

## Minutes

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

Teleconference held on Tuesday 21 August, 2012

**Attendees:** Colin Grant, DAFF (Chair); Vanessa Findlay, DAFF; Andrew Wilson, DAFF; Louise Clarke, DAFF; Neal Hardy, DSEWPaC; Alex Blanden, DSEWPaC; Rod Turner, PHA; Jenna Taylor, PHA (Secretariat); Suzy Perry, DAFF Queensland; Fiona Giblin, DAFF Queensland; Satendra Kumar, NSW DPI; Graham Wilson, OEH; Russell McMurray, DPI Vic; Martin Mebalds, DPI Vic; Hugh Bramwells, DSE; Lucy Sutherland, ASBP; Gavin Matthew, AFPA; Peter Grist, AFPA.

**Apologies:** Sophie Peterson, DAFF; Mike Cole, DAFF; Chris Howard, DAFF; Tegan Honing-Wassenburg, DAFF; Belinda Brown, DSEWPaC; Greg Fraser, PHA; Sam Malfroy, PHA; Jim Thompson, DAFF Queensland; Mark Panitz, DAFF Queensland; Gordon Guymer, DSITIA; Bruce Christie, NSW DPI; Kathy Gott, NSW DPI; Pat Sharkey, DPI Vic; Anne Dennis, DSE; Tuesday Phelan, DSE.

#### Item 1 – Welcome by the Chair

Colin Grant welcomed all Members of the Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Group (MRTMG) and introduced Vanessa Findlay who has been appointed as the new Chief Plant Protection Officer and will be chairing the MRTMG in the future.

#### Item 2 – Endorsement of Minutes from the Previous Meeting

It was discussed that the draft minutes from Meeting Seven had been circulated for comment out of session. Members were given a final opportunity to comment or request that an amendment be made. There were no further comments or amendment requests and the minutes were taken to be endorsed. PHA will make them available on the Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Program website.

#### Item 3 – Action Items from the Previous Meeting

Colin Grant ran through the action list from Meeting Seven. The status of each action item was discussed and amendments were made where necessary.

#### Item 4 – Report from PHA

##### Contracts

Rod Turner advised that all but one of the contracts for the Australian Government funded projects in the Plan for Transition to Management of Myrtle Rust have now been signed and these projects are all underway. In most cases the researchers had commenced work prior to the signing of the contracts.

The remaining contract is for Project 3.4, the collecting trip to South America to collect isolates of *P. psidii* and send them back to Australia for use in some of the other projects. As has been discussed in previous meetings, PHA has become aware of a ban on the export of specimens and DNA out of Brazil and has been investigating the possibility of Professor Acelino Alfenas from the Department of Plant Pathology of the Federal University of Viçosa, Brazil making collections of *P. psidii* in South America and sending them to Australia. Acelino has a collaborative group of international researchers working on *P. psidii*. that includes Australian researchers and PHA is holding a teleconference next Monday with some of these Australian researchers to discuss this option.

#### Item 5 – Report on Myrtle Rust Activities in Queensland

Suzy Perry gave an update on Myrtle Rust activities in Queensland. Her report is attached at Attachment A.

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### **Item 6 – Report on Myrtle Rust Activities in NSW**

Satendra Kumar and Graham Wilson gave an update on Myrtle Rust activities in NSW. Their report is attached at Attachment B.

### **Item 7 – Report on Myrtle Rust Activities in Victoria**

Russell McMurray and Hugh Bramwells gave an update on Myrtle Rust activities in Victoria. Their reports are attached at Attachment C.

### **Item 8 – Report on National Myrtle Rust Activities**

Neal Hardy gave an update on national Myrtle Rust activities. His report is attached at Attachment D.

### **Item 9 – Report on the Australian Seed Bank Partnership**

Lucy Sutherland gave an update on the Australian Seed Bank Partnership's Myrtle Rust activities. Her report is attached at Attachment E.

Colin Grant praised the response to the Country Program Consultation Discussion Paper on *Protecting and conserving national significant species, ecosystems and biodiversity in the next phase of Caring for our Country* and thanked those Members who contributed to the submission, in particular Lucy who coordinated this collaborative effort.

### **Item 10 – Report on Forestry Activities**

Peter Grist gave an update on the Forestry industry's Myrtle Rust activities. His report is attached at Attachment F.

### **Item 11 – Next Meeting**

Members were reminded that it had been decided previously that future meetings will be scheduled for October and December 2012, and February, April, May, and June 2013. Jenna Taylor will consult with Vanessa Findlay to set dates for these meetings and will advise Members of the decision.

### **Item 12 – 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 DAFF Qld for Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Group Meeting Eight held by teleconference on Tuesday 21 August 2012**

##### **Geographic Range**

There have been ongoing detections of Myrtle Rust in far north Queensland since the last MRTMG meeting on 27 June 2012. These include detections in Mossman, Smithfield, Kuranda, Mareeba, Tolga, Atherton and the Daintree River.

There have also been new detections recorded at Townsville and Ingham. In Townsville, the disease had previously been detected in a plant nursery, but not in the natural environment. The new detection is at the Townsville Botanic Gardens, and indicates that the disease is now established in the Townsville region.

The report of Myrtle Rust at Ingham was from Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) who detected the disease in plants purchased from a council nursery for planting at a regeneration site. The infected plants have been destroyed.

The disease is also now established on Fraser Island, where it is a significant threat to the Fraser Island satinay (*Syncarpia hillii*) and other species of Myrtaceae that dominate the four main vegetation communities on the island. Fraser Island is a World Heritage Area.

There continues to be no detection of Myrtle Rust in the environment in Queensland west of the Great Dividing Range.

As at 21 August 2012, there were 207 known infected premises in Queensland (sites where there has been a confirmed diagnosis and a confirmed identification of host species). There were a further 662 highly suspect reports (reports that have not been diagnostically or botanically confirmed but have been verified through photographic or other evidence) and 828 suspect reports (reports which have not been verified but are in known host species in known infested areas) of Myrtle Rust in Queensland. This brings the total number of suspected cases of Myrtle Rust in Queensland to 1697.

To date, 21 local government areas in Queensland have had confirmed cases of Myrtle Rust.

##### **Host Range**

Five new species have been identified as hosts of Myrtle Rust in Queensland since the last MRTMG meeting. These are: *Homoranthus papillatus*, *Homoranthus melanostictus*, *Syzygium puberulum*, *Leptospermum madidum*, and *Tristaniopsis exiliflora*. The known host range in Queensland now covers 139 species from 36 genera.

##### **Community and Stakeholder Engagement**

The Myrtle Rust Program continues to work with affected stakeholders, including businesses, local governments and the community to help them manage the disease at affected sites.

##### **Research and Development**

The Cooperative Research Centre for National Plant Biosecurity (CRCNPB) funded project *Understanding eucalyptus rust epidemiology and host specificity to determine disease impact in Australia* (CRCNPB 70186), which has been led by the Queensland Myrtle Rust Program and delivered in conjunction with Queensland DAFF's Horticulture and Forestry Science Program and New South Wales Department of Primary Industries, was successfully completed in May and the final project

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report has now been approved and published on the CRCNPB website. Again, our thanks to the CRCNPB for the \$200K in funding that was provided to deliver this important research project.

The Queensland Myrtle Rust Program is currently preparing a preliminary research proposal, *Managing myrtle rust and its impacts in Australia*, for consideration by the new Plant Biosecurity CRC. The key Queensland collaborators are: DAFF (Biosecurity Queensland and Horticulture and Forestry Science), Nursery and Garden Industry Queensland, and the Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts. The key NSW contributors are the Department of Primary Industries, and the Office of Environment and Heritage. The University of Tasmania will also participate in the project.

The project builds on the research and outcomes from CRC70186, with the key research areas being:

- 1) disease epidemiology and factors influencing disease development
- 2) impact of Myrtle Rust on native Myrtaceae
- 3) pathogen variability and host specificity, and
- 4) protecting Australian plant industries against Myrtle Rust.

The research areas are designed to complement the activities outlined in the national *Plan for Transition to Management of Myrtle Rust*.

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### Attachment B

#### Myrtle Rust in NSW – report from NSW DPI and OEH for Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Group Meeting Eight held by teleconference on Tuesday 21 August 2012

1. Myrtle rust is considered endemic in NSW, with a confirmed distribution in native environments from Batemans Bay to the Queensland border. However, there have been no reports of Myrtle Rust in natural vegetation to the west of the Great Dividing Range thus far.
2. The DPI Biosecurity website (<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/plant/myrtle-rust>) is the major site for information on Myrtle Rust management and this is being updated regularly. Further information on Myrtle Rust management in natural vegetation is available from <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/pestsweeds/20110683myrtlerustmp.htm>.
3. A number of staff attended the second National Myrtle Rust Research and Development Workshop in Brisbane and found it to be very useful. This was further augmented by the visiting scientist doing a tour of sites in NSW.
4. Angus Carnegie has recently returned from 2 weeks in Brazil, Florida and Hawaii, funded by the Gottstein Trust. In Brazil Angus visited Professor Acelino Alfenas (Federal University of Viçosa) as well as eucalypt plantation companies (Veracel & Suzano) to learn more about the impact and management of Guava rust. In Florida he visited Dr Rayamajhi (USDA Invasive Plant Research Laboratory) to look at the impact on *Melaleuca quinquenervia* and observe how insect damage can exacerbate the impact of the rust. In Hawaii, he met with Dr Janice Uchida (University of Hawaii) and Robert Hauff (USDLNR Division of Forestry & Wildlife) to investigate the impact in the native environment and monitoring of the rust, as well as current and proposed legislative actions to restrict further strains entering Hawaii. The trip also established links with overseas researchers that will help with the upcoming DAFF T2M projects. Angus presented information about his trip at the National Myrtle Rust Research and Development Workshop in Brisbane and will complete a report by October 2012.
5. Monitoring the impact of Myrtle Rust on *Rhodamnia rubescens* in native environments continues with a site in Olney State Forest where half the trees have been kept free from rust using fungicides. After 10 months there is a significant improvement in foliage production in trees free of rust compared to those where rust has caused almost complete loss of foliage and resulted in mortality for some plants. Monthly monitoring at the site continues with the hope of being able to quantify the impact on flower set, fruit production, and survival of seedlings to trees. This work was partly funded by the Cooperative Research Centre for National Plant Biosecurity.
6. Data on Myrtle Rust locations collected by Forests NSW and Angus Carnegie have been supplied to OEH for inclusion in the Wildlife Atlas.
7. National Parks & Wildlife Service prepared a Myrtle Rust Management Plan in 2011, which principally focused on biosecurity measures to reduce the potential for spread and recording the distribution of infected sites. However now that the disease has become widespread and endemic, this plan requires revision, with the focus to move to management of impacts in natural bushland areas, including protection of key threatened species sites and the capacity to reduce broader impacts. In addition for highly threatened species, gene storage issues may need consideration.

At this stage, the review is being proposed in 2012-13 in conjunction with Forests NSW, NSW DPI, the Royal Botanic Gardens, and other relevant public land managers as it may

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provide a cross tenure framework for Myrtle Rust management across bushland areas of NSW. This work will be done in collaboration with related work nationally and in other states.

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### Attachment C

#### **Myrtle Rust in Victoria – report from DPI Vic and DSE for Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Group Meeting Eight held by teleconference on Tuesday 21 August 2012**

#### **Geographic Range**

Myrtle Rust has now been detected at 68 sites in Victoria which is an increase of four sites since the last MRTMG meeting.

Several of the recent detections have been on much larger plants (hedges and small trees). The size of the plants and severity of infection represents a significant management issue for home owners.

Although the majority of cases have been in nurseries and private residences within metropolitan Melbourne the Casey shire “hot spot” in outer Melbourne is continuing to expand.

There have been no new detections of Myrtle Rust in regional Victoria since the last meeting.

Myrtle rust has not yet been detected in Victorian bushland or the natural environment.

#### **Host Range**

Myrtle Rust has currently been detected on the following hosts in Victoria:

*Acmena smithii* (lilly pilly); *Agonis flexuosa* (willow myrtle); *Austromyrtus dulcis* (midgen berry); *Backhousia citriodora* (lemon scented myrtle); *Callistemon harkness* (bottle brush); *Callistemon* ‘Kings park special’ (bottle brush); *Callistemon viminalis* (bottle brush); *Chamelaucium uncinatum* (Geraldton wax); *Eucalyptus olida* (strawberry gum), *Lophomyrtus X ralphii* (Black Stallion); *Metrosideros carminea* Red rata (Crimson rata); *Metrosideros collina* (Fiji Christmas bush); *Metrosideros excelsa* (New Zealand Christmas bush); *Myrtus communis* (common myrtle); *Syzygium anisatum* (aniseed myrtle); *Syzygium australe* (lilly pilly/scrub cherry/Aussie southern); and *Syzygium paniculatum* (dwarf magenta cherry).

#### **Training and Communication**

The Victorian Myrtle Rust Coordination Committee consisting of DPI Vic, DSE, Parks Victoria (PV), local councils, botanic gardens, forestry, nursery and beekeeper representatives is continuing to meet on a regular basis and is actively involved in planning, monitoring, reporting and conducting industry education activities.

Over 1500 people have attended ongoing Myrtle Rust information and ID sessions.

During July, two media interviews were given by Gordon Berg, one to Libby Price for the ABC Country Hour on 3 July and the other to the Swan Hill Guardian on 5 July.

The website has been updated and factsheets distributed as required.

The number of calls about Myrtle Rust received by the DPI Customer Service Centre has declined slightly during the winter.

There has been no need to run any ICA-42 Authorised Inspection Person training courses this month. NGIV is keeping a waiting list of interested participants, but it appears that industry needs for this course have been met at present.

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A Myrtle Rust Identification and Sampling course (a modified version of the ICA-42 Authorised Inspection Person training course) was presented at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Cranbourne on 31 July.

There is a strong demand from local councils and other groups for training. Consequently it is anticipated that training sessions will re-commence in September as the weather warms.

### **Surveillance and Tracing**

There has been good participation from stakeholder groups in the surveillance program.

Over 105 sentinel sites have been established around the state (with the assistance of many stakeholder groups) to provide early warning in high risk areas and significant bushland sites. DPI is coordinating the sentinel site network but is actively monitoring only a relatively small number of these sites with much of the monitoring work being done by stakeholder groups.

### **Market Access and Compliance**

From 30 June 2012, Myrtle Rust has been declared as an endemic disease in Victoria and the Victorian Importation Order has been rescinded. This means that Myrtle Rust host materials are able to enter Victoria from New South Wales and Queensland without certification. It remains illegal under Victorian plant biosecurity legislation to sell plants with visible symptoms of Myrtle Rust. In addition, adherence to the Nursery and Garden Industry Australia's Myrtle Rust management plan will help to minimise the sale of diseased plants and reduce the risk of spreading Myrtle Rust further within the State.

### **Management**

The focus of recent operational activities has been the identification and provision of advice to affected land holders to assist them to manage the disease on their land.

Yates is continuing to pursue a minor use permit for the Zaleton fungicide product for use against Myrtle Rust.

One commercial garden maintenance company report that two sprays of Triforine fungicide appeared to have "cleaned up" a Myrtle Rust infection at Berwick.



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### Attachment D

#### **National Myrtle Rust activities – report from DSEWPaC for Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Group Meeting Eight held by teleconference on Tuesday 21 August 2012**

##### **Geographic Range**

DSEWPaC is liaising with representatives from the State agencies to coordinate a national map to record how Myrtle Rust is moving across Australia.

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### Attachment E

#### **The Australian Seed Bank Partnership's Myrtle Rust activities – report from the Australian Seed Bank Partnership for Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Group Meeting Eight held by teleconference on Tuesday 21 August 2012**

##### **Situation Update**

As was discussed at the previous meeting, the ASBP in collaboration with PHA, Hugh Bramwells from DSE, Gavin Matthew and Peter Grist from AFPA, and Neville Walsh from the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne has prepared a response to the Caring for our Country Program Consultation Discussion Paper on *Protecting and conserving national significant species, ecosystems and biodiversity in the next phase of Caring for our Country* highlighting Myrtle Rust. This submission has been accepted by Caring for our Country and will be reviewed by the Caring for our Country design team before becoming a public document and being made available from the Caring for our Country website. It is hoped that the submission will help inform the direction of the next round of Caring for our Country funding.

The ASBP will next prepare a proposal for Caring for our Country funding to build a comprehensive *ex situ* collection of Myrtaceae species to support conservation. Priority will be placed on collecting threatened species and building a genetically diverse collection. The ASBP will take a national approach to safeguarding species from Myrtle Rust. It is understood that the next open call for funding proposals will be in November 2012.

The ASBP is also preparing a submission to the Dahl Trust. The Dahl Trust operates a Small Grants Program, the principal purpose of which is the protection and enhancement of eucalypts as a significant aspect of Australia's natural environment and the provision of information and education about eucalypts. As such, the ASBP aims to raise awareness of Myrtle Rust through its submission to the Dahl Trust and highlight the impact that it has on eucalypts in the hopes that the ASBP will be granted funding.

### Attachment F

#### **The Forestry Industry's Myrtle Rust activities – report from the Australian Forest Products Association for Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Group Meeting Eight held by teleconference on Tuesday 21 August 2012**

##### **Situation Update**

Companies are continuing to undertake monitoring and surveillance activities and are also training staff in the identification of Myrtle Rust.

Myrtle Rust has not yet spread into nurseries nor has it affected commercial operations.

In the last few weeks AFPA has become a member of PHA and will be working with PHA to produce an Industry Biosecurity Plan for the forestry industry.

AFPA has also applied to become a Party to the EPPRD. PHA has initiated the admission process.