



Compliance Report

C3 declared weed **Narrow leaf cotton bush** (*Gomphocarpus fruticosus*) 2017–18



Christine Comer, Senior Compliance Inspector
Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
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Table of contents

1. Summary	1
2. Introduction	3
3. Leschenault Biosecurity Group area (LBG)	4
4. Blackwood Biosecurity area	5
5. Peel-Harvey Biosecurity Group area.....	6
5.1 Shire of Murray	7
6. Communication approaches	8
7. Barriers to engagement and compliance	8
7.1 Absentee landowners	8
7.2 Information sources – due diligence	9
8. Public estate.....	11
9. Recommendations	12

1. Summary

This report details the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development Narrow leaf cotton bush (cotton bush) compliance season for 2017 / 18. Cotton bush is a declared C3 weed across the southwest region of WA. C3 weed management requires a landowner to alleviate the harm, reduce numbers and prevent the spread.

The compliance season for cotton bush commenced in August 2017 and concluded in March 2018. The department's commitment and results of this program are summarised as follows:

Human resources

- 7 inspectors, with 3 in a lead inspector role
- 1 local government authority ranger from the Shire of Murray
- 1 senior compliance inspector
- 1 compliance manager

Inspections

- ~120 days of operational inspections and compliance administration
- 57 properties inspected within 24 cotton bush action areas.
- **93% of landowners whose properties were inspected undertook voluntary compliance (Figure 1) (53 landowners out of the 57 properties inspected did not require remedial action)**
- 152 inspections completed in the process

Compliance

- 12 local government authorities (LGA) covered in the compliance process.
Note: The Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup is split into north and south and covered by the Leschenault Biosecurity Group and Blackwood Biosecurity Group respectively.
- 13 Pest Control Notices (PCN) issued under section 31 of the *Biosecurity and Agricultural Management Act 2007* (BAM Act)

23% of properties inspected were issued a PCN

- 4 properties were subject to remedial action by the Director General of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) under section 38 of the BAM Act.

7% of properties inspected were subject to remedial action.

- Compliance actions delivered in support of 3 biosecurity groups:
 - a) **Leschenault Biosecurity Group – (3 LGA: Donnybrook-Balingup (north), Dardanup, Harvey and Capel)**

94% of properties inspected were voluntarily compliant

- 15 properties inspected within 5 cotton bush action areas

- 3 PCN's issued – 20% of properties inspected were issued a PCN
- 1 property was subject to remedial – 7% of properties inspected were subject to remedial action

b) Blackwood Biosecurity Inc – (5 LGA: Donnybrook-Balingup (south), Bridgetown, Boyup Brook, West Arthur, Nannup)

93% of properties inspected were voluntarily compliant

- 14 properties inspected within 7 cotton bush action areas
- 1 PCN issued – 7 % of properties inspected were issued a PCN
- 1 property was subject to remedial action – 7% of properties inspected were subject to remedial action

c) Peel-Harvey Biosecurity Group (PHBG) – (4 LGA: Serpentine-Jarrahdale, Murray, Waroona and Harvey)

86% of properties inspected were voluntarily compliant

- 14 properties inspected within 9 cotton bush action areas
- 7 PCN issued – 50% of properties inspected were issued a PCN
- 2 properties were subject to remedial action – 14% of properties inspected were subject to remedial action

- Compliance actions delivered in the Shire of Murray in partnership with DPIRD

100% voluntary compliance

- 14 properties inspected within 3 cotton bush action areas by the DPIRD Senior Compliance Inspector with support from the Shire of Murray delegated ranger
- 2 PCNs issued – 14% of properties inspected received a PCN
- 0 remedial action

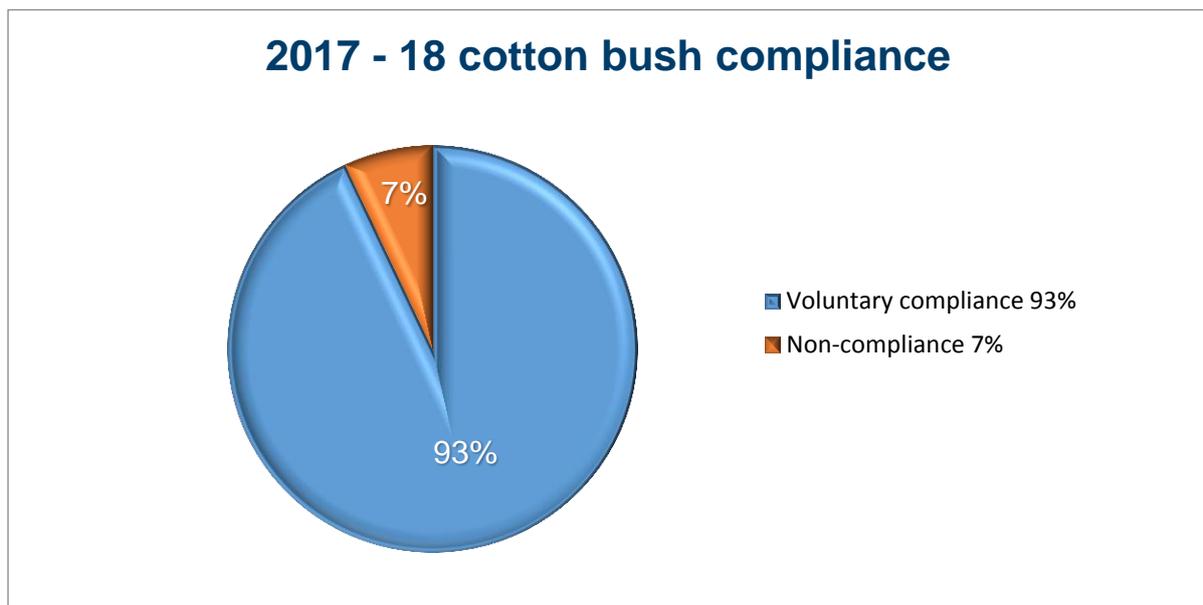


Figure 1 – 2017-18 cotton bush compliance

1. Introduction

DPIRD compliance for cotton bush is undertaken in support of a community coordinated approach to the management of cotton bush. The department has placed an emphasis on the community coordinated approach in preference to enforcing compliance on an individual landowner. The control and management of this declared weed requires cooperation and coordination of all landowners. This compliance process by the department supports the education, engagement and awareness programs committed to the approach, by the biosecurity groups. Through a range of engagement processes implemented by the biosecurity groups and the department, a high level of voluntary compliance has again been achieved in this the 4th year that this approach has been applied. Across the three biosecurity group areas, 93% voluntary compliance¹ was achieved.

A significant step in the approach to this style of management of a declared C3 weed was to establish cotton bush action areas within the three biosecurity group areas. These areas, identified by the community and biosecurity groups, provided local and on-ground knowledge to support the subsequent identification of properties for inspection by the department inspectors.

Over 800 letters, establishing first contact, were mailed to landowners in cotton bush action areas by the department and three biosecurity groups. These letters provided the first step in the engagement process. Alone, this step in the process yielded over 75% voluntary compliance.



Spraying cotton bush

¹ Voluntary compliance is defined as a landowner undertaking control work with no remedial action required.

2. Leschenault Biosecurity Group area (LBG)

94% of properties inspected in the LBG area were voluntarily compliant (Figure 2).

Compliance within the LBG area was conducted in the LGA of Donnybrook – Balingup (north), Dardanup, Harvey and Capel. It was deemed to be acceptable for inspections to be carried out in the Shire of Harvey as part of the LBG compliance due to the overlap of the Burekup Valley. 15 properties were identified by the department as having cotton bush present. Property inspections were carried out from September to December. Over 50% of the properties inspected required only one property inspection.

Three (3) PCN's were issued. In all three cases, the PCN was issued after multiple attempts were made to engage with the landowners to achieve their voluntary compliance.

Remedial action was undertaken on one property following the failure to the PCN issued.

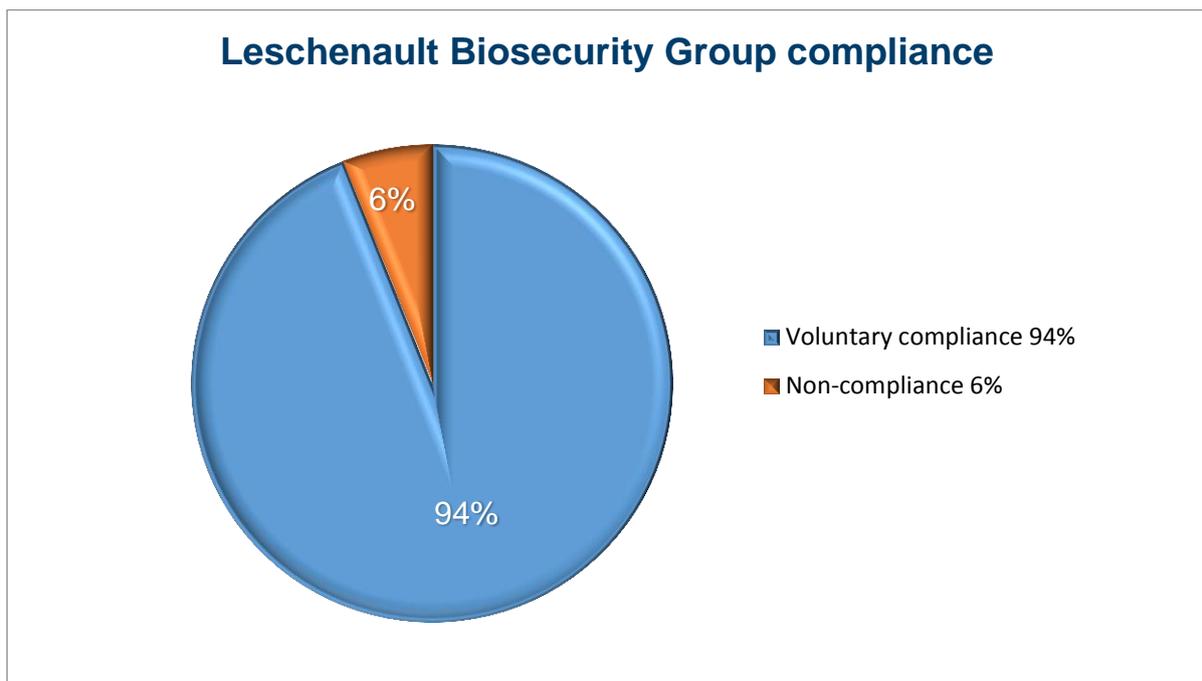


Figure 2 - Leschenault Biosecurity Group compliance

4. Blackwood Biosecurity area

93% of properties inspected in the Blackwood Biosecurity area were voluntarily compliant (Figure 3).

Compliance within the Blackwood Biosecurity area was conducted in the LGA of Donnybrook-Balingup (south), Bridgetown, Boyup Brook, West Arthur and Nannup. 14 properties were identified by the department as having cotton bush present. Property inspections were carried out from September to December. Over 68% of the properties inspected required only one property inspection.

One PCN was issued after the landowner failed carry out control actions.

At the time of completing this report, the property noted above, was deemed to have failed the directions of the PCN. The process of undertaking remedial action, as well as other processes permitted under the BAM Act, was being determined for action.

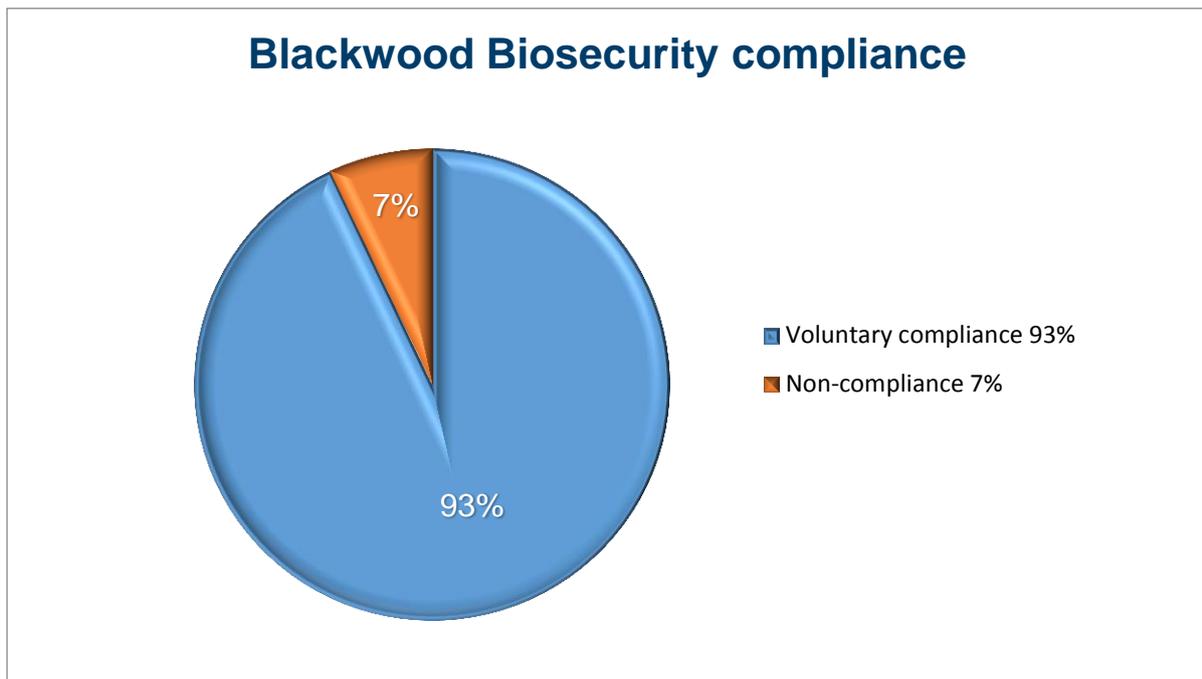


Figure 3 - Blackwood Biosecurity compliance

5. Peel-Harvey Biosecurity Group area

93% of properties inspected were voluntarily compliant in the PHBG area (Figure 4).

DPIRD compliance within the PHBG area was conducted in the LGA of Serpentine-Jarrahdale, Waroona and Harvey. (See 5.1 for compliance within the Shire of Murray). 14 properties were identified by the department as having cotton bush present. Property inspections were carried out from September to December. Over 60% of the properties inspected required second inspections.

Seven PCNs were issued. In all seven cases, these notices were issued after multiple attempts were made to engage with the landowners to achieve their voluntary compliance.

Remedial action was undertaken on two properties following the failure to the PCN issued.

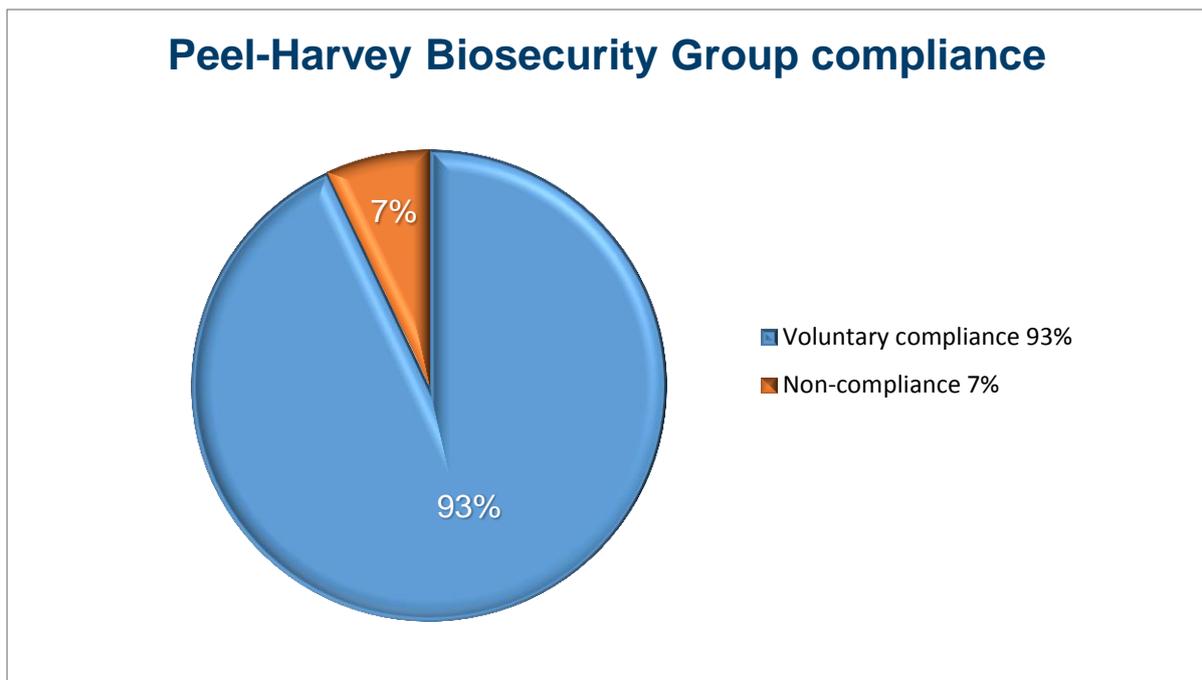


Figure 4 - Peel-Harvey Biosecurity Group compliance

5.1. Shire of Murray

100% of properties inspected were voluntary compliant (Figure 5).

A partnership between the Shire of Murray and DPIRD to improve declared pest control was implemented for the first time in 2017 – 18. The Shire of Murray delegated one ranger to the program, Mr Adrian Eppen. It was estimated that the ranger's time commitment totalled five days over the course of five months. This partnership began with training and surveillance in October and concluded with final inspections in February. All inspections were conducted by the DPIRD senior compliance inspector with support from the Shire of Murray delegated ranger. Formalisation of this partnership, with the execution of a document of shared responsibility, is scheduled to be completed by end of March 2018. DPIRD is to progress the appointment of the delegated shire ranger as a BAM Act inspector.

14 properties were identified by the Shire of Murray and DPIRD as having cotton bush present. Property inspections were carried out from October – February.

2 PCN's were issued. In both cases, these notices were only issued after multiple attempts were made to engage with the landowners to achieve their voluntary compliance.

Both properties complied with the PCN so no remedial action was undertaken.

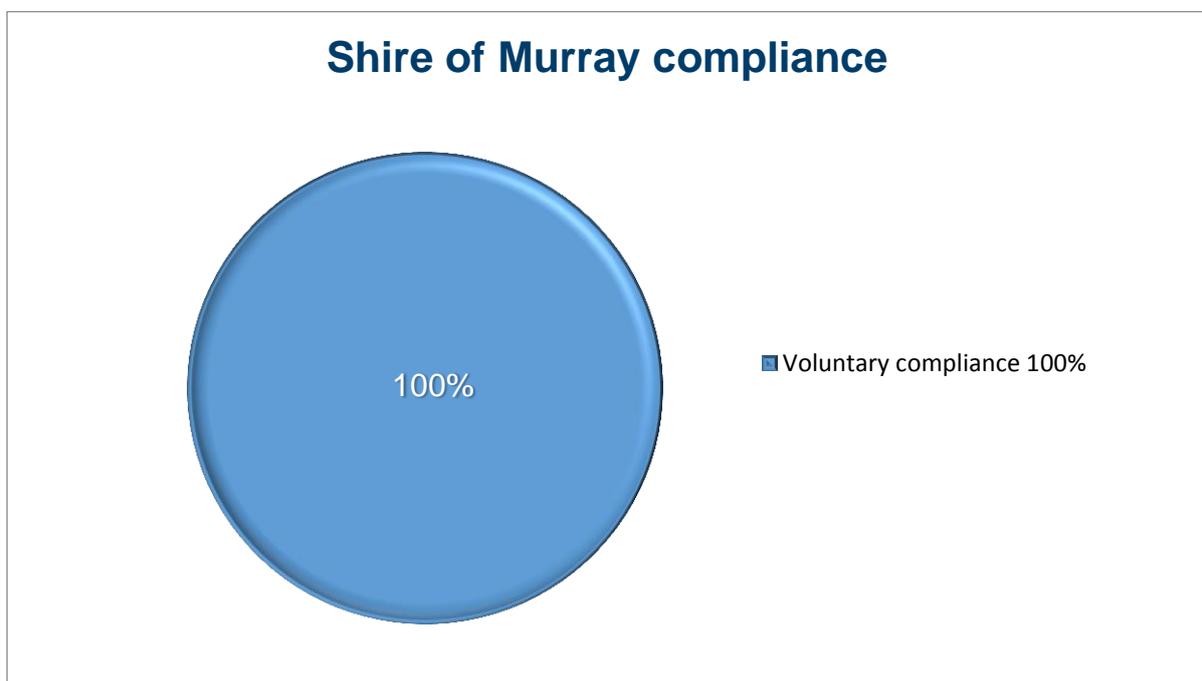


Figure 5 - Shire of Murray compliance

6. Communication approaches

- **Letter mail out by biosecurity groups and DPIRD.** Over 800 letters were mailed by the department and three biosecurity groups to landowners within identified cotton bush action areas. The department letter is in support of the biosecurity group’s letter and serves as the first point of contact and engagement with landowners.
- **Inspection notice.** Landowners identified for property inspections were contacted by certified mail. This communication provided lead inspector contact details and served as the second point of contact to landowners. The notice detailed the property inspection details and requested that the landowner make contact with the lead inspector.
- **Direct communication contact.** If details were available, the lead inspector made contact with landowners via telephone and / or email.
- **Property visit.** Landowners were provided with details of the proposed property inspection and requested to make arrangements with the lead inspector for access.

7. Barriers to engagement and compliance

7.1. Absentee landowners

Absentee landowners consumed the greatest portion of enforced compliance by the department (Table 1).

Table 1 - Absentee landowners enforced compliance

	Leschenault	Blackwood	Peel-Harvey
Absentee landowner properties issued a PCN	100%	100%	8 out of 9
Absentee landowner properties subject to remedial action	100%	100%	100%
Interstate / overseas landowners issued a PCN	1 out of 3	0	1 out of 3

	Leschenault	Blackwood	Peel-Harvey
Interstate / overseas landowner properties subject to remedial action	100%	0	100%

Absentee landowners provided the greatest challenge to lead inspectors in terms of making and maintaining contact during the compliance process.

For example, the landowner subject to remedial action in the LBG area did not respond to any mailed correspondence from DPIRD or the biosecurity group. No records were available from either the shire or DPIRD that provided a phone contact or email details. All attempts by DPIRD to make contact with the interstate landowner were unsuccessful.

Data collected for this report indicates that absentee landownership is not only a significant barrier to compliance, but that absentee landowners are the greatest source of non-compliance. Biosecurity group feedback indicates that absentee landowner properties cause the greatest amount of frustration to the community and particularly, neighbouring properties.

7.2 Information sources – due diligence

Current and updated information on properties and ownership is inconsistent within DPIRD as well as what is available from local governments. The intelligence and supporting information provided by the biosecurity groups to DPIRD was inconsistent across the three areas.

Lead inspectors used DPIRD data bases and systems to carry out preliminary identification of land ownership. These included Objective, GIS systems and maps, FIS and historical records. A Landgate title search was conducted on all properties prior to inspection. An ASIC search was conducted on all properties that showed company ownership. Local governments were able to provide information on request to verify and support DPIRD data. This relationship with the local governments was vital in this part of the process. Local governments that were actively engaged with the biosecurity groups were supportive and efficient in providing support.

The mythology in identifying cotton bush action areas was consistent across the three areas, however, the application of the process was inconsistent. In all biosecurity group areas, cotton bush action areas were identified that did not contain properties with cotton bush present, or contained properties that were actively and effectively controlling and managing cotton bush.



Cotton bush seed pod



Seeds being released

8. Public estate

Senior compliance inspector role

Part of the role of the senior compliance inspector in this process, was to establish and develop relationships with the managers of the public estate. The government departments identified in this process as having key responsibilities in managing land within the biosecurity group areas were:

- Water Corporation - WaterCorp
- Forestry Products Commission – FPC
- Department of Transport – ARC Infrastructure
- Department of Biosecurity, Conservation and Attractions – Parks and Wildlife services

WaterCorp. A centralised email contact system was established to report cotton bush requiring control and management that was present on WaterCorp managed land. From this first report, the location and use of the property determined its assignment within the WaterCorp system. WaterCorp has responded positively to requests from DPIRD and undertaken efforts to include identified areas in their annual works program or to take specific action upon request.

FPC. In March 2017 a change in the responsibility for management of weeds within native forests and plantations occurred. This responsibility reverted back to FPC from Parks and Wildlife. For cotton bush compliance, the greatest portion of FPC managed plantations in the public estate is within the Blackwood Biosecurity area. Positive steps are being made by both the Blackwood Biosecurity Group and FPC Nannup in forming collaborative partnerships and engaging in information sharing for the common goal of managing declared C3 weeds across the area.

Department of Transport (DoT). ARC Infrastructure (ARC) is appointed by DOT to undertake management and maintenance of the railway corridor that runs, for the purpose of cotton bush compliance, primarily through the PHBG area and secondarily in the LBG area. Meetings with the ARC project manager and the DPIRD senior compliance inspector have occurred on several occasions in 2017. Site meetings have discussed specific concerns of the PHBG and DPIRD. ARC has completed several spraying campaigns in areas identified by DPIRD and met requirements for suitable control and management of a C3 weed. Main Roads not considered based on voluntary compliance being implemented annually.

Department of Biosecurity, Conservation and Attractions. The major area of cotton bush concern within the DBCA managed estate in the biosecurity group areas is that at Serpentine Falls National Park. A meeting to engage with and build collaboration was held between DPIRD, PHBG, Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale and DBCA in September 2017. This initial meeting was productive in starting the process. Unfortunately, staffing changes within the DBCA and Serpentine Falls National Park posed a barrier to moving forward. Coupled with the approach of the peak visitor, bushfire and summer season, no further meetings were held to date.

9. Recommendations

1. The collaborative partnership between DPIRD and the biosecurity groups to begin in July each year.
2. DPIRD to support the biosecurity groups in establishing the cotton bush action areas and assisting with the coordination of the letter mail out.
3. DPIRD and the biosecurity group's relationships with the local government authorities to be further encouraged and developed. Information sharing and gathering can be further strengthened by such relationships.
4. The DPIRD relationship with the public estate managers to be further encouraged and developed.
5. Biosecurity groups to update their knowledge and information sources in identifying cotton bush infestations within their areas. Reports made to DPIRD to be provided to the biosecurity groups, especially those received January – April.
6. That a report is provided to the biosecurity groups based on the information detailed in this report.
7. The Shire of Murray partnership be formalised through The Case for Joint Responsibility memorandum and the delegated ranger be appointed as a BAM Act inspector.
8. Based on the observations of the current season, the compliance season for cotton bush is extended through until April each year. This would enable DPIRD to address the longer growing and seeding season, for follow up on slashing actions and to act on the larger number of reports that are received once the landscape has dried and browned off.
9. DPIRD to implement policy that addresses absentee landowner engagement and that looks at the compliance history of properties in implementing enforcement actions.
10. DPIRD to implement policy that addresses repeat non-compliant properties.