

Exotic Birdkeepers Advisory Group

Meeting Record - Fifth Meeting

Dates/times: Sunday 3 December 2006 – 11.00am to 5.00pm

Monday 4 December 2006 – 9.00am to 5.00 pm

Venue: Piano Room, Brassey Hotel, Macquarie St, Barton, Canberra

Introductory comments:

The Chair, Ms Kerry Smith, confirmed the record of EBAG meetings will be published on DEH web site with a summary.

1. Apologies.

None.

2. Acceptance of agenda

Discussion:

Members discussed the draft agenda circulated before the meeting and the proposed order of items. Members agreed to discuss *Development of the proposed criteria* (item 7) before *Options to address lack of record keeping* (item 6).

Members noted the importance of considering public comments and seeking to finalise the proposed criteria, classes and classification of species.

Members noted that sufficient time would be needed for discussion on options to address lack of record keeping and treatment of 'birds of unknown origin' (also referred to as *black hole birds*).

Members also noted the need to discuss and prepare for the stakeholder information meeting.

Outcome:

EBAG agreed to the agenda.

Note: Discussion points made at different stages of the meeting are recorded under the key agenda items for ease of reference.

3. Business from the previous meeting.

a. Report on use of technology to assist in managing record returns.

Discussion:

- EBAG was informed that the Department had engaged a consultant to report on use of technology to support record keeping, in particular whether scanning of handwritten documentation would be useful and cost effective. The report was provided to members and the key issues were discussed.

- The report included MTRs and Activity Records in a form that could allow scanning and electronic capture of the recorded information.
- The report concluded that the costs of data entry versus the costs for automated scanning are comparable at least initially, and scanning would only be cost effective if a significant level of transactions was reached.
- The report also generally scoped the options for electronic support systems, including online transactions and factors to consider when developing and implementing options.
- EBAG discussed the value of these approaches and that the birdkeeping community would also need paper based distribution and submission of record forms because of low level of internet use and familiarity amongst many birdkeepers.
- Activity Record and MTR form design had been refined as part of this process but this was only in relation to data capture and forms might need further refinement to maximise general useability.
- EBAG noted the significant investment that would be required in electronic systems to support the record keeping proposal.

Outcome:

- EBAG members to read the report and provide feedback.

b. Communication (Pet Bird Buy web site)

Discussion:

- Chris Claydon reported favourably on the possibility of using direct links to the Department's website from the www.petbirdbuy.com.au web site. Members discussed that this should be a small URL and/or use of the Department's logo or an image with the URL incorporated.

Outcome:

- The Department will investigate the best approach to providing the link that could be used on www.petbirdbuy.com.au and other websites.

c. Activity Record and MTR form design

Discussion:

- Members reviewed the forms designed for electronic scanning provided under agenda item 3a. Members considered that the scanning versions may appear more complicated than necessary. If scanning forms was not an initial option, then they could be presented more simply.

Outcome:

- EBAG agreed that the forms to be published for comment should be presented as simply as possible. The Department will investigate this further.

4. Correspondence received since last meeting

a. Request for EBAG membership from Pet Industry Association of Australia and National Finch and Softbill Association

Discussion:

Members noted that this issue had been discussed prior to the meeting and that the Department had responded to requests for membership of EBAG

indicating that at this stage the current representation is appropriate based on EBAG's progress and that all major stakeholders were now involved.

Outcome: No further action required.

b. Request for Queensland Council of Bird Societies observer(s)

Discussion:

Members noted that the issue of having observers had been discussed prior to the meeting and that the Department has responded to the Queensland Council of Bird Societies on 17 November 2006. This included inviting one QCBS to participate in the stakeholder information meeting immediately following this EBAG meeting. Members noted that club and association representatives in all states and territories and some other key stakeholders had been invited to the stakeholder information meeting.

Outcome: No further action required.

c. Request for full records of EBAG meetings by Queensland Council of Bird Societies and an [individual]

Discussion: Members noted that the Department had responded to the two requests for full records of meetings and that these would now be published on the website with a summary of each EBAG meeting.

Outcome: No further action required.

d. Statements handed to the Department at the Brisbane meeting

Discussion: The Department had been provided with a position statement of the Queensland Council of Bird Societies dated 21 October 2006 at the meeting in Brisbane on 21 October 2006 which was hosted by the QCBS. Pro-forma statements signed by six individuals were also provided at the meeting.

Outcome: The statements were considered with other comments and submissions received.

e. Canberra Finch Society letter

Discussion: The Department advised that the Canberra Finch Societies' concerns of not knowing about the EBAG proposal had been addressed.

Outcome: The comments raised in the letter were considered with other comments and submissions received.

f. Comments and submissions received

Discussion: The Department reported that 50 submissions had been received by the 15 November 2006 in response to EBAG's invitation following EBAG's September meeting. Nine late submissions had also been received and were considered. Copies of all correspondence received by the Department had been distributed to EBAG members as they had been received. Each submission was acknowledged by the Department by email, phone call, or letter.

Outcome: Comments and submissions were discussed under agenda item 5.

5. Discussion on consultation

a. Discussion of public comments and submissions

Discussion:

- Issues, comments and questions raised were summarised by the Department and presented in the document *Summary of public comments received on Criteria for Classifying Exotic Bird Species and Draft Classification of Exotic Bird Species – December 2006*. The document was provided to members and discussed.

- Many comments and submissions reflected a range of differing views. However, there were similar views in many submissions and these were presented in the summary document as common issues raised.
- Each submission received was grouped under hobbyist, commercial breeder, or club/association where this could be ascertained. These groups were the main respondents.
- EBAG confirmed that
 - A common response supported some level of record keeping for high interest species.
 - Many submissions were concerned that there were too many classes.
 - A majority of comments and submissions indicated the need for very simple, or no records, for low interest species.
 - A major issue is the draft classification, which some submissions have said should be subject to rigorous review with relevant expertise taking into account issues raised through submissions.
 - A clear message through many comments and submissions is that options to deal with the lack of records since 2002 should be addressed urgently, and there should be an opportunity to comment on these options.

Outcomes:

- EBAG agreed that the summary document had captured the major issues and agreed that the summary of common issues should be published on the Department's website to provide feedback on the consultation process.
 - The summary is to include a brief explanation as to why actual comments received cannot be published (i.e. privacy considerations). Any future invitations for comment will make clear that any comments received may be published in full, together with the names of individuals or representatives of organisations making the comments.
- EBAG discussed the key issues relevant to the matters being considered by EBAG and noted that the agenda provided opportunities for relevant issues to be addressed.

b. Feedback on public presentations

Discussion:

- Members provided feedback on public and club level presentations that had occurred during October and November 2006 and discussed the value of public presentations on EBAG's proposals held in eastern states.
- EBAG noted that attendance levels at public meetings were varied. At a number of venues attendance was lower than anticipated by the club/association organisers, even though they were widely promoted for most venues. Various factors were discussed for the lower than expected levels of participation.
- Reaction to the EBAG proposals and EBAG was mixed and included criticisms over transparency and confidence of some birdkeepers in the consultation process. EBAG noted this feedback for discussion under agenda item 9.
- A common objection at meetings was to the keeping of records for species previously exempt from registration under NEBRS. Many birdkeepers objected to mandatory keeping of records for low interest birds (Class 3).

- Members noted that the Department's presence and willingness to listen to issues of concern was well received at most meetings even though many participants held strong views and presented them passionately.
- EBAG noted that very vocal participants in attendance at some meetings may have meant that others in the audience could not express their views or ask questions. EBAG noted that this could not have been anticipated and was not an easy situation to manage.
- EBAG members noted from the presentations that the reverse-onus-of-proof existed in state and other Australian Government legislation covering other matters and commented that this point was not widely known or accepted.
- The ABA reported that public presentations were well received in NSW and that in Cairns the meeting acknowledged the value of record keeping/proof of purchase for people in possession of birds.
- The AFA noted that initial resistance and anger from south east Queensland birdkeepers to the issues being raised in the information sessions now seemed to be shifting to wanting to move forward on the issue of record keeping.
- Recent compliance activity involving the Department was topical and has influenced attitudes and behaviour within the birdkeeping sector.

Outcomes:

- EBAG noted feedback from members about the public presentations during October and November 2006.
- EBAG confirmed that the public presentations had been a worthwhile exercise. Despite some of the difficulties experienced there was now a much broader involvement of birdkeepers and other interests within the sector.
- EBAG noted that the range of questions and issues raised at public meetings are reflected in the summary of common issues (see agenda item 4). These are to be considered under the remaining agenda items.

c. Department's feedback on consultation with State and Territories

Discussion:

- The Department advised that some states and territories
 - had a strong focus not to support any additions to the 2003 Inventory listing
 - raised queries in the proposed classification of species
 - were concerned about pest risk and that some exotic bird species were establishing wild populations (e.g. Indian Ringneck Parakeet) that have not been formally documented
 - support classifying at species level, not mutations or sub species level
- There is process involving state and territories to address anomalies in 2003 Inventory (mainly spelling and taxonomic issues). A working group is likely to meet on this before the next Vertebrate Pest Committee meeting in March 2007. Any changes arising from this will be included in the proposed classification.

Outcomes: EBAG noted the feedback.

d. Issues to present to stakeholders information meeting

Discussion:

- Members discussed the value of briefly outlining key issues from public submissions and public meetings held and to highlight to stakeholders that comments were taken into account when considering issues under this agenda.

- EBAG discussed that the stakeholders should be presented with the background to the EBAG proposal and the proposal as modified after considering all the comments.

Outcome:

- EBAG agreed that it would be useful to provide the summary of common issues to participants at the stakeholder information meeting on 5 December 2006.
- A PowerPoint presentation will be prepared for the stakeholder information meeting to present the record keeping proposal as revised during the meeting.

6. Development of proposed criteria

Discussion:

- EBAG reviewed the public comments and identified the following issues relevant to the proposed criteria
 - EBAG's classification criteria fails to give any weight to the abundance of a species in Australian aviculture, and the degree of difficulty in introducing this scheme for species traded in high numbers.
 - The proposed pest and disease criterion are not relevant to the keeping of exotic birds already in the country as many species have been in the country for a long time. The smuggling criterion is the main criterion this proposal should focus on.
 - Common species that were previously exempt under NEBRS should not be regulated unless there is smuggling of the species.
 - Smuggled birds pose a disease threat and therefore disease risk is directly linked to the risk of a species being smuggled into Australia.
- EBAG agreed that long term impacts of disease and pest risk as a result of exotic birds introduced through smuggling activities must be considered.
- EBAG members discussed the concerns birdkeepers may have if the criteria are applied again in the short to medium term (2-5 years) and this resulted in additional species requiring records. EBAG noted that should a bird species be reclassified upwards into the Class 1 category of high interest birds after the scheme commenced, then an important component will be explaining to birdkeepers why record keeping would be required for these species.
- Some EBAG members representing aviculture expressed concerns regarding the lack of accessible information on the level of illegal trade in exotic birds and whether discussion with Department investigators would be useful. The Department highlighted that matters under investigation or before court are not available for consideration by EBAG as they cannot be provided for legal and privacy reasons. EBAG noted that anecdotal information about levels of illegal trade would need to be used when applying the criteria.
- EBAG considered that the issues raised were about interpretation and could be addressed by amending the considerations under each criterion. The considerations under pest and disease criteria should be reviewed to place greater emphasis on:
 - the abundance of each species in Australian aviculture, the length of time they have been in Australia, and the related pest and disease risk
 - the difficulty of encouraging record keeping and managing records for abundant species which are traded in high numbers

- the species that did not require the person keeping them to be registered under NEBRS – these should not require records under the proposed scheme unless there is a related smuggling risk.

Outcomes:

- EBAG agreed that the criteria reflect the obligations of the Australian Government.
- EBAG agreed that pest and disease risk were important but that disease, in particular, could be affected by levels of illegal trade activity.
- EBAG agreed that application of the criteria would be improved by amending the considerations under each criterion to take into account
 - abundance of species
 - length of time species have been in Australia
 - species not requiring registration under NEBRS
 - disease risk being linked to levels of illegal trade for different species.
- EBAG agreed that the system must be flexible enough to reflect changes in biodiversity risk. It is anticipated any changes in classification are likely to be downward and are likely to be minimal. Any changes should only be done on an ‘as needs’ basis, not made without proper assessment against the criteria, and changes should involve consultation with the birdkeeping sector.

7. Proposed classes and classification of species

a. Simplifying classes and record keeping

Discussion:

- EBAG considered the comments received through submissions and public meetings, noting that the vast majority of comments sought simplification of the proposal in terms of the number of classes for record keeping purposes. EBAG noted the following key comments:
 - The proposed system is too complex, it needs to be simple and contain fewer classes.
 - For simplicity there should be only two classes: ‘exempt’ and ‘non-exempt’.
 - There should be three classes: high - requiring MTRs, and specimen identification; low – MTRs but identification optional; and exempt – no records.
 - The need for Activity Record returns.
- EBAG considered in relation to the need for ARs being sent to the Department that if the Department could not process and analyse the information contained in ARs for compliance purposes their return would serve no purpose and should not be undertaken.
- Through discussion EBAG simplified its proposal to the following three classes with the following record keeping approach for each class:
 - Class 1 - High interest species
 - Activity Records would need to be maintained and kept for each species, and returns provided annually to the Department.
 - Movement Transactions Records (MTRs) would be required for all transactions with the buyer and seller retaining copies and each submitting a copy to the Department.
 - Individual marking and identification of specimens would be required.

- The Class 1 requirements could be implemented either as a policy or through Regulations under the EPBC Act.
 - EBAG's preference is to implement this initially as a Departmental policy, strongly recommended by the Department for a 12 month period initially, and followed by the introduction of Regulations under the EPBC Act which would require records for species in Class 1.
- Class 2 - Low interest species
 - MTRs would be strongly recommended by the Department to assist birdkeepers in verifying where they had obtained specimens (i.e. strongly advised as a Departmental policy but not put into Regulations under the EPBC Act)
 - No Activity Records would be required.
 - No individual identification would be required (birdkeepers could choose to mark and individually identify specimens).
 - No records returned to the Department. However birdkeepers would need to be aware that the Department may request documentation held by birdkeepers that help them verify where they obtained their specimens.
- Class 3 – No records required
 Import/export would still be regulated by relevant agencies.
- EBAG confirmed that the species on the 2003 Inventory would be classified into one of the three proposed classes (see agenda item 7b).
- There was general discussion about distribution of record forms and how information provided by birdkeepers would be recorded. The use of technology to record details on MTRs and ARs was discussed. Many birdkeepers have made comments that they do not use computers. Internet based records may not cater for everyone's needs. EBAG agreed that a range of distribution and record management approaches would need to be put into place.
- Some EBAG members sought clarification about the legal status of MTRs and the specimens they cover if record keeping was introduced. It was clarified that MTRs would not legitimise any specimen –they would simply support a paper trail.
- EBAG proposed publishing the draft movement transaction record (MTR) form on the Department's website so that birdkeepers could start using it to help them record their transactions.
- EBAG noted that in presenting the proposed classes it will be important to highlight that requirements of states and territories and other agencies may need to be met by birdkeepers. The proposed classes only related to the Department's policies and legislation it administers in relation to exotic birds.

Outcome:

- EBAG agreed to publish the revised classes with the revised classification and criteria in one document '*revised record keeping proposal for exotic birds*' so that comments could be invited and provided before the next EBAG meeting in February 2007.
- EBAG agreed that its important to have annual returns to the Department for Class 1 species and analysis of those returns.

b. Review of the draft classification

Discussion:

- EBAG considered the comments received through submissions and public meetings, noting that many comments sought re-consideration of species that could be kept under NEBRS without the person being registered. EBAG noted and discussed other key comments:
 - Extending the ‘exempt’ list [from record keeping] would reduce DEH’s work load. DEH had problems keeping up with this task when only 2,000 people registered.
 - With this proposal, EBAG may be creating another ‘black hole’. If the classification system changes in the future and exempt birds become non-exempt, how are birdkeepers expected to have the necessary paperwork.
 - All finch species should be removed from class three and made exempt.
 - The list also needs to be checked for inaccuracies and anomalies (some specific examples have been highlighted for checking).
 - There is inconsistency in how the criteria have been applied to develop the working draft and this needs to be reviewed with relevant expertise before the option is considered further.
 - State requirements and assessments (e.g. Qld assessment of exotic bird species) should be taken into account when a review is undertaken.
- EBAG discussed the issue of workloads and the potential for changes of the classification over time. In regard to potential changes EBAG considered that changes would be infrequent and would only be made if substantial new information was available to justify a change. In the event that a species was placed in a higher class requiring records it would not act retrospectively and would only apply from the date of the change.
- EBAG discussed the need to consider all species on the 2003 Inventory against the proposed criteria and to classify each species. EBAG noted that this proposal is different to NEBRS and that current information should be considered when applying the criteria.
- EBAG considered the options available to assess species against the criteria for classification including the value of establishing a panel. Options of representation from a scientific authority, state/territory and birdkeeping community (independent of EBAG) were discussed.
- In relation to inaccuracies and anomalies in the 2003 Inventory EBAG noted that the Department would be working with the states and territories (see agenda item 5c) to address this issue and it would refer to comments provided.
- EBAG discussed the issue of finch classification and whether some species should be in the Class 1 or Class 2 category based on rarity in aviculture and past and current illegal trade risk.
- EBAG considered the issue of classifying hybrids, sub species and mutations for record keeping purposes. EBAG confirmed that hybrids should be classified for record keeping at the species level in the highest class of either of the parents. Notwithstanding the level of classification of the species, EBAG anticipated that certain colour mutations of some species pose a significantly higher risk of illegal trade. EBAG noted such specimens may be of interest to regulatory agencies in compliance and enforcement actions.
- Classifications of specimens that are in very low numbers and only kept in zoos were discussed. There was concern about possible future smuggling because of interest from collectors.

- EBAG worked through the draft classification, revising the classifications to take account of the key public comments where this was possible.
- EBAG proposed some changes to the pest risk rating of some species already a common pest in Australia on the basis that this is a current problem rather than a future risk that could be minimised by record keeping. In doing so EBAG noted that the Vertebrate Pest Committee pest status and the priority given by some states would be different because of current pest problems.
- EBAG discussed how this revised classification should be progressed and how any further comments on the classification of particular species could be addressed. EBAG agreed that a two stage process be undertaken to progress the draft classification:
 1. Revision within EBAG taking into account comments received
 2. External assessment undertaken if concerns expressed by birdkeepers remain (possible external consultants were identified).

Outcomes:

- EBAG agreed each species must be assessed against the criteria, regardless of whether it could be kept without registration under NEBRS previously.
- EBAG confirmed that hybrids should be classified at the species level in the highest class of either of the parents.
- EBAG highlighted the importance of adequate paperwork being maintained for rare colour mutations of certain species to assist birdkeepers verify the source of such specimens and to minimise scrutiny of birdkeepers under the EPBC Act 1999.
- EBAG agreed that the revised classification of species for record keeping should be available for comment with the other revised aspects of the record keeping proposal so that comments could be invited and considered before the next EBAG meeting in late February 2007.
- EBAG agreed that any comments received on particular species being inappropriately classified for record keeping may need to be referred by the Department to an independent consultant for advice in order to finalise the classification.

8. Options to address the lack of record keeping since the closure of NEBRS

Discussion:

- EBAG noted that public comments and submission and feedback from public presentations had highlighted that this issue needed to be progressed urgently.
- EBAG discussed the following options that could be applied to address concerns about lack of record keeping and 'black hole birds':
 1. Continuation of the current approach by the Department.
 2. The proposed approach to deal with *Black Hole Birds* as outlined in the discussion paper tabled at the fourth meeting by Chris Claydon.
 3. An approach to deal with 'contentious birds' based on possible changes to the *Black Hole Birds* discussion paper that could be developed further.
 4. A compliance policy approach presented at the meeting by the Department titled *Discussion paper for meeting 3 and 4 December 2006 - Proposed code for birdkeepers and compliance response to address lack of record keeping*
 5. Amnesty options previously identified by EBAG.

- EBAG noted that papers presented had been prepared for discussion and development by EBAG and were not for wider distribution at this stage.
- Before discussion some EBAG members raised concerns that the points raised in the compliance policy approach paper may not be supported by the Department's compliance/enforcement area given recent actions. The Department declined to comment on current investigations but advised that consultation was occurring within the Department on the range of options being considered by EBAG.
- The Department presented the compliance policy approach paper and explained the principles of the proposed compliance framework. It aims to provide improved understanding of the Department's compliance approach and thereby provide comfort to the majority of companion bird owners and hobbyist birdkeepers that the Department's investigation priorities are focussed on illegal activities that pose a high risk in terms of illegal trade and activities that may adversely impact on Australian biodiversity.
- EBAG members highlighted the potential scale of the lack of record keeping, i.e. the number of birds involved.
- Some members estimated that a majority of birdkeepers could not establish proof of legal ownership under the current possession offence which requires the person to be able to verify the source of the specimen, or have a reasonable excuse for holding the specimen. During the discussion the suggestion was made that the Department make a policy statement declaring that all birds not required to be registered under NEBRS be declared legal. The Department said it could not declare birds as legal or illegal.
- The Department reported that it has asked DEFRA (United Kingdom) about the scheme outlined in the *Black Hole Birds* discussion paper. The response was that it was not operative. Chris Claydon explained that this scheme probably was no longer operative as it was initiated 20 years ago. The birds initially identified as birds of unknown origin were probably now deceased. Further clarification is required to determine if it was a scheme previously run by DEFRA.
- The *Black Hole Birds* discussion paper was discussed, and while this led to suggestions of some changes, the review could not be completed because of the time spent discussing other agenda items. Some members felt that this could be developed as a workable option. Further revision of the document was deferred to the next meeting because members had not expected detailed revision of the document.
- EBAG discussed defining and applying the 'acquired in good faith' concept. EBAG agreed that this needed clarification if it was to provide a basis for deciding what would be done with contentious birds. The Department noted that it could be very difficult to define, given other cases in law, and there are likely to be different perceptions about whether 'acquired in good faith' could be applied consistently.
- EBAG discussed the distinctions between birds that were never registered under NEBRS but should have been, and birds that may not have complete or adequate documentation to support their origin.
- EBAG members suggested the lack of communication following NEBRS has contributed to the problems faced in the current situation. EBAG also noted

that ignorance of the law is not considered by Courts as an excuse for a breach of the law.

- Some EBAG members thought that the *Black Hole Birds* discussion paper ultimately presents as an amnesty. This view was not supported by members putting forward the suggested approach. The suggestion was also made that the proposal, as presented in the discussion paper, may be considered as laundering of birds. The Department highlighted that it cannot be involved in laundering of birds or activities that may be seen to promote illegal trade.
- Some EBAG members raised the concern that the possession offence provision (303GN) to regulate exotic birds has not been tested in Court.
- Discussion also included the common issue in submissions that the *Black Hole Birds* should be addressed as quickly as possible. EBAG maintained the view that the proposed record keeping scheme needed to be introduced as soon as possible so the record keeping gap doesn't grow.
- EBAG discussed how this agenda item could be presented to the stakeholders attending the information meeting on Tuesday 5 December.
- EBAG acknowledged that time spent reviewing and taking account of comments received and preparing for the stakeholder information meeting on Tuesday 5 December had meant that further work could not be done on the issue at this meeting.

Outcomes:

- EBAG agreed to progress this agenda item as the major issue at the next meeting and that it would review and develop the options outlined in the EBAG working drafts:
 - i. *Proposed code for birdkeepers and compliance response to address lack of record keeping and*
 - ii. *Black Hole Birds* discussion paper tabled in September 2006.

9. Communication issues and approach to further consultation

a. Addressing criticisms of EBAG

i. *Approach to meetings and transparency*

Discussion:

- Some criticism has been made of EBAG due to a perception that the group is making decisions on behalf of the birdkeeping community. The Department highlighted that the criticism is not appropriate given that EBAG is a consultative group established to advise the Department.
- EBAG members reported that direct communication (one on one) was effective in clarifying issues relating to EBAG proposals and criticism of EBAG.
- EBAG also considered that the public presentations had been useful where audiences had adequate opportunity to consider the proposals and ask questions.
- In either situation EBAG noted that difficulty was often encountered when birdkeepers were not presented with messages they would prefer to hear, or if they were not given adequate opportunity to present their views.
- Feedback from meetings had included options to improve communication and dissemination of information on proposals. Several clubs provided newsletter contact details so that EBAG updates could be provided for distribution through club newsletters.

- Timing of magazines and club level publications did not often coincide with progress on EBAG proposals or invitations for public comment. There was little that could be done about this other than to disseminate information as widely as possible and promote people accessing current information.
- EBAG members discussed distribution of working draft documents produced for consideration by EBAG. Members agreed that these working documents should not be distributed outside EBAG without agreement for their wider distribution, or for invitation for public comment. This would help avoid miscommunication or confusion if proposals are developed further before their release.
- EBAG noted again that full meeting records will be released with a summary via the Department's website and that updates will continue to be provided to aviculture media.

Outcomes:

- EBAG members confirmed that any document produced as a working draft should not be circulated beyond EBAG membership without EBAG agreeing to wider distribution.
- The Department will establish a list of known contacts in bird clubs, associations and societies and send EBAG meeting updates to these contacts.
- Full meeting records will be made public with a summary via the Department's website.

ii. *Observers at meetings*

Discussion:

- The Department advised that the issue had been raised by the Queensland Council of Bird Societies in correspondence and at the Brisbane meeting on 21 November 2006.

Outcome:

- EBAG noted the Department's decision to decline the request for observers which was communicated in a letter to QCBS on 17 November 2006.

iii. *Approaches to future birdkeeper engagement*

Discussion:

- EBAG discussed possible changes to the composition of its membership.
- The Department advised that the current composition was decided by the Department from 21 nominations received in February/March 2006 following an invitation for nominations at the December 2005 workshop. Nominations came from people other than those who attended the workshop.
- The Department expressed the view that consideration of the issues was well advanced and consultation across the sector was ensuring that all major stakeholders in the exotic birdkeeping sector were now involved.
- The Chair advised that the Pet Industry Association of Australia and major finch associations could be more closely consulted on particular issues and that presentation of their views would be encouraged and supported.

Outcome:

- Membership on EBAG continues to be appropriate.

b. Proposed communication strategy for EBAG

Discussion:

- The Department advised that its Public Affairs area had been consulted on the most appropriate and effective methods of communicating with birdkeepers with the small budget available. The Public Affairs area had recommended that the Department produce a simple publication outlining:
 - the background of establishing EBAG
 - the issues EBAG is addressing
 - how to access this information
 - the key messages for birdkeepers on record keeping.
- The Department also outlined a proposed communication strategy for EBAG and tabled the paper *Proposed exotic bird recordkeeping requirements - Communication strategy*.
 - The paper identifies a range of audiences to be targeted, primary communication approaches and the use of other groups which are useful as secondary communication channels.
- EBAG discussed the timing and method, and communication required to introduce its record keeping proposals. Different options were considered, taking account of attitudes among the birdkeeping community and the audiences identified in the proposed communication strategy.
- EBAG member Chris Claydon agreed to post information on the bulletin board section on Pet Bird Buy.com.au web site.
- One EBAG member raised the problem faced by members in respect of communication – they need to be clear on the key messages that need to be sent.
- Given the Department currently requires that birdkeepers maintain adequate paperwork some members suggested that the draft MTR form could be posted on the Department's website with the recommendation from the Department that birdkeepers commence using the form in addition to existing record keeping methods.

Outcomes:

- The Department will review the draft MTR form and post a template on the Department's website with the recommendation that birdkeepers should consider using the form in addition to existing record keeping methods.
- EBAG agreed with the approach in the draft communication strategy and agreed to respond with further avenues of communication. The draft communication strategy will be refined with this input and used as a basis for future EBAG communication.
- The Department will develop and publish a simple brochure and seek to distribute this widely through a range of outlets (including clubs and associations, pet shops and bird sales) directing birdkeepers on where to get more information on outcomes from EBAG.

c. The need for further consultation

Discussion:

- EBAG discussed the approach to consultation on EBAG's revised record keeping proposal. EBAG noted that comments would need to be received late January/early February 2007 so that all feedback can be summarised and circulated prior to the next EBAG meeting scheduled for late February 2007.
- EBAG considered that the proposal could be presented in one document.

- EBAG anticipated that discussions on the lack of record keeping and *black hole birds* should be progressed sufficiently by the end of the February meeting to give an indication on how this issue could be addressed.
- EBAG also considered that by the next meeting scheduled for late February 2007, a conclusion on the record keeping proposal and the Activity Record and MTR forms could be possible.
- The Department acknowledged the possible timing and noted that consultation with other stakeholders such as the states and territories may occur in February/March 2007 and this would determine timing for any proposals being formally provided by the Department to the Minister for consideration.

Outcome:

- A package of information outlining the revised EBAG proposal for record keeping will be prepared by the Department and circulated to members prior to being published on the Department's website. This will include the classes and classification of bird species.

10. Other business

a. Confirmation of Chair for next six months

Discussion:

- The EBAG Terms of Reference require the chairperson to be confirmed every six months. The current chair invited other members to consider the position.

Outcomes:

- EBAG confirmed Kerry Smith as chair for next six months.

11. Next meeting

Discussion:

- Timing of the meeting was discussed in terms of inviting comment on the revised record keeping proposal and the need to progress the options to address lack of record keeping and issues relating to *Black Hole Birds*. EBAG agreed that it would need to meet in early 2007.

Outcomes:

- The next meeting will be held in late February 2007. To be confirmed by email.