

Notes from MPSC for the period October 2021 - May 2022

The Marine Pest Sectoral Committee (MPSC) held its twenty-third committee meeting online on 18 May 2022.

Notes from the Chair

COVID has proved very resilient and continues to restrict face to face meetings. However, the virtual platform has allowed many more people to participate in the MPSC Partners Workshop and meeting. With restrictions being lifted and borders opening, MPSC will consider a hybrid format for its twenty fourth Partners' Workshop and committee meeting and will continue to strive to improve Australia's marine pest biosecurity.

The MPSC23 Partners Workshop was held virtually and focused on biofouling management and regulation. The workshop generated significant interest as participants attending the workshop were from sectors such as environmental consultants, boating industries, port authorities, environmental non-governmental agencies and Defence. Attendees were updated on the implementation of national biofouling regulations which came into effect from 15 June 2022. The regulations aim to mitigate the biosecurity risk posed by biofouling and further protect Australian waters from the threat of marine pests.

The MPSC23 Committee Meeting focussed on implementation of MarinePestPlan 2018-2023 and the National Marine Pest Surveillance Strategy. For example, we will be launching our new Response Manual for Invasive Marine Crabs which will improve Australia's preparedness and ability to respond to invasive crab incursions.

MPSC has made significant progress on high priority work items across multiple aspects of marine pest management including surveillance, preparedness, emergency response, stakeholder engagement, and research & development.

This was my last meeting as Chair of MPSC before handing over to Matthew Osbourne from the Northern Territory. I would like to thank everyone for their continued commitment to marine pest biosecurity and especially those contributing to the Partners' Workshop and Committee Meeting. These forums highlight the marine pest monitoring and surveillance taking place around Australia to improve marine pest biosecurity management and the communicate is crucial to communicate MPSC achievements to our national stakeholders.

Dr John Robertson

Chair MPSC23

MPSC23 Partners Workshop

The MPSC23 Partners Workshop was held virtually on 17 May 2022, with the theme 'Australian Biofouling Management'.

The workshop began with presentations on the incentive compatible regulatory design and implementation of the biofouling regulation from 15 June 2022.

There was also a presentation on eco-engineering and its applications for marine pest biosecurity. Eco-engineering involves combining principles from ecology and engineering to design structures (e.g., marine

infrastructure) that both benefits humans and the natural environment. Research is underway to explore how eco-engineering can be used to improve marine pest management on artificial structures.

The Living Seawalls project presentation covered some background to eco-engineering of marine built structures followed by a summary of a project to use eco-engineering for marine biosecurity.

Representatives from New South Wales and Tasmania gave presentations on managing vessel biofouling and an overview of biofouling management in New South Wales and Tasmania respectively.

Suggested themes for the next Partners Workshop included innovative surveillance techniques such as molecular surveillance, remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) and other tools that are being used in marine pest surveillance. Any feedback and suggestions are welcomed and can be sent to mpsc@agriculture.gov.au. These will be used in preparation for the next Partners Workshop.

MPSC High Priority Work Items

Since MPSC22, MPSC has progressed the following high priority work items.

National Strategic Plan for Marine Pest Biosecurity: MarinePestPlan 2018-2023

Of the 29 activities listed in MarinePestPlan 2018–2023:

- 16 activities are complete
- 9 have commenced
- 2 are ongoing
- 2 are yet to commence.

More information on MarinePestPlan 2018-2023 activities and current status can be found on the [Marine Pests](#) website.

National Marine Pest Surveillance Strategy

The National Marine Pest Surveillance Strategy is now published. The accompanying Work Plan was endorsed in September 2021, and implementation has commenced.

The Surveillance Strategy outlines priority requirements for enhancing surveillance of marine pests in Australia over the next five years and aims to improve coordination and implementation of surveillance activities.

Passive Surveillance Education and Awareness (PSEA)

Activity 2.3 of MarinePestPlan 2018–2023 is to promote tailored education and awareness materials to engage marine pest observer groups in passive surveillance activities. Four sectors were identified as likely to benefit from the provision of passive surveillance, education, and awareness material: ports, marinas, divers and aquaculture. The PSEA task group have been developing visual materials for these four sectors to increase marine pest awareness and reporting.

The suite of visual materials for the ports sector are nearly finalised and include an A3 poster, A4 supplementary fact sheet, virtual background, email signature and social media tiles. The suite of marina visual materials has been drafted and are awaiting further feedback from the PSEA task group. The PSEA task group will be discussing the key messages, audience and communications plan for the divers' sector after the marinas materials are completed.

Emergency Response (EMPPlan)

Activity 3.5 of MarinePestPlan 2018–2023 is to plan and implement procedures to develop and update the EMPPlan response manuals and related guidance materials. The EMPPlan manuals provide guidance on responding to a marine pest incursion, including types of information needed and technical advice on control, eradication and management methods.

MPSC endorsed the Response Manual for Invasive Marine Crabs, which has now been published.

Work on other EMPPlan manuals is underway and the series will continue to be updated throughout implementation of MarinePestPlan 2018-2023.

National Awareness Campaign (NAC)

Activity 5.3 of MarinePestPlan 2018–2023 is to design a targeted national campaign to improve awareness of marine pest biosecurity risks, management actions and shared responsibilities. The National Awareness Campaign task group met in February 2022 to discuss ideas and development of an awareness campaign. A list of biosecurity campaigns developed for other biosecurity issues in Australia and New Zealand were collated and sent to the task group. These campaigns will be used as a reference guide for campaign styles and delivery. The National Awareness Campaign will be rolled out in 2022-23.

Jurisdictional Updates

Since the last update to MPSC22, there has been progress on a range of marine pest biosecurity work:

Australian Government

- Implementation of Australian biofouling management requirements for all incoming vessels in Australian waters came into effect on 15 June 2022. This will see mandatory pre-arrival reporting for all international vessel arrivals relating to Australian biofouling management practices.
- Progressed implementation of domestic and international ballast water management policies.
- Funded projects to validate molecular assays for priority marine pest species and improve sampling protocols for molecular surveillance methods.
- Undertaken an audit of marine pest surveillance activities in Commonwealth managed locations on a national scale.

New South Wales

- NSW Department of Primary Industries have finalised development of a five-year marine pest species surveillance plan (2022-2026). Surveillance activities in accordance with the plan have commenced in four of the six nominated ports.
- There have been two investigations of suspected marine pest occurrences in NSW this reporting period. Christmas light sea squirt (*Clavelina lepadiformis*) that has been confirmed in Twofold Bay, Eden and Nelson Bay Marina, Port Stephens. This species has not been formally recorded in Australia; however, it is not considered to be of significant biosecurity concern. NSW DPI will continue to monitor its abundance and behaviour.

- NSW DPI and the Royal Australian Navy are conducting surveillance for sea squirt (*Didemnum vexillum*) at several sites throughout New South Wales. Currently, there have been no confirmed detections.
- A working group between DHI (an international environmental services company), NSW, Victoria, and Western Australia, have prepared and circulated a letter to shipping industry stakeholders, supporting the Vessel-Check tool for managing biofouling, citing its benefits, and recommending its uptake.
- A current Marine Estate Management Strategy (MEMS) -2018-2028 project is responding to recent social research to inform an intervention and communications campaign to improve biofouling management in NSW. The project focuses on adopting a variety of communication activities and tactics aimed at key stakeholders.

Northern Territory

- Marine pest surveillance and risk mitigation and communication activities continued during this period.
- The Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade (DITT) focuses on community and industry education along with risk base resourcing to help ensure the prevention and early detection of priority invasive marine pests.

Queensland

- Queensland continues to deliver the Queensland Seaports eDNA Surveillance (Q-SEAS) program in partnership with port authorities to facilitate early detection of marine pest threats.
- Queensland also continues to respond to and manage risks associated with detections of invasive marine species as they arise.

South Australia

- Increased collaboration with Department for Infrastructure and Transport (South Australian government) to extend marine pest risk messaging and management through networks and facility managers.
- Assessing South Australia's biofouling management and infrastructure (marinas, slipways, shiplifts) to evaluate current and future needs in view of the proposal to develop a new consolidated Biosecurity Act for South Australia.

Tasmania

- The detection of Pacific oysters in Tasmania's Wilderness World Heritage Area at Port Davey has raised concern and initiated the need for increased surveillance and hull hygiene for vessels visiting the area.
- Phase two of the Tasmanian remotely operated vehicle (ROV) project is now near completion, and the project will be completed in June 2022. This project has examined ROV design and training needs to facilitate detection of marine pests. The project has produced two modified ROV designs and developed training material.

Victoria

- During this period Victoria has focussed on the establishment of a marine surveillance program across all Victorian commercial ports (Melbourne, Hastings, Geelong and Portland) and monitoring and management within marine protected areas.
- Victoria has responded to the detection of New Zealand green-lipped mussel (*Perna canaliculus*) in Western Port and continues to support research into Asian shore crab (*Hemigrapsus sanguineus*).

Western Australia

- The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) has been involved in a range of marine biosecurity science, compliance, policy and communications activities since the last report. Highlights of these activities include continued surveillance of 11 ports and targeted surveillance at high value and high-risk assets.
- There is also on-going management of carpet sea squirt (*Didemnum vexillum*) at HMAS Stirling.

Chair Handover

Upon the conclusion of MPSC23, MPSC Chair duties will be transferred from Queensland (John Robertson) to Northern territory (Matthew Osbourne). MPSC thanks Dr John Robertson for his leadership to the committee over the past two years.

Upcoming MPSC Meetings

MPSC24

The twenty-fourth MPSC meeting and corresponding Partners' workshop will be held face to face/ virtual meeting as hybrid in October/ November 2022 in NSW.

Dates and workshop theme is yet to be decided.