



Macao paper wasp – transition to management program

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Relevant: Cocos (Keeling) Islands

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The Macao paper wasp (*Polistes olivaceus*) is a large social wasp that is exotic to the Cocos (Keeling) Islands and mainland Australia. It was found on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands in 2015, and has been subject to an eradication program led by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, with assistance from the Western Australian Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD).

On 3 September 2018, the National Biosecurity Management Group (NBMG), comprising representatives from all Australian governments, determined that the Macao paper wasp was not technically feasible to eradicate from the Cocos (Keeling) Islands under the National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement (NEBRA).

The two-year program encountered difficulties inconsistent with evidence from previous wasp infestations outside Australia, including an ability to breed rapidly and colonise dense forest. Many islands in the group are densely forested and challenging to access, which has made it difficult to effectively locate, delimit, treat and contain the wasp.

Next steps

The Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities will lead the ongoing management of the wasp on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, and is working with DPIRD to develop a management program. In the meantime, current eradication activities will continue.

What you can do

It is important that the community and visitors are vigilant to the Macao paper wasp. Macao paper wasps are up to 24 millimetres long, deep yellow in colour with yellow antennae and legs. They build large papery honeycomb nests in trees and on houses.

If you see any wasps or their nests, please notify the local pest controller, Jack Clunies-Ross on (08) 9162 7793. Do not approach or disturb the wasps, as they have a painful sting and are aggressive in nature.

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