

24 May 2004

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

The North East Pest Animal Advisory Committee (NEPAAC) covers an approximate area from the Queensland border south to Coffs Harbour, and west to Inverell. The committee has representatives from the Rural Lands Protection Board, the Department of Lands, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, State Forests and NSW Agriculture, and has been operational for four years.

The main objective of NEPAAC is to assist in the planning and implementation of cooperative pest animal programs across all tenures that generate positive conservation or agricultural outcomes throughout the committee area.

Following a recent meeting of the North East Pest Animal Advisory Committee, discussion arose concerning submissions to the Inquiry into the Impact on Agriculture of Pest Animals.

The committee agreed to the following points being listed :

1. The Rural Lands Protection Board

This organisation is responsible for the coordination of pest animal control programs across the state of NSW. It is the only organisation that provides a service in the event of a pest animal problem. However, the task presented to the RLPB is immense, given the area of land that they are responsible for, the number of ratepayers that they are accountable to, and the limited resources that is available to address pest animal problems

The shortage of funding for the RLPB, combined with the expansion in urban areas due to subdivisions, and a decline in ratepayers has contributed to a shortfall in the level of resourcing available to combat pest animal problems effectively. In addition to this, there has been an expansion in the distribution and density of many pest animals, particularly in closely settled areas. This has occurred without a concomitant increase in the level of staffing and funding to allow appropriate and prompt control measures to be undertaken.

To address this, the rating system that provides funding to the RLPB system needs to be critically reviewed, with the aim of increasing the amount of ratepayers. In addition to this, the State Government needs to closely investigate the need to

compliment the RLPB funding system with a view to addressing the burgeoning pest animal problems present in many areas.

Adequate funding would then allow the RLPB to become a more effective lead agency in :

- : the prevention of new pest animals becoming established;
- : the implementation of detection and reporting systems for pest animals;
- : an increase in the number of coordinated pest animal control programs necessary to combat established pest infestations.

2. National Parks and Wildlife Service

With the significant increase in the number and area of National Parks in the previous five years, there has been criticism of NPWS concerning a perceived lack in the implementation of effective pest animal control programs. In many areas, this criticism is unfair, with the NPWS often being a leading stakeholder in the planning and implementation of pest animal programs.

However, with continued purchases of additional areas to become National Parks or Nature Reserves, extra and continued funding is vital to ensure that cooperative, coordinated programs can be implemented. In addition to this, established pest animal programs that have been ongoing for several years require continued funding, as pest animals require constant management.

Therefore, substantial budget increases are necessary to maintain progress already made in the numerous NPWS pest animal programs and to also effectively target pest animals in new NPWS additions or acquisitions.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully

TINA WOOLFE
Secretary
North East Pest Animal Advisory Committee