

# MEEKATHARRA RANGELANDS BIOSECURITY ASSOCIATION INC

## CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2015-2016

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### 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.

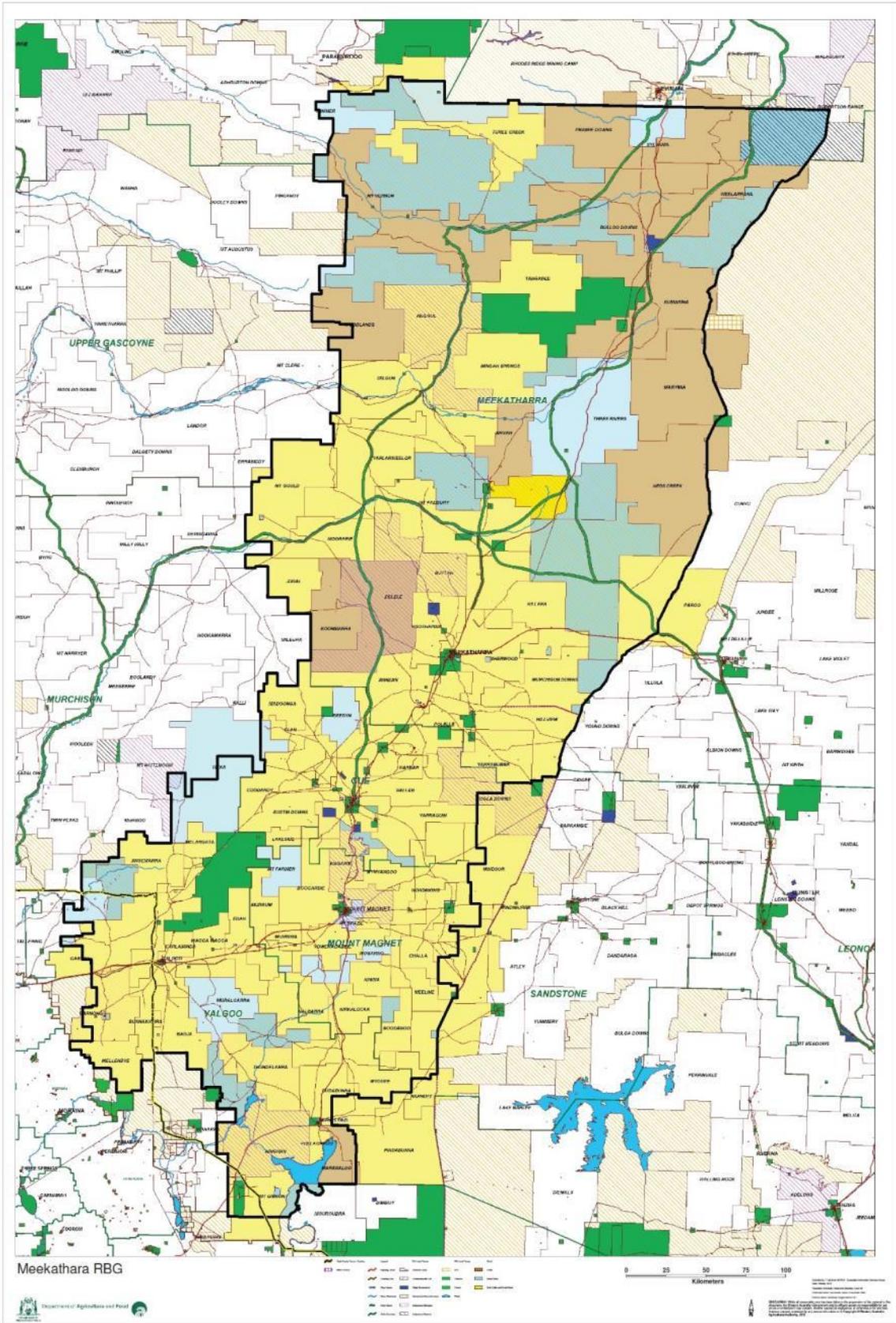
The MRBA Constitution provides for a Management Committee, of up to eleven members, with the responsibility of overseeing the operation of the Association. The Management Committee (with dates elected) as at 30 June 2016 was:

- Chairman – Ashley Dowden (2015)
- Vice Chairman – Greg Watters (2015)
- Secretary/Treasurer – Kath Mahony (2015)
- Darren Cousens (2014)
- Bob Grinham (2014)
- Tom Jackson (2013)
- Jorgen Jensen (2013)
- Liam Johns (2015)
- 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.



**MAP OF MEEKATHARRA RBG**

## MRBA OPERATIONS 2015/2016

### 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 2015/2016 receipts were \$383,875 with an expenditure, excluding GST, of \$355,749. The principal activities and costs (excluding GST) funded from the declared pest account were:

### 2015/2016 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 2016 detailed below:

Location	Autumn Baiting Dates 2016	Autumn Quantity/Type of Bait Kg	Spring Baiting Dates 2016	Spring Quantity/Type of Bait Kg
Pullagaroo	8 April Friday	1,000 bulk 300 bulk DPaW	12 Sept Monday	800 bulk 300 bulk DPaW
Challa	6 April Wednesday	2,000 bulk	14Sept Wednesday	2,100 bulk
Melangata	6 April Wednesday	2,000 bulk 300 bulk DPaW	21 Sept Wednesday	2,000 bulk 300 bulk DPaW
Killara	21 April Thursday	1,200 bulk 300 bulk DPaW	22 Sept Tuesday	1,200 bulk 300 bulk DPaW
Glen	1 April Friday	750 bulk	16 Sept Friday	750 bulk
Yarlarweelor	26 April Tuesday	2,800 bulk	7 Oct Friday	2,500 bulk
Ilgarrarie	N/A	N/A	15 Sept Thursday	1,500 bulk
		10,650 bulk  Total 10,650 kg		11,750 kg bulk  Total 11,750 kg

Meat quantities are determined in consultation with Rack Co-ordinators and in 2015/2016 expenditure was \$70,989. In September 2015 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 \$5,598.

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.

During the year some \$5,000 was expended on extending the Illgararie baits racks and purchasing a shipping container for the storage of bait rack supplies.

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.



Pastoralists take a break during the Challa Bait Rack (April 2016).

### Employment of Doggers

In 2015/2016 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 409 days, on a part time and full time basis, at a total cost of \$251,007. In all 266 dogs were trapped and over 24,000 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.

In January 2016 the MRBA purchased 240 wild dog traps at a total cost of \$10,636. These traps are utilised by MRBA doggers and also are available for purchase by MRBA members at a cost of \$45.00 plus GST each.

## 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. This arrangement has now been extended for a further four years to 30 June 2020.

In 2015/2016 the doggers worked a combined total of 535 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 2015/2016 totalled some \$251,007 with 144 dogs being trapped.

## State and Federal Natural Resource Management (NRM) Grants

### Parkinsonia Project

In 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. This project has now been completed with both grants acquitted.

On advice from the Department of Agriculture and Food WA (DAFWA) the *Parkinsonia* infestation, which covered a 300 hectare network of creeks and channels, was treated with the herbicide Access using the “Thinline” method of application. This technique involved 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 with monitoring to date clearly demonstrating the success of the treatment. These control points will be monitored on an ongoing basis with further treatment as required being undertaken by the landholder.



Dead Parkinsonia aculeate - Windimurra Station May 2016.



Spraying of Parkinsonia aculeate seed sets – May 2016

### **Employment of Executive Officer**

In November 2015 funding of \$33,333 was obtained from DAFWA which when combined with MRBA funding of \$29,206 enabled the employment of a part time Executive Officer for the full financial year.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES IN 2015/2016

### Pastoral Profit Workshops at Wogarno and Nallan Stations

With funding provided by the Australian Wool Industry (AWI) and the Meat and Livestock Association (MLA) the MRBA assisted in the coordination and promotion of two workshops focusing on business planning and livestock production. These workshops were held at Wogano Station in October 2015 and Nallan Station in May 2016.



Pastoral Profit Workshop Wogarno Station - October 2015

### WA Wild Dog Action Plan

In October 2015 the Minister for Agriculture set up a Committee involving government agencies and pastoral and grazing industry representatives to develop a WA Wild Dog Action Plan.

In mid-March the draft WA Wild Dog Action Plan was emailed to all MRBA members for comment and input. As a result a meeting was organised with the plan's author, Mr Peter Cooke in Cue on 12 April 2016. This meeting was attended by representatives from twenty-five pastoral stations.

The key issue was the draft plan's dismissal of the Murchison Region Vermin Cell as a way to assist in the control wild dogs and also the total lack of support for small stock production in the area of the Vermin Cell. As a result of input from MRBA members the benefit cost ratio of 1.0 included in the draft plan was shown to be in error and was subsequently revised to 1.6. The positive benefit cost ratio resulted in a significant change in approach with the Vermin Cell being identified as a viable option in the Action Plan.

A second important outcome of the meeting in Cue was a commitment to the continuation of Royalties for Regions dogger funding for a further four years as referred to above.

The WA Wild Dog Action Plan has now been finalised and is awaiting Ministerial endorsement. Pleasingly there is strong acknowledgment in the Action Plan of the crucial role that the MRBA and other biosecurity groups play in wild dog control with the recommendation of additional funding to enhance their effectiveness.

The efforts of all those MRBA members who put a lot of time and thought into considering and commenting on the WA Wild Dog Action Plan are very much appreciated.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J.W. Brooks', written over a horizontal line.

Chairman

Meekatharra Rangelands Biosecurity Association

18 October 2016

For further enquires please contact Geoff Brooks, MRBA Executive Officer

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