

SHIRE OF LAVERTON

SUBMISSION NO. 7

Start of the Outback Highway
Through the Northern Territory to Queensland

MacPherson Place, LAVERTON WESTERN AUSTRALIA

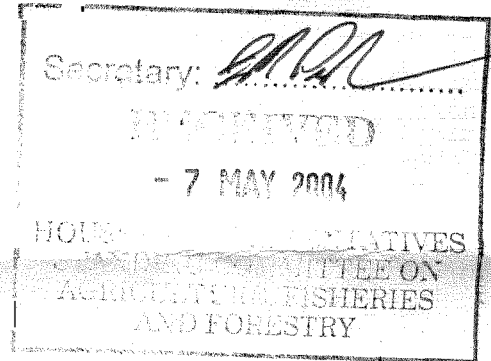
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Our Ref: A/10/1

30th April 2004

The Secretary
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Committee
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Sir,

Re: **The Impact of Pest and Animals on Agriculture**

Enclosed herewith please find our submission to the above inquiry.

Please contact us should you require any further information.

Yours faithfully

M N Brown
Chief Executive Officer

OVERVIEW

Local Government in the Laverton area commenced in August 1906 with the formation of the Mt Margaret Road Board. In 1950 the Mt Margaret Road Board became the Laverton Road Board and subsequently the Laverton Shire Council in 1961.

The Shire of Laverton is located in the North Eastern Goldfields Region of Western Australia and is located some 1,000km north east of Perth. The Shire of Laverton shares its boundaries with the shires of Menzies, Leonora, Wiluna, Ngaanyatjaraku and the South Australian border.

Many people came to the Laverton area in the 1890s in search of gold. The town of Laverton was officially gazetted in 1900. In those early years development of this area was rapid with the extension of the railway line to Laverton which was completed in 1903.

The Laverton area has three major industries being mining, pastoralism and tourism. Mineral exploration in this area continues and will provide more opportunities for further development in the future.

The Laverton area is becoming more popular with outback tourism. Council in conjunction with local authorities in Western Australian Northern Territory and Queensland are also working on developing the Outback Highway which will provide a road link from Laverton in Western Australia through Alice Springs in Northern Territory and through to Winton in Queensland. Already this route is proving popular with tourists to this area keen to experience some real outback adventure travel.

Council maintains various facilities in the town of Laverton including the sealed airstrip and the airport facilities at the Laverton Aerodrome.

Council has a road network of some 3,500km the majority of which is unsealed dirt road construction. These roads provide access to the various pastoral properties in the Shire and to the various mining developments.

East and North of Laverton are the Jindalee Over the Horizon Radar installation sites which were constructed by the Commonwealth Government.

There are approximately sixteen pastoral leases located within the Shire. These include: -

- | | | | |
|-----|---------|-----|-----------------|
| (a) | Minara | (b) | Laverton Downs |
| | Mt Weld | | Whitecliffs |
| | Merolia | | Wonganoo/ Bandy |
| | Yamarna | | Banjawon |
| | Glenorn | | Prenti Downs |
| | | | Lake Wells |
| | | | Deleta |
| | | | Erlistoun |
| | | | Mertondale |

(a) = Mining Company Owned

(b) = Owned/ Operated by Pastoralist

While seasonal conditions have generally been good for the pastoral industry over recent years the high cost of operation and low rates of return of pastoral profits has seen a general decline in the number of people and investment into the pastoral industry in this Shire.

There are four major aboriginal communities in this shire. They are located at Cosmo Newberry, Mt Margaret, Mulga Queen and the Wongatha Wonganarra Community which is located adjacent to the Laverton townsite.

The major mining operations located in this shire at present are, Granny Smith (Placer), situated some 28km south east of Laverton, Sunrise Dam (Anglogold Australasia), located some 50km south of Laverton and Murrin Murrin (Anaconda Nickel) located some 60km West of Laverton. Both Placer Dome and Anglogold have recently increased their workforces and have both commenced work on developing "underground mining operations" as well as continuing their current open pit mining.

In addition to the above mentioned major mining operations there are a number of other projects that will come on line this year.

(A) Apollo Mining limited have purchased various assets previously belonging to Sons of Gwalia. This includes mining tenements treatment plant and associated infrastructure in the Laverton area. They plan to develop various gold sources in this area.

(B) Lynas Corporation are working on developing the Mt Weld Rare Earths project. It is planned for this project to be operational in about 6 months time.

(C) An open cut mine is being developed at the Whisper Deport (Chatterbox), some 8 Kilometres West of Laverton, by a joint venture involving Placer Dome/ Metex

(D) Deep Yellow plan to mine a gold deport at Mikado, located South/ West of Laverton. This is expected to be a relatively short term venture.

"These mines all employ a significant workforce however the vast majority of staff of these operations operate predominantly on a fly in/ fly out basis.

Council is responsible for the provision of health and building services at all these locations and share an Environmental Health Officer/Building Surveyor with the Shire of Leonora for this purpose.

Background

The pastoral areas in the Shire of Laverton are located in the Western half of the Shire area. The Eastern area is a variety of vacant crown land and various reserves.

The major problem in our pastoral area at present is the large number of wild dogs/ dingos. This has had a major impact on sheep numbers in this area.

In past years, in conjunction with the Western Australian Agriculture Protection Board "Doggers" were employed in the pastoral areas to trap wild dogs/ dingos.

In recent years the employment of "dogger" has been phased out and replaced by aerial baiting. This has not proven successful and pastoralists are forming "dogging groups" to employ on ground dogger again.

Funding to employ these doggers in 2004/2005 is being provided from a number of sources:-

A.P.B

Local Pastoralists

Mining Companies

Local Government Authorities

Laverton, because of its remote location provides some protection and a shield to discourage wild dogs/ dingos moving into pastoral areas West of this area.

Aerial bating of wild dogs/ dingos is not carries out on reserves or vacant crown land. Some pastoralists did not want aerial bating carried out.

Some people believe that with the sharp reduction in rabbit numbers, brought about by the Calici Virus, wild dogs/ dingos have lost a food source and this has forced them to attack more sheep and calves.

For some years, as the development of the Outback Highway has progressed, Council has presented the setting up of a stock inspection/ quarantine check point just East of Laverton. Every year this road is getting busier with the transport of cattle to WA.

A stock inspector/ quarantine check point is seen as essential to protect agricultural industries in WA.

About 2 or 3 years ago we did have an officer (mobile) in Laverton for a month or two.

To date our requests to the State Minister for Agriculture to set up a permanent stock inspection/ quarantine checkpoint in Laverton has not been successful.

Comments on Terms of Reference

(A) It appears that in Western Australia both the Agriculture Protection Board and the Agriculture Department of WA have insufficient resources to prevent the establishment of new pest plants or animals in WA.

(B) "Agriculture" appears to have a lower priority compared to other portfolios, needed to protect, promote and support various agriculture pursuits in this State.