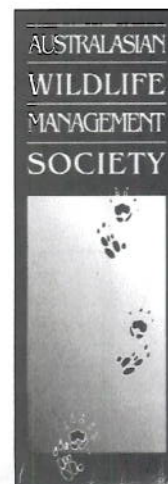


Australasian Wildlife Management Society



Submission to inquiry into the adequacy of arrangements to prevent the entry and establishment of invasive species likely to harm Australia's natural environment.

The Australasian Wildlife Management Society (AWMS) is Australia's peak body concerned with the management and conservation of Australia's vertebrate fauna. One of the Society's premier goals is to promote the application of science in wildlife management. The following is a submission on behalf of the Society, having been prepared by the elected executive in consultation with the members of the Society.

The collective view of AWMS is that the strategy and processes for assessing potential harmful species are appropriate. For example, the Vertebrate Pests Committee (VPC) assessment process developed by Mary Bomford and used by the VPC.

As an introduction we note that the process of managing vertebrate pest incursions has several phases (Figure 1) and each of those phases requires different strategies and tactics, if the entire process is to be successful. We note, in particular, that after a vertebrate pest has become established on a continent there are few opportunities for complete eradication (Figure 1). If pests do become established management may be a long and expensive process, but for it to be successful funds should not be withdrawn when the density of a pest has been reduced. It is at that stage that control and eradication are most difficult, and therefore expensive. The balance of the remarks in this submission relate to the pre-invasion phase (Figure 1) of the biosecurity process.

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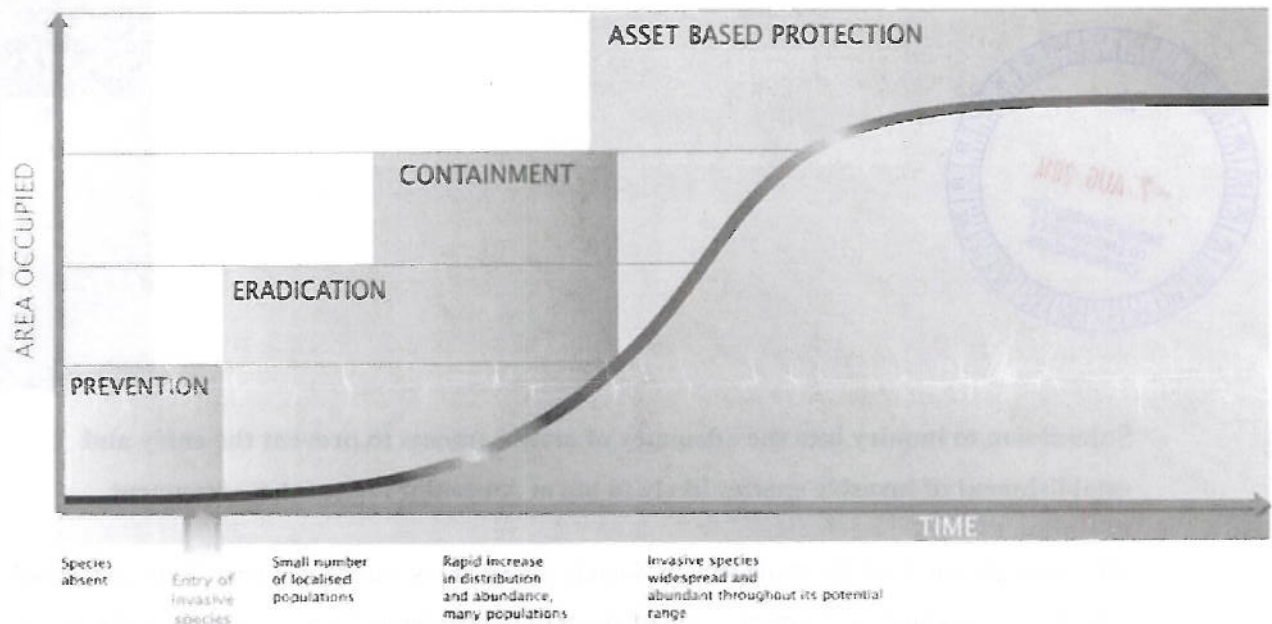
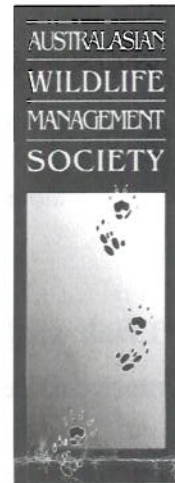


Figure 1. The Pest Species Invasion Continuum (Author: Professor Mike Braysher)

AWMS' main concern about the management of new harmful incursions is that agencies tend to stop at the stage of developing a strategy or even enacting legislation, and then announce their preparation publicly. However, it usually stops there. Strategies, policies and acts will not in themselves prevent new incursions. They provide the framework. To be effective management requires adequate trained staff with the necessary support and well-developed and evaluated processes to implement them. This is like the preparation of endangered species recovery plans without allocating funding to support their implementation. To effectively implement an incursion strategy requires action at several levels.

1. Identification of these potential pests that are of most concern, the modes by which they are most likely to enter Australia and the where this might occur. We note strongly the need to be selective as there will never be the resources to pay special attention to all possible invaders. The assessment of risks that have been undertaken by the Vertebrate Pests Committee and other agencies on vertebrate pests give a good guide to those that are of most concern and that are likely to enter. They include the reviews of potential pest reptiles, amphibians and aquarium fish that Mary Bomford and co-workers undertook. We note that rabies is now in Papua New Guinea. Given the extensive traffic across Torres Strait, this is looming as a key issue.
2. Knowing the species and how and where they may come in is just the first step. It is essential that there are actions to prevent their incursion and to deal with them should they get in. For example, an effective and targeted awareness campaign is required to ensure that those most likely to be involved in bringing new pests in and those that are

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most likely to come across them, are aware of the danger and aware of what they should do. It is essential that the strategy should also ensure that as far as possible, security is appropriate at sites where they might enter.

- a. Any awareness program requires identifying the key target groups and individuals that are likely to be involved in introducing these unwanted species, either intentionally or unintentionally, as well as those individuals and groups that are most likely to encounter them. The awareness and understanding message about the risk and what they should do needs to be formulated and delivered in a mode that is relevant to each target group so that they understand it from their perspective and, hopefully, are most likely to act on it. One approach will not suit all situations because of the different species, locations, and cultures and motivations of the people involved.
 - b. It may be necessary to construct appropriate containment areas and traps for specific species around ports of entry. As an example an assessment by Prof. Mike Braysher for Samoa of potential new harmful species, identified cane toads and brown tree snakes as two of the most likely to enter due to the extensive inter-island trade by ferries. That assessment recommended that they construct a toad and snake proof fence around the ferry terminal and to establish habitat and cover that would be most likely to attract these animals within the enclosed area. Without knowing which species are of most risk for Australia, likely points of entry should be assessed along similar lines.
3. If Australia is really serious about preventing additional harmful species entering and establishing, then it needs to have sufficient numbers of staff that are dedicated to preventing and dealing with incursions. These staff need to be trained staff in the necessary skills and have experience to deal with the incursions and to treat them. As far as AWMS is aware there is no such training course. The Invasive Animals CRC identified the need for such a course to address incursions of new aquatic pests. Not only is there a need for trained officers but they need to regularly test their skills and be supported with the necessary equipment and powers of access to treat an emergency incursion. This includes the necessary traps, toxins and other tools, including the permission to use them, as well as permission to access sites to treat the incursion. As far as AWMS is aware, these are not in place, certainly not the training. It is important to keep in front of mind that agencies such as AQIS and relevant state

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agencies are the front line in preventing incursions of vertebrate pests. In addition to their training, there must be sufficient officers on call from those organisations to mount a rapid and effective response to any and all future incursions.

Thank you for this opportunity to make a submission. AWMS is willing to provide more detailed advice at any time.

Greg Baxter (Dr)

AWMS President