

The Secretary
Agriculture Fisheries Forestry Committee
House of representatives
Federal Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

About the author

Noeline Franklin B Sc (Hons) PTC M Med Sc

~160 yr family association with the Snowy region raising livestock and observing ecological interactions (Chronically wild dog affected for over last 3 decades)
Worked 16 years CSIRO Animal Health Survey dog affected families and professional pest animal controllers around Snowy region since 1998 following watching brief for over 25 years

Sat on Victorian NSW Wild Dog Coordinating Committee since inception
National Wild Dog Summit Wodonga 22.2.02 Instigated and member of the working group for the Coordinated Brindabella Wee Jasper Wild Dog Fox Management program now adopted throughout NSW and viewed highly as a concept and process in other states and internationally incorporating the monitoring of native animal population thrift and predation of domestic animals
Deep concern for the ramifications of pest animal impacts predisposing demise of the values our families worked for sacrificed for across the Snowy direct effects and indirect through repeated harsh large area preventable fire in a perturbed ecology. Very concerned about the poor quality science being applied to land management much refuted by long time experienced observers and long term outcomes supporting predictions chronically ignored by public servants seeking the quiet simple life Chronic misrepresentation of rural people on environmental issues to the long term peril of shared natural resources and values of national significance. My views are not isolated and are representative of experienced land managing families across SE Australia Knows of at least 200 000 sheep destocked forcibly off private land adjacent to national park in SE and escalating Melbourne water catchment through to the NSW Qld boarder. Creeping in from the western division dog fence. Large implications for recovery enjoyed by native species as dogs again become ubiquitous inside the fence

We believe wild dogs to be a pest of national significance because of its ecological impact, highly competitive nature, reproductive rate, mobility and difficulty to suppress and contain unless control is coordinated over all titles and boundaries.

Summary

β Wild dogs head feral shandy of other litter bearing invasive ferals exotic predators and their prey interact to the peril of native species plants and animals
β Affected farmers will not accept blame for native species loss through feral predators rampant in public managed land and constantly flowing onto private land
β Major environmental impact through predisposing intense large area fire, loss wildlife, disrupting livestock industries, disease attack, threat and disruption land management options and regional employment
β Wild dogs pest of national significance due to mobility, competitiveness, high reproductive rate, difficulty to suppress and contain, potential for damage, ability to ignore state and territory borders and various titles within. Dogs are vectors for many serious endemic and exotic diseases and unacceptable to wander at will.
β Legally dogs were declared noxious on all titles now they are legitimised as naturalised top predators on public land and we question the validity of the stance and the science especially as unsuppressed populations underpinned by a feral shandy. We believe the stance largely a cop out shirking responsibility and highlighting the lack of goal setting to deliver conservation outcomes in forests, grasslands, water catchment taken for conservation land as manifest by Snowy largely butchered and burnt
β Expansive national park system while disruptive of established regional land and pest management strategies is forming conduits and distribution centres for huge dog populations to spill from are poorly regulated, flawed budget allocation and land management perceptions neglecting responsibilities for invasive ferals and fuel
β Near neighbours of national park system denied input into regional land management issues through insincere public consultation or political processes, are being used to their social and economic peril to tidy up the out flow of ferals and fire
β If we value not only the native species conservation, heritage and aesthetic values but Snowy's continued ability to provide 30-40% Murray River flows production of rice, fruit, vegetables, meat, milk, export earning, water for 1/5 or more electricity for NSW Victoria domestic water for regional towns and Adelaide. 56% of Australia's agricultural produce is irrigation dependant. In NSW alone \$9B pa of farm produce is value added through the retail, hospitality, manufacturing and export industries to \$40B Now where do you get such return on investment in a matter of weeks yet to attract suitable funding to carryout much needed pest animal works across the Snowy is chronically denied. Having butchered and burnt the Snowy there is an estimated 5000-11 000Gl of water run off in jeopardy as is a national investment in infrastructure of dams power stations irrigation farms now subject to sheet erosion and rapid fire cycle if nothing is done to arrest the spiral.
β We as experienced land managers doubt the sincerity of much bureaucratic orchestrated superficial shonky science (BOSSS) being applied to public land management and subsequent use of public resources and fear for the long term security of our farming forestry and fishing industries, native forests and grasslands, water supplies, native wildlife and wildflowers, soil fertility our families have harboured and nurtured for 200 years or more and apparently expendable for obscure political and commercial

ideologies of a vocal few. If vocal minorities are disruptive and obstructive of pest animal control techniques setting policies then processes must be put in place to make them responsible for the funding of equally effective alternatives including the development and institution of those techniques and or compensate affected industries for losses incurred. Presently there is evidence that through rabble rousing, selective scientific opinion and extrapolation bureaucrats can adopt indecision legitimise doing nothing reaping economies while the problem shifts to other agencies. Concepts of abandoned wilderness for example is a cop out and irresponsible by its outcomes for our forests water supplies native species etc.. Experienced land managers refute much of the scientific basis for public land management policy suggesting R&D is being abused to soak up precious budgets and procrastinate while the problem beds in. NSW NPWS has in 2004 first time made a public allocation of \$17M for feral animal control across its 7.3M ha estate or \$2.33/ha pa. NPWS budget has been \$240M-\$260M pa but a \$30M cut to NPWS has been announced. Is this innovative accounting? An estimated \$1.2M budget has allocated by Vic for dog mostly control in Alpine park ~1M ha. Best estimates suggest without an aerial baiting option NSW needs more like \$3-6/ha pa for the feral shandy with perhaps more for catch up of chronic neglect. Firm figures are difficult to locate. NSW Rural Lands Protection Boards cannot presently obtain vehicle allowance for dogmen a large part of expense. NSW is paying about \$1000+ per dog caught given high density populations. ie dogmen average ~100 dogs caught pa and with vehicle cost ~\$100 000 pa per dogman wages vehicle running traps workers comp etc. In mountain country can work ~200 000ha each offering some cover unless dogs team in. In SE NSW prior to Destruction of the Wild Dog Destruction Board 3 full time trappers could mop up rogue dogs with strategic dogman mediated aerial baiting 2X pa well timed on migratory routes. The Victorian NSW Wild Dog Coordinating Committees requests the Commonwealth form a Pest Animal Control Unit receiving funds to employ experienced and professional staff to carryout pest animal control across all titles and boundaries in the interest of industry and the environment. While wild dogs in the SE of Australia is our main platform we are aware of the need for acknowledging native animals can become pests causing hardship similarly skilled people ought to be trained in sampling ferals for endemic and exotic disease monitoring, aware exotic animals being imported are potential ecological threat. There is a list of other suggested duties relating to reporting, recording, performance indicators, goals, suitable administration, training R&D, cost recovery etc we believe is required and desirable. Our Committee with a depth of experience in industry and practical ecology would appreciate the opportunity to speak further with the Federal Pest Animal Enquiry Committee highlighting were efficiencies could be gained over the present often dysfunctional and adhoc approaches. The following submission introduces the scope of the impact of wild dogs directly and indirectly to the SE Snowy in particular but in a national context of dog distribution. Our Committee hosted the National Wild Dog Summit Wodonga 22.2.02.

WILD DOGS PEST OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Victoria NSW Wild Dog Control Coordinating Committee representatives from farm organizations, affected farmers, wool organizations across SE Australia, N Victoria Gippsland, ACT, S NSW South Coast NSW hosting the first national Wild Dog Summit in Wodonga 22.2.02 wishes to convey to the Federal Pest Animal Enquiry 2004 that they see wild dog numbers in and flowing from public managed land in SE Australia to be unacceptable and out of control causing much damage to regional employment derived from livestock production and what has been termed water catchment, conservation land eliminating wildlife grazing predisposing to the worst fire disaster ever occurring in Snowy Mts Jan Feb 2003. A national disaster for livestock raising, conservation of forests, grasslands, wildlife, cultural heritage and water catchment values providing electricity, irrigation, domestic supplies for regional Australia, towns and capital cities Canberra Adelaide, environmental flows of the Murray. Fire warnings ignored. Wild dog suppression and containment is chronically under rated and under funded for its impact on predisposing the bushfire and prolonging any recovery.

TOP OF LITTER BEARING FERAL SHANDY ANTI GRAZING ANTI BIODIVERSITY FAILED EXPERIMENT

Wild dogs legitimised as being top order predators in public land are left to find their own population ceiling in the feral shandy of foxes, pigs, rabbits and cats are being allowed to flow out of the Snowy virtually unopposed. Once exterminating wildlife populations in public land packs of hungry dogs leave a deteriorated habitat for near neighbours to muster at their own cost and economic peril as dogs plunder wildlife and livestock on private land. The Snowy has a reputation for being the nations nursery for highest quality livestock genetics going to the dogs with our native marsupial wildlife unable to compete with out of control dog populations. Many dog affected flocks have a 40-130 year selection for productivity in the hands of one farming family. Highest quality beef and dairy herds are now subject to disease, disruption and attack. We believe wild dogs to be a pest of national significance because of its ecological impact, highly competitive nature, reproductive rate, mobility and difficulty to suppress and contain unless control is coordinated over all titles and boundaries. A wild dog dominant ecology is highly susceptible to intense bushfire bringing about a senescent poorly structured ungrazed vegetation. Accepted scientific dogma is not supported by local community observations. Reject legitimacy of harbouring unsuppressed dog populations in public land serious about goals of biodiversity conservation and long term water catchment security.

UNGRAZED ABANDONED VEGETATION SUICIDAL FOR WATER CATCHMENT Deterioration of water catchment values through rampant ungrazed vegetation including palatable weeds such as “blackberry” clogging water ways, soaking up run off before catching fire in summer heat is of national significance. There is no doubt in the minds of experienced regional land managers that excessive wild dog populations for the past 3 or more decades has led to unprecedented fuel loads across conservation land, water catchment, public managed land deprived of natural fire, traditional fire and grazing from wildlife and or reintroduced mega fauna for in some places in excess of 50 years. The Snowy 2003 bushfire was the most intense ever. Snowy is 2% of the Murray Darling Basin providing 30-40% of the MDB annual inflows or 11 000Gl of an estimated average 24 000Gl reaching the river system. Snowy holds much of the 60 000Gl storage and run off capacity of the MDB the life blood of much of Australia shared by several states and territories. These storages and inlets are at risk of serious siltation off intensely burnt mountains and the anticipated rapid fire cycle which is likely to result if active management of invasive pest animals and vegetation is not instituted. Dogs survived the 2003 bushfire disproportionately well and are getting rid of the few wildlife to survive appalling levels of predation, starvation and cremation. Snowy is now virtually dead silent and still over vast areas of national park. Ms ha of abandoned killed and cured habitat trees devoid of birds possum glider insects lizards stand stark reminders the anti grazing experiment hasn't worked and the next fire is closer. 1000s of years of top soil nutrients were burnt off and sent into outer space with seed, humus, trees killed to ground level. Alpine ash forests burnt in previous fires as late as 1984 killing regrowth in 2003 burning old standing trees may be the events to end these forests. Some killed snow gums & black sallies may be over 300 yo. Bogs and swamps incinerated and sealed by heat and soot. Ancient brown coal deposits set alight and may now burnt for centuries.

RAPID FIRE CYCLE, POPULATION DEMANDS WATER & LAND

If Snowy is allowed to revert to a cold desert rain shadow through successive harsh fires in an ungrazed dog dominant ecology then the national implications are unacceptable. 83% of the nations human population is clustered <50km from the beach in the high rainfall temperate zone highly competitive of agriculture especially water expensive industries of dairying and horticulture shifted from the humid high rainfall zone and deep soils of coast and tablelands to irrigation dependence of the inland suffering high evaporation rates, cropping of salt affected soil, dwindling rainfall, great distances from markets. Tableland areas are being dehabited for city water catchment national park forming interconnected distribution centres for pest animal species. NSW has 27M ha native forest 13% of the nations 167M ha of native forest covering 20% of the Australian land area and an estimated 60% though controversial proportion of what native vegetation was thought to exist in 1788 or before. There is good evidence to suggest woody shrubs in the western division in particular are replacing grasslands. Forest density has also risen in areas experiencing a mindless proliferation of vegetation bulking out of woody under storey and

increased seedling density where fire regimes and predatory pressure have been changed not understood. 7.3M ha or 9% of NSW area is managed as abandoned vulnerable national park clustered on tableland and coastal fringe valued diverse largely open complex forests taken from community management as high conservation value now subject to insufficient effort managing ferals and fuel and where aggressive species are allowed to dominate unopposed. National park network is acting as conduits for pests between Qld, ACT & Victoria distributing disease and disruption. Since crown leases for grazing or logging rights have been dissolved public managers of these lands have no legal obligations or enforceable goals to retain biodiversity, suppress fuel or ferals secure long term the forests or water ways. Formation of national parks has been largely political and mostly irresponsible given the lack of resources reaching the ground for basics of land management, viz ferals & fuel. Victoria has 7.3M ha of native forests making up 32% of the states area or 5% of the national native forests. There is an excellerated politically motivated trend in this state to acquire more land from forest and farming communities expanding national park to attract attention from urban groups posturing environmentalism on a political platform but offer few proven land management skills amongst the opinionated rhetoric critising rural community management and achievements given limited resources as returns on commodities. Most crown lease has been run to a high standard by much social and economic sacrifice and powered by cultural pride and love of the land. Once national park is declared there are no obligations by Government to match or surpass local rural community management achievements for biodiversity proliferation, ferals or fuel suppression.

DOG AFFECTED COMMUNITIES FRUSTRATED, OBSTRUCTED, DENIED TO ARREST ATTRITION & SPREAD Near neighbours to these dog affected public managed lands traditionally raise livestock and are left to muster dog packs when they flow out virtually unimpeded. Bulldozed, burnt eroded and disabled accesses by barricades of logs, locked gates, massive rocks, ditches dug across are what face poorly resourced dogmen to access dog harbour. Untenable restrictions and draconian fines apply to use accesses, rifles, poisons, domestic detector dogs, horses, traps, aerial baiting etc in public managed land. Once stockmen lose leases to national park expansion they are no longer welcome to carryout traditional proactive regional suppression by strategic trapping and poisoning. Public budgets are chronically denied allocations for pest work while staff generally lack expertise, sympathy or commitment. Affected communities denied democratic input via public consultation are forced to watch helplessly as their high conservation land values deteriorate while farmers and foresters as a group suffer public vilification and misrepresentation on land management issues also suffer the consequences of inevitable fire & pestilence on their remaining land as it escapes neglect. With the constant autocratic expansion of national park boundaries for various obscure political and commercial agendas, regional pest containment lines and local expertise is continually disrupted. Funding of skilled professional dogmen is a long overlooked and under rated occupation in public land budget allocations. Denial of the issues reaps

economies for staff and government trying to perfect do nothing management or seek gainful secure employment addressing insoluble problems. Many 100 000s sheep have been forcibly destocked off chronically dog affected SE were dogs territory is reaching 30km or more into private land from the breeding areas on public managed land before these dogs can all be caught, shot or poisoned. In open grazing land single dogs have been eluding capture for up to 8 years while they reek havoc. Single dog case studies indicate one dog can cause \$50 000 in lost wages, livestock killed mauled with up to \$120 000 in supplementary feed expenses from trying to shift animals to safer areas plus damaged wool clip suffering loss of value from dirt, tensile strength off stressed chased sheep. A survey of 70 families across the Snowy suggest managing dog risk costs them \$20-\$40/ha pa or \$3-22/hd pa of remaining sheep offered some protection. Tactics include destocking, shift and feed, electric fence, guard animals exhaustive trapping, baiting, monitoring effort, with change over to cattle only attracting a loss of income by 80-90% possible as with sheep and cattle commodity base is more widely spread and products a faster turnaround time. Accumulated losses on individual properties can reach as high as \$2.8M destocking 25 years 3000 wethers 10 years 1000 XB ewes. The wethers were lost to dogs over several weeks killed chased lost infected wounds suffering fly strike sheep too traumatised to be mustered by working dogs in bush country. Other case studies have lost 100 lambs killed for the exercise over night 62 full wool pregnant ewes drowned in the river, 1200 sheep killed in 2 months, 600 pregnant cows returning 129 calves, child's pony terminally injured, 5 weaner dairy heifers killed and 2 eaten in 2 days, 7 weaner cattle chased by 14 dogs and terminally injured. Dairy cows being chased udders torn teats and vulvers eaten, mastitis, blood in the milk. People on foot walking their dog, campers, fishermen having to jump into a cold lake, farmers trying to protect their stock, riding a horse, driving tractors or bulldozers have been attacked and menaced by single and packs of several dogs. Both adults and children having close encounters with certain tragedy as dogs become hungry bold and familiar with habitation.

WHAT CAN DOGS DO?

When crown land was leased to local communities dogs were considered noxious animals across all titles. Snowy held few if any dogs until Kosciuszko became a national park in the late 1960s. Damning circumstantial evidence exists and can be cross referenced in local communities that dogs were deliberately released and allowed to wander as an enforceable anti grazing campaign by authorities in Snowy. Wildlife began to disappear echidna, wallaby, wombats, kangaroos driven into blackbury bushes and slaughtered or drowned whole sale in creeks. Dog scats full of quills and fur from possum, wallaby, wombat, kangaroo, glider. Large and small species hoovered ambushed and plundered. Predation of livestock chronically denied. Dogman mediated strategic aerial baiting of discrete travel routes at 1-2 X pa was the last effective and affordable method to be employed in KNP to quell dog numbers and was withdrawn fully in 1996 because of perceived though not substantiated risk to non target species

mostly quoll. No proven effective replacement strategies were instituted. Little regard was given to whether overt competition from dogs foxes cats pigs would affect quoll thrift or similarly impact from the resulting uncontrollable fire in an ungrazed vegetation. Authorities have admitted they do not know how many dogs they harbour or what impact they are having on wildlife or the ecology. While wild dogs dingoes and their hybrids are valued in public land as legitimate top order predators little effort is given to contain them or make certain populations are sustainable. Models suggest dogs given unlimited food and territory, a pair and their progeny can breed to 195 pups in 7 years raising only 5 of possible 9 pups born pa. With greater hybridisation with domestic breeds and secure food sources dogs are noted to be breeding 2,3,4 times in 2 years. The estimated stocking rate of wallaby equivalents in a dog pair territory of 2400ha is 3000 wallaby. In just 4 years dogs will start eating into the parent population. 800 dogs only can move into a new 100 000ha park extension in 12 months can clean out the wildlife previously taking up to 100 years to recover and respond to stockmen's management of dogs, foxes, cats, pigs, vegetation and fire. Experienced land managers observations support these trends and time frame. Dog breeding will quickly compensate for food sources and wildlife disappear followed by deterioration in vegetation visible to the trained eye 3 years into dog invasion. 2M ha of KNP and Alpine park could breed 162 500 dogs in 7 years eating 48 750 tonnes of wildlife in year 7 alone or killing 25.35M wallaby if they were available. It is estimated wildlife and livestock summer grazing processed 0.7-1.4 tonne/ha pa of palatable dry matter tinder in a fire safe manner. Stockmen suggest they would have left in the order of 6M wallaby in thrifty supportive habitat when high country grazing was banished for merely water catchment. With this breeding capacity of dogs alone is easy to see why Snowy is dead. If dog territory was allowed to expand at will dogs from 2M ha could colonise 194M ha or 8000 farms by the 7th year. Believe the model or not it clearly demonstrates dogs are capable of whole sale slaughter in land deemed merely water catchments. Observations support trends and time frame.

IRRESPONSIBLE LEGAL SHIFT TO ONUS PENNY PINCHING APPROACH

Private land holders have a legal obligation to control these dogs now, considered once to be noxious pests over all titles and now wandering onto private land. Public land managers value dogs as top order predators before they are allowed to stray at will. Private land managers or their representatives bear majority of the cost for quelling regional dog populations as they emerge on the periphery of public land. The Snowy 2003 bushfires burnt 3M ha of which there were ~240 000ha of privately managed land and an estimated 10 000+km of fencing burnt. Much of this is dog fencing to assist stockmen to exclude the traffic of dogs out of public land. This fencing will not be replaced quickly by farmers spending their resources on feeding stock losing pastures hay sheds in bushfire and now drought affected and losing stock in large numbers to dog predation. Many families have been chronically dog affected for decades and their financial thrift has been severely eroded. Many farmers do not qualify for

Government dog fencing as much land immediately adjacent to national park forest dog harbour has been sold away from livestock production because of untenable wild dog invasion to absentee landholders as merely abandoned lifestyle blocks. Public lands are considered the greatest breeders of dogs inside the 5400km of dog exclusion fence across SA, W NSW and Qld. Levies on W NSW lessees and tax payers contribute over \$1.2M pa to upkeep of this fence in NSW alone. Clay sections are being laid to stop sand drifting and breaking down the fence. National park within this fence are knowingly harbouring wild dog populations. One recent report suggested seeing packs of 15-20 dogs on the outside of the fence every 20-30 km. Any breach because of flood or sand is a lengthy recovery program of dog free status.

Cattle country outside the 5400km dog fence where dog & fox carried diseases Neosporium and hydatids are endemic. <60% calving rates diseases and direct predation are thought to account for a significant amount of this production loss. Neosporium is considered worse than Brucellosis which attracted a national eradication program. Hydatids infection rate Emerald Qld 30% weaner cattle 80% 2-3yo loss offal contracts to China \$6-10per head. Hydatids in abattoir surveys in NSW are indicating serious infection rates from flocks and herds raised beside national park city water catchment. The traffic in Neosporia infected dogs has affected beef and dairy herds on the south and north coast of NSW at least in recent years. Pens of well bred infertile dairy heifers are now a regular sight in Bega Valley saleyards. Bega Cheese employs 500 people milks 30 000 to 40 000 cows exports to 47 countries in addition to produce for the domestic market. Beef herd owners many forced away from sheep production are returning high dry cow % unknown as predation victims or disease. There is no vaccination available for Neosporium only bleed to detect infected animals and cull while excluding dogs and foxes from the pasture to prevent reinfection. Up to 80% of cattle in a stressed infected herd can suffer late stage abortion from Neosporium caninum protozoan infections passed on from mothers or ingested off the pasture contaminated with dog or fox faeces. Neosporium can infect sheep cattle, goats, deer, horses, people? And has unknown affect on marsupial wildlife. Rabies is also an exotic disease that could affect dogs and foxes allowed to wander freely over great distances. International visitors are encouraged to visit our national parks. 1M pa people visit Kosciuszko alone challenging exotic disease exclusion of both Foot & Mouth in pigs & Rabies in dogs and foxes (quoll, possum & cats?) Infections could sleep undetected while spreading across the SE for months. While livestock owners are being cohered to make heavy investment commitment to National Livestock Identification Systems to monitor disease status and stock movements feral animals knowingly bred and spread by public land managers are beyond constraint allowed to wander onto farms obliged to produce clean green food cost effectively to meet challenges of free trade agreements and chronically poor commodity returns on investment.

NATIONAL PARK TAKEN AWAY > \$2075/ha pa VOLUNTARY CARE

State and Territory Governments enjoy captivating the imagination of the environmentally and socially stressed urban populace offering them national park water catchment, whimsical promise of wilderness, salvation and spiritual solitude. Beyond gaining government by these promises and the election cycle of state and territory governments is finding the obligation of managing this land expensive. Snowy Stockmen's largely voluntary contribution to creating, nurturing the conservation essence of the Snowy in today's prices amounts to about \$2075/ha pa mowing the grass, managing fuel loads, suppressing bushfire, weeding and dog catching. Suppression of rabbits, pigs, cats etc monitoring disease, water catchment care, encouraging native species proliferation and thrift, up keep of safety huts has not been costed.

Gaining government on the "distracted environmental vote" is followed by the irresponsibility of government to manage the land from which local community management has been removed complete with a very significant and largely legally binding performance reinforced by a cultural commitment on minimising pest species and fuel bushfire risk on what were largely grazing or logging leases taken for national park abandoned water catchment or more recently nationally traded carbon sinks. Native and plantation forests are being looked to to offset out of control fossil fuel use via unsustainable and inefficient electricity generation in coal fired plants and primitive transport systems sending national emissions well beyond agreed levels for the Kyoto process. 1990 to 1997 up 18%. Elimination of grazing and prescribed burning in native forests maximises carbon accumulation able to be traded nationally to offset transport and power consumption. Any accidental bushfire in an unprepared environment can be claimable by carbon traders on insurance or hedged against on the stock exchange. While forests and grasslands can burn by accident every summer it is considered illegal to gather and use fire wood as a renewable energy source substitute for fossil fuel even if it has a long term protective effect on maintaining the fire security of the forest. Encouragement of a dog dominant ecology would have advantages for carbon traders. Greenhouse office thinking suggests our forests can be managed to maximise carbon accumulation and maximal dog populations appear to be an integral part of bringing this about. Water providers can also reap economies in avoiding city water treatment costs by theoretically eliminating any bacterial contamination from animals in the catchment, soot and silt which may result from burning or grazing activities otherwise designed to minimise bushfire risk encourage biodiversity, optimise run off and ensure continuity long term.

COMPOST GROUND COVER OR LIVING GROUND COVER?

Scientific advice adopted by bureaucrats public land managers in NSW Kosciuszko national park suggest that ground tinder dry matter burdens of 20 tonne /ha or more are needed to stabilise soil types in the Snowy to ensure optimal water catchment values. Under extreme fire risk conditions bushfire

cannot be fought with certainty in these fuel loads especially if they are over large areas. Before the Snowy 2003 bushfire ground fuel was measured at 80-240tonne /ha in country suffering overt dog populations deprived of grazing, natural or traditional fire for in some cases 50+ years. Fallen timber impenetrable bulky flammable scrub maximal tree densities meters deep of litter. Suggesting 20+tonne/ha overburden is necessary for soil stabilisation ignores the fact that with well managed mixed species grazing and traditional small area low intensity fire, a living ground cover can be achieved stabilising soil. Naturally fire retardant green grazed thrifty living ground cover soil stabiliser and maximal native biodiversity retained. Under the present management biodiversity survives incidental to feral take over and repeated massive bushfire burning with the intensity to remove all organic matter to bed rock. Stockmen used to try and keep fuel loads below 5-8t/ha to reduce impact of any accidental summer fire on forests, grasslands seed top soil wildlife minimise area affected and encourage rapid comprehensive recovery. Fires with low fuel loads burnt largely superficially to recovery mechanisms. Foresters consider ~100/ha of mature trees optimal for thrifty growth optimal access to light, moisture space nutrients and such a thrifty open forest of minimal fire risk. Fightability of fires across the wild dog infested Snowy in 2003 were unacceptable given the fuel loads. Intensity of burns were estimated at 500 000kW/m. Fire travelled into Canberra on a 35km front at 230kph burning 160 00ha in 4h energy release of x24 Hiroshima bomb and devastation to match. Cottor catchment has been dog affected for many years. Blackberry infestations in creeks and gullies acted as wicks to spread the fire front alone gullies which used to act as fire safe havens for plants and animals during fire and fed animals after the fire. Sheep and wallaby are effective in suppressing blackberry infestations. Water ways infested with blackberry were scoured out by harsh fire. Dogs, pigs, cats, foxes too harbour in blackberry and use them as stockyards to capture wildlife.

On public land wild dogs interact with a feral shandy of foxes pigs rabbits and cats to their mutual prosperity and to the demise of wild and domestic grazing animals in private and public lands. We question the dogma that these invasive ferals are allowed to find their own population level in a deteriorated vegetation and vulnerable marsupial fauna. We are dismissive of current thinking that wild dogs as unsuppressed populations in public land are acceptable given they are able to exist with other litter bearing ferals in an ecology where natural fire is actively and chronically suppressed, traditional fire has been banished not understood, reintroduced mega fauna banished with the grazing process not understood to rejuvenate vegetation promote flowering, seeding, recolonisation, nutritious palatable shoots, secure catchment values, biodiversity and as a proven effective land management tool. We reject the adopted view dogs control pig rabbit fox and cat populations. Dogs may live off rabbits and piglets achieving great numbers themselves and only when wildlife disappear do foxes and cats leave a desolated landscape. Grazing wildlife cannot persist or resist overt, extreme predation pressure from dogs, foxes and pigs combined with and helping to bring about impact from the most intense fires ever across the region

by unprecedented fuel loads in a neglected unkempt vegetation. Snowy is dead. An ecological disaster. If any lasting recovery is to be achieved with what has survived the catastrophic fire active management of pest animals viz dogs pigs rabbits cats is imperative and a matter of immense urgency to institute. Affected neighbouring communities burnt out, predated upon can no longer alone resource and bring about restoration of order.

THE ANTI GRAZING EXPERIMENT HAS FAILED! NO MORE FIRE & DOGS FOR SNOWY

If we value not only the native species conservation, heritage and aesthetic values but Snowys continued ability to provide 30-40% Murray River flows production of rice, fruit, vegetables, meat, milk, export earning, water for 1/5 or more electricity for NSW Victoria domestic water for regional towns and Adelaide. 56% of Australia's agricultural produce is irrigation dependant. In NSW alone \$9B pa of farm produce is value added through the retail, hospitality, manufacturing and export industries to \$40B Now where do you get such return on investment in a matter of weeks yet to attract suitable funding to carryout much needed pest animal works across the Snowy is chronically denied. Having butchered and burnt the Snowy there is an estimated 5000-11 000Gl of water run off in jeopardy as is a national investment in infrastructure of dams power stations irrigation farms now subject to sheet erosion and rapid fire cycle if nothing is done to arrest the spiral.

While the Snowy is valued for the food, fibre export earning tourist potential very little money is invested in trying to maintain long term security of water catchment and conservation value. Catchment and conservation survives incidental to application of non interventionist conservation theory reaping short term economies in land management of ferals and fuel by state and territory governments while effective in attracting votes for more parks from a politically active minority in what is possibly perceived as a relatively harmless concession out their in remote rural Australia. In the event of over supply of ferals in parks they move out unopposed for industry to muster or contain. Affected public cannot have their issues addressed by public consultation subject to deflection by orchestrated superficial shonky science, media spin, restricted terms of reference, denial, warnings ignored. In the event of catastrophic bushfire in a dysfunctional ecology, country fire authorities volunteers and Commonwealth funds are expected to mount a rescue. State and territory governments are being irresponsible and we ask the Commonwealth to step in and coordinate a retrieval program supporting affected communities across state and territory borders where natural resources are shared. Processes need to be put in place where public land managers become accountable and responsible for the outcomes and excessive reliance on our Commonwealth money and voluntary input to subsidise unsustainable public land management approaches and rescue from inevitable disaster. We believe there is evidence that the Kyoto agreement for example is being misinterpreted at the long term peril of managing natural

resources. The public consultation process has failed to bring to account public land managers to the mindless expansion of national park and reluctance to address risk and actual unacceptable fire and feral escapes beyond the duration of state election cycles where government is gained by proliferating environmental myth and flirting national disaster.

OUTCOMES BELIE THE RHETORIC

Many feel State and Territory Governments would rather burn down our forests and drought relief grazing for obscure political and commercial agendas rather than have it used and cared for offered long term security just to placate an extreme green but out of touch fringe in bureaucracy and voting public willing to drown our wildflowers in leaf litter and feed our wildlife to the dogs, burn down our heritage huts, forests, farms and water ways. Send the dogs to our place for disposal when they finish our wildlife and our fences have been burnt down by the vegetation deprived of grazing animal services. Every national park sign tells the public to extinguish all fires, no dogs allowed, care for our flora and fauna. Advice near neighbours find astonishing given the reality as they view their butchered livestock and wildlife, burnt pastures and hills, water ways full of gravel, soot and cement.

COST OF SNOWY 2003 BUSHFIRE & CHRONICALLY IGNORING FERALS

What did Snowy 2003 Bushfire cost? For lost pastures, fencing, livestock, wildlife, drought relief grasslands, buildings, homes, fire fighting effort, ~\$20B plus old growth forests taken for conservation worth \$50B milled and dressed, ongoing risk to water yield \$1B + pa for the next 20-30 years if we progress to a stable open forest rather than a quick fire cycle in a dysfunctional vegetation of limited complexity and diversity. Authorities resume land off foresters and farmers as valued conservation land. When it gets negligently overcome with ferals and burnt to the ground it reverts to “uninhabited inaccessible land devoid of assets” apparently of little consequence. Our committee objects to this insincerity and abuse of public resources.

BRUMBIES BENEFITIAL MEGA GRAZING FERALS

Wild dogs have eliminated most small grazing animals from their territory. Bushfire in the Snowy was either least impact or stopped on the green grazed brumby runs or on the Victorian High country cattle leases. In NSW estimated brumby numbers in the Upper Cottor KNP range from 1000 to 3000. Most observers refute these figures as being over estimates more media hype and spin. Vic cattle before the fires had been eroded to 6800 head. In its thriftiest days KNP ran up to 2m sheep for 7 months of the year plus a recovered abundant wildlife and wildflower population. The brumbies are being butchered and banished presently sapping feral animal budgets and moves are afoot to banish all cattle of which only 680 were reportedly allowed back in 2004 to deal with 100 000sha of 1m high grass interspersing millions of dead trees flirting with the possibility of

more fires. Public land managers know not what they do! While brumbies need to be managed their numbers are not excessive and clearly advantageous rather than damaging in an ecology deprived of all other animal services. The only time Snowy's vegetation and soils suffered from over grazing was during the rabbit plague of 1870 to 1940 ignored by authorities until Snowy became Canberra's water catchment when Myxomastix was finally introduced to assist stockmen arrest the plague.

The evidence is clear that Snowy was far more secure as leased grazing and sustainably logged land where local rural communities could take community pride in managing the land, biodiversity, water ways, ferals and fuel burdens. Senior Soil Conservation Officer, Western Division Commissioner Dick Condon observing the Snowy for ~50 years since stock were withdrawn can now see the wisdom of stockmen's ecological insight identifying that managed grazing by reintroduced mega fauna is a valuable management tool combined with pest species suppression allowing wildlife to help vegetation management and minimise bushfire risk to care for biodiversity and water supply.

In the 12 months since the Snowy 2003 bushfires in the order of 2500 to 3000 wild dogs plus foxes pigs and cats have been trapped and shot flowing from the Snowy on both the NSW Victorian interfaces. Packs of dogs still flow in inflicting serious carnage. These dogs could eat 750-900 tonne wildlife pa or kill 390 000 to 468 000 wallaby taking tasty morsels and feeding the rest to the benefit of the feral shandy. One family burnt out in the 2003 fires lost 600 sheep in the fires and 1400 since to dog packs of their 4000 sheep running capacity. Despite exhaustive efforts to protect their stock in 2002 they lost to dogs 800 of their expected 1000 lambs. They are to rebuild their homes fences sheds lives buy drought feed to feed stock to feed the wild dogs. The situation unacceptable in the same country where city people must have their dog on a leash at all times or contained in a fenced yard.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A Pest Animal Council be established to attract funds from both state territory and federal Governments. These funds are to be an ongoing commitment looking at goals of minimising pest animal impact on livestock industries, disease affecting livestock wildlife and human health, cropping efficiency, water way health etc.
2. Administrators sympathetic with the challenges and vagaries of pest animal control in the bush be appointed to manage those funds and staff working across various titles state and territory areas. Presently pest animal controllers believe there is too much wasted funds and effort on inefficient and ill informed uncommitted management streams.
3. Raise the public status and importance of pest animal controllers in the eyes of the general public and bureaucracies acknowledging the depth of knowledge required to bring about efficient humane suppression of pest animals in often vast areas of rugged country
4. Appoint professional staff with experience and wanting training

industry accreditation in humane efficient pest animal control techniques. 5. Control techniques such as aerial baiting should have their status clarified and if unaffected activists are dissatisfied they are to be encouraged to fund alternatives including R&D required and compensate affected land managers for any losses incurred by the withdrawal of effective suppression techniques. Phasing in and out is recommended and effective affordable alternatives is the key to their adoption and replacement. 6. offer appropriate remuneration scale for senior PAC's skilled at their craft and dedicated to their task of suppressing pest animals, training and mentoring new PACs 7. Acknowledge that native species too can become pest species to industry and conservation cause hardship and environmental impact 8. Pest Animal Council (PAC) is to work and coordinate pest animal control over state and territory borders over all titles public or private assisting land managers to suppress, contain, minimise impact of pest species on the environment production of food fibre fish plantation timbers crops etc. and maintain native species biodiversity. 9. Goals will be removed from a dead animal tally to other goals of maintaining minimal impact. Funding will be based on performance to maintain high standard of land and water way management. 10. Staff ideally should be mobile and multi skilled to handle large and small pest species diverting basic bushmanship skills and observational ability to managing horses camel donkey buffalo goat deer pigs dogs foxes cats emu parrots eagles snakes flying fox carp cane toads possum and possibly marine species crocodile shark jelly fish shellfish star fish etc as the need arises with accidental introduction or over population.

11. Salvage of skins meat genetic worth should be encouraged to offset costs of recovery however steps taken not to make it an industry in itself

12. Carcass disposal should be acceptable not to encourage scavengers and disease spread

13. The PAC be encouraged to conduct research into better capture and control methods develop innovative skills of staff. If affected farmers etc. are to suffer continued hardship while research is carried out then moneys must be made available to compensate for losses of crop fruit livestock pasture income time labour.

14. Discourage use of unskilled staff for extended periods if at all to check traps perform duties beyond their insight to avoid problems

15. Samples collected from feral populations and routinely sent for monitoring disease status. Staff are to be trained in sampling technique, record keeping and routine biological hazards associated with bacteria viral parasitic diseases.

16. Structures set up to receive calls for specialist assistance from rural land managers contacting through community health, social security, farming organizations, RLPB, DPI PAC hotline etc.

17. Statistical section to monitor coordinate and assess impacts develop system of reporting monitoring receive reports and follow up on residual populations

18. Provide information on disease status population dynamics to concerned individuals and organizations

19. Section to review sincerity of any opposition to adopted best practice methods aware industry sabotage could be motivation for obstruction and objection attempt to educate ill informed debate mischievous rhetoric unsubstantiated claims poor scientific input

20. Funds should be made available to institute long term solutions were appropriate such as fencing netting permanent traps, processes of relocation or disposal, critical population densities determined to maintain sustainability. For example 3 wedge tail eagles may be beneficial to a locality however if 15 eagles are breeding on lambs and wallaby then the outcomes are unacceptable. If Government wants to protect these species then responsibility must be taken for the damage they can cause in excess. Options for consented relocation to zoos and nature parks to adopt these animals must be considered.

FUNDING COMMITMENT MUST BE CONSISTENT & ADEQUATE TO DELIVER SET GOALS OF MINIMAL DISEASE RISK, MAXIMAL PROTECTION OF INDUSTRY, HUMAN SAFETY & WELFARE & ENVIRONMENT VEGETATION, NATIVE ANIMALS, WATER WAYS ETC.