA	deoxyribonucleic acid
DPIRD	Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
DPR	Declared pest rate
eDNA	environmental DNA
R&D	Research and development
RBG	Recognised Biosecurity Group
RDC	Regional Development Commission
WA	Western Australia
WALGA	Western Australian Local Government Association
WHO	World Health Organisation

Appendix A

Copy of Instrument of Appointment

BIOSECURITY AND AGRICULTURE MANAGEMENT ACT 2007
INSTRUMENT ESTABLISHING AND APPOINTING MEMBERS OF THE
BIOSECURITY COUNCIL.

1. This instrument replaces the instrument signed on 25 November 2019, and comes into effect on 20 April 2020.
2. As required by section 48(1) of the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007*, the Biosecurity Council is established and the following persons are appointed as members of the Council for the term specified.

Members	Term
Professor Simon McKIRDY (Chairperson)	for a term expiring on 30 June 2021
Mr Bradley ADAMS	for a term expiring on 30 June 2021
Mrs Nicole BATTEN	for a term expiring on 31 December 2021
Dr David BOWRAN	for a term expiring on 27 February 2021
Dr Regina FLUGGE	for a term expiring on 27 February 2021
Professor John MACKENZIE	for a term expiring on 27 February 2021
Dr Kelly PEARCE	for a term expiring on 31 December 2022
Mr Clifford WINFIELD	for a term expiring on 27 February 2021

3. Set out below are the matters on which the Council is to give advice and other matters relating to the operation and procedures of the Council:

MATTERS ON WHICH COUNCIL IS TO GIVE ADVICE

The Council is to give advice to the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007* (the Act) Minister and Director General on any matter related to biosecurity and in particular:

1. The requirements of a comprehensive and effective biosecurity system for the State of Western Australia (WA) and necessary linkages to other biosecurity systems (national and international).
2. Significant gaps in or necessary improvements to, the biosecurity system.
3. Opportunities to improve industry and public awareness and support for biosecurity objectives.
4. Opportunities to improve government, community and industry cooperation and collaboration on biosecurity matters.

5. Matters referred to the Council by the Minister or the Director General.

MATTERS RELATING TO THE OPERATION OF THE COUNCIL

The Council should:

1. Be strategic by adopting a long term perspective for biosecurity in WA and by giving appropriate consideration to national and international obligations.
2. Be aware of changing industry, community and environment needs and of options for balancing the demands of different interests.
3. Provide advice to others, including to other Ministers and Directors General, only when specifically permitted.
4. Act and be seen to act with integrity, as set out in the WA Public Sector Code of Ethics.

On or before 30 November of each year, the Council must prepare and submit to the Minister an annual report on its activities throughout the preceding financial year in accordance with section 50 of the Act.

MEETINGS AND CONDUCT OF THE COUNCIL

The Council is to hold four ordinary meetings each year. For consideration of issues out-of-session, agenda papers will be directed to all members by the Secretariat and the outcome of any decision will be communicated to all members.

The Chair may convene special meetings of the Council if it is necessary to deal with any urgent matters requested by the Minister or Director General.

The Council must maintain a formal record of its proceedings and make that record available to the Minister and the Director General or their nominees.

Signed by the Minister for Agriculture and Food on 20 April 2020