

House of Representatives Standing Committee  
On Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

SUBMISSION ON THE IMPACT ON AGRICULTURE OF PEST ANIMALS  
By Sandy Creek Catchment Landcare Inc, Welshmans Reef Vic. 3462

Dear Sirs,

Introduction:

Welshman's Reef, near Castlemaine, lies within the Goldfields bioregion which incorporates much of the Victorian Box-Ironbark ecosystem. Much of the area is state forest where 28 fauna species and 90 flora species are considered to be threatened. Within the area are large and small agricultural properties, including sheep, cattle, emus, alpacas, goats, grain crops, wineries, orchards, olive groves, honey, and a wide variety of specialist organic products, .

Sandy Creek Catchment Landcare Inc have implemented a biodiversity plan which seeks to increase the awareness of the local community of the need for biodiversity conservation, to facilitate partnerships between public land managers and other agencies or organizations with responsibility for environmental protection and to promote conservation within a context of sustainable agricultural production.

The pest animals in this area consist mainly of rabbits and foxes. Indian minah and starlings are also beginning to develop in small colonies. Over the past few years, because of the drought, kangaroos are also considered a pest animal in some locations. Private landowners generally willingly participate in prevention and/or eradication of pest animals on their land, but it is increasingly more difficult with the convoluted method of permit applications.

We hereby submit the following observations and suggestions for the committee's consideration:

*1. To identify nationally significant pest animal issues and consider how existing Australian and State Government processes can be better linked for more coordinated management of these issuers across state boundaries:*

- 1.1 Landcare groups are widespread throughout Australia and are in a position to advise location and identify pest animals in their area, on both private and public land.

1.2 Information gathered can be collated by local offices of a (eg) “Pest Animal Authority” to enable appropriate eradication planning. Having ONE responsible body would certainly assist landowners by having one point of contact for advice, permits etc.

2. *To consider the approaches to pest animal issues across all relevant jurisdictions:*

*Prevention of new pest animals becoming established:*

2.1 Scientific research should be continued and supported and strict adherence to quarantine laws maintained.

*Detection and reporting systems for new and established pest animals:*

2.2 Local knowledge and reporting should be encouraged. Information gathered and collated by (eg) Pest Animal Authority for action. (Action must follow – another “database” without action will be just another cause for “landcare burnout” and landowner skepticism of another “government enquiry”).

2.3 Reporting of infestations should include private and public land. This could be carried out by Landcare groups with the assistance of the local community.

*Eradication of infestations where feasible and appropriate:*

2.4 Following detection and reporting eradication must be undertaken. This could be achieved by landowner input, grants to Landcare groups, and funding to private contractors. State forests and parks should not be exempt from this action. The Commonwealth and State Governments should participate in eradication of animal pests on public land.

3. *Consider the adequacy of State Government Expenditure on pest animal control in the context of other conservation and natural resource management priorities with particular reference to National Parks.*

3.1 State Government expenditure on pest animals is inadequate and confusing. i.e. Only ONE authority should have responsibility for pest animal issues in national parks. If one federal body was responsible for pest animals, State departments would be able to concentrate on other specific environmental matters particular to their area.

3.2 It should be ensured that sufficient funding is available “on the ground” and particularly for any follow-up work necessary.

4. *Consider the scope for industry groups and R&D Corporations to improve their response to landholder concerns about pest animals.*

4.1 Different land types and agricultural pursuits require different approaches to pest animal controls. Workshops/seminars, R&D grants, with landowners, councils, and industry groups for continued development of eradication procedures, both mechanical and chemical, should be widely available with support by Pest Animal Authority.

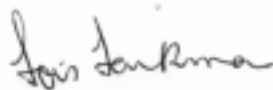
5. *Consider ways to promote community understanding of and involvement in pest animals and their management.*

5.1 Landholders understand the need to control pest animals as their sustainability is at stake, but there is still some confusion and ignorance about the use and responsibilities when using particular chemicals/baits and other eradication methods. Obtaining permits at the moment is time consuming and unnecessarily cumbersome. With the formation of a “Pest Animal Authority” (a “one stop shop” landowners, local councils, contractors etc. would have access to up to date information, guidelines and procedures regarding control and eradication methods. Information can be distributed at field days, workshops, and via landcare groups.

5.2 Council environmental departments - “New landowner” handbooks could include necessary contact information for animal pest problems.

5.3 A major point we wish to make is the Commonwealth and State Governments should accept their responsibility for the need to control animal pests on public land. There is not much point eradicating pests on a private farm if it is surrounded by state forest where pest animals continue unchecked.

Yours faithfully



LOIS LARKMAN

Secretary

On behalf of members of Sandy Creek Catchment Landcare Inc.