

MEEKATHARRA RANGELANDS BIOSECURITY ASSOCIATION INC

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2017/2018

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 Agriculture Management Act 2007 with a charter to manage and control declared pests, both animal and plant.

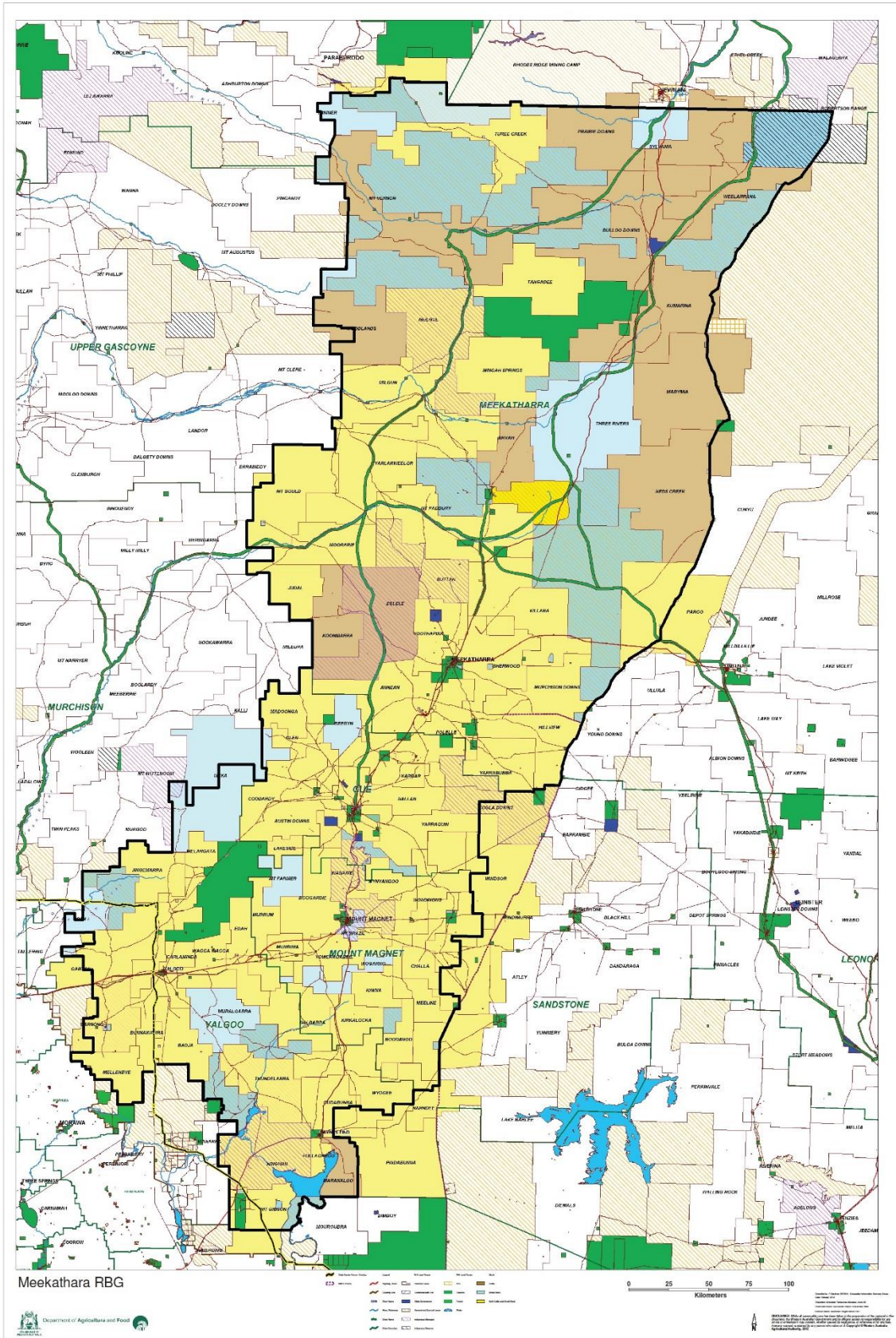
The MRBA Constitution provides for a Management Committee, of up to eleven members, with the responsibility of overseeing the operation of the Association. The Management Committee (with dates elected) as at 30 June 2018 was:

- Chairman – Ashley Dowden (2015)
- Vice Chairman – Greg Watters (2015)
- Secretary/Treasurer – Kath Mahony (2015)
- Jarrad Blair (2016)
- Darren Cousens (2017)
- Jason Homewood (2016)
- Jorgen Jensen (2016)
- Liam Johns (2015)
- Jo Kanny (2017)
- Eric Moses (2017)
- Angus Nichols (2017)

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 leases, to mining leases, UCL, national reserves and indigenous managed pastoral leases.

The following map shows the extent of the MRBA area.



MEEKATHARRA RBG

MRBA OPERATIONS 2017/2018

Declared Pest Account Funding

The MRBA has established a Declared Pest Account (DPA) into which the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) deposits the declared pest rates paid by pastoralists and the government's matching contribution. In 2017/2018 DPA receipts were \$407,404 with an expenditure, excluding GST, of \$392,408. The principal activities and costs (excluding GST) funded from the declared pest account were:

2016/2017 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 2018 detailed below:

Location	Autumn Baiting Dates	Autumn Quantity/Type of Bait Kg	Spring Baiting Dates	Spring Quantity/Type of Bait Kg
Pullagaroo	6 April Friday	800 bulk 300 bulk DPaW	7 Sept Friday	800 bulk 300 bulk DBCA
Challa	8 April Sunday	2,100 bulk	10 Sept Monday	2,100 bulk
Melangata	11 April Wednesday	2,200 bulk 300 bulk DPaW	11 Sept Tuesday	2,200 bulk 300 bulk DBCA
Killara	15 April Sunday	1,200 bulk 300 bulk DPaW	20 Sept Thursday	1,200 bulk 300 bulk DBCA
Glen	10 April Tuesday	750 bulk	19 Sept Wednesday	750 bulk
Yarlarweelor	24 April Tuesday	2,700 bulk 300 pre-cut	11/12 Oct Thur/Fri	2,700 bulk 300 pre-cut
Ilgarrarie	N/A	N/A	15/16 Sept Sat/Sun	2,000 bulk
		9,750 kg bulk 300 pre-cut DPaW 900 bulk Total 10,950 kg		11,750 kg bulk 300 pre-cut DBCA 900 Total 12,950 kg

Meat quantities are determined in consultation with Rack Co-ordinators and in 2017/2018 expenditure was \$75,805. In September 2017 a specially fitted out

aircraft was hired from Exmouth to enable baits prepared at the Illgararie bait rack to be laid in inaccessible country in the north of the MRBA area. The cost of this aerial baiting was \$11,677.

As can be seen from the table above the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) are involved and they have staff in attendance at the Pullagaroo, Melangata and Killara bait racks. In 2016/2017 DPaW purchased baits prepared on their behalf from the MRBA at a cost of \$10,134.

During the year some \$985 was expended on fencing materials for the Yarlarweelor bait racks.

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 contained in the MRBA Wild Dog Management Plan which is available on request.



Illgararie Bait Racks September 2017

Employment of Doggers

In 2017/2018 the MRBA employed five 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 Yagahorn, Meekatharra West, Cue, Mount Magnet and Mount Magnet East. The five doggers worked for a combined total of 450 days, on a part time and full time basis, at a total cost of \$194,407. In all 213 dogs were trapped.

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 Dogger 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 2017. This arrangement has now been extended for a further three years to 30 June 2020.

In 2017/2018 the doggers worked a combined total of 384 days.

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

Expenditure in 2017/2018 totalled some \$185,028 with 182 dogs being trapped.

State and Federal Natural Resource Management (NRM) Grant Funding

Jingemarra Station – Cactus Control Grant

In October 2016 a grant of \$19,850 for the control of an infestation of cactus on Jingemarra Station at the site of the old Woogalong homestead was obtained. These funds were provided for Stage 1 of the project which involves the deep burial of the core of the infestation and also a trial program to determine the most effective herbicide. This grant is administered by DPIRD utilising federal funds made available under the Agricultural White Paper Initiative for management of pest animals and weeds of national significance.

In November 2017 a further grant of \$25,925 for Stage 2 of the Jingemarra project was approved by the Minister under the State NRM program for the spraying and mapping of outlying infestations. A component of this grant is being used to fund the deployment of a drone to map the extent of the infestation which is widely spread throughout the headwaters of the Greenough River.



Opuntia engelmannii – Old Woogalong Homestead

MRBA Large Feral Herbivore Control Program (LFH)

In February 2017 the MRBA was successful in obtaining a State NRM grant totalling \$43,565 for the eradication of feral donkeys on Meka, Kalli, Coodardy and Austin Downs Stations. In addition, Royalties for Regions funding of \$55,000 was obtained to support this project and also contribute to the MRBA's triennial LFH control program in the north.

During the week commencing 06 November 2017 a cull of LFH's was carried out by DPIRD Biosecurity officers. The cull took place simultaneously to the west of Cue and in the north and involved the deployment of two helicopters for a total of some 38 hours each.

The stations involved were:

- West of Cue – Meka, Coodardy and Austin Downs.
- North – Prairie Downs, Sylvania, Kumarina, Bulloo Downs and Weelaranna.

To the west of Cue 713 donkeys were culled (Meka 328, Coodardy 294 and Austin Downs 94). In addition to this pastoralists culled some 250 feral donkeys prior to deployment of the helicopter operation.

In the north a total 799 feral donkeys, horses and camels were culled. The following table shows the breakup by station.

Station	Donkeys	Horses	Camels	Totals
Bulloo Downs	347	42	13	402
Kumarina	111	18	21	150
Prairie Downs	5	41	0	46
Sylvania	43	5	0	48
Weelarrana	114	39	0	153
Totals	620	145	34	799

The culls were carried out in accordance with the Invasive Animals CRC Model Code of Practice for the Humane Control of LFHs.



Refuelling at Meka Station - November 2017

Federal Capacity Building Grant Funding

A grant of \$160,000 was obtained in January 2018 under the Federal Capacity Building program. This grant is administered by DPIRD and provides over a two year period \$100,000 for the part time employment of an Executive Officer and \$60,000 as a contribution towards the employment of doggers. The additional funding for doggers is intended to increase the capacity of the MRBA to assist pastoralists new to the industry, who have limited experience in wild dog control techniques.

It is a pleasure to submit this annual report and in doing so I acknowledge with thanks the contribution over the last twelve months of all Committee Members, the Secretary Treasurer Kath Mahony and Executive Officer Geoff Brooks.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Brooks', written over a horizontal line.

Chairman
Meekatharra Rangelands Biosecurity Association
16 October 2018

For further enquires please contact Geoff Brooks

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