

Notes from MPSC for the period June 2020 – November 2020

Notes from the Chair – MPSC20

The Marine Pest Sectoral Committee (MPSC) held its twentieth committee meeting online on 12 November 2020.

As Chair, I wanted to extend my heartfelt thanks to all MPSC members (current and previous), observers, partners, stakeholders and all who participated in MPSC workshops and meetings over 2020. In particular, I would like to thank Brett Herbert and Louise Caldwell without whom it would all fall apart.

It was certainly a strange period as chair, what with a global pandemic I spent most of the time chairing virtually. In contrast to this time last year, the one thing we can be sure of is that Covid will continue to shape our context throughout this year and beyond. Thankfully our Melbourne colleagues are now free to leave their homes.

Despite the challenges we all faced MPSC delivered some great work and outputs. I have two main reflections from 2020.

Firstly, the work we do through MPSC is important, we must remember that. We are a small group that produce a lot. The quality of our work is acknowledged by our partners and we have received great praise from NBC and EIC for our project delivery, collegiate and open approach

Secondly, there will continue to be inevitable curve balls locally, nationally and internationally and we'll need to keep an open and flexible mindset and be ready to roll with whatever shocks and challenges arise. I urge all of you to continue to push marine pest issues and to support one another.

Finally, I would like to welcome Dr John Robertson as the new MPSC Chair. I am confident John will be an amazing chair and I hope he will enjoy, as I have, working with MPSC members and stakeholders to progress the valuable work of the committee.

Please take care of yourselves, each other and remember to chat and enjoy the coffee

Dr Justin McDonald

Chair MPSC20

MPSC High Priority Work Items

In the second half of 2020, MPSC progressed the following high priority work items.

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

Activities in *MarinePestPlan 2018-2023* are being progressed.

Of the 29 activities listed:

- 12 activities are complete
- 11 have commenced
- 1 is ongoing
- 5 are yet to commence.

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

MarinePestPlan 2018-2023 mid-term review

Over 2020, *MarinePestPlan 2018-2023* underwent a mid-term review. All activities in the plan are either complete or underway, or waiting on progress in other areas.

An additional activity to develop a national marine pest surveillance work plan, to support implementation of activity 2.1 (Develop a national marine pest surveillance strategy), has been added to the plan and project commenced.

Activity 4.4 has been reworded and is now 'Make recommendations and implement measures to improve management of marine pest vectors and pathways'.

The *MarinePestPlan 2018-2023* mid-term review can be found on the [Marine Pests website](#).

National Marine Pest Surveillance Strategy and Work Plan

MarinePestPlan activity 2.1 – Develop a national marine pest surveillance strategy.

The [National Marine Pest Surveillance Strategy](#) was endorsed at MPSC17 (May 2018) and is now published. The accompanying Work Plan is in development, with a proposed implementation period of 2021–26.

Passive Surveillance Education and Awareness

MarinePestPlan activity 2.3 – Promote tailored education and awareness materials to engage marine pest observer groups in passive surveillance activities.

Four sectors have been identified as likely to benefit from the provision of passive surveillance education and awareness material: aquaculture, commercial divers, ports/marinas, and shipping.

The task group is now discussing what activities could be undertaken to improve availability of education and awareness material. Initial focus is on the ports and shipping sectors.

NIMPIS

MarinePestPlan activity 2.7 – Review surveillance information management needs and ensure an appropriate information system is in place.

The [National Introduced Marine Pest Information System \(NIMPIS\) website](#) has been revitalised and launched (beta version).

The website provides information on the biology, ecology and distribution of marine pests either established or that pose a risk of future introduction to Australia, and acts as a central repository for validated Australian marine pest surveillance data.

Further updates and adjustments to the website are underway, based on feedback from users.

Emergency Response (EMPPlan)

MarinePestPlan activity 3.5 – Plan and implement procedures to develop and update the EMPPlan rapid response manuals and related guidance materials.

The [Biosecurity Incident Management System: Marine pest version \(BIMS:MPV\)](#) is now published. The document provides guidance on managing marine pest incidents, including establishing control centres.

A Rapid Response Manual for invasive crabs is currently in development. This is the first draft of the new structure for EMP Plan response manuals-focusing on a functional group instead of single species.

A Marine Pest Management Manual – covering topics including destruction, decontamination and disposal of marine pests – is currently in development.

Marine Pest Impacts

MarinePestPlan activity 4.3 – Review the economic, environmental and social impacts of marine pests in Australia.

The Marine Pest Impacts Task Group has completed its review of the economic, environmental and social impacts of 16 introduced marine pest species in Australia, however finalising the report has been delayed.

National Awareness Campaign

MarinePestPlan activity 5.3 – Design a targeted national campaign to improve awareness of marine pest biosecurity risks, management actions and shared responsibilities.

New members have joined the National Awareness Campaign Task Group, and the scope is being narrowed and more clearly defined. Terms of Reference and a workplan of activities are being developed.

The primary aims of the project are to direct target audiences toward existing material, and to ensure a consistent message is delivered across jurisdictions.

Australian Priority Marine Pests List

The Australian Priority Marine Pest List (APMPL) contains three established and six exotic marine pest species, assessed as being of national significance, and therefore potentially eligible for cost-sharing under the NEBRA.

MPSC agreed to add [Mytella strigata](#) (Charrou mussel) to this list.

Mytella strigata was previously not considered eligible for listing on the APMPL, but has since been reassessed using recent data and found to meet the criteria. This decision was based on new literature available regarding the morphology, invasion ecology of its spread in Asia and control of the species, and on its increased invasion risk. *M. strigata* was identified as a species of rapidly growing concern in the region.

Jurisdictional Updates

Australian Government

The Department of Agriculture, Water Resources and the Environment has progressed a range of marine pest biosecurity work, including:

- progressed implementation of domestic and international ballast water management policies
- contributed to the review and development of international ballast water and biofouling standards
- collaborated on international marine pest biosecurity partnerships.
- progressed projects under the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper and other administered funding
- progressed activities under *MarinePestPlan 2018-23*.

New South Wales

A number of projects are underway, or commencing soon, including:

- literature review project to identify and determine potential marine pest surveillance techniques suitable for NSW
- development of an online training module that will focus on marine pest biosecurity
- a Marine Estate Management Strategy (MEMS) funded project that will deliver social research and a behaviour change program for marine biosecurity awareness, targeting biofouling management on small-medium sized vessels moored or berthed in NSW marine estate waters.

There has been a range extension of *Sabella spallanzanii* (European fan worm) confirmed on scientific equipment deployed 3nm offshore from Bondi, Sydney. There have been three re-confirmations of *Caulerpa taxifolia* (killer alga) confirmed in areas where it is already known to occur. NSW DPI has also investigated the illegal online sale of *Carcinus maenas* (Asian shore crab) via Facebook.

Northern Territory

Marine pest surveillance and risk mitigation and communication activities continued during this period.

Queensland

Queensland has been finalising deliverables from the Marine Pest Prevention and Preparedness Project; planning for and securing resources to ensure benefits realised from the project are retained into the future. This includes the continuation of the Queensland Seaports eDNA Surveillance Program in partnership with port authorities.

Queensland has also continued to respond to and manage risks associated with in-water cleaning operations, which are continuing to increase, and detections of invasive marine species on vessels.

South Australia

In this period, South Australia has:

- provided advice to the South Australia Department of Infrastructure and Transport and proponents for a number of ports in SA to minimise biosecurity risks
- provided advice to a biofouling contractor regarding in water cleaning
- worked with the Department of Defence on biosecurity risks of vessels in Port River
- Biosecurity Act Technical Directions Paper out for public consultation
- provided advice to DIT and proponent for proposed Floating Storage and Regasification Unit at Outer Harbour.

Tasmania

In this period, Biosecurity Tasmania has:

- continued to work on developing regulations to the *Tasmanian Biosecurity Act 2019*
- continued to develop Remote Operated underwater Vehicle (ROV) inspection capability through the ROV enhancement program
- begun below-water inspection of high-risk vessels entering Tasmania or prior to embarkation to high value environments.

A new build vessel originating from Vietnam and travelling to Hobart was detected (pre-arrival) to have *Mytella strigata* (Charru mussel) and *Perna viridis* (Asian green mussel), and appropriate steps taken to manage the risk.

Victoria

Victoria continues to build its capability in the management of marine pests. Victoria has focused on emergency preparedness and response activities.

At MPSC 20, Victoria notified members that they are currently investigating a detection of *Hemigrapsus sanguineus* (Asian Shore Crab) in Port Phillip Bay. The initial detection was reported and identified via iNaturalist. Further surveillance discovered 27 crabs across two sites,

including 6 adult females in berry. Surveillance is continuing and samples have been sent for analysis; a formal notification to CCIMPE has been submitted.

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 across the state
- targeted surveillance at high value and high-risk assets
- implementation of the Vessel-Check portal as part of DPIRD's biofouling management strategy, and continuing to contribute to the portal's development.

Chair Handover

Upon the conclusion of MPSC20, MPSC Chair duties transferred from Western Australia (Justin McDonald) to Queensland (John Robertson). MPSC thanks Justin for his leadership of the committee.

Upcoming MPSC Meetings & Activities

MPSC21

The twenty-first MPSC meeting and corresponding Partners workshop will be held online in early May 2021, dates to be confirmed.

MPSC22

The twenty-second MPSC meeting and corresponding Partners workshop will be held in November 2021, dates to be confirmed. If a face-to-face meeting is possible, Western Australia will host; otherwise the meetings will run online.