

MEEKATHARRA RANGELANDS BIOSECURITY ASSOCIATION INC
CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2018/2019

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 is established under the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007 with a charter to manage and control declared pests, both animal and plant.

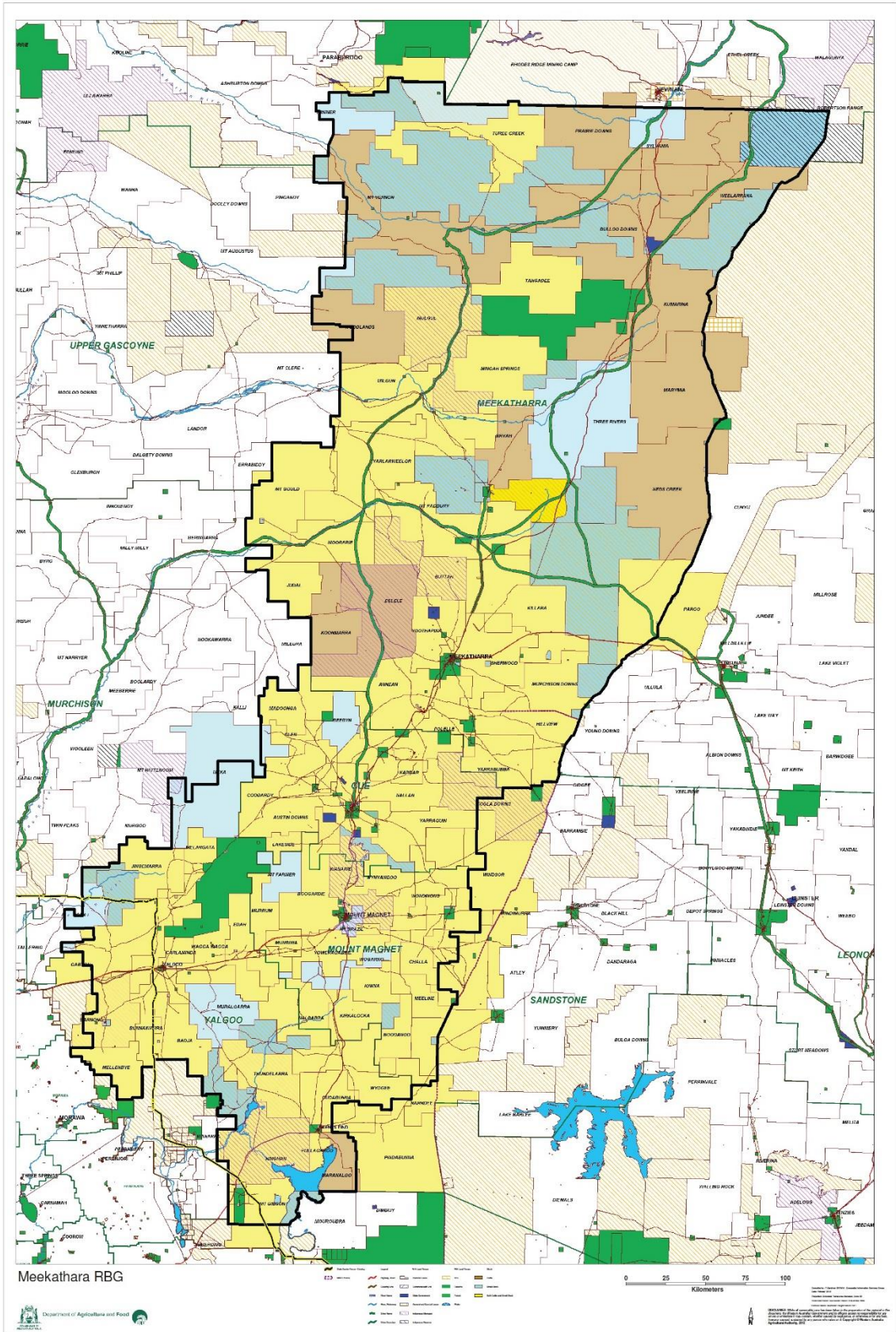
The MRBA Constitution provides for a Management Committee, of up to eleven members, with the responsibility of overseeing the operation of the Association. The Management Committee (with dates elected) as at 30 June 2019 was:

- Chairman – Ashley Dowden (2018)
- Vice Chairman – Greg Watters (2018)
- Secretary/Treasurer – Eric Moses (2017)
- Jarrad Blair (2016)
- Darren Cousens (2017)
- Jason Homewood (2016)
- Jorgen Jensen (2016)
- Liam Johns (2018)
- Jo Kanny (2017)
- Angus Nichols (2017)
- Murray Pens (2018)

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 72 pastoral properties. There are also other landholdings with a mix of tenure including mining leases, UCL, national reserves and indigenous managed pastoral leases.

The following map shows the extent of the MRBA area.



MEEKATHARRA RBG

MRBA OPERATIONS 2018/2019

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 2018/2019 DPA receipts were \$443,109 with an expenditure, excluding GST, of \$462,378. The principal activities and costs funded from the Declared Pest Account were:

2018/2019 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 2019 detailed below:

Location	Autumn Baiting Dates 2019	Autumn Quantity/Type of Bait Kg	Spring Baiting Dates 2019	Spring Quantity/Type of Bait Kg
Pullagaroo	4 April Thursday	800 bulk 300 bulk DBCA	3 October Thursday	800 bulk 300 bulk DBCA
Challa	8 April Monday	2,200 bulk	7 October Monday	2,200 bulk
Melangata	10 April Wednesday	2,200 bulk 300 bulk DBCA	9 October Wednesday	2,200 bulk 300 bulk DBCA
Killara	09 April Tuesday	700 bulk 300 bulk DBCA	16 October Wednesday	700 bulk 300 bulk DBCA
Yarraquin	11 April Thursday	750 bulk	17 October Thursday	750 bulk
Yarlarweelor	27/28 April Sat/Sun	2,950bulk 300 pre-cut	12/13 October Sat/Sun	2,950 bulk 300 pre-cut
Ilgarrarie	N/A	N/A	19/20 Sept Thursday/Friday	1,600 bulk
		9,600 kg bulk 300 pre-cut DBCA 900 bulk Total 10,800 kg		11,200 kg bulk 300 pre-cut DBCA 900 bulk Total 12,400 kg

Meat quantities are determined in consultation with Rack Co-ordinators and in 2018/2019 expenditure was \$81,576. In September 2018 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 \$10,428.

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 2018/2019 DBCA purchased baits prepared on their behalf from the MRBA at a cost of \$11,160.

During the year \$629 was expended for the purchase of poison warning signage. In April 2019 DPIRD conducted an audit of the Challa, Melangata, Yarraquin and Killara bait rack operations, which thanks to the great efforts of rack coordinators and participants, confirmed a high level of compliance with the Department of Health requirements for the safe handling of 1080.

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

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 efforts 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 522 days, on a part time and full-time basis, at a total cost of \$299,966. In all 342 dogs were trapped.

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

Large Feral Herbivore (LFH) Aerial Cull – West of Cue

At the Committee meeting on 26 February it was resolved to conduct an aerial cull of feral donkeys on Austin Downs, Coodardy and Meka stations as soon as possible to take advantage of the prevailing very dry weather. The operation was conducted over the period 16-18 March 2019 and resulted in the culling of 357 feral donkeys at a cost of some \$20,000. These funds were drawn from the Declared Pest Account LFH reserve.

This was a follow up of a cull that was conducted in November 2017 which resulted in in excess of 700 donkeys being destroyed

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



Refuelling at Meka Station

ROYALTIES FOR REGIONS DOGGER FUNDING

Employment of Doggers – Wild Dog Control on Crown Lands and Adjoining Pastoral Leases

In April 2014 the MRBA was successful in gaining funding under the Royalties for Regions Program for the employment of four doggers for the three-year period to 30 June 2017. This arrangement was extended for a further three years as part of the WA Wild Dog Action Plan 2016-2020 to 30 June 2020 with total funding of \$703,000.

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) is currently updating the Wild Dog Action Plan which will include future R4R funding allocations. With the Murchison Regional Vermin Cell now fully funded and due for completion in 2020 it is essential that wild dog control on crown lands within the area of the cell is accelerated. Representations to this effect have been made to the Minister and Department on numerous occasions.

In 2018/2019 the Royalties for Regions funded doggers worked a combined total of 493 days. The doggers operate on lands under the control of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and adjoining pastoral lease buffer zones. Areas of operation are Doolgunna north east of Meekatharra, Paynes Find and Yalgoo.

Expenditure in 2018/2019 totalled \$243,265 with 271 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. This funding was supplemented by a further \$10,000 in October 2018 to part fund the deployment of a drone to enable the extent of the infestation to be accurately determined. The project involved the deep burial of the core of the infestation, a trial program to determine the most effective herbicide and determination of the extent of the infestation. This grant was administered by DPIRD utilising federal funds made available under the Agricultural White Paper initiative for management of pest animals and weeds of national significance. The project was completed and acquitted in March 2019.

In November 2017 a further grant of \$25,925 for 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 was used in conjunction with the White Paper funding mentioned above to fund the deployment of the drone to map the extent of the infestation which is widely spread throughout the

headwaters of the Greenough River. The mapping was completed in April 2019 and spraying of the infestation is in progress.



Opuntia engelmannii – Old Woolalong Homestead



The drone used for mapping at Jingemarra Station

FEDERAL CAPACITY BUILDING GRANT FUNDING

A grant of \$160,000 was obtained in January 2018 under the Federal Capacity Building program. This grant was administered by DPIRD and provided over an eighteen-month period to 30 June 2019 \$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 was intended to increase the capacity of the MRBA to assist pastoralists new to the industry, who have limited experience in wild dog control techniques.

This grant program was completed on 30 June 2019 and has been successfully acquitted.

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 Eric Moses and Executive Officer Geoff Brooks.

Chairman

Meekatharra Rangelands Biosecurity Association

15 October 2019

For further enquires please contact Geoff Brooks

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