



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

**HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND  
FORESTRY

**Reference: Impact on agriculture of pest animals**

WEDNESDAY, 11 AUGUST 2004

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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY**  
**Wednesday, 11 August 2004**

**Members:** Mrs Elson (*Chair*), Mr Adams, Mr Forrest, Mrs Ley, Mr Quick, Mr Schultz, Mr Secker, Mr Sidebottom, Mr Tuckey and Mr Windsor

**Members in attendance:** Mrs Elson, Mr Forrest, Mr Quick, Mr Sidebottom, Mr Tuckey and Mr Windsor

**Terms of reference for the inquiry:**

To inquire into and report on:

The impact on agriculture of pest animals particularly:

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 issues across State boundaries.

To consider the approaches to pest animal issues across all relevant jurisdictions, including:

- (i) prevention of new pest animals becoming established;
- (ii) detection and reporting systems for new and established pest animals;
- (iii) eradication of infestations (particularly newly established species or 'sleeper' populations of species which are considered to be high risk) where feasible and appropriate; and
- (iv) reduction of the impact of established pest animal populations.

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.

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

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

**WITNESSES**

**FRANKLIN, Ms Noeline Alice Franklin, Member, Victorian and New South Wales Wild Dog  
Coordinating Committee; and private capacity ..... 1**



**Committee met at 5.04 p.m.****FRANKLIN, Ms Noeline Alice Franklin, Member, Victorian and New South Wales Wild Dog Coordinating Committee; and private capacity**

**CHAIR**—Welcome. Witnesses will notice that members will be coming and going throughout the afternoon, because it is fairly busy in Parliament House at the moment. I declare open this public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Our inquiry is into the impact on agriculture of pest animals. The hearing today is only the second in this inquiry.

Welcome to the hearing, Ms Franklin. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that the hearings are formal proceedings of the parliament and consequently warrant the same respect as proceedings of the parliament itself. I remind you that giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. Do you wish to make a brief statement in relation to your submission or would you care to make some introductory remarks? Firstly, I would like to thank you for your submission. Very early in the piece, we feel very privileged to have someone who has been so involved for so many years in the wild dog issue. We look forward to hearing from you, and our committee would like to ask you some questions on the completion of your presentation.

**Ms Franklin**—I will give the parliament as much information as I possibly can and to the best of my knowledge and ability. I have prepared a PowerPoint presentation because much of what I have to say to parliament is quite visual. I hope that I can cross-reference that with Hansard. The first slide says who I am. I have a degree in biological sciences. I worked for CSIRO Animal Health for 16 years. Our family has had an association with the Snowy for in the order of 160 years. We feel we may be able to contribute a little bit to the understanding of the ecology of the Snowy. We feel that we are still learning.

Our family has been affected by dogs for three decades. I have been working with wild dog affected families for six years, collecting case studies, looking at the dynamics of dog distribution and the ecological, economic, and social impacts on families and the mountains in general. I have instigated, through need I guess, the Brindabella-Wee Jasper wild dog and fox program. Some members of the committee may be familiar with that situation. As I stated, I have also represented the Victorian and New South Wales Wild Dog Coordinating Committee, and we were part of organising the wild dog summit in Wodonga in 2002.

In my grazing of libraries I have read quite a bit of what I think is substandard science which has been used to make policies. A lot of it, from a bushman's perspective, can best be described as biology bingo. I have cross-referenced quite a few scientific works with our community to validate trends. As I stated, I am going to try and give you an overview of or a feel for the ecological, social, productive impact of wild dogs in the south-east of Australia. I believe I have enough information to suggest that we declare it a pest of national significance.

I make no apologies for running fire, dogs, water, wildlife and wildflowers together in this talk. I believe contemporary science ecology has a lot to learn from our bushmen. They are still trying to wrap their heads around the interaction between dogs, vegetation, wildlife and how to produce good water, which is what the Snowy is renowned for. The link between unsustainable

and unsuppressed dogs and catastrophic bushfires is very clear to our bushmen in areas of vegetation deprived of grazing animals—that includes our wild animals.

We predicted—and those predictions were ignored—the situation that we faced in January 2003. We feel that a lot of green policies were showing their true colours during that horrific event. In the preceding decade, when our wildlife was butchered and then burnt, we feel very deeply that we lost a lot of the values that our family has worked for in poor Snowy.

As you can see from the slide, the smoke that was generated was horrific and the state of the bush afterwards was tragic. We can only declare that situation one of a dog dominant ecology. The slide shows baked enamel, bare rocks and killed trees; there are no birds, no lizards—nothing. A lot of people have talked about global warming. We believe that burning our forest is the closest we will get to global warming. It was certainly very warm on the day it happened! We believe it was a man-made disaster. Similarly, the wild dogs being allowed to get away and precipitate this was also a man-made situation.

The barbecued wildlife shown in this slide is a situation that has faced our families over these last 12 months, and we are absolutely devastated. The wild dogs have lived on this barbecued wildlife and have bred extremely well. Again, we feel that we have negotiated and gone to meetings but nobody has listened. We predicted it, and we have lost our Snowy. We need to rethink a lot of government policies. We feel that over 100 years of wildlife recovery has been confiscated from our people's leases or whatever. That wildlife has been turned into dog meat. Those dogs are now coming to our farms because of the desolated landscape.

I will raise some of the sorts of issues that our people are facing all too often. They have sheep and goats that they are trying to manage, as well as vegetation. They are trying to get equilibrium. Sheep and goats are massacred all too regularly, despite the fact that we have huge trapping and poisoning efforts. Dairy and beef cattle are chased over fences and harassed off pasture. Calves are taken as they are being born. Cows are starting to lose calves—they are having late-stage abortions—through neospora. Calves are turning into blood-stained dirt. We go to authorities and they say, 'Where's the proof?' Do we take them a shovelful of dirt? What do we do? We also have a loss of milk production as these animals are running around and are diseased.

I think the message our families have given me time and time again is: 'Get the murderous mongrel dogs off our farms!' Our people are becoming desperate. They face drought, fires and a continuous flow of dogs. We believe the clock is on. I have surveyed a number of our Snowy farmers, and they say that their old leases lost 95 per cent of wildlife to dogs, starved in the stagnant vegetation. That was before these fires. The fires meant another 3.78 per cent of that wildlife gone. So there is a very small percentage left of the wildlife that we had on our grazing leases. And the dogs are wearing them out over time. From my modelling, in 12 months, 800 dogs can clean out 100,000 hectares of the stocking rate of wildlife we had when we were grazing.

The endangered species generator looks a bit crazy, but it is an attempt to summarise the interaction of fire, dogs, vegetation, the loss of our biodiversity and, subsequent to that, sheet erosion, loss of the water supply, rain shadow and possibly desertification if nothing is done about it. Basically you have predation pushing grazing animals out; as a response to that, the



vegetation becomes stagnant and fire susceptible. The animals starve and the groundcover starves. You get less grazing; you get senescence; you work your way into a rapid fire cycle. We then have incineration. It will be repeated. There are dead trees, there is angry regrowth and there is no wildlife in there to shape it back into open forest and fire-retardant vegetation again.

This is the reality as we see it. The top one shows grassland. The grasses have died off. What we call the interstitial tussock spaces are where all the herbs, wildflowers and so on usually reside. They are covered in litter and die. The slide on the right shows the serious burns which result from the vegetation that is dead. Down below, we have an angry species, a dominant species, overtaking. You are going to get loss of biodiversity there and shading of groundcovers. On the right-hand side you can see what happens after the subsequent fire in that; we are back to bedrock.

We have deprived our ecologies of natural and traditional fires. We have deprived them of all grazing animals. We have taken the livestock out under policy. We have dogged the wildlife out. We do not have any other way of resolving fuel loads, be it logging or clearing, and the biodiversity is lost because you are only getting angry, aggressive species taking over the lot. We have represented these views exhaustively and we believe that the public consultation process that we have been offered is fairly well orchestrated theatrics.

The Snowy is now silent and lifeless for hundreds of thousands of hectares. The part that the dogs play, I believe, is highly significant. This is a photo of snow gum ecology right on top of the range. Normally you would be lucky to boil your billy, but look what happened last year. It burnt to bedrock. It is just appalling. There is no doubt that too many dogs predisposed to that situation. It was not drought; we were one of the few areas of New South Wales that was not drought declared.

Basically we have been butchered and burnt. If it is allowed to continue, there will be no Snowy water, just a cold desert. It goes back a long way for our people. We were working over two world wars when the Snowy started to take effect. We packed up our packhorses and left. We had a huge effort from the Snowy. We sent horses; we sent men. We were pretty upset to come back and hear people say that it was all going to be dammed and that we were irrelevant. We were over there fighting for human rights and democratic processes, but I believe that in the last 60 years we have been offered anything but those values. We are trying to deal with the issues for our farmers and our mountains. The thing that we have held very dear culturally has been blackberried, bulldozed, butchered and burnt.

Those photos give you a little feeling as to how we see it. Beautiful clean water. Our stockmen have been obstructed to stop the wildlife going to the dogs, stop the wildflowers disappearing, stop the huge fuel build-up, stop the loss of biodiversity and stop catastrophic bushfires and the destruction of forest and grasslands. Sheet erosion and siltation have resulted and are affecting our water supplies daily. As this situation gains momentum—unless it is short-circuited—the rain shadow effect is going to be serious, and a cold desert will form. If anybody doubts me, you should go and have a look at poor old Cabramurra.

We have had our huts burnt down. We have had trees deliberately felled over our fire trails and that sort of thing. Our animals have been killed, not only in our Snowy, in our public land, but they have then spilled over onto our lands. Our family is dealing with the situation that you see

on the slide there, sheep ripped about and wallabies and all of those sorts of things destroyed, all too often—almost daily. Every time we capture some of the dogs, another 15 or 20 take their place. We are appalled. We took our packhorses out in good faith and said, ‘This is all going to be conserved.’ Look what has happened. We value our wildlife, I think, as much as anybody. We feel as though it has been confiscated. Conserved? That poor little burnt kangaroo there on the slide has been conserved for all time. It is the same story with wallabies. We get our kids involved in looking at the wildlife and then the animals either disappear or we find them up-ended in a log somewhere.

As I suggested, it starts on our public land and then it starts to spread to our farms. It very much involves our livelihoods, our emotions—our ability to get enough income to fight the problem locally. The worst part about it is that there is very damning circumstantial evidence to suggest that dogs were deliberately reintroduced to the Snowy, coincident with its declaration as a national park in the late 1960s. Previously Kosciuszko ran in the order of two million sheep safely, as drought relief, and most of the stockmen I talk to say we ran the equivalent in wildlife: echidnas, wallabies, wombats—you name it, it was all there. There were possums in the trees and birds everywhere. We recovered a thrifty, diverse vegetation. It was fire retardant. It was a conservation icon. There was abundant and reliable water; that is why people went there. The ecological necessity of grazing animals to manage the vegetation, fire and water in this situation was underrated. We believe it is mass slaughter for city water.

When you ask senior park staff, ‘Do you know how many dogs you harbour?’ or ‘Do you know what ecological impact they have?’ the answer is ‘Dunno,’ and they still cannot get budgets organised to solve the problem. Dogs are still wandering into the neighbours’ property. For decades they have denied they had dogs. As we mustered their excess escaping cows, the dogs butchered our livestock and the wildlife on farms. Talking to dog men and a lot of our landholders, I estimate that 100 dogs could eat in the order of 30 tonnes of wildlife per annum. That is what they eat. And they can kill in the order of 15,600 wallabies per annum to support the ‘feral shandy’.

The dogs will only take certain parts—they will probably take heart, lungs, kidneys and whatever else—so the rest of the carcass is there to be shared amongst pigs, foxes, eagles and whatever else is going. That is quite often how we know the dogs are in. We can see the eagles and the crows. All of that sort of thing comes. Quite often we only find a skeleton—the pigs have worked with the dogs to clean up any sheep that we may have. We go to the authorities and they say, ‘Where’s your proof?’ What do we take them? Scattered wool? A rib cage? It is very hard to get a post mortem in that situation.

I am sorry the next slide is not clearer. Basically, that is a model. I believe there are in the order of 116 dog territories in Kosciuszko’s one million hectares. In seven years, those 416 pairs, in theory, can breed 81,250 pups, if they raise only five pups a litter. A lot of bitches that we have captured actually contain nine pups, so those estimates may be conservative. A pair of dogs, in theory, can breed you 195 dogs. I do not know why we cannot get the same performance out of our cattle!

We believe that the grazing animal stocking rates were 1.7 to 1.4 tonnes of plant residue. They convert all that into soil and humus per hectare per annum. That is all fire build-up. If you get rid of all your animals it is going to keep accumulating, particularly in a cold climate. In seven years

those dogs—81,250—can kill more wildlife than we believe we have left. Believe the model or not, the dogs' breeding capacity and their ability to hunt demonstrates the sort of carnage that we have seen over the last few years.

**Mr WINDSOR**—Have you raised this with National Parks? Have they commented on the progeny figures in terms of the growth of numbers? Do they agree or disagree?

**Ms Franklin**—They are very critical because they believe they have got alpha and beta females. I do not know whether you can pick up a dingo bitch and say whether they are alpha or beta. Within the pack situation, they believe there is a suppression on breeding. As far as we are concerned, if you have got expanding territory the alpha and beta situation is gobbledygook. It is bureaucratic, orchestrated, superficial and shonky science—as I call it. I believe that we have an edge effect, and it is very hard to explain. While the population is breeding and doing quite well, it is wanting to muster the wildlife out and the animals on the periphery are fat, happy and breeding well. That is what we are experiencing as farmers.

**Mr WINDSOR**—You are getting the good ones coming out.

**Ms Franklin**—Absolutely. We are getting the killers, and they are big dogs.

**Mr TUCKEY**—It was mentioned in Albury that they felt there was another reason for changed breeding patterns. Pure wild dogs bred seasonally, whereas any introduced exotic species were being converted into breeding machines. Is it your view that other dogs could be changing that arrangement because domestic dogs will breed all year around?

**Ms Franklin**—I think the jury is still out on that. In the DNA studies that have been done in the Snowy, around 80 per cent have a small domestic infusion. I believe that there is also an interaction with body weight. If you have a working bitch running around all the time it is hard to get weigh on her and she will not breed in one year. If a wild dog is out there doing well and eating well, it may be able to raise at least three lots of pups in, say, two years. I believe that is quite feasible and, talking to our dog men, it has merit.

**Mr TUCKEY**—That is the kangaroo principle, isn't it? They only breed when they are doing well but then they breed continuously.

**Ms Franklin**—Absolutely. I think the limiting factor is food, not the ability to breed. We wonder why aerial baiting was pulled in the Snowy in 1996. Somebody found a dead quoll. The merino industry in the whole area has gone into abeyance because somebody found a dead quoll. Believe the model or not, it demonstrates the capability of these dogs to take over the world. That possibly happened in its first introduction 4,000 years ago. Within seven years, the Snowy could breed—that is, New South Wales and Victoria—enough dogs to chew out about 8,000 farms. I calculated the average farm to be about 6,000 acres.

Kosciuszko has gone from a one million-hectare territory out to a 140 million hectares or something of that nature so that covers an awful lot of Australia. Since the fires, the best figures I have been able to get show that between 2,500 and 3,000 dogs have been caught, shot or whatever, leaving the burnt area. Those dogs could eat somewhere between 750 and 900 tonnes of wildlife per annum—and I think it is actually 360,000 to 490,000 wallabies per annum.

Dogs have had a long history of getting rid of species in Australia. The tiger and the devil were here and they were either out-competed for food or eaten by the dogs. A lot of our small animals—potoroos, quokkas, and that sort of thing—are only found in Tasmania now. The other thing that flies in the face of contemporary scientific literature is that the dog is actually heading a feral shandy—instead of the dog being a suppressant of foxes, rabbits, pigs or whatever, they are actually living very well together, at least initially, to the detriment of wildlife. Unlike the presettlement situation, the dogs are able to breed up on litter-bearing ferals and therefore are able to knock out the wildlife so much more effectively.

**Mr TUCKEY**—Why have you included in your display a photo of a dog lying down? Is it dead?

**Ms Franklin**—Yes, it is. It was only a pup.

**Mr TUCKEY**—That is a farm dog that got killed?

**Ms Franklin**—No, it is a wild dog.

**Mr TUCKEY**—And it is that colour?

**Ms Franklin**—Yes, they can come in any colour. That one is only a pup. I gave some of my better photos away, so I had to improvise. The dogs come in any colour.

**Mr FORREST**—They are not dingoes, though, are they? It is dingoes and others? Are they domestic dogs gone wild?

**Ms Franklin**—The jury is still out. There are some domestic dog genes in the mitochondria. I do not know whether you are familiar with that. You have nuclear DNA, to which both the mother and father contribute, and you have mitochondrial DNA, which is only from the mother. The scientists can work out when you had a point infusion, as they say, of a domestic dog. As far as I am concerned, the evidence that domestic dog genes may have been introduced into the Asian dog before they left Java is quite clear, and they are possibly still coming.

At the end of the day, it does not really matter. The wild dog that has been popularised as the dingo is the red fella that walks up and down the sand dunes of Fraser Island. If you go to the centre of Australia you can get them white, sandy, red brindle, grey brindle, black brindle, black, nearly blue or black and tan. They do come in all colours. The closer the family breeding is the more you tend to get recessive colours coming out in the population. If you have got a widely bred population you tend to get the red. If you line-breed foxes, for example, you can actually end up with a black and tan. In other words, if you breed foxes with their fathers, grandparents or whatever—if you breed within the family—you can get a recessive situation showing up in the phenotype. That fox will be different physically from the red fox. That gene is continuing on in the population, but only when you intensify it through line-breeding will it come out as a coat colour. As I understand it, the situation with dogs can be fairly similar. Most of the dogs that we are having difficulty with are mostly dingo in content.

We believe that government and publicly managed lands are the greatest breeders of dogs within the 5,400 kilometre dog exclusion fence which runs from South Australia to western New

South Wales, through to Queensland. These people have now got themselves exempt from dog suppression and containment. The New South Wales national parks are now nine per cent of New South Wales or 7.3 million hectares. I have not had a good figure for the Victorian parks department, but I think it is in the order of four million hectares. They are quite happy to breed dogs. They basically have the science there to suggest that they need to be a top-order predator, and they do not feel as though they need to have them suppressed or have sustainable populations. They do not know how many are there so they do not know how sustainable they are. These areas are now working as harbours and as distribution centres.

**Mr SIDEBOTTOM**—You are not saying they are deliberately breeding them, are you? You are just saying that, because they do not do anything about it, they just breed, aren't you?

**Ms Franklin**—I am very concerned about the 'deliberate' too.

**Mr TUCKEY**—There has been evidence given that maybe they were reintroduced to some of these areas.

**Mr SIDEBOTTOM**—It just says here that they are knowingly breeding and harbouring them. That is a pretty serious claim and a pretty clear claim. It is more than just being indirectly involved, unconsciously involved or whatever.

**Ms Franklin**—When we, as affected farmers, have gone to parks authorities and said, 'Listen, guys, you have some dogs in there,' they say, 'No, I don't know whether we have.' We say, 'I'm sure you have.' After decades, we have convinced them that they do have dogs. We have a flow of dogs out of there. Yes, they now acknowledge that, particularly since the New South Wales rural lands protection board act 1998. We say, 'Can you do anything about it?' They say, 'Sorry, we don't have the budget.' We say, 'Can we go in there and do something about it?' They say, 'No, you are not allowed in there with traps, poisons and whatever.' The local community have basically been stopped from doing their own work, for whatever reasons—policy reasons. I believe you can deduce from that that they are knowingly breeding dogs.

We feel that the wildlife that we conserved on our leases or whatever has been confiscated for conservation and now fed to dogs. They are basically bred and coming onto our land. Legally these dogs are now noxious on private land, so we have to chase them. Private land-holders have to pursue wild dogs and get rid of them. Because they are exempt, their dogs can leave and go onto our place and we have to pursue them. Our people are going broke and are being traumatised and whatever else pursuing basically the top-order predator just over the fence that decides to stray onto private land.

**CHAIR**—Can I just ask if there is much further to go with this presentation, because time is running away.

**Ms Franklin**—You can certainly cut me off.

**CHAIR**—I do not want to cut you off. I just want to ask whether it will be much longer, because I know we would like to ask you some questions.

**Ms Franklin**—Yes, you can. I am through most of it and you are probably getting the general drift of what I want to say.

**Mr TUCKEY**—Some of it is repetitive.

**Ms Franklin**—Yes, you are exactly right. It is not a problem. Going back to the endangered species generator model, we are looking at the rapid fire cycle. I will just take you quickly through that.

**Mr FORREST**—I am a bit confused on the fire. Can I just ask something in my silly way. What you are saying is that, with no stock, there is more fuel. It is not being eaten by the stock. The dogs are not eating the grass.

**Ms Franklin**—That is exactly right. The dogs are basically getting rid of the grazing process, which then results in a situation—

**Mr FORREST**—That is native animals as well.

**Mr TUCKEY**—The roos particularly, yes.

**Ms Franklin**—What we had was a grazing dominant ecology where the vegetation was thrifty, well structured and fire retardant. Let me take you to the suburban garden situation. You use mowers and pruners; you weed it and structure it. You have trees; you have grass. If you walked away from that for 60 years, what would you come back to? Your trees would have got bigger; your leaf litter would be high; you would have no grass. The same thing has basically happened to our mountains, and the dog has orchestrated that. We have had a fire through here; we have killed the gum trees—killed the snow gums. We now have an extraordinary growth of grass in response to the potash that was produced during that fire. We now have a lot of suckers coming up from ground level and they usually overcompensate. It is going to be extremely dense. There is a situation now where there is ground tinder. As you get that regrowth up bigger, it will be able to ignite the dead trees and there will be one heck of a good fire again. And the possibility of that regrowth coming back—the seed production is just getting down that funnel.

**Mr TUCKEY**—It cooks it.

**Ms Franklin**—Yes, it is a repeated cook. The magnitude of the fires that went across Snowy is the thing that blows your mind. There is nowhere for wildlife to go and feed after that fire. There is nowhere for the birds to come back from. It is just cooked—such a vast area. I estimate there are about 500,000 hectares of alpine ash. Milled, it would be worth in the order of about \$50 billion. It is unlikely that those forests will come back, because the trees need to be 40 years old before they can seed. We have to get in there. We have to get the dogs out of there. We have to manage those areas if they are to recover. Otherwise we will get into that rapid fire cycle and it will all be gone.

**Mr TUCKEY**—What do National Parks say to you when you raise that argument?

**Ms Franklin**—They say, ‘Oh, she’s got another eye in the middle of her forehead.’ I do not believe that contemporary science understands the bigger picture as our bushmen do.

**Mr TUCKEY**—They don't read history. When you read Abel Tasman from 1642, he described the forests of Tasmania as huge trees, but you could see for miles between them.

**Ms Franklin**—Exactly right.

**Mr TUCKEY**—For the same reason.

**Ms Franklin**—Yes. Do not doubt the sincerity of our people. I think we have been misrepresented. We have multicultural origins. We have had a number of contributing factors in getting Snowy as a good water supply and as an entity and in trying to keep it out of trouble from rabbits, fires, droughts and exploitation—whatever. We feel as though our land has been hijacked. Our people are now being hounded. We have been told that we do not know what we are talking about. When we get cranky, people stand over us and try and intimidate us. We have social isolation. All sorts of things happen. We are very concerned for our forests, our fisheries, our culture and our animals. I challenge anybody to feel more about our wildlife than some of our Snowy people. We are concerned. There are days when, because we have been removed—is it the protective shell that has been taken away so we can hop in there and exploit the whole thing? We are concerned that we are living a lie.

When I talk about ideal bush, this is the situation that we tried to create. We stumbled on it a bit. Mr Tuckey just said that here we have the big trees. About 100 trees to the hectare seems to be a fairly good stocking rate. It is an open, airy forest—about 70 per cent sunlight. If you talk to any horticulturalist, they will say, 'About 30 per cent shade cloth.' It is very interesting. There are some fundamentals there that we have stumbled on—that photosynthesis works best with a bit of shade. We have a situation here where there are the woody shrubs, they are open and the groundcovers can get light moisture. The old fellas used to say that, if the undergrowth is coming up to your stirrup irons, it is time to have a poky fire or get some more stock in. That was the situation. That was how we maximised the diversity. We structured it. You go into your average city park in town. You have little bushes, big trees and lawn. When you go into some of our national parks now, you have these green gum leaves and you cannot walk five seconds into it. As the old blokes used to say, there is not enough room for a dog to bark.

In this situation we say 'grazing stops blazing'—you log it or lose it. I have also introduced 'carbon credit environmental debt' in my submission. Here we have what I would call a jungle. It is wall-to-wall aggressive species. The dominant ones are there. You have to poke around to see if you can find any sunlight reaching the ground. The wildflowers are all gone, the wildlife has cleared out and the birds have gone—they have nothing to live on. The toxic leaf-litter is just waiting for the fire.

Here we have grassland. It is the same situation. People have asked, 'How do you turn it around?' I think we still have bushmen out there who could do a little sympathetic superficial burn in the right climate in late autumn just after a bit of rain. It is not the sort of thing you can put down in a diary entry and say, 'We are going to burn it.' It is more art than science.

**Mr WINDSOR**—Checkerboard.

**Ms Franklin**—I am not convinced that people understand fully what we mean by 'checkerboard'. This is sounding more like a fire inquiry than a dog inquiry, but the dogs are the

drivers. The visual thing is the result of what is going on in our vegetation. We basically have a situation where the tussock spaces are crowding in and it is like a lawn that you have not mown for 20 years. So there are very few wildflowers. I can remember, as a kid, that you would be lucky to poke your fingers between the buttercups and the soldier buttons. Look at it now! Presumably this is at the height of summer. It is tragic. You can flick a few matches around and try to get small patches so that if lizards have to go anywhere they can get out in time. Putting a head of a tree and a few tussocks along the creek were the sorts of things we did. There was no OH&S. Noni would probably have had four years experience in fire ecology, in my childhood. She would have understood fire behaviour. She would have been running around barefooted. Our wildlife are barefooted, so why couldn't she be barefooted? Those were the sorts of assurances and predictability we had in our environment. We could tell to the last metre where a fire was going to stop, because it was broken up and grazed and so on. Things were done differently. It was not all normalised like it is now.

**CHAIR**—You have given us a great picture. I really appreciate what you have given us here today and especially the professional way you have presented your slides. Thank you to your daughter for her assistance.

**Mr WINDSOR**—We have many similar problems in the gorge country around Tenterfield and Armidale with the old burning policies—the same sorts of things you are talking about but with variations on the theme.

**Ms Franklin**—Tony, you are not quite as far down the track as we are. I cut my teeth at the uni in Armidale, so I am well aware of it. I have been working with a lot of landholders up there on the eastern escarpment. Looking down the tablelands, they are concerned about what is ahead for them if these things are continued.

**CHAIR**—Your submission was highly critical of government agencies. If you had the job tomorrow of fixing this problem, where would you start?

**Ms Franklin**—Aerial baiting of dogs.

**CHAIR**—Since that stopped in 1996, have you seen a notable increase in the number of dogs?

**Ms Franklin**—Yes, it has been huge. I would say it is probably in the order of 300 to 400 per cent.

**CHAIR**—So that would be your first priority?

**Ms Franklin**—That is a matter of urgency. It should have been done straight after the fires, because dogs survive disproportionately well compared to wildlife.

**CHAIR**—No doubt you have discussed this with government agencies over the last few years, yet you have had no response or cooperation whatsoever?

**Ms Franklin**—I have a couple of slides on this. Basically, they have pulled aerial baiting out of Kosciuszko because they believe it was endangering the quolls. We believe dog domination



and fire ecology have endangered more quolls. There are data to support that. The dogs are also eating the quolls and the quolls' food. So, while they are concerned about the strategic and very minimal risk of baiting one or two quoll inadvertently, the entire population of quoll is being put in jeopardy. That is how we see it.

**Mr TUCKEY**—I want to follow up on dog control. What do you see as the role of doggers? We received evidence in Albury about the public service chain that got down to employing one dogger. I found it quite remarkable. You read a dollar sign in a budget that says, 'We spend all this money on dogging,' but when you traced it through the little chart that was provided there were about eight people for one dogger. Obviously they were not necessarily fully employed on that dogger, but they were part of it. Is that an observation you would make? Where do you see doggers fitting in? In my state there is debate about aerial baiting versus doggers. You may see them as complementary or as having special skills. Can you comment on the role of the doggers? Should we have more of them?

**Ms Franklin**—Absolutely we should have more of them. The chair asked me what was the first thing I would do, and aerial baiting would be the first thing. We have a number of doggers trained up now, and aerial baiting is not going to work unless you have a good knowledge of where to put those baits. We want to get strategic about these things. We do not want to put baits across Kosciuszko a foot deep; we only want to put baits strategically, by air, on certain ridge lines which are travel routes and so on. That knowledge, that strategy, has to come from your doggers. Aerial baiting is very much part of an integrated program, and the doggers are a key part of that. The doggers can then go onto private land and pursue dogs that have not taken baits. The other thing from the Brindabella-Wee Jasper experience is that our doggers are out there in the field. They know what is happening and where the dogs are moving. Incidental to that, they are picking up pigs, foxes and cats—and that has to be of benefit to the entire ecology.

**Mr SIDEBOTTOM**—So the baits are relatively safe for grazing animals?

**Ms Franklin**—They are not a problem. They are meat baits.

**Mr SIDEBOTTOM**—But you are picking up foxes with them as well?

**Ms Franklin**—Absolutely.

**Mr SIDEBOTTOM**—And pigs?

**Ms Franklin**—No, not pigs. Foxes and dogs are highly sensitive to 1080. Pigs would have to eat a considerable amount.

**Mr SIDEBOTTOM**—Are there any alternatives to 1080?

**Ms Franklin**—There are some in the pipeline, I believe.

**Mr TUCKEY**—Where do you put strychnine?

**Ms Franklin**—Strychnine is not available in New South Wales or Victoria. It is still available in South Australia and Queensland, where you can apply strychnine to dog traps under certain circumstances.

**Mr SIDEBOTTOM**—Is 1080 inimical to quoll and other wildlife?

**Ms Franklin**—There is some work being done in New England at the moment. Quolls are least likely to scavenge, which is basically what is done with a meat bait. They appear to be quite insensitive compared to foxes and dogs. There is work hot off the press in New England. If I recall correctly, they collared 35 quolls. During the process, nine quolls died. They were killing each other, they were killed by foxes and dogs, and they were killed by eagles. A post-mortem is being conducted on two of them at the moment. There was no trace of rhodamine, which is a food dye that they put in the bait. Tongue in cheek, I wondered whether the collars might have been too tight for them.

**Mr SIDEBOTTOM**—I have one more question. Let us assume we get some form of relative control over the dogs. Would you then advocate the reintroduction of more grazing in conserved areas? Isn't that what they are—conservation areas before you get to the farms? Would you support the reintroduction of grazing in those areas?

**Ms Franklin**—Definitely. I guess this is sort of revisiting what we found when our family first went to the Snowy. There was a stunning response by the vegetation to the grazing process that was able to happen with the reintroduction of megafauna: cattle, sheep and horses. It is mixed species grazing. You have mowers, browsers, pruners and whatnot with those animals. Once the vegetation started to respond, the soil fertility started to move. There was then a recovery of the wildlife as you got rid of the dogs, and the whole situation gained momentum. It was then that people went to the Snowy and said, 'What a beautiful place.' The processes had been put in place, as it were, by the bushmen over about a hundred years.

**Mr SIDEBOTTOM**—But it is catch 22, isn't it, because, once the areas are deemed to be conservation areas, the dogs can move into the areas and deal with the native grazers, if you like, and the system will not allow non-native grazers in there?

**Ms Franklin**—They are crazy.

**Mr SIDEBOTTOM**—It is a two-pronged process, isn't it? You need the dogs out and the grazers in. It strikes me that it is incomprehensible to Parks and Wildlife. I am thinking about the green backlash to this. I am not saying it is right; I am just saying that is a problem.

**Ms Franklin**—Absolutely. It is a manmade problem. I have talked about the shonky science associated with the grazing process and how it was besmirched, I suppose, in the Snowy in the early days. What the rabbit plague basically achieved was blamed on livestock. I think it was a fairly political process. Our people were seriously knocked about by two world wars and their ability to deal with the rabbits during the time when the Snowy was being assessed for grazing was seriously compromised. The scientific literature said the overgrazing was caused by livestock, but it was actually rabbits. That contradiction has not been addressed. We are now in a situation where we can go back with our sheep and cattle and try and deal with the vegetation—recover the soil and try and heal the vegetation, while our wildlife builds up again.

**Mr SIDEBOTTOM**—I am sorry that I have to go, but thank you very much for your contribution.

**Ms Franklin**—Thank you for finally hearing.

**Mr WINDSOR**—We have had dog problems in the Tenterfield area and in other areas, and there have been disputes between land-holders and the National Parks people, similar to what you have been talking about. Last week there was a report on ABC radio about the quoll research that you mentioned a moment ago. The National Parks fellow—and he was not a very senior person—said that they were probably within a year of being able to ascertain from research whether 1080 was actually killing the quolls. If it could be proved from that research that it is not a problem, that we have the solution in aerial baiting, how serious do you think that argument is?

**Ms Franklin**—That loss of time?

**Mr WINDSOR**—If that research shows a positive light, do you think they are serious about moving in that direction or will they just keep pushing the boundary out?

**Ms Franklin**—Most of our bushmen feel that, if it is not the quoll this week, it will be something else next week. Basically that is how most of our families feel about science in the Snowy. From a scientific point of view, I have had difficulty within my family trying to justify the scientific process; I believe it has been misused.

**Mr WINDSOR**—Perhaps we could get the committee's staff to following up on that research and even the comment that was made. Perhaps the committee could even interview the people doing that work. I think that gets to the cutting edge of this debate: are there going to be controls in the future; if so, what are they? The obstacle that has been used for years now is the quoll.

**Ms Franklin**—That is exactly right. From my point of view and that of most other people, procrastination has killed more quoll than 1080. I do not know to what extent we can let the Snowy hang out for a scientific paper in New England, really.

**Mr TUCKEY**—It is interesting from my electorate's perspective. There has been a 20-odd year debate on whether draining farmland regenerated it from salinity, and the government agencies have lost that debate. They can no longer say, as they did for 20-odd years, that it does not work. But does that mean we are going ahead with it? Oh, no. Now they are out there saying, 'You're going to drain acid soils into the river system.' I know I am giving you an example that has nothing to do with dogs—but immediately a group got together and put up a program to government. They are taking up petitions in a couple of towns saying 'this is going to kill off our river'—which I refer to as the Avon trench. It only flows for about three months a year, which is when they all go down it in their boats; after that it is just a series of pools, if you are lucky.

**Ms Franklin**—Absolutely.

**Mr TUCKEY**— But I think the point is that, if you fix the quolls, the same mob of blind people just come up with something else. But again a bit of courage in this place would not hurt.

**Mr FORREST**—Thank you, Noelene; yours is really good earthy evidence and that is the kind of thing we like to hear, backed up by your professional qualifications. Just for the record though, is aerial baiting for dogs the only feasible and practical way?

**Ms Franklin**—That I guess goes to our aerial baiting debate. It is the quick fix; we know it works. I guess to Tony's question: aerial baiting has been used in the Snowy for in the order of 40 years. It has been dog men mediated, it has been strategic and everybody loves the results. We would go up there and enjoy the wildlife and the wild flowers, until just recently, and then the aerial baiting was pulled out. This has always been a contradiction to me: we manage our public lands by the precautionary method, go in there and say, 'Look at all the wildlife and the plants; everything's going nicely', and then start pulling out things which have been in place for a long time as an integral part of why—

**Mr WINDSOR**—Everything was going nicely.

**Ms Franklin**—Absolutely. If you were precautionary, you would keep the loggers in there, watch what they were doing and watch what was happening. You would keep the aerial baiting in there and watch what was happening, instead of pulling it out and watching chaos happen and saying, 'Oh, gee, how did that happen?'

**Mr TUCKEY**—You are protected by benign neglect.

**Ms Franklin**—Absolutely, and I believe there are some economic advantages in that. If we pulled aerial baiting out of Kosciuszko, we would have another \$50,000 to spend on a car or a junket overseas or whatever else, and that is the cynical view.

**Mr FORREST**—What do they say about meat eaters, like eagles and so on? We can imagine all the excuses they create, other than quoll, for why this is not a good thing to do.

**Ms Franklin**—We have dealt with the eagle one. LD50 for eagles is probably effective at about three times the body weight. 1080 has been out there, I guess, in the media and in the press and so on; at the moment it is the Rolls Royce of poisons. It is well developed and strategic and has been in good hands. You can go down to Woolworths and buy snail bait or aphid killer or whatever else that is far worse than 1080. 1080 has become bigger than Ben Hur.

**Mr FORREST**—The only other question is with regard to the suggestion in your evidence for a pest animal council. I am not sure what is in the name. We want an action council, with some teeth and funding. What is the significance of the title that you have chosen? Is it just a name?

**Ms Franklin**—It is just tongue-in-cheek—PAC. We are talking about pack animals.

**Mr FORREST**—What we need is a feral animal eradication council.

**Mr TUCKEY**—State governments used to have them. Ours was called the Agricultural Protection Board. But they have been sidelined. They are virtually non-existent in WA today.

**Mr WINDSOR**—It might not be a great acronym either, John.

**CHAIR**—No. Work that one out!

**Ms Franklin**—I guess I am getting back to integrated pest management, which I was going to show in the slides. Basically, I want to deal with the feral shandy, not just the dogs. I want to get the other animals that the dogs are reliant on and that are having an ecological impact as well. I believe that if we have the skills within such a unit—the dog men—we can also apply them to horses, water buffalo or deer or whatever else as time goes on. There are situations, too, where native animals can get out of hand. People are having difficulty with eagles and corellas. We need to have a civilised way of dealing with those sorts of problems as well. The flying fox is a problem for some agriculturalists and, I dare say, some native environments as well are getting overdone. There are extraordinary populations of koalas on Kangaroo Island, for example, trashing the trees. Somehow, nationally, we have to deal with those sorts of problems. When I am talking about pest animals, it might be only in relation to a particular situation. Some people have too many wombats. I wish we were in that situation. We could probably import some wombats when we get rid of the dogs.

**Mr FORREST**—If this committee is to try to put up some proposal, it has to be in a national context. Other regions have different problems. Some have problems with pigs, dogs or rabbits. As you say, some have problems with native animals. So the proposal has to have a broad species reference. My fear is that that will slow things down. Your problem is dogs. Do we need one for dogs and one for every other species?

**Ms Franklin**—Not at all. Looking at the Brindabella plan; I believe that we have basically targeted dogs. The bonus has been foxes and pigs. I think we could do better on cats. We need basic skills and resources: a rifle licence, a motor vehicle, mobility, bush skills, being able to read what is happening. Our men can be out there. If we have exotic disease outbreaks, these people, hopefully, will be trained to take tissue samples and send them down for testing. Instead of us having a foot-and-mouth or rabies outbreak smouldering away in our national parks—which are wilderness areas where nobody goes for months—then having a huge interface when it becomes apparent, we can have people in there looking at these things.

This committee could recommend that we set up a task force for us to workshop the details of how to set up a structure. It could look at whether we plug into existing networks, rural lands protection boards, departments of primary industry, local government or all of the above. I believe we need to get back to a network of people, like those I have been working with, for example. That would be a reasonable start. Then it can go from there to what people see as the solution.

We need funding. We need to reduce the length of the food chain. We have people administering these things, taking a few dollars off as it goes down. We need a more streamlined management structure so that funding from the Commonwealth and/or state is actually going on the ground, as opposed to getting carried around and then the dog trapper has to have a lamington drive to organise some new tyres for his vehicle, and that is basically what is happening at the moment.

**Mr FORREST**—Madam Chair, that might be something that we could consider as part of the inquiry. Maybe we should get them all in one room and run a forum.

**CHAIR**—Yes, that is right. We could have a roundtable discussion.

**Mr FORREST**—It was pretty successful last time.

**CHAIR**—It was, too.

**Mr FORREST**—We could bang a few heads.

**CHAIR**—Yes. Ms Franklin, we really appreciate your comments. Are there any further questions?

**Mr TUCKEY**—I have to go.

**CHAIR**—Yes. I am sorry, but we will all have to disappear on you.

**Ms Franklin**—That is okay.

**CHAIR**—On behalf of the committee I thank you, and your daughter who has been helping you, for the time you have given to us today.

**Mr TUCKEY**—Congratulations, Ms Franklin, and thank you.

**CHAIR**—Yes, and keep up the good work. In your submission you said:

A single dog can cause \$50 000 to \$120 000 damage to a farmers livestock production.

Is that in one year?

**Ms Franklin**—It can be, yes.

**CHAIR**—On the next line you said that in a 12-month period between 2,500 and 3,000 dogs were caught or shot on the boundaries. Could a farmer lose that much in one year?

**Ms Franklin**—He could do, yes. People look at livestock kills as the only form of damage. When you are actually living it, the damage can be through reduced quality wool. A reasonable sized farm would have 2,500 sheep. If a dog gets to those and hunts them off food and water, the wool can be damaged for that entire year—it is what they call ‘tender wool’. You get an interruption in the growth of that wool, and that can result in a discount of somewhere between 300c and 500c a kilogram. If you average that out across your 2,500 thousand sheep, it does not take long to come up to those sorts of figures.

**CHAIR**—I thought it was a very high amount, so I thought I would just ask that. Thank you very much. We really appreciate your time with us today, and we might call you back for our roundtable discussion. We hope that there is a chance of that and that you can come back.

**Mr FORREST**—I want to see that.

**CHAIR**—Thank you again.

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**Ms Franklin**—I hope I was not too longwinded.

**Mr FORREST**—No, you were very good.

**CHAIR**—If we had the time, we all probably would have stayed for another hour because there are so many questions to ask.

**Mr FORREST**—I know the position you are in. You are presenting your science, but I bet you get ridiculed and that other scientists counterargue, saying that their science is better or that your collection of science is not rigorous. I bet you get ridiculed.

**Ms Franklin**—Definitely. They have a fairly cosy operation happening. A lot of it is non-peer-reviewed science, and that is the sad part about it. From my perspective, I believe it is unfair science. They say, ‘There’s a river. We’ll tear out to the bush and look at quoll.’ They do not look at quoll in the context of New England, Gippsland or wherever. They are not looking at quoll over a 10-year period; they are looking at quoll over, say, an 18-month period. We can go to our people and say, ‘What are the trends regarding quoll?’ And they say, ‘In 1960 we had a distemper outbreak, or some blessed thing, and it was not really harmful to the quoll because it got rid of the dogs so much better than even aerial baiting.’ These sorts of things are in the community database.

**CHAIR**—I now formally close the meeting.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Tuckey**):

That this committee authorises publication of the proof transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

**Committee adjourned at 6.14 p.m.**