

MEEKATHARRA RANGELANDS BIOSECURITY ASSOCIATION INC
ANNUAL REPORT 2014/2015

INTRODUCTION

The Meekatharra Rangelands Biosecurity Association Inc (MRBA) is an industry body with a membership of all pastoralists in the Shires of Yalgoo, Mount Magnet, Cue and Meekatharra. The Association has been established under the Biosecurity and Agricultural Management Act 2007 with a charter to manage and control declared pests, both animal and plant.

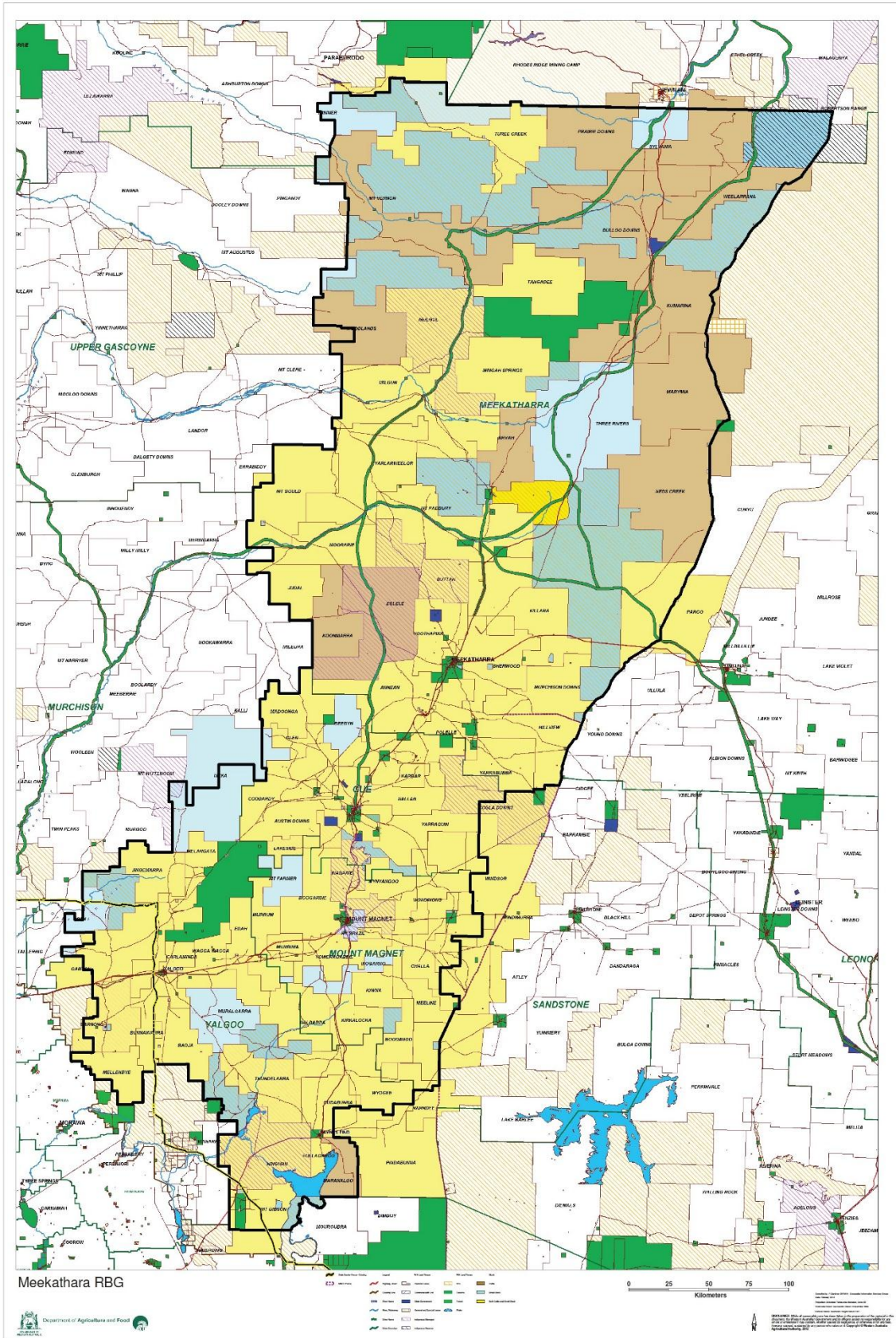
The MRBA Constitution provides for a Management Committee, of up to eleven members, with the responsibility of overseeing the operation of the Association. The Management Committee (with dates elected) as at 30 June 2015 was:

- Chairman – Ashley Dowden (2012)
- Vice Chairman – Greg Watters (2012)
- Secretary/Treasurer – Kath Mahony (2012)
- Darren Cousens (2014)
- Bob Grinham (2014)
- Tom Jackson (2013)
- Jorgen Jensen (2013)
- Liam Johns (2012)
- Suzanne Maguire (2013)
- Morrie Seivwright (2014)
- John Wainwright (2014)

MRBA operations are funded from annual declared pest rates paid by pastoralists which are matched by the State Government and also one off grants from State and Federal NRM programs, Royalties for Regions and other sources.

The MRBA area covers approximately 184,000 square kilometres and incorporates 93 pastoral properties. Of these 93 pastoral properties, there is a mix of tenure ranging from pastoral lease, to mining leases, UCL, national reserve and indigenous managed pastoral leases.

The following map shows the extent of the MRBA area.



MEEKATHARRA RBG

MRBA OPERATIONS 2014/2015

Declared Pest Account Funding

The MRBA has established a Declared Pest Account into which the Department of Agriculture and Food WA (DAFWA) deposits the declared pest rates paid by pastoralists and the government's matching contribution. In 2014/2015 receipts were \$350,255 with an expenditure, excluding GST, of \$341,467. The principal activities funded from the declared pest account were:

2014/2015 Community Wild Dog Baiting Program

The MRBA coordinates the laying of baits on a community wide basis two time per year. The MRBA operates seven bait racks with the program for 2015 detailed below:

Pullagaroo	7 April Saturday	1,000 bulk 100 bulk DPaW	15 Sept Tuesday	800 bulk 200 bulk DPaW
Challa	8 April Wednesday	2,000 bulk	8 Sept Tuesday	2,100 bulk
Melangata	23 April & 14 May Thursdays	1,000 bulk 500 sausage 200 bulk DPaW	9 Sept Wednesday	900 bulk 300 sausage 200 bulk DPaW
Killara	9 April Thursday	1,200 bulk 100 bulk DPaW	22 Sept Tuesday	1,200 bulk 200 bulk DPaW
Glen	20 April Friday	900 bulk	24 Sept Thursday	900 bulk
Yarlarweelor	16 & 17 May Saturday & Sunday	2,200 bulk 300 cut up	9/10 Oct Friday & Saturday	2,500 bulk
Ilgarrarie	N/A	N/A	19/20 Sept Saturday & Sunday	1,500 bulk
		8,700kg bulk 500kg sausage 300kg cut up Total 9,500 kg		10,500 kg bulk 300 sausage Total 10,800 kg

Meat quantities were determined in consultation with Rack Co-ordinators and in 2014/2015 expenditure was \$70,284. In September 2014 a specially fitted out aircraft was hired from Exmouth to enable baits prepared at the Ilgarrarie bait rack to be laid in inaccessible country in the north of the MRBA area. The cost of this aerial baiting was \$6,872.

As can be seen from the table above the Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW) are involved and they have staff in attendance at the Pullagaroo, Melangata and Killara bait racks. DPaW purchase baits prepared on their behalf from the MRBA.

In April 2015 the MRBA purchased stencils at a cost of \$4,500 to assist pastoralists in preparing signage warning that 1080 baits had been laid. Adequate signage is a legal requirement and the stencils were supplied to pastoralists at no charge.

The MRBA community baiting program operates on the basis that a co-ordinated approach, where all pastoralists lay baits within the same time frame, is a fundamental component of a successful wild dog reduction program. Further details of the community baiting program are available in the MRBA Wild Dog Management Plan.



Melangata Bait Rack May 2015

Employment of Doggers

In 2014/2015 the MRBA employed four Licenced Pest Management Technicians (LPMT) or doggers utilising declared pest account funding. The role of the doggers is to support pastoralists in their effort to control wild dogs by trapping and also laying baits.

The areas of operation of the doggers was Meekatharra, Meekatharra West, Cue, and Mount Magnet/Paynes Find. The four doggers worked for a combined total of 450 days, on a part time and full time basis, at a total cost of \$183,508. In all 329 dogs were trapped and over 15,000 baits were laid.

In addition to trapping and baiting doggers maintain close contact with pastoralists and provide technical advice on wild dog management where required.

Royalties for Regions Funding

Employment of Doggers

In April 2014 the MRBA was successful in gaining funding under the Royalties for Regions Program for the employment of four doggers for the period to 30 June 2016. In 2014/2015 the doggers worked a combined total of 500 days.

The doggers operate on lands under the control of DPaW and adjoining pastoral lease buffer zones. Areas of operation are Yagahorn near Meekatharra, Paynes Find and Yalgoo.

Expenditure in 2014/2015 totalled some \$235,000 with 154 dogs being trapped.

The MRBA has written to State Government Ministers seeking to have the Royalties for Regions funding extended beyond 30 June 2016.

Wild Dog Bounty

In 2014 the Minister for Agriculture and Food approved, on a trial basis, a Wild Dog Bounty scheme to operate in the area of the proposed Murchison Region Vermin Cell and adjoining northern pastoral leases.

The MRBA administered the scheme which resulted in the destruction of 500 wild dogs with bounty payments totalling \$50,000.

Unfortunately due to financial constraints the State Government has advised that trail will not be extended nor will a permanent bounty scheme be implemented.

State and Federal Natural Resource Management (NRM) Funding

Parkinsonia Project

In 2014/2015 the MRBA successfully obtained two grants for the project "Walloping WoNS at Windimurra". The project involved eradicating an infestation of *Parkinsonia aculeate* located on Windimurra Station. *Parkinsonia* is a Category C3, Weed of National Significance declared under the Biosecurity and Agricultural Management Act 2007.

The grants obtained were \$46,930 under the State NRM Program and \$20,000 under a Federal Landcare Program. Stage one of the project was completed in the last week of April 2015. Further stages will involve follow up spraying due for completion by 30 June 2016.

On advice from the Department of Agriculture and Food WA (DAFWA) the *Parkinsonia* infestation, which covers a 300 hectare network of creeks and channels, was treated with Access herbicide using the "Thinline" method of application. This technique involves the spraying of the bottom 50-100 mm of the weed stem with a mixture of diesel and herbicide.

DAFWA, as an in-kind contribution to the project, set up ten control points from which the success of the treatment process is being measured both in the immediate

term and over the next three years. Whilst it is too early to determine the effectiveness of the treatment early signs are encouraging.



Parkinsonia aculeate - Windimurra Station March 2015

Employment of Executive Officer

Rangelands NRM funding of \$33,000 was also successfully obtained for the employment of a part time Executive Officer for the period January to June 2015.

OTHER ACTIVITIES IN 2014/2015

Murchison Region Vermin Cell – Visit by Senator Dean Smith and Member for Durack, Melissa Price

In April 2015 WA Senator Dean Smith and Member for Durack, Melissa Price visited the Challa Bait Racks to hear firsthand from pastoralists the problems caused by wild dogs. Prior to this Senator Smith made a speech to the Senate on the wide spread killing of stock by wild dogs and the need to put control measures in place before it is too late. This speech attracted a lot of media attention much of which focussed on the need to complete the Murchison Region Vermin Cell.

The State Government has over the last three years contributed over \$2.6 M of Royalties for Regions funding towards the creation of the Murchison Region Vermin Cell by upgrading and extending the No 1 and No 2 Vermin Fences. The completion of the cell requires the construction of an additional 380 km of new fencing at a cost

some \$4.8 M. Once completed the cell will enclose an area of 88,000 km², helping to protect some 55 pastoral stations and 9 Department of Parks and Wildlife properties.



Senator Dean Smith – Challa Bait Racks April 2015

Following their visit, Senator Smith and Ms Price called upon the State Government to support the pastoral industry and complete the Vermin Cell without further delay.

Currently the Vermin Cell is in the hands of the Mid-West Development Commission who are working closely with the relevant government departments and Ministers to finalise the business case for the project.

Every opportunity is being taken to promote the completion of the Murchison Region Vermin Cell.

Wild Dog Action Plan

The proposal to construct the Murchison Region Vermin Cell has prompted the Minister for Agriculture and Food to set up a Committee to prepare a state wide Wild Dog Action Plan.

The MRBA is represented by the Chairman on this Committee and is expected that a draft plan will be available for public comment in the first half of 2016.

For further enquires please contact Geoff Brooks

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