

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 81

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Policy Division

Topic: Review of the national BioSIRT (Biosecurity Surveillance Incident Response and Tracing) program

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

Has the Review of the national BioSIRT program been provided to the Standing Council on Primary Industries yet?

Is it publicly available?

What is causing / caused the delay?

What are the key outcomes?

What are the implications for Biosecurity and for the new biosecurity legislation?

Answer:

The review of the BioSIRT program has not yet been provided to the Standing Council on Primary Industries.

The review is not yet publicly available.

The review involved an initial examination of the program. Further work is being undertaken to refine the nature of possible changes and timeframes for implementation.

The key outcomes and implications for other Government priorities will be known when the review is finalised.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2013

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 82

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Policy Division

Topic: Myrtle rust

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

Has any work been done on the impact on the die back caused on new growth and the susceptibility of myrtaceae species, eucalypt etc. to bushfire?

Answer:

The *Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Program*, managed by Plant Health Australia, is investigating the genetic basis for susceptible and resistant myrtaceae species including eucalypt to Myrtle rust (*Uredo rangeilii*). The projects are due to be finalised by 30 June 2013.

Related Projects

The Queensland Government has committed \$850 000 for complementary Myrtle rust projects to increase knowledge of Myrtle rust under Queensland conditions; engage communities to reduce the impact of the rust; and assist the hardwood plantation industry to manage the impacts of the rust.

The Cooperative Research Centre for National Plant Biosecurity has committed \$200 000 for projects to increase understanding of eucalyptus rust epidemiology and host specificity to determine disease impact in Australia. This project aims to increase understanding of the epidemiology and host specificity of *Puccinia psidii*, to more accurately determine disease impact in Australia and options for disease management.

The Rural Industries Research Development Corporation (RIRDC) has made a commitment of \$300 000 over three years (2011–14), for Myrtle rust research. This work is complemented by funds provided by the Australian Native Food Industry Ltd (\$21 250) (2011–12 to 2012–13) and the Australian Tea Tree Industry Association (\$37 500) (2011–12 to 2013–14).

A RIRDC report *Assessing Myrtle rust in Lemon Myrtle Provenance Trial* released in October 2012 was funded from RIRDC core funds that are provided by the Australian Government. This research indicates that it may be possible to select cultivars of lemon myrtle with greater myrtle rust resistance than the moderately to highly susceptible cultivars that are currently in use by the native food, essential oil and horticultural industries in Australia.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 83

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Policy Division

Topic: Myrtle rust

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

What progress has been made on allocating the \$3 million set aside to manage Myrtle rust? How much of the money has been allocated and what activities are underway?

Answer:

Myrtle Rust – transition to management program

1. The Australian Government announced on 11 May 2011 funding of \$1.5 million to support a pilot of the national transitional containment principles developed by National Biosecurity Committee. The *Plan for the Transition to Management of Myrtle Rust* includes projects that are aimed at: improving knowledge of the disease; actions to manage and slow down spread; chemical control options and resistance breeding options.
2. Additional funding has been provided by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), the Queensland Government, Cooperative Research Centre for National Plant Biosecurity, Rural Industries Research Development Corporation and industry for related research projects on Myrtle rust.
3. Plant Health Australia is managing the pilot transition program that will operate from July 2011 to June 2013. The plan and implementation progress reports are available at <http://myrtlerust.net.au>.
4. A transition to management group chaired by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and comprising affected state and territory agencies, forest industry representatives and some technical specialists has been established to oversee the implementation of the program and monitor delivery of the program outcomes. Contracts have been signed for all projects and the details of these and funds committed to date¹ by the Australian Government are as follows:

Taxonomy and identity of the pathogen

Agency	Project	Funding
NSW Department of Primary Industries	3.1 Genome sequencing of Myrtle rust and guava rust.	\$175 000
CSIRO	3.2 Determining infectivity of Myrtle rust at specific developmental stages and investigating nuclear behavior using microscopy techniques.	\$23 549
University of Tasmania	3.4 Classification and diversity of the guava rust complex using molecular morphological characters.	\$120 000

¹Details of some projects differ from those presented in the plan due to revisions

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Question: 83 (continued)

Agency	Project	Funding
Sydney Royal Botanical Gardens	3.5 Family placement of Myrtle rust and guava rust, by DNA extraction from both myrtle and guava rust families to determine exact species.	\$60 000

Potential impact and distribution

Agency	Project	Funding
The University of Sydney	Genetic basis of the virulence of Myrtle rust across its geographic range in Australia. Evaluating resistance of selected Myrtaceous species. Establishing a national myrtle rust resistance screening facility.	\$385 836

Chemical Control Options

Agency	Project	Funding
The University of Sydney and NSW Department of Primary Industry	Gathering efficacy data to identify the most effective chemicals for controlling myrtle rust.	\$223 859

Resistance Breeding Options

Agency	Project	Funding
Research School of Biology, Australian National University	6.1 Discovery of genetic markers for resistance to Myrtle rust infection in Myrtaceae (excluding members of tribe Eucalypteae).	\$121 460
CSIRO	6.2 Discovery of genetic markers for resistance to Myrtle rust infection in members of tribe Eucalypteae.	\$100 000

CSIRO contributions:

CSIRO	Taxonomy and Identity of the Pathogen.	\$190 000 (\$25 000 from the Myrtle rust transition to management program)
CSIRO	Resistance Breeding Options.	\$178 000 (\$100 000 from the Myrtle rust transition to management program)
CSIRO	Strategic management of <i>Uredo rangellii</i> rust.	\$87 500 (\$69 000 from the eradication program)

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