

To the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs

The intentions and actions of a so called Recognised Biosecurity Group (RBG)in the Blackwood Biosecurity Inc (BBI) have never been accepted or well received by the community of Boyup Brook in part but not withstanding the very poor consultation process adopted since the Incorporated Bodies inception in 2014. The impost of a Prescribed Pest Rate (PPR) in the form of a Biosecurity Levy of \$50 per every farm title holder and \$40 per town block title holders has not been developed through a satisfactory process of collaboration and consultation with the community of Boyup Brook or for that matter the other associated shires that fall within the designated control zone of the RBG in question. The implications of the establishment of an RBG and the checks, measures and ultimately the results of the PPR collection and spend on proposed actions is not widely understood or indeed poorly communicated back to the rate payers who ultimately give legitimacy to this structure. It could be argued that this point could apply not solely to the BBI but to many of the 14 + RBG's currently operational throughout the state of Western Australia.

A non conforming population, such as that within Boyup Brook, who are not compliant with the structures, systems and outcomes of this approach to biosecurity controls are given little or no choice but to involuntarily contribute to the scheme once a RBG has state approval and subsequently establishes a PPR demanding payment of the levy with the backing of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD), as well as legislative weight of the State Government infringements if the levy is not paid, by the means of The Office of State Revenue (OSR) notice. The outcomes of such a compulsory approach to the funding allocations and the lack lustre guidelines that allow RBG's to operate with loose governance structures, little accountability (to the taxpayers that are largely unaware as to how their money is actually being spent), potential conflict of interest issues within RBG's and the poor reporting of the definite effectiveness of control measures, calls for a enquiry and review of the BBI and what's more all RBG's state-wide, beginning with the long overdue dissection of the Biosecurity and Ag management act (BAM) 2007, which dictates how RBG's are established.

The case of The Blackwood Biosecurity Inc consultation process within Boyup Brook is well documented and started in 2016 with a presentation to the Shire Council. The ensuing council deliberated decision was not to support the concept of an RBG funded model in alignment with the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) position. On Feb 1st, 2017, the BBI was endorsed by the instrument of the minister for the DPIRD, unbeknown to the majority of residents. Then a PPR was devised with little/no consultation with the Boyup Brook Community. Rate payer information was subsequently sought by the Department from the Shire and denied. On April 19th 2018, Council resolution 66/18 to not support RBG's in alignment with WALGA's policy (which it still holds) was endorsed and reported back to the DPIRD who granted a PPR rate exemption for the shire for 18/19 financial year. The Shire of Boyup Brook then undertook its own consultation

- 9th April 2019, Public meeting convened concerning the Biosecurity issue. Low attendance registered indicating poor understanding of what had been proposed with the BBI given an opportunity to present.
- 18th April, Shire Biosecurity Committee meeting held recommending not to endorse the RBG ; pursue Shire control of biosecurity measures internally.
- 16th May council resolution 128/19 Non supportive of RBG and no rate payers information to be forwarded
- 21st May 19, letter to Minister from Shire President outlining many concerns.
- 4th June 19, Letter to all ratepayers seeking further guidance on the matter. Poll results : 36% response. 95% in support of Shires position to not support RBG.

- During August 2019, PP Rate notices sent out to rate payers (not all, as information provided from Landgate to DPIRD incomplete)
- 18th October 2019. Public meeting called , well attended, BBI present and had an opportunity to consult, but poorly received. Community Voted to instruct Shire to continue to oppose the support for the RBG model and the advent of a PPR citing various reasons.
- 5th September 19, Further letter to the minister conveying considerable community concerns and Shire opposition. 30th October Reply received from Minister of DPIRD providing a less than favourable and unsatisfactory response.

During the period of early 2016 to late 2019, the supposed RBG obviously did not demonstrate support for the levy, consulted poorly with the community and have implemented the PPR without Boyup Brooks consent. Hence an enquiry and review of this process is sought and it is recommended a thorough investigation be held prior to the commencement for implementation of further requests, having regard to the long awaited overdue review of the BAM act 2007 being undertaken. The awareness of this issue has been thoroughly highlighted by the Shire council of Boyup Brook, consulting at length with rate payers, in stark contrast to the Blackwood Biosecurity Inc, a state government endorsed Recognised Biosecurity Group.

Any RBG organised meetings over the past 3 year period have had a low level attendance and budgeting information has failed to be widely disseminated. The desire to facilitate the RBG model has certainly not been generated or adopted by the residents of Boyup Brook and the Blackwood Biosecurity Inc and DPIRD remain defiant to this fact and continue to consult infrequently and ineffectively with the community it claims endorsed it. In fact the annual public notice publishing the DPIRD's proposed Declared Pest Rates for 2020/21 year failed to even list Boyup Brook, creating further confusion.

Residents of Boyup Brook are now faced with the reality of one on one (David and Goliath) legal action at the hands of the OSR and have hence been scare mongered into conforming to this latest Land Tax, albeit without the due diligence associated with proper community consultation. The Departments only measure of success of this state-wide program is that "some 80% of people who are taxed pay the PPR" (as quoted from a DPIRD rep presenting to a SW Zone of WALGA meeting in 2019). Actual figures of on ground effectiveness of scheduled works on Declared Pests is not documented by the Department and the large amount of funding generated and spent from this model is perhaps inadequately monitored. With the huge volume of work required falling largely to volunteers who are ultimately equipped with the tools to tackle large scale Biosecurity issues by a depleted State Government Department that in itself is arguably underfunded.

Hence the Important Research and Development budget is somewhat inadequate meaning measures taken at ground level are potentially not effective. I hereby request a large scale enquiry and review into this much broader issue.

Thank you for your consideration,
Graham Aird.
10th September 2020