

## Minutes

### Meeting Three of the Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Group

Teleconference held on Tuesday 24 January, 2012

**Attendees:** Colin Grant, DAFF (Chair); Lois Ransom, DAFF; Robyn Martin, DAFF; Tegan Honing-Wassenburg, DAFF; Greg Fraser, PHA; Rod Turner, PHA; Sophie Peterson, PHA; Jenna Taylor, PHA (Secretariat); Sam Malfroy, PHA; Kareena Arthy, DEEDI; Mike Ashton, DEEDI; Suzy Perry, DEEDI; Jim Thompson, DEEDI; Satendra Kumar, NSW DPI.

**Apologies:** Bruce Christie, NSW DPI.

#### Item 1 – Welcome by the Chair

Colin Grant welcomed the Members of the Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Group (MRTMG) to the teleconference and the Members introduced themselves.

#### Item 2 – Update on Secretariat Activities

Rod Turner advised the MRTMG that the minutes from Meeting Two have been finalised. It was agreed that PHA will make the minutes available on the Myrtle Rust Transition to Management (MRT2M) Program website. It was decided that the Action List would be removed from the minutes prior to posting as this list would be dynamic and would become out-dated quickly. It was decided that the Terms of Reference for the MRTMG will also be made available on the website.

#### Item 3 – Update on Project Activities

Rod Turner advised that as PHA is dealing with a range of stakeholders and sometimes multiple stakeholders for any given project, the contracts for the Australian Government funded projects in the Plan for Transition to Management of Myrtle Rust are in various stages of completion. Many are in the final stages and have been sent to the researchers for final approval.

He also advised that PHA is keeping a record of the details of each project and the current status of the corresponding contract. This document can be made available to the MRTMG if desired.

The Chair thanked PHA for their work in development and provision of papers for the MRTMG Meeting as well as the work being done to negotiate and contract projects described in the Plan for Transition to Management of Myrtle Rust.

#### Item 4 – Gap Analysis

Rod Turner explained to the MRTMG that PHA has compiled a draft document listing the Australian Government funded projects in the Plan for Transition to Management of Myrtle Rust as well as R+D projects from other funding streams. Rod advised that although this document is by no means complete, it is already evident that some projects may overlap. For example, there are multiple projects investigating host range. These projects are funded by different funding bodies and it will be necessary to approach each of these funding bodies to see if there is any overlap in the potential host species that are being tested.

It was discussed and agreed that if Members of the MRTMG were aware of any R+D projects that haven't been included in this document they should forward the details of these projects to Jenna Taylor at PHA. PHA will look at alternative electronic ways to collate this information.

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It was also discussed that the use of both *Uredo rangellii* and *Puccinia psidii* in this document was confusing and that nomenclature should be consistent between projects. Although in many cases PHA can confirm that the use of *Puccinia psidii* in this document does actually refer to Guava rust from South America and was therefore used correctly, there is some disagreement among researchers as to whether the Australian Myrtle Rust should be named *Uredo rangellii* and/or *Puccinia psidii* and this is reflected in the names of some of the projects listed in this document. It was agreed that Lois Ransom would consult with DEEDI out of session and decide upon standard MRTMG nomenclature for Myrtle Rust to resolve this issue.

### Item 5 – Reporting

#### Update from DEEDI

Mike Ashton gave an update on Myrtle Rust activities in Queensland.

PHA agreed to provide a link to the Domestic Quarantine website and specifically to information on ICA-42 on the MRT2M Program website.

#### Update from NSW DPI

Satendra Kumar gave an update on Myrtle Rust activities in New South Wales.

It was discussed and agreed that DEEDI and NSW DPI would forward summarised reports of their respective Myrtle Rust activities to PHA following all meetings for attachment to the minutes. The DEEDI report is attached at Attachment A. The NSW DPI report is attached at Attachment B.

### Item 6 –Future Meetings

Members were reminded that the MRTMG is to meet monthly via teleconference and that the dates for the next six meetings have been confirmed. Members were advised that it was decided during the Asian Honey Bee Transition to Management Group meeting that future teleconferences would be only 30 minutes long. It was agreed that this will be adopted for the MRTMG meetings also and that the Myrtle Rust meeting would continue to be held directly after the Asian Honey Bee meeting.

It was also discussed and agreed that representatives from Victoria DPI should be invited to future meetings given the new detections of Myrtle Rust in Victoria. Colin Grant will write to a senior official from Victoria DPI and formally invite them to participate in the MRTMG.

### Item 7 – Close of Meeting

The Chair thanked the Members of the MRTMG for their participation in the teleconference and closed the meeting.

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### Attachment A

#### **Myrtle rust in Queensland – report from Biosecurity Queensland for Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Group Meeting Three held by teleconference on Tuesday, 24 January 2012**

The following was reported:

1. Myrtle rust has been recorded on 120 host species in Queensland from 34 genera in the Myrtaceae family, some of which are endangered, vulnerable or near-threatened species. The host range continues to expand and now includes key species of eucalypts (*Eucalyptus* and *Corymbia*) and paperbark (*Melaleuca*).
2. The geographic range is also rapidly expanding, with the disease now established and widespread in South East Queensland and north as far as Rockhampton. Myrtle Rust has been diagnostically confirmed at over 175 sites in Queensland with a further 397 sites confirmed through photographic or other evidence. It is currently established in at least 19 Queensland local government areas.
3. Myrtle Rust was recently confirmed in the Rockhampton Botanic Gardens and in a residential garden in Farnborough north of Yeppoon. These are the first confirmed cases of Myrtle Rust in the natural environment in the Rockhampton area and the most northerly detections of Myrtle Rust in Queensland to date outside a plant nursery.
4. Myrtle Rust was also recently confirmed in a residential garden in Gladstone. This is the first known natural infection of Myrtle Rust in the Gladstone Regional Council area. This and the Rockhampton infections indicate the disease is now established and becoming widespread in central Queensland.
5. The disease appears to be spreading steadily north from south east Queensland where it was initially detected in December 2010. To date there has been no evidence of satellite infections in more remote centres despite the detection of the disease in nurseries in a number of centres including Cairns, Townsville and Airlie Beach in north Queensland during 2011. The reasons for this are not clear.
6. A \$750,000 Myrtle Rust Program has been established by Biosecurity Queensland with the goal of helping Queenslanders live with the impacts of Myrtle Rust. This will be achieved through targeted disease management, research, education and awareness, market access initiatives and, where practical, protection of strategic assets. A further \$100,000 has been allocated by DEEDI's Horticulture and Forestry Science in 2011-12 to help the Queensland hardwood plantations industry manage the impacts of the disease.
7. The Queensland Government is encouraging the development of a comprehensive national program of activities to assist in the adaptation to Myrtle Rust. This program will complement the \$1.5 million the Australian Government has allocated to its 'Transition to Management' Program for Myrtle Rust.
8. The Queensland Myrtle Rust Program is continuing to monitor the host and geographic range of the disease in Queensland through surveillance, tracing, stakeholder input and a dedicated on-line Myrtle Rust Reporting System accessible from the DEEDI website.
9. The Program has responded to more than 2,700 public enquiries since the disease was first detected in Queensland. Public reports have increased significantly during the spring and summer months due to rising temperatures and humidity producing conditions that are ideal for disease development and spread.

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10. The Program is engaging with a wide range of industry, government, environmental and community stakeholders across Queensland. The program recently commenced a series of industry and community forums which are being delivered across the state to provide information and advice to businesses, councils, residents, environmental and other interest groups. Information sessions on Myrtle Rust were held in Hervey Bay and Bundaberg in late 2011 and sessions will be held in Rockhampton on 24 January 2012. Similar sessions will be delivered in Mackay in early February and in north Queensland regional centres over the coming weeks. These forums provide individuals, businesses, councils and other interested stakeholder groups with information and advice on myrtle rust and what they can do to minimise spread and manage the disease.
11. The Program is working closely with affected industry and government stakeholders such as the Nursery and Garden Industry Queensland, DERM, various businesses and local councils to help resolve the many policy and operational issues associated with managing Myrtle Rust and its impacts.
12. Some of the impacts already affecting stakeholders include the affects on production, cost and efficacy of chemical control, loss of street and amenity trees, cost of tree removal, replacement of susceptible species, loss of species, loss of biodiversity, reduced flowering and seed production, impact on regeneration and subsequent ecosystem damage, and loss of ecosystem functions such as climate regulation and carbon sequestration.
13. The Queensland Myrtle Rust Program includes a 'Knowledge and Understanding' component to learn more about this disease and how it will behave under Australian environmental conditions. Important baseline data is being gathered to enable better impact assessments of the affects of Myrtle Rust in Queensland and Australia as the true impact of this disease may not be realised for the next 5 to 10 years or more.
14. A number of research projects are also underway in Queensland to investigate host specificity, disease epidemiology and disease development to increase our understanding of *Puccinia psidii* in Australia. This research will help develop better options for disease management and potentially identify resistant varieties within susceptible Myrtaceae species.
15. The Queensland Government has had its procedure for the certification of live plants of the Myrtaceae family for freedom of Myrtle Rust using an an Interstate Certification Assurance (ICA) arrangement endorsed. Information on this procedure (ICA-42 in Queensland) is available from the Domestic Quarantine website.

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### Attachment B

#### **Myrtle rust in NSW – report from NSW DPI for Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Group Meeting Three held by teleconference on Tuesday, 24 January 2012**

It was discussed that most of the activities reported at the last Meeting are still current. Additionally, the following was reported:

1. Myrtle rust has become more active according to the internal and external reports we have received in the recent weeks. Most calls are from backyarders on how to manage Myrtle rust. Staff from Forests NSW have reported Myrtle rust on young plants in the managed plantation. The damage is not obvious at this stage but this may change as the season progresses.
2. Distribution - Coastal NSW from the North down to Batemans Bay in natural vegetation. Myrtle rust has not been detected west of the Great Dividing Range.
3. Fungicide Project - Angus has had discussions with Robert Park to ensure that every possible synergy is sought.
4. A teleconference was held in late December 2011 with the aim of connecting people who are involved in plant conservation and Myrtle rust research – exploring collaborations aimed at conserving some of the badly affected hosts of Myrtle rust. The meeting involved staff from the Australian National University, Orange Botanic Gardens, Burrendong Arboretum, Australian Botanic Gardens (Mt Annan, NSW), DPI NSW, the Office of Environment & Heritage, Royal Sydney Botanic Gardens, Biosecurity Qld, and the Department of Environment & Resource Management Qld. The teleconference discussed and agreed on 2 main outcomes:
  - The current seed collection and storage project being run through the Australian Botanic Gardens at Mt Annan is to include Myrtle rust hosts.
  - Efforts are to go into establishing collections of live plants, including potentially resistant individuals, at refuge gardens (e.g. overseas and inland NSW) for posterity and research purposes.