BEST PRACTICE MANAGEMENT OF PHYTOPHTHORA CINNAMOMI FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

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INTRODUCTION
Disease in natural ecosystems caused by Phytophthora cinnamomi is listed as a key threatening process under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. A Commonwealth Government funded project stemming from the National Threat Abatement Plan (1), sought to develop:

• a process and criteria to assess the risk to biodiversity from P. cinnamomi (2)
• national best practice benchmarks for the management of P. cinnamomi (3)

The current paper describes the best practice component of the project.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
The best practice was prepared under the guidance of a panel of experts representing all States/Territories, except the Northern Territory. Current management practices were reviewed, and factors hampering management identified. The review enabled the development of benchmarks for best practice management of P. cinnamomi for biodiversity conservation in Australia.

At the time of writing, the document was under review by the panel. It will then be released to 350 stakeholders Australia-wide for comment. The stakeholder group includes: key land management agencies, Local Government, NRM organisations, emergency services and utilities, research institutions, industry, community conservation groups and recreational land users.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION
A model of best practice was developed for the management of P. cinnamomi in natural ecosystems of Australia (Fig. 1). As the model implies strategic management paves the way for achieving best practice management. Strategic management refers to the acknowledgement of the threat P. cinnamomi poses to biodiversity, by all levels of government, through the development and implementation to effective statutory and non-statutory provisions, and coordinated and informed investment.

A central core of research undertaken in collaboration with land managers drives the processes and procedures necessary for the deployment of effective on-ground measures, the ultimate aim of which is to minimise the further spread and impacts of the pathogen on biodiversity. A process of monitoring, auditing and reviewing the effectiveness of procedures completes a loop of continuous management improvement.

Many gaps in processes and knowledge have been identified which hamper best practice. The gaps have a cascading effect. A history of insufficient and ad hoc investment is responsible for key gaps in knowledge: the extent of the threat, P. cinnamomi poses to biodiversity and the effectiveness of current on-ground management measures.

This document provides a national framework for management of P. cinnamomi in Australia. It provides the best current management procedures and the information will enable Governments to refocus efforts for better outcomes in biodiversity conservation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

REFERENCES