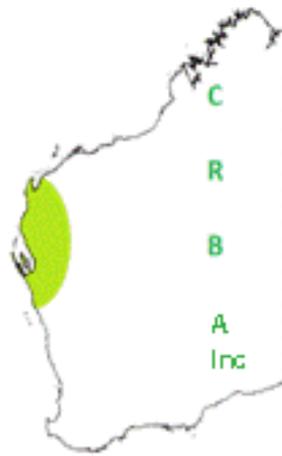


# **CARNARVON RANGELANDS BIOSECURITY ASSOCIATION INC.**



## **OPERATIONAL PLAN 2020/21**

### **About the Carnarvon Rangelands Biosecurity Association (CRBA)**

The CRBA is a not-for-profit association formed under the *Associations Incorporation Act 2015*, providing declared pest control assistance services for Pastoralist throughout Carnarvon, Exmouth, Murchison, Shark Bay and Upper Gascoyne Shires. The Associations' primary purpose is the control of declared pests using funding from Declared Pest Rates paid by landholders on pastoral stations. These Declared Pest Rates funds are matched dollar for dollar by the WA Government to reflect the public benefit of controlling declared pest animals and weeds. The association is formally recognised by the Hon Minister for Agriculture and Food as a recognised biosecurity group (RBG).

### **Membership of the Association**

Full membership of the Association is open only to ratepayers within the area (subject to rule 19.3 of the groups constitution), and full membership is automatically bestowed upon the individual or entity in whose name the relevant Declared Pest Rate assessment is issued, for a period of 12 months from the date of issue of that rate assessment.

The association is managed by a committee of between 7 and 11 members, where the full (pastoral) members act in a voluntary capacity.

### **Committee of management members (as at 30 June 2020)**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Member details</b>
Chairperson	Justin Steadman	Wooramel Station, Carnarvon
Vice-Chairperson	Tim Higham	Meedo Station, Carnarvon
Secretary / Treasurer	Aggie Forrester	Winning Station, Carnarvon
Member	Harry McKeough	Carey Downs Station, Upper Gascoyne
Member	Jim Dorrell	Mia Mia Station, Carnarvon
Member	Cameron Tubby	Wahroonga Station, Carnarvon & Winderie Station, Upper Gascoyne
Member	Leonie McLeod	Warroora Station, Carnarvon
Member	Roger Davies	Eudamullah Station, Upper Gascoyne
Member	Sandy McTaggart	Mt Narryer Station, Murchison
Associate Member	Gavan Mullan	Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Carnarvon
Associate Member	John McCleary	Shire of Upper Gascoyne

### **How the group is funded**

The CRBA's main source of funding is from the Declared Pest Account, which is made up of rates paid by Pastoral leases. These rates notices are then matched equally by the State Government. In late May 2020, the CRBA was advised that funding previously received under the State Wild Dog Action Plan, through Royalties for Regions (R4R) had been extended for the 2020/21 year. This funding recognises the State's obligation to manage biosecurity on vast lands they manager within our region, but to date no alternative solution has been provided by the State Government.

2020/21 will see the CRBA retain all Declared Pest Rate (DPR) and associated funds relating to the Shire of Upper Gascoyne, with the Shire continuing to contribute an additional \$120,000 towards biosecurity, now to be managed by the CRBA. This additional funding will be utilised in the Local Government area for which the funding is received under a new Memorandum of Understand (MOU).

The CRBA has specific obligations under the BAM Act regarding the transfer of funds from the Declared Pest Account, which are detailed in section 170 of the BAM Act. The CRBA has secured funding for an additional 10 days of Licensed Pest Management Technicians (LPMTs) from Rangelands NRM to assist in protection of turtle hatcheries on the Gnaraloo Station coastline. The forecast for the 2020/21 year is for little to no funding being available from other sources for wild dog control within the region.

Alternative funding was also awarded in 2019/20 for the management of Weeds of National Significance (WONS) through the State NRM 2019 Community Stewardship Grants program. This year also sees the final year of the CRBA program with Rangelands NRM on Large Feral Herbivore control within the northern part of our region.

### **Carnarvon Rangelands Biosecurity Association Aims**

The Carnarvon Rangelands Biosecurity Association (CRBA) aligns its aims directly to it objects in the groups' constitution. These are:

- Foster the *control of declared pests* throughout the Area, via the formulation, implementation, and review of appropriate *management plans* and programs.
- Focus on improving further *integration, coordination, and general collaboration* of all Area stakeholders in pest management matters.
- Promote the adoption of *sound biosecurity practices* throughout the Area.

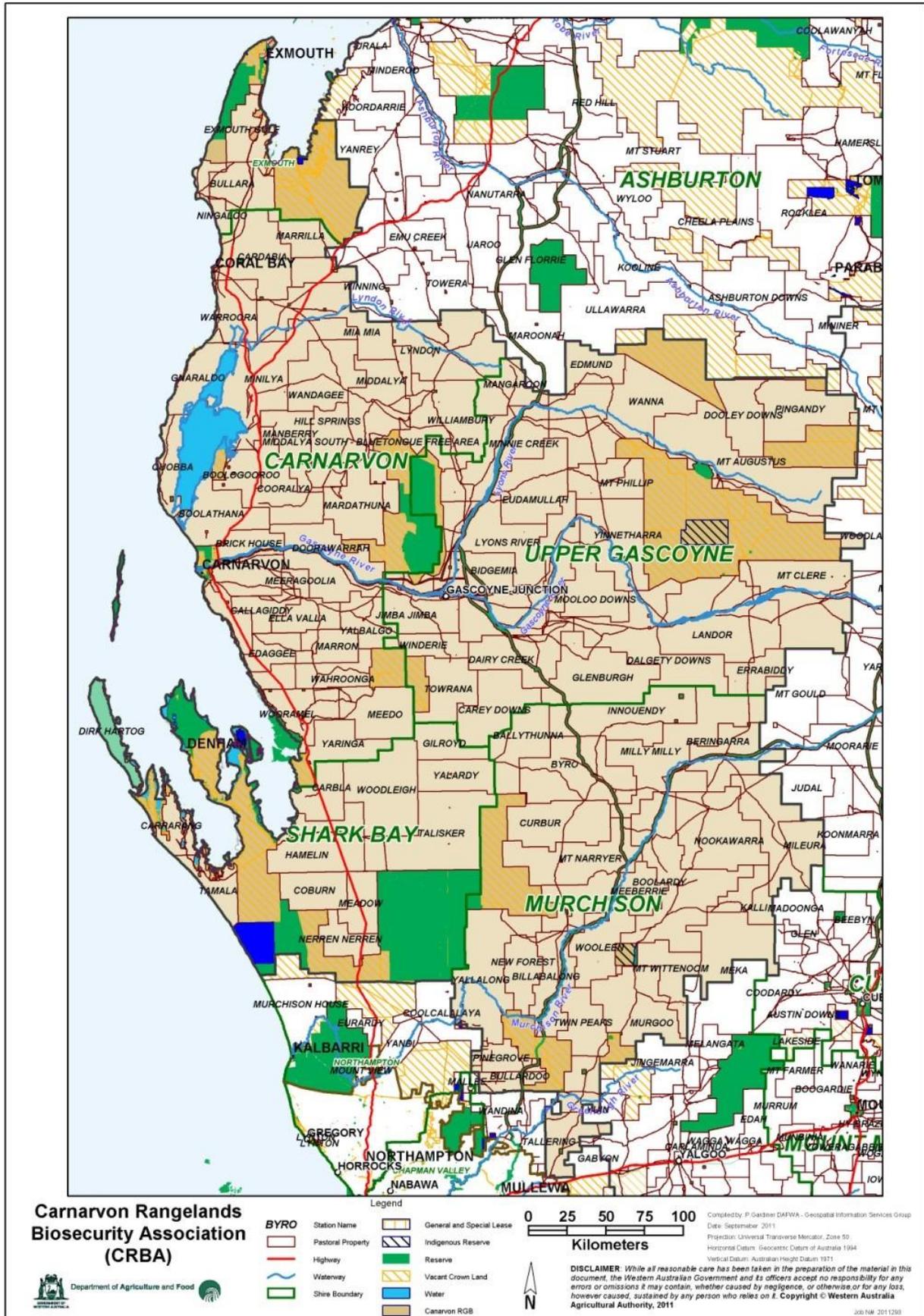
### **Area of operation**

The CRBA area of operation takes in the Shires of Carnarvon, Exmouth, Shark Bay, Murchison, and Upper Gascoyne. Additional pastoral properties below the state barrier fence within the Shire of Northampton and City of Greater Geraldton (locality of Mullewa) are included in the CRBA area of operation. The population of the CRBA area is approximately 9,500. Its largest town is Carnarvon, with a population of approximately 5,500. Carnarvon is the regional service centre for the whole Gascoyne-Murchison area. There are over 90 pastoral leases, multiple Exclusive Native Title properties and a considerable amount of DBCA managed land within the area.

The CRBA region includes the Shark Bay & Ningaloo World Heritage Areas; Cape Range National Park, Mount Augustus and Kennedy Ranges National Parks, multiple nature reserves and former leasehold properties that are managed by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA). DBCA managed lands form in excess of 2.5 million hectares within the CRBA region, with Exclusive Native Title properties forming an additional 1 million hectares.

The CRBA shares the northern boundary with the Pilbara Regional Biosecurity Group (Pilbara RBG), and the eastern boundary with the Meekatharra Rangelands Biosecurity Association (Meekatharra RBA). Just below the southern boundary of the CRBA area is Kalbarri National Park, unallocated Crown Land (UCL) and the Northern Agricultural Region.

Figure 1: Map Showing CRBA Area of Operation



## CRBA OPERATIONAL PLAN

### Introduction

The 2020/21 operational plan for the CRBA links to the Strategic Plan of the group. The plan identifies activities required to be undertaken over the coming year to ensure the hard work of previous years, specifically on wild dog control can be maintained. The plan will continue assist the CRBA to meet its responsibilities under the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007 (BAM Act) in providing assistance to its rate payers.

### Our aims

- Foster the *control of declared pests* throughout the Area, via the formulation; implementation and review of appropriate *management plans* and programs;
- Focus on improving further *integration, coordination, and general collaboration* of all Area stakeholders in pest management matters;
- Promote the adoption of *sound biosecurity practices* throughout the Area.
- Work with non-pastoral landholders to manage land and biosecurity issues that impact heavily on business and non-business entities operating within the landscape.

The CRBA will achieve these aims by:

- Continuing to try and attract additional resources;
- Establishing systems and processes to enable the CRBA to continue operating effectively;
- Having all land managers (not just pastoral properties) actively engaged and participating in biosecurity matters;
- Openly communicating with rate payers and key stake holders in the business of the CRBA.

This will lead to:

- Continuing to work with the Local DPIRD Biosecurity Officer to encourage participation by non-rate paying land users;
- Resources being provided by non-rate paying land users;
- Increased ownership & active participation by all landholders;
- Continued assistance with control of declared pests in the region to encourage livestock production increases (due to effective actions of CRBA).

Achieving success in this role will help CRBA pastoral businesses to become robust and viable through improved production, reduced variable costs and reduced labour costs.

### CRBA Priority Pests

The CRBA priority declared pest continues to be wild dogs with a notable increase in numbers during the second half of 2019/20. These declared pests are the main focus of this operational plan. Whilst large feral herbivores and weeds are also of major concern to the group, the availability of funding limits our ability to have a significant impact on this group of pests. These pests impact significantly on pastoral production and the environment.

CRBA Declared Pest Rate funds alone are not capable of fully controlling these pests, however the CRBA manages these pests to the best of their ability within the financial confines of the available DPR and external funding; and with contributions of resources and time from partnering with land managers. As it is CRBA's primary responsibility to assist those properties currently paying rates, there is a requirement for additional funds to service the extended areas now under government, indigenous or exclusive native total possession in order to achieve cross boundary biosecurity results.

While management of declared pests is the responsibility of individual land holders, the CRBA offers assistance to landholders through contracted Licensed Pest Management Technicians (LPMTs) on the ground. These LPMTs provide additional support in the control of wild dogs and other declared pests where possible. LPMTs alone, will not control pests within the region and the CRBA recognises that we need to continue to work with landholders on best practice community coordinated control programs.

## **Methodology**

The CRBA encourages broad scale, coordinated, cooperative and integrated pest management control; and promotes best practice control methods. It is playing a key regional role in assisting Pastoralists to control high impact declared pests. Through agreement, the CRBA will take back management of biosecurity related issues within the Shire of Upper Gascoyne. The DPR and additional contribution from the Shire will be used towards contracting their two preferred LPMTs and other biosecurity assistances as required.

## **CRBA Key Activities for 2020/21**

**Wild dogs** continue to be the biggest problem in the region attacking sheep, goats, and young cattle. Not only do wild dogs cause direct stock losses, they also cause income losses through injury and attack damage to livestock (sheep and cattle) that devalues livestock at sales.

Wild dogs require a wide range of control measures, with even wider costs and approaches. In past years, the CRBA has relied heavily on community baiting programs to compliment the work undertaken by contracted LPMTs within the region. However, this year due to budget restraints this is not possible, and baiting will be the sole responsibility of individual landholders with the CRBA providing the restricted chemicals required.

The CRBA members will continue to contribute a significant amount of in-kind time making and distributing meat baits; supervising LPMTs; attending/participating in training and workshops.

**Large feral herbivores** are present in various concentrations across the CRBA region. Notable donkey numbers have been reported during 2019/20 in the regions of North Carnarvon, North Upper Gascoyne, North and South Murchison. Due to LFH concentrations being so spread out and funding restrictions the CRBA will run opportunistic programs for LFH control throughout the region in consultation with landholders. Where additional funding becomes available larger control programs may be undertaken.

Historically DPIRD had been contracted to conducted aerial control programs but due to the excessive cost of these programs and the spread of LFH within our region, continues to be an ineffective and cost prohibitive method of control.

**Weeds** in the CRBA catchment, include mesquite, coral cactus and parkinsonia.

The CRBA remains focused on controlling these invasive weeds, specifically mesquite as a declared Weed of National Significance (WONS). It out-competes native vegetation and reduces the productive grazing capacity of pastoral lands. It also exposes topsoil along riverbanks to water and wind erosion, damages infrastructure and greatly increases the operating costs of pastoral holdings throughout the region. The CRBA will utilise funding received from State NRM to run a small WONS management program during 2020/21 with alternative funding sources and alternative control methods also being investigated.

The CRBA will also continue to provide guidance to landholders within the region who have identified coral cactus by providing them with the biological control that has proven successful on other properties within the region.

## **Focus of the operational plan**

Given the budgetary restrictions facing the group this year and significance of the problem, the CRBA will focus most of its energies in assisting pastoral leaseholders in the control of wild dogs.

Wild dog control will be achieved through:

- Using Licenced Pest Management Technicians (LPMTs) in specific areas of the region;
- Running a coordinated Community Baiting program across the CRBA region;
- Continuing to make chemicals available to encourage individual landholders to run their own baiting program when required;
- Identifying & hitting target areas for control;
- Continuing efforts to engage pastoral lease holders in active control;
- Increase community feedback and information through bi-annual newsletter, landholder feedback forms and online surveys;
- Communicating with DBCA regarding their planned control programs on government lands, including ensuring effective wild dog control activities are being undertaken;

Due to budget constraints no community baiting will be undertaken and baiting will be the sole responsibility of individual landholders within the CRBA region.

Declared Weed Control will be achieved through:

- 2019/20 saw each landholder within the region provided with a weed identification card to encourage pastoralists engagement in identifying and notifying the CRBA areas of concern;
- Working with other organisation to source and secure additional funding;
- Researching alternative control methods to assist in declared weed eradication;
- Train Pastoralist, where alternative funding is identified in the best practices to eradicate declared weeds found within their leaseholds.

Large Herbivore control will be achieved through:

- Identifying target areas of concern, through feedback from landholders;
- Providing financial assistance (where available and approved) to pastoralists for opportunistic control programs;
- Working collaboratively with other RBG's where possible to identify large feral herbivore numbers and movements;
- Working with other organisations to source and secure alternative funding to undertake preferred control activities.

### **Measurement and Indicator of Success**

The CRBA will continue to measure the success of each program and communicate to lease holders regularly through the year, utilising the electronic bi-annual newsletter, committee meetings and emails.

Wild dog control will be measured through:

- The use of Feral Scan & Spot devices;
- Preparation and submission of monthly LMPT reports, detailing activities undertaken throughout that month;
- Feedback on dog movements and numbers from LPMTs;
- Communication with CRBA Executive, LMPT co-ordinators and landholders.

Declared Weed Control will be measured through:

- Information received from the State NRM funded contractor;
- Communication received from Pastoralist on problem areas;
- Preparation and a detailed report by LMPT's that are employed to help identify known declared weeds;
- Liaising with local DPIRD Biosecurity officer.

Large Herbivore control will be measured through:

- Data collected and recorded by LPMTs and landholders;
- Liaising with local key stakeholders on observations;
- Liaising with local DPIRD Biosecurity officer.

### **Community Engagement**

The CRBA plans to maintain community engagement in 2020/2021 through a number of various activities. The CRBA will continue to ask for feedback on what the community would like to see offered to them to help with the control of Declared Pests.

Planned events in 2020/2021 included:

- Providing a copy of the annual Operation Plan to all CRBA rate payers;
- Providing an updated copy of the CRBA Wild Dog action plan to members;
- Holding regular committee meetings, at different locations within the CRBA area;
- Offering training days (where funding is available) and inviting all members to attend;
- Producing a bi-annual electronic newsletter.

## Budget summary

The Declared Pest Rate for the CRBA has been set at approximately 3.573c in the dollar on the unimproved value of pastoral land in the local government districts that make up our group.

Activities within the operational plan will expense \$934,196 in Declared Pest Rates and associated funds to implement from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

DPA Budget summary	Budget	% of Budget
<b>Wild dog control</b>	824,996	88.31
<b>Declared Weed control</b>		
<b>Large herbivore control</b>	5,000	0.54
<b>Contingency Fund</b>	10,000	1.07
<b>Administration and Governance</b>	94,200	10.08
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>934,196</b>	<b>100%</b>

The total expenditure consists of \$934,196 which comes from the combined 2020/21 Declared Pest Rates (budgeting for 85% payment rate) of \$318,802 pastoral rate payments plus \$375,061 matching WA Government funding; \$120,000 draw down from surplus funds held in DPA account for the CRBA, \$120,000 contribution from Shire of Upper Gascoyne, and a small amount of expected account interest, totalling \$935,863 of DPA funds required in 2020/21.

This forecast sees a predicted surplus and allows for unexpected or urgent expenses that might occur during the 2020/21 year.

### Administration and Governance

Administration and Governance (10.08%) includes a budget of \$75,500 (around 8.82% of overall budget) for an Executive Officer (EO) and related operational budget, which the CRBA believes to be critical for success. One of the primary roles of the EO is to source and secure external funding to supplement the DPA funding; to communicate CRBA activities to all members and co-ordinate all CRBA meetings, workshops, and activities. The administration and governance budget also cover insurance, financial audits, restricted chemical permits (RCP) and meeting expenses.

The CRBA will prepare an audited financial statement and annual report covering the implementation of its 2020/21 annual report and budget in line with the group's constitution.

The CRBA, by submitting the Group's 2020/21 operational plan consents to the transfer of \$813,863 (ex GST) from the DPIRD Declared Pest Account to the CRBA for the control of declared pests on pastoral leases on the Local Government areas of Carnarvon, Exmouth, Murchison, Shark Bay, Upper Gascoyne, Northampton and Greater Geraldton.

### Allocation of funding from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

Payment dates are as follows.

1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter
<b>1 August 2019</b> <b>\$406,931</b>		<b>1 February 2020</b> <b>\$406,932</b>	

The CRBA continues to operate under tightening budget constraints. With this in mind, we would hope moving forward to receive timely quarterly financial statements, including reconciled interested from DPIRD for our Declared Pest Account and prompt payments on all invoices submitted. Both of these are key to the smooth running and management of the CRBA financials moving forward.

As the members are liable for the financial considerations of the CRBA, prepared budgets are submitted based on expected rates from DPIRD. In the financial year, budgeted income is reduced markedly due to non-payment leaving the committee vulnerable to trading insolvent. This would leave DPIRD and the RBG committee members in a precarious position, for which the committee has no authority or control over.

It is hoped during the 2020/21 year that DPIRD will work with the CRBA to ensure better financial management, including ensuring prompt and up to date payment of Declared Pest Rate invoices.