

Notes from MPSC for the period November 2020 – May 2021

Notes from the Chair – MPSC21

The Marine Pest Sectoral Committee (MPSC) held its twenty-first committee meeting online on 11 May 2021.

As we know, COVID has proved very resilient and continues to restrict us to meeting virtually. While coming together face to face is quite special these days and is of immense value, the virtual environment has allowed many more people to be involved, particularly industry partners who normally may not be able to travel to participate.

The MPSC21 agenda focussed around the key issues of ballast water and biofouling. I think it is important to note from our current discussions how far we have come in the last few years on these issues. The level of awareness among all stakeholders has increased enormously, and the level of interest in systems and processes such as in-water cleaning wasn't as obvious three years ago.

To reinforce this progress, it was reassuring to see that the midterm review of *MarinePestPlan 2018-2023* found that the Plan was on-track and a large number of activities have been completed or are on track.

Having an agreed National Marine Pest Surveillance Strategy is a big step forward for the sector. Having an effective surveillance strategy in marine settings will provide guidance for surveillance development in years to come. The revitalisation of the National Introduced Marine Pest Information System (NIMPIS) website is another example of a key component of the marine pest toolkit important for all involved.

The review of the economic, environmental and social impacts of marine pests in Australia is another important piece of work that shows that we have a long way to go to better understand the impacts of established marine pests in Australia.

I would like to thank everyone for the commitment each makes in marine pest management especially those working together through the MPSC Partners' Workshop and the MPSC. These forums recognise the efforts being made and the communicate coming from these forums are crucial for open and integrated communication.

John Robertson
Chair MPSC21

MPSC21 Partners' Workshop

The MPSC21 Partners' Workshop was held on 5 May 2021 as a trial virtual format.

The workshop opened with an update from the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) regarding progress on the review of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) biofouling guidelines and IMO sampling of ballast water systems.

This was followed by updates and discussion from several key MPSC Partners including DAWE, NOPSEMA, the Department of Defence, Maritime Industry Australia Ltd. and OceanWatch. Topics of interest included the actual and perceived effectiveness of ballast water management systems, calculating marine pest translocation risk, and the challenges in communicating risks and regulations with stakeholders and contractors.

Several Partners and Members commented on how valuable this part of the workshop is as a communication forum, allowing for two-way feedback and group discussions as well as notification of regulations in development.

The second half of the workshop consisted of a presentation by DAWE on the draft *Australian in-water cleaning standards*. The standards aim to reduce environmental and biosecurity risk by providing clear and consistent requirements for all stages of the in-water cleaning process.

Partners were particularly interested in the capture percentages for cleaning debris and chemical contamination; how these are measured and calculated.

The standards will open for public consultation in August 2021.

Members and Partners appreciated the convenience of the workshop's virtual format and requested that it continue to be an option at future face-to-face workshops.

The MPSC22 Partners Workshop will be held virtually on 12 October 2021, focusing on marine pest surveillance in ports.

MPSC High Priority Work Items

In the first half of 2021, 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
- 10 have commenced
- 2 are ongoing
- 5 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 and Work Plan

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

MarinePestPlan activity 2.9 – Develop the marine pest surveillance strategy work-plan.

The [National Marine Pest Surveillance Strategy](#) was endorsed at MPSC17 (May 2018) and is now published. The accompanying Work Plan is being finalised, with the intention to start implementation in late 2021.

The Surveillance Strategy outlines priority requirements for enhancing surveillance of marine pests in Australia over the next 5 years, and aims to improve coordination and implementation of surveillance activities.

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.

A draft poster template has been developed, targeting marine pest awareness and reporting in the commercial shipping sector. This template is designed to be customised for specific locations with local marine pests and contact details.

The task group is currently reaching out to the aquaculture sector, to determine communication needs and if a similar approach is useful.

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.

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. This includes the development of indicative species range maps for key species, based on sea surface temperature. If you see any corrections or omissions please contact us so we can keep it as accurate as possible.

Emergency Response (EMPPlan)

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

A draft Emergency Response Manual for invasive crabs is currently with MPSC for comment. This is the first draft of the new structure for marine pest emergency response manuals, focusing on a functional group instead of a single species.

These manuals provide guidance on developing a response to a marine pest incursion, including types of information needed and technical advice on control, eradication and management methods.

MPSC has agreed that the next response manual will cover bivalves.

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

Research and Development Priorities review

MarinePestPlan activity 4.1 – Periodically review the national marine pest biosecurity research and development priorities.

The [National priorities for introduced marine pest research and development 2013-2023](#) was developed to provide direction on areas for marine pest R&D investment. These priorities need to be reviewed and

updated periodically in light of current progress and new developments, particularly with emerging technologies.

72 representatives of research organisations have been contacted with a request for input on progress and gaps. The results have been collated and common themes identified, and will be available for comment once finalised.

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 significant established marine pest species in Australia.

The report is currently with MPSC for endorsement, which will be needed prior to publication on the [Marine Pests website](#), in late 2021. This assessment can be used to inform future marine pest management decisions and research priorities.

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.

The task group aims to design simple and consistent national messaging for marine pest awareness, focussing on digital mediums – such as a Facebook tile or digital poster. The task group will also explore opportunities to use and adapt existing materials, such as the [biosecurity basics videos](#).

A Terms of Reference for the task group has been developed, and a brief work plan is in development.

Jurisdictional Updates

Australian Government

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

- engagement with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet - Office of Best Practice Regulation on options for finalising the biofouling Decision Regulation Impact Statement
- implementation of domestic and international ballast water management policies
- contribution to the review and development of international ballast water and biofouling standards
- collaboration on international marine pest biosecurity partnerships.
- projects under administered funding from several sources
- further activities under *MarinePestPlan 2018-23*.

New South Wales

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

- procurement of both aquatic biosecurity advisory trailers and an underwater remote operated vehicle for surveillance and awareness raising activities
- a project applying social research to inform an intervention and communications campaign to improve biofouling management
- an online training module for aquatic biosecurity in NSW, including a marine port environment
- review of the NSW Guidelines for Responding to Marine Pest Incursions (April 2015).

There have been 16 investigations of suspected marine pest occurrences in NSW this reporting period. No new pests have been confirmed. A species of nudibranch was detected in Twofold Bay, Eden for the first time in Australia however this species is not considered to be invasive. *Caulerpa taxifolia*, *Sabella spallanzanii* and *Carcinus maenas* have been reported in locations where they are already known to occur.

Northern Territory

Marine pest surveillance and risk mitigation and communication activities continued during this period. The focus is on community and industry education along with risk base resourcing to help ensure the prevention and early eradication of priority invasive marine pests.

Queensland

Queensland has finalised the Queensland Seaports eDNA Surveillance (Q-SEAS) Pilot Program and is working with ports to investigate options to enable ongoing program delivery.

Queensland has also continued to respond to and manage risks associated with in-water cleaning operations and detections (range expansions) of invasive marine species including black scar oyster in Mourilyan Harbour and suspected white colonial sea squirt near Magnetic Island (ID yet to be confirmed).

South Australia

Key activities in South Australia have been:

- engagement with New Zealand Ministry for Primary Industries & DAWE to inform policy approach for biofouling regulations under the Biosecurity Act
- increased collaboration with SA Department for Infrastructure and Transport to extend marine pest risk messaging and management
- commenced Marinas Program – targeted engagement to increase management and monitoring of marina facilities
- completed development of *Mytella strigata* assay
- commenced development of assay for *Hemigrapsus sanguineus* (Asian Shore Crab).

Tasmania

In this period, Biosecurity Tasmania completed and published a report on the [Review and enhancement of remotely operated vehicles for marine pest surveillance](#).

Victoria

During this period, Victoria has focussed on emergency response and surveillance activities including:

- responding to the detection of Asian shore crab in Port Phillip
- establishing a surveillance program in the Port of Melbourne and Station Pier
- establishing a state-wide, marine pest distribution project within the local port environments.

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
- targeted surveillance at high value and high-risk assets

DPIRD is also continually focused on developing and maintaining strong partnerships across government, industry and the community.

Upcoming MPSC Meetings

MPSC22

The twenty-second MPSC meeting and corresponding Partners' workshop will be held as videoconferences on 12–13 October 2021.

The Partners' Workshop (12 October) will focus on marine pest surveillance in ports.

MPSC23

The twenty-third MPSC meeting and corresponding Partners' workshop will be held as a hybrid face-to-face/virtual meeting in May 2022.