



Minutes for the Eastern Wheatbelt Biosecurity Group (EWBG) Meeting held Friday 24th of April, 2026 at Merredin Community Resource Centre Conference Room.

Chairperson: Mick Caughey.

1. Opening of Meeting: 10.32am.

- a. **Attendance:** Mick Caughey, Ross Della Bosca, Brett Smith, Margaret Sullivan, Jim Sullivan, Jamie Taylor, Lisa O'Neill, Craig Watts, Steve Palm, Peter Barnes, Dean Sinclair.
- b. **Apologies:** Chris Patmore, Stephen Hunt, Travis McDonnell, Gary Guerini, Len Armstrong, Samantha Webb, Steve Hunt, Stuart Putt, Scott Stirrat, Murray Jones, Mark Creeves, Hayley Billing.

2. Disclosure of Interests: nil.

3. Confirmation of Minutes:

- a. Meeting held 20th of October 2025, at Merredin CRC, Merredin.

Motion:

That the minutes presented from the meeting held on the 20th of October 2025 are accepted as a true and accurate record.

***Moved R. Della Bosca. Seconded: P. Barnes.
Carried.***

4. Business Arising from Previous Minutes:

- a. Increased emu activity has been reported by LPMTs, with mobs of approximately 40–50 observed along sections of the fence. CWBA has undertaken aerial control on private properties at the expense of landholders. At this stage, no similar reports or requests for control have been received from landholders within the EWBG area.
- b. Control efforts in Merredin have had limited success, with three birds destroyed. Further access to undertake control was not available, as the birds relocated to CBH premises where shooting is currently not permitted.

5. Adoption of Financial Statement:

- a. 2025/2026 Financials presented.

Motion:

That the financials presented to be accepted as true and accurate and were tabled at the meeting to the members.

***Moved: B. Smith. Seconded: J. Sullivan.
Carried.***



6. Agenda Items

- a. **LPMT (Dogger) Update: provided by Jamie Taylor (in person) and Seb Jenkin and Stuart McEwan (written report).**

The Board noted the verbal and written update as presented.

- b. **EWBG Overview – Executive Officer.**

i. **RBG Forum:**

Jim Sullivan and Lisa O’Neill (Executive Officer) attended the forum on the 24th of February. Mia Carbon – Deputy Director General opened the meeting and provided a Biosecurity update. Focuses on the forum were land access, feral pig management, rabbit control and succession planning (which is important for the EWBG as with only one current employee). Looking to put together a document for incoming new EO’s for RBG’s. The day concluded with a breakout session, which allowed RBG’s to ask individual questions of DPIRD staff, Jim and Lisa focused on the state of the SBF and the concerns with R4R WDAP funds.

ii. **R4R WDAP Funding**

Across the RBGs, the main issue was not just funding, but the lack of clarity beyond 30 June 2026. Resulted in EWBG increasing their DPA budget and therefore the rate on landholders, that uncertainty has already driven real decisions on the ground, with some groups reducing LPMT days, less aerial baiting and scaling back work on state and buffer lands. There is also a genuine risk of losing experienced LPMTs, which will be difficult to rebuild. In the meantime, Boards are relying on DPA reserves, which is not sustainable, and the mismatch between long-term planning requirements and short-term funding advice is creating real governance challenges.

For 2026/27, funding has now been confirmed. However, it has been made clear there are likely to be changes to how funding is distributed moving forward. All agricultural RBGs have received the same level of funding (with an additional \$50K allocated to Esperance), while all pastoral groups have had their funding halved. There has been no indication of where this reallocated funding will go. The reduced funding in the pastoral areas will impact the EWBG as the area will see increased wild dog pressure from outside the fence.

The third Wild Dog Action Plan has also not yet been released.

iii. **2026/2027 Operational Plan and Budget**

Motion:

That the Eastern Wheatbelt Biosecurity Group Shire Representatives endorse and approve the 2026/27 Operational Plan as presented.

***Moved: M. Caughey. Seconded: B. Smith.
Carried.***



iv. SBF Maintenance

The Board discussed ongoing concerns regarding the condition and maintenance of the State Barrier Fence, particularly within the Hyden area in the southern part of the EWBG region. It was noted that vegetation overgrowth in sections is now exceeding the height of an LPMT vehicle, significantly impacting access and operational effectiveness.

The Board acknowledged that:

- EWBG representatives have raised these concerns directly with the Minister, including discussions by Jim Sullivan at the Wagin Woolorama;
- The Executive Officer has engaged with Lachlan Hunter, who has subsequently raised questions through Parliamentary Question Time;
- Multiple communications have been sent to SBF Coordinators regarding the condition of the fence;
- A recent response from SBF Coordinators advised that the identified section is not included in the current year's budget allocation; and
- A formal letter has been sent directly to the Minister outlining the concerns regarding both fence maintenance and associated operational impacts.

The Board expressed concern that the lack of maintenance in this area is affecting access for LPMTs and may compromise the effectiveness of wild dog control efforts.

Action: EO to write to relevant State Ministers regarding SBF maintenance and overgrowth issues, including associated risks (fire, access, safety, and fence integrity), and to highlight the environmental benefits of effective pest control and the importance of maintaining the SBF.

7. General Business.

a. Yelbeni Refuse Site

Peter Barnes made note a dog has been sighted in the Yelbeni Refuse Site area. Hot Shots (a group of volunteer shooters) will attend to undertake a control actions.

b. Camels along SBF

Camels have not been sighted in the area for a period of time. Previous activity indicated watering at Drovers Soak. It is likely the animals have moved east following recent rainfall.

c. Wild Dog Attacks

Human safety concerns are increasing, with recent reports of wild dog attacks at Karijini National Park. The City of Karratha has also issued separate public risk warnings regarding wild dog activity.



d. Fuel Concerns

The Committee noted rising diesel costs as a concern for LPMTs, given average travel distances of approximately 200 km per day.

Motion:

That the Committee notes the increased fuel cost pressures impacting LPMTs and authorises the EWBG Executive to meet and implement temporary financial measures, as required, to alleviate these pressures.

Moved: R. Della Bosca. Seconded: D. Sinclair.

Carried.

8. Next Meeting: September 21st 2026.

9. Close of Meeting: 11.28.



Attachment 1- SBF Overgrowth East of Hyden

