



**Hon Alannah MacTiernan MLC**  
**Minister for Regional Development; Agriculture and Food; Ports;**  
**Minister Assisting the Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade**

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Our ref: 64 – 18761  
Your ref:

Hon Matthew Swinbourn MLC  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs  
Parliament House  
4 Harvest Terrace  
WEST PERTH WA 6005

[env@parliament.wa.gov.au](mailto:env@parliament.wa.gov.au)

Dear Mr Swinbourn

Matt

**PETITION NO. 160 – BIOSECURITY LEVY IMPOSED ON RESIDENTS OF  
BOYUP BROOK**

Thank you for your letter dated 17 September 2020 requesting comments on the terms of the petition and submission as tabled by the Hon Colin Holt MLC titled: Petition 160 – Biosecurity levy imposed on residents of Boyup Brook.

Please find my comments in response to the main issues as detailed in the submission.

**1. Consultation**

Before determining a rate and as prescribed in the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management (Declared Pest Account) Regulations 2014* (the Regulations), the following actions are to be undertaken to meet the consultation requirements:

- a. Send a letter inviting submissions with a copy of the Public Notice to affected landowners in areas where the rate is new or there will be an increase of 5% or more from the previous year; and
- b. Advertise a notice of the proposed rates in The West Australian and regional newspapers as a Public Notice.

In addition, Blackwood Biosecurity Inc. (BBI) also engages throughout the year with landholders through public meetings and public educational programs in addition to undertaking pest control activities within its operational area to support its landholders. The BBI operational area covers the shires of Boyup Brook, Bridgetown-Greenbushes, Donnybrook-Balingup, Nannup, and West Arthur.

During 2018-19, it is understood that BBI held at least one workshop, community meeting or other engagement event in Boyup Brook Shire each month throughout the year to raise awareness and garner support within the community. This was to give Shire of Boyup Brook residents multiple opportunities to discuss the Recognised Biosecurity Group (RBG) and proposed Declared Pest Rate (DPR), before formal DPR consultation was undertaken.

The table below details some of the community workshops that were organised by BBI to engage and raise awareness within the community of the BBI's pest management activities.

<b><u>Workshop</u></b>	<b><u>Attendees</u></b>
Shooters workshop	98
Options for Rabbit control	10
1010 baiting training	40
RBG Information Presentation	40 (Boyup Brook Town Hall)
Dinninup Agricultural Show	63 landholders
Storm in tea Cup (Ladies event)- Presentation	150
RHDV K5 release	163 landholders
European Red Fox	108 landholders 70 landholders
Feral Pigs (including Boyup Brook)	125 landholders

Data on the 2019-20 DPR consultation for each RBG is available on the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (Department) website. This data shows that of the 264 submissions received in response to the consultation process for rates, 55 came from the area covered by BBI.

Of these responses, 12 were from the Boyup Brook Shire area, with two who supported the levy and 10 did not. This represents a response rate of 1.2% of 1029 landholders in the Boyup Brook Shire contacted directly by letters.

The rate applied in the BBI area is a fixed sum of \$40 for urban properties, and \$50 for rural properties. This rate is the same across all shires within BBI, and has not increased since it was introduced in the 2018/19 financial year.

## 2. Memorial on land title

Revenue WA issues DPR assessment notices and collects rates on behalf of the Department. Landholders are issued rate assessment notices around September/October each year. The process for rate payment and debt recovery, if pursued, is based on the process for Land Tax Assessments. A reminder notice is issued to landholders if the rate remains unpaid and following that, if rates are still not collected, Revenue WA has the option to pursue debt recovery through external debt collectors and/or possibly the lodgement of a memorial on the title. The wording used in the reminder letters is based on that used in similar collection processes, and seeks to encourage landholders to pay the rates and understand possible consequences of non-payment. DPIRD is reviewing this wording for future processes to ensure it is more balanced in tone. Revenue WA provides a pensioner postponement option, as well as a payment plan, for landholders experiencing difficulty in making payments.

## 3. Significant impact of pests on crown land

Under the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007* (BAM Act), landholders are responsible for managing declared pest animals and weeds on their property. Pest management can be challenging for individual landholders, especially where pests are established and widespread. In these circumstances, pest management is best addressed with a coordinated community, industry and government approach. This principle of shared responsibility is implemented in Western Australia through RBGs and funded by the DPR. There are examples where RBGs have formed sound working relationships with State government agencies and as result are achieving good outcomes through this collaborative approach to managing widespread and established pests.

RBGs are an independent body but receive support from the Department and other government agencies. Landholders contribute to RBGs by supporting management programs through the DPR as well as through providing input to RBGs on the identification of local priority species for management. In addition, there are many community members who volunteer or work with the State's 14 RBGs to provide coordinated pest management.

The RBG provides the conduit to assist landholders in meeting their legal obligations to manage declared pests on their land, as it raises rates within its community through the DPR process and also enables the matching of funds raised within the community by the Western Australian State Government, which is dollar-for-dollar. As a result, this doubles the amount of funding available to each RBG to implement annual operational plans which detail the programs (educational and management) to be undertaken within their operational area to support its community. This government funding is one way the State Government contributes to pest control on Government managed lands, where it will benefit producers and communities most. BBI has developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions to have agreed access to government land when required, and coordinate pest control activities.

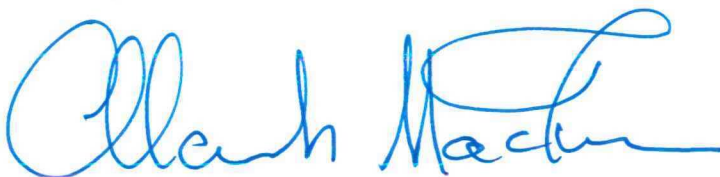
When the BBI was pursuing recognition as a RBG, the group decided to include the Shires that cover the catchment area of the Blackwood River and its tributaries as a natural operational area, to contain established pests and weeds of similar types. To achieve this, the BBI sought for its operational area to include the local government authorities of West Arthur, Boyup Brook, Bridgetown, Nannup and the southern half of Donnybrook. By including the Blackwood River catchment and its tributaries, it was recognised that a coordinated approach to managing priority species would likely be more effective, as it ensured management and control efforts could be undertaken across property boundaries and throughout the Blackwood River catchment.

RBGs recognise that as they grow and develop, community needs may change and/or more effective means of managing high priority pests may result. This can result in refinement of RBG operational areas. As the Shire of Nannup is at the outer end of the Blackwood River catchment area, and the landholdings within the Shire are complex with varied stakeholders, pests within Shire of Nannup may eventually be managed through an alternative method to that of the BBI. However, the Shire of Boyup Brook is within the centre of the BBI operational area, and excision would have a more significant impact on effectiveness of pest control activities throughout the catchment area.

The growth and success of the RBGs and the model requires the support of not only the government agencies but more importantly the Local Government Associations (LGAs) and their communities. Some community members, landholders and LGAs may be reticent about the community coordinated approach to managing widespread and established through an RBG. The Shire of Boyup Brook have actively undermined the legitimacy of the BBI. Examples of this include in late 2019 the Shire's website encouraged landholders not pay the DPR, their refusal to share landholder contact data with the Department to ensure all landholders are contacted during consultations, and the Shire has also refused to meet with BBI to understand what pest management the BBI is doing for the benefit of Boyup Brook residents.

Some signs of this shift are seen in the positive feedback the BBI has received recently received from landholders in response to activities. In the last 18 months, the BBI has removed 530 feral pigs and 802 foxes from its area. BBI also supports the Wheatbelt NRM Red card for foxes and rabbits annual shoot, mentioned in Mr Holt's letter.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information on the petition.



**HON ALANNAH MACTIERNAN MLC**  
**MINISTER FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT; AGRICULTURE AND FOOD; PORTS**  
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**JOBS AND TRADE**

15 OCT 2020