

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 5

INQUIRY INTO FERAL ANIMALS

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At Armidale on Wednesday, 3 April 2002

¾¾¾

The Committee met at 9.15 a.m.

¾¾¾

PRESENT

The Hon. Richard Jones (Chair)

The Hon. Rick Colless
The Hon Amanda Fazio
The Hon. John Jobling
The Hon. Malcolm Jones
The Hon. Janelle Saffin

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CHAIR: I welcome the media and members of the public to this hearing of General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 inquiring into feral animals. The Committee has previously resolved to authorise the media to broadcast sound and video excerpts of its public proceedings. Copies of guidelines governing the broadcasting of proceedings are available from the table by the door. I point out that in accordance with the Legislative Council guidelines for the broadcast of proceedings only members of the Committee and witnesses may be filmed or recorded. People in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photographs. In reporting the proceedings of this Committee the media must take responsibility for what they publish or what interpretation is placed on anything that is said before the Committee. Witnesses, members and their staff are advised that any messages should be delivered through the attendant on duty or through the Committee clerk. I advise that under Standing Order 252 of the Legislative Council evidence given before the Committee or any documents presented to the Committee that have not been tabled in Parliament may not, except with the permission of the Committee, be disclosed to the public by any member of such Committee or by any other person. I welcome the witnesses and others present.

OWEN GLENDOWER CROFT, Grazier and Director, Armidale Rural Lands Protection Board, Salisbury Court, Uralla,

NIGEL ROBERT SCHAEFFER, Grazier, Chairman, Armidale Rural Lands Protection Board, Glenowen, Armidale,

ANDREW DESMOND PHILLIPS, Ranger, Northern Slopes Rural Lands Protection Board, "Lee Carrow" Delungra, and

GERARD SEAN O'CONNOR, Senior Ranger, Northern Slopes Rural Lands Protection Board, 12 Gough Street, Goondiwindi, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: Are you conversant with the terms of reference of this inquiry?

Sir OWEN CROFT: I am.

Mr SCHAEFFER: Yes, I am.

Mr PHILLIPS: Yes, I am.

CHAIR: If you should consider at any stage during your evidence that in the public interest certain evidence or documents you may wish to present should be seen or heard only by the Committee, the Committee would be willing to accede to your request but that may be overturned by a vote of the Legislative Council. Do you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr O'CONNOR: Yes, I do. I have prepared an information package for all members. In that is a copy of this introduction. Thank you for the invitation to attend today's inquiry. I would like to introduce Mr Phillips, who has been with the Northern Slopes Rural Lands Protection Board for five years and has been primarily responsible for pest animal control within the board. He is based at Warialda and is a land-holder with grassroots practical experience. I have been with the board for 13 years and as part of my duties I am responsible for pest animal control programs within the north of that board. I would like to apologise for Mr Ian Uebergang, a land-holder who was invited by the board to assist the inquiry but was unable to attend at short notice due to localised flooding with the recent welcome rains. Mr Uebergang has prepared a submission to take his place and it is enclosed in the documents. We have enclosed copies for the Committee. The Committee may note that Mr Uebergang estimates and budgets for around \$7,000 for pest animal control each year.

I have a late submission that has been included in the information from the director of the board, Mr Steven Adams. I would like to make it clear to members of the Committee that the Northern Slopes Rural Lands Protection Board has a mandate to assist and ensure that land-holders control all pest animals. However, this Board has a focus on feral pigs as they cause huge financial losses to land-holders in the central and north of the Board where land has been intensively improved and feral pigs have a far greater financial impact. I would invite the Committee to peruse the literature provided in which you will find a single article with a photograph attached. This is factual evidence of the damage that feral pigs cause, not only to land-holders but to Australian trade.

That is a very common occurrence in our board despite the control measures undertaken by land-holders.

You might note from the aforementioned document that the damage was negated by 1080 poisoning programs. The Poison 1080 is currently under review by the National Registration Authority. If it were removed as a vertebrate pest control option, it would see the pig problem in this board escalate to inconceivable proportions. Given that this board's 1080 solution use, in a worst-case scenario selected over the past three years, amounted to 107,388 litres, this would account for over 6,000 feral pigs.

Given that it has been shown that you need to reduce the population each year by 70 per cent to maintain the population, with reasonably favourable seasonal conditions I could not estimate the additional cost to land-holders. We also have some videos of feral animal control undertaken in this board. These have not been duplicated as we did not have the resources at the time to do so. They may be offensive to some members of the Committee as they do contain shooting of feral pigs. They are for the Committee's viewing today as a visual reference. They do, however, give stature to the prevalence of the pest and the effectiveness of this control measure. We could provide to this Committee a truckload of anecdotal evidence as to feral pig damage in the board if we could get land-holders to sit down and document their losses. One land-holder reports losses of 400 to 500 lambs last year alone through fox and pig predation.

In closing, I would like to conclude that this board's budget for pest animal control is \$101,810 based on last year's figures. Land-holders in this board are committed to pest animal control, however, it is a resource problem. Do the sums, gentlemen.

I paid 1.5 per cent of my wages last year as a Medicare levy and I have not been to the doctor once. I am happy to pay for it. It is for the health of all Australians. What is the value of the health, viability and freedom from exotic diseases for those who choose to battle it out in the bush. Can you put a percentage on it, gentlemen? Thank you, Mr Chairman.

Mr SCHAEFFER: As Chairman of the Armidale Rural Lands Protection Board I would rate rabbits, foxes and wild dogs—and rabbits and foxes in particular—as inhabiting the whole area of our board whereas wild dogs inhabit some portions of the board as well as feral pigs. Our staff spend a tremendous amount of time on fox poisoning and baits for fox poisoning as well as rabbits baits. I have not got figures on the amount of rabbit poisoning and fox baits distributed. That could be sourced, if required.

I would like speak on the control of rabbits, foxes, wild dogs, feral pigs and say that 1080 is the number one control measure for all these pests. In each category it plays a part. As you would be aware, rabbits have played a very devastating role in the environment and one need only look in some of the western areas I know well, such as Sturt National Park, Kinsella National Park and others since the accidental release of calicivirus. Initially it worked very well. However, I was out in these areas in July last year and I was amazed to see the reappearance of fairly large populations of rabbits there. In our own board calicivirus has been somewhat spasmodic. It worked to some degree in the western areas but it is more effective on the plains and slopes than it is on the tablelands.

In my own area east of Armidale I have no evidence of it getting out here, yet there are pockets of quite heavy gestation of rabbits. There again myxomatosis is still active in that area but to a lesser degree than it was 20 or so years ago. I am aware of an inquiry into the deregistration or discontinuance of the use of 1080 and I am adamant that that chemical should be made available to us on a continuing basis for the control of rabbits, even though we have other methods. It is the number one control method in this area.

The environmental damage caused by foxes to small fauna and bird life is substantial. They are also responsible for the spread of some noxious weeds or plants, for example, blackberries, and they can spread other weeds. The impact on livestock production, particularly in lambing percentages, before we embarked on a group eradication control program in conjunction with Landcare, which has been going on for the past three or four years in that area, has been most effective. A lot of producers are now seeing an increase in their lambing percentages due in no small part to 1080 baits, either meat or manufactured baits. What I have noticed in my own area is an increase in native animals and birds, particularly quolls, plovers, grass parrots and top-knot pigeons, to name just a few. Up until through four years ago, these were extinct—we just never saw them—but they have re-inhabited my own property.

Wild dogs are a particular problem, mostly on the eastern escarpment of our board. When some of these dogs get through a barrier fence, they can run over a much larger area than the board's area and they tend to cause a lot of degradation to the environment, in particular to small animals and ground nesting or ground birds. If I can take you back some 50 years before the introduction of 1080, the country outside the barrier fence was almost devoid of kangaroos. There were some, but their numbers were fairly small and wallaroos, rock wallabies and

swamp wallabies, et cetera, were just never seen. After the aerial baiting by using 1080—and that would have occurred in the early 1960s and was very effective—those animals gradually reappeared. I do not know where from, but obviously there were still pockets of these animals in the countryside. The main method of control or the primary method of control of dingoes is 1080 poisonous meat baits dropped from aircraft, mound baiting which has been successful but is very labour intensive, and the use of manufactured baits.

For the control of wild dogs, 1080 has been very target specific. There are other speakers such as Owen Croft who will talk later on the impact or the lack of its impact on other species. Other methods of control are shooting or trapping, but there again these are one-off control methods. Barrier fencing is, if not the first, then certainly secondary and from my own association, the barrier fences range from very good to very average, particularly on properties that do not run sheep where the fences have been left to deteriorate and are not maintained. I must acknowledge the support I have had from the National Parks and Wildlife Service which has been very good, not only through helping by supplying and setting up mound baits but also for the maintenance of the barrier fence where it adjoins national parks or is used in close proximity. The benefits to us as producers are widespread.

I wish to discuss other animals such as deer, goats and cats. As a board, we do not go out and specifically target cats but in the use of 1080 and fox baits, rabbits are a secondary category poisoned by 1080. Certainly cats are controlled to some degree. Wild cats are fairly numerous. You do not see a lot of them in daylight hours but at night-time, if you go out with the spotlight it is not unusual to see them. You do not see cats very much in the daytime whereas foxes are very prevalent in the daytime, or were, and still are. Cats destroy small animals such as birds and the like. The biggest risk from this group of animals are deer and goats as far as being the main culprits in spreading diseases is concerned, namely, foot rot and Johne's disease. For example, if we had an outbreak of a disease such as foot and mouth, pigs, goats and deer would all play a very important or a very devastating role in the spread of that disease.

I might add that if rabies were to become an outbreak in Australia, certainly you would target foxes and other animals, but in particular foxes. You can imagine trying to eradicate some of these pest animals in the wild, particularly in the national parks, forests and green country, which I refer to as falls country, but not sheep country. Environmental damage caused by pigs is quite high. While this is not a cropping board, I am sure there are other speakers who can enlighten you more on the damage caused to cropping and lambing percentages by wild pigs. They do a tremendous amount of damage to the environment with their digging or rooting and they have a devastating effect on other animals. Once again, the exotic disease control methods for wild pigs in this area all the primary control methods—helicopter shooting, trapping, and poisoning to a lesser degree by the use of 1080 which is only marginally effective. The main method would undoubtedly be shooting from a helicopter. That concludes my statement. I am quite happy to answer the questions the Committee might have.

Sir OWEN CROFT: I think that most of what I was going to say has been covered so I will have to take a different track. I come at this probably from an angle that is different from that of most people. I have been a member of the Armidale Rural Lands Protection Board for 25 years and I have been a member of the State Council of the Rural Lands Protection Board. I have been a member of the State Pest Advisory Committee and Non-indigenous Species, and I am also Chairman of the Northern Tablelands Regional Advisory Committee to the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The problems that have been encountered with pest animals have already been stated but the other side of this is that one of the things that has worked has been group operations for the control of foxes and pigs which is often related to shooting, group operations for the control of rabbits and an annual baiting program for dingoes. Control is most effective when people work as groups. That must be emphasised more and more as we go along.

Something interesting that has happened is that there has been some work done by Gerhard Körtner and Shaan Gresser of the National Parks and Wildlife Service on 1080 and its effect on quolls. Quolls have been a major hassle where we have been doing aerial baiting for dingoes or mound baiting. I have a copy of the work they have done to present to the Committee and that has shown that the quoll does not take 1080 with the baits at this stage. We have done two trials so far. The baits were taken out of the mound by the quolls but they were not eaten. They were all recovered. The quolls had radio collars and so forth. The trial will be done with poisonous baits and non-poisonous baits with the dyes in them. The quolls will be collared and recaptured afterwards and hopefully we will see that they seemed to have been able to understand what 1080 is and have not eaten it. That is backed up by interstate people who have developed foxoff and dogoff in Victoria and whose findings are exactly the same. I have been trying to drag information out of him but he also states that quolls do not take 1080 in meat baits which could make a very big difference.

As a grazier who has had everything except deer on his property at various stages, either at his place or on the family property, I can state that the control of pest animals is an ongoing problem. It is a cost not only to a person as an individual but also to the environment and of course to the community in general. The use of 1080 of course has made life very much easier. I do not think there is any doubt that because it is a very specific poison we can aim it at a target. It is probably the most safe poison that is available. If it does come off the market, Lord help us, because people would use poisons that are far worse and that have far worse effects on native species particularly. My observation as far as native species are concerned—we have been doing fox baiting on my land and my Landcare group is one of the early ones that did the very large-scale ones—we have seen the reappearance of a lot of native species.

As a result of that, we do not get all the foxes but we get about 60 per cent of them and that seems to be quite adequate to keep a balance. My comment would probably be that there are plenty of foxes around but there were not the baits or poisons in those days. Once we started harvesting for skins, we upset the balance and from there on it has been getting worse and worse. The more we poison, the more foxes we are going to get, unless we can do the whole of the State. Unless they can come up with the research that is being done on a contraception program on foxes and rabbits, I really do not see that there is a real answer to the fox problem. I believe that a new poison is being developed in Queensland which is specific to pigs. I would like to see that certainly brought forward because I understand that that is a very specific poison and is very effective on pigs, so that will give us some chance.

Having been on non-indigenous advisory committees, my main worry is that are all this new animals that we are bringing in—and goats would be a good example although we are bringing in potentially other problems with ostriches and alpacas—is that when people no longer have the use of his animals, they will not destroy them. When the market disappears, what they do? They have to let them go and, God help us, we have got another problem. The other problem that I worry about more in relation to pigs in particular is not only the foot and mouth threat but also the threat of Japanese encephalitis. Pigs are hosts for that disease and there has been one outbreak in Australia already. It is spreading gradually right down and it has the potential to go right Australia. For that reason, to my mind to pigs are probably the biggest danger we have got. I could go on for hours on these things but I think that is all I can say at the moment. If there are any questions, I will be happy to answer them.

CHAIR: It is apparent that the key to controlling feral animals is finding a co-ordinated targeted approach within the region. How can the co-ordination of feral animal control be improved? What defines effective co-ordination?

Sir OWEN CROFT: Armidale's rural lands protection board has a very good record, particularly of working with National Parks. We spend a lot of time with National Parks and Forestry coming up with programs. This applies particularly to dogs and foxes. We have a program working with them. The biggest thing is preparation and education. Groups such as Landcare have a tremendous part to play. It is probably the best avenue we have because you have a group of like-minded people in a particular area. They know their land very well. They know the problems. From a rural lands protection board perspective, one ranger can deal with 20 or 40 people at the one time and set up programs.

That is the role that Landcare excels in. It could be nourished a lot more for that reason. They cover nearly all the respects we are talking about. You cannot demand more of any land care group. Most of the land care people are very concerned about the environment and native species. Everything is ready to role. I am not sure how much money you bring in, but that is where the organisation goes. Collaboration and co-ordination is imperative. You cannot do it as an individual. A lot of these pests cover vast territories. It is always an ongoing problem, but if you can do it on 100,000 or 200,000 acres or whatever, you can be effective. But if you do it as an individual it is a waste of time.

Mr PHILLIPS: I draw your attention to some of the literature in front of you. The last aerial pig shoot the board held in the area was negated. Your question here today hit the nail right on the head: getting everyone involved is a problem. If you look at some of the literature you will see a map of an aerial shoot we held. You will see a number of properties in black, which are the properties that decided not to come into our shoot. The reason was financial. One of our control measures is helicopter shooting. It would have been a much more successful shoot if the black area had been involved as well. The main reason they did not become involved was expense. We have the authority and the power to compel all land-holders to control feral animals, but they can use a loophole to say no to our attempts, and it is a vital one.

We need to be able to encourage those land-holders to participate in group control. The encouragement that is needed is finances. We need to be able to reduce the cost of aerial control, especially in pigs in this area, which is what we are talking about, to make it a viable proposition that land-holders become involved. That shoot, in particular, was a successful one because we shot 1,300 or 1,250 pigs. But if we flew that same area the next day or the next week we would have shot another thousand. The fact that those people were not involved leaves a nucleus of breeding pigs, and really negates all of our attempts. Land-holders around there who became involved were quite upset that the other land-holders did not become involved, and they put pressure on us to make them become involved.

In our attempts to make them become involved we came across hostility. Besides the economic factor there are other factors as to why they do not become involved. It is not an easy process. To make it easier, we need everyone to be involved. But there are different reasons, and all different pest animals. There are different reasons. Rabbit groups are formed in a certain area and you will not get everyone involved in that area as well. The same with fox groups. With foxes you have 50 per cent sheep people and 50 per cent cattle people. Cattle people are not interested in baiting for foxes because foxes do not affect their livelihood. It is not an easy process to have everyone involved, but we need everyone involved.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: Mr Phillips indicated that, apart from finance, other factors were involved. I am sorry to be brittle, but the Committee needs to understand what those other factors are.

Mr PHILLIPS: That is a good question. Sometimes it comes down to minor things, like they dislike the use of 1080 because they think it is a cruel way to die. They dislike the use of guns because they think that is a cruel way to die. They lean on the RSPCA side. Everyone with whom I have been involved in the rural land protection board, whether they be land-holders or employees, lean on the green side of things and the RSPCA side of things as it is, but these are just one or two reasons they can use.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: You referred to a loophole that lets the landowners out. Would you tell the Committee precisely what the loophole is and how it may be either amended or closed?

Mr PHILLIPS: All land-holders have a duty. It is written in the Act. The duty is that they must suppress and destroy noxious pest animals at all times, continuously. Continuously is a contentious issue. If anyone took a land-holder to court because he has not become involved in, let us say, the shoot that is in front of you, he stands up in front of a judge and says, "Your Honour, I am continuously suppress pigs. I go out once or twice, maybe three times I week and I shoot them. I take my 22 out and I shoot anything I see." Therefore he is continuously suppressing and destroying pigs in the eye off the law. We could tie ourselves up in knots and be in court for weeks, months or whatever, but we are not achieving anything. We are after effective control. The last thing we want to do is take our ratepayers to court. It is the last thing on our minds. It does not help the other ratepayers, for starters if we are tied up in court all the time. That is how they can get out of the becoming involved in group activity. That is quite simple.

CHAIR: Do the recent changes to the Rural Lands Protection Act make a difference?

Mr PHILLIPS: No, not as far as that goes, no.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: I would like to get comments from both the Northern Slopes board and the Armidale board on this question. The Northern Slopes submission refers to a need for up to four teams of helicopter shooters with five people each working across the State. Do you have any estimates of the cost structure that would be involved in that? I have taken on board that your submission talks about the cost of \$16 to \$17 per pig for aerial shoots that have been undertaken.

Mr O'CONNOR: This was part of our submission, and it was to get people to think outside the square. We are fully aware of the guidelines for defence assistance to the civil community. However, we still pose the question that perhaps this defence assistance to the civil community is basically a policy. Politicians change policy and we seem to have a lot of resources out there practising shooting things when we could use it as a multifunctional training aid. To answer the other part of your question about cost, we have not worked out how much it costs. However, given that the helicopters we use across the board cost nearly \$800 per hour and every time you hear a gun go off that is another 81¢, plus you need back-up vehicles and a good ground support group, we could do the sums, and it would be probably quite astronomical. But it is also astronomical what the feral pig community is doing to our country.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Do you believe that the money spent in that manner would control more pigs than a targeted poisoning program? I refer you to a submission we received from the Narrabri board, which advised us that over a six-week program for the laying of nine tonnes of poison 1080 over 30 properties, 90 per cent of the grain was consumed. They had a conservative estimate of approximately 15,000 pigs being destroyed. What do you think of a target poisoning program of that kind? Do you think it would be more efficient to do that rather than look at aerial shooting?

Mr O'CONNOR: Poisoning, shooting and trapping are all tools for controlling feral animals. Over the past, probably, five years we have had reasonably good seasons, not necessarily good seasons for growing crops because some of them have been too wet, because you have to have a dry season to have a successful pig poisoning program. If there is an abundance of feed you cannot get the pigs to free feed on the grain you are putting out. It is a rare thing, but it is a great tool, I agree. But there is a lot of opposition out there to 1080. There is public perception that it is a very dangerous poison. Have I answered your question?

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Yes, you have. I take on board your comments about the difficulties in getting everybody to participate in the aerial shooting program. Do you think farmers or land-holders would be more willing to participate in a targeted poisoning program such as the one carried out by the Narrabri board?

Mr O'CONNOR: The Northern Slopes board is always aiming at, I suppose, an integrated pest control management plan where we try to work with land-holders. Recently, we conducted two pig meetings in the north of the board to try to encourage a poisoning program. One meeting was fairly poorly attended and one was reasonably well attended. There were probably 30 land-holders in total, some of whom were quite large land-holders, multi-property owners. But we have not had a response yet to commence our poisoning program. You might ask why that is so. It comes down to the available resources to put time aside to do some pre-emptive poisoning. The poor old farmer is always hit in the hip pocket when he walks out into his sorghum crop or looks at his central pivot and finds that 30 acres in the middle of it has just been decimated by pigs. He rings up the rural land protection board and says, "Get me a bloody helicopter. Quick!" When you tell him how much it will cost he says, "Wait a minute." It is a revolving door. It is a very difficult process. The State Government could make it a lot easier for land-holders by giving them more resources.

Mr PHILLIPS: To add to that, I think you are asking why we do not use 1080 poisoning in group control instead of shooting. We try to use both. One on its own is not sufficient. As Mr O'Connor alluded to, the three methods—trapping, poisoning and shooting—need to be used in conjunction with each other. They need to be used when time and season prevail and it is the right thing to do. We need the whole three of those as part of our weapons. Poisoning is a great tool, and if we lose it we are in big trouble. As I say to land-holders, aerial shooting is not the be all and end all of pig control, but it enables you to cover a large area in a short time. If you can cover a large area in a short time you can clear 70 per cent to 80 per cent of pigs in a certain area. If you can cover 30,000 hectares in a week you then follow up with a poisoning program to mop up the ones that are left. We never suggested that aerial shooting is the only way to go. Never. I hope that answers your question.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Do you regard the current government policies that are in place as retarding your operations at the moment and, if so, how do you see that data should be challenged?

Mr PHILLIPS: Government policies are adequate to the extent that they do support us, I think. The policies that are in place are designed to help us and they understand that. What we would like to see—if I can come back to the map you have in front of us—is that if I organise an aerial pig shooting covering 40,000 hectares and I had a nucleus in the middle where that black area is that says no, I would like the power and the knowledge to be able to fly over that country, shoot and know that at the end of that shoot the expense would not fall into my pockets and that the land-holders who are underneath and who said no, for various reasons, would have no recriminations on my employer. I would like to cover that area to make it a viable shoot and I would like to be able to do it in a reasonable manner without any recriminations back on my employer, but in doing so make the rest of the shoot viable.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: I would like to ask about dogs, 1080 and aerial baiting for dogs. Sir Owen, you mentioned earlier the impact of 1080 on quolls. Have you discuss that with your contacts in that the National Parks and Wildlife Service?

Sir OWEN CROFT: Yes. There has been a lot of talk about it and I think once the next trial is completed, which will be done by the end of September I believe, we will have all the necessary ammunition. We could fall over backwards too but I am pretty convinced that will not be the case because anybody who lives along with the area

where we have been aerial baiting for 23 years will say they cannot keep chooks because quolls eat the bloody things. That is common right through. It is not only quolls but lyrebirds and others in that area. I am not a believer in taking all dogs out of all parks. Where we have done peripheral baiting and continued control testing it is working very well.

I think the new method that I hope Mr Barnard will talk about this morning will reveal that be our key areas where we can keep the lid on it and very much stop the recharge of dogs coming in. We need to look at it much more critically. We have reasonably good control and I would say that up to this year the Armidale figures of stock losses have been static. This year there has been quite a big upsurge but right throughout eastern Australia there have been a lot more dogs recorded, for one reason or another. There has been a good breeding season, which is more susceptible to pups, so you do get these hiccups. The Armidale figures are very static, which backs up the aerial baiting that is not only peripheral but mainly along the boundaries.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: So that I can have an idea of the problems in your area, would you say that pigs are the worst offenders?

Mr PHILLIPS: If you could divide our board up into half, the top is predominantly pigs. I say that because the top half of the board is cropping and cattle. The bottom is mainly grazing and foxes and pigs would be 50-50 of the problem. Our board stretches from Goondiwindi to Barraba, which is a two-hour drive, and from Inverell in the east to Pallamallawa, which is a one hour to 1½ hour drive.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: Give me the order of priority?

Mr PHILLIPS: Pigs, foxes, rabbits.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: Are cats and deer a problem? Do they fit into the equation?

Mr PHILLIPS: Cats are becoming a problem. They are not actually in our budget; they are in our work plan because they are increasingly becoming a problem and we will have to start looking at them severely. Deer are not a problem although there may be isolated occurrences in corners of the board.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: What about goats?

Mr PHILLIPS: They are like deer. There are isolated incidents of deer but there is a bit of value with goats at the moment and any land-holders who find them, tend to round them up and sell them. They were a problem when they were worthless but they are not a big problem now.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: Feral dogs are mainly in the bottom half of your area.

Mr PHILLIPS: We do not have a great deal of trouble with wild dogs as the Armidale board does. It is to do with the topography and climate. Problems with wild dogs in our area would only occur three times a year where the Armidale board would have them on a daily basis

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: Is that largely because of the fence?

Mr PHILLIPS: No. I do not know why the problems exist in Armidale. I would say it is something to do with the topography, terrain and the timber. Wild dogs in our area tend to be town dogs that have escaped and run wild. There is the odd dingo. I have been in the system for five years now and I have come across three dingoes, so it is a very small problem for us.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: Have you looked at the proposed Game Bill?

Mr PHILLIPS: Gerard has but I have not.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: When the Game Bill was introduced—

Mr O'CONNOR: You are not telling me it is going to be.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: Subject to it being approved by Parliament, when established will that be of assistance and help with the problems in your area?

Mr O'CONNOR: Nil.

CHAIR: Sir Owen, would you like to make a response about your priorities, because your area is different?

Sir OWEN CROFT: The dog problem is not a problem here because our entire eastern boundary is either national park or forestry escarpment country. Our entire eastern boundary is dog country. It is probably number one. Rabbits, dogs and foxes are very high on our list. There is possibly an emerging problem with deer through most of the eastern fore country right throughout New South Wales now and that has increased over the last few years from escapes and deliberate releases. You will see tomorrow what I am talking about with the terrain because they are a major problem. You have 2,000 to 3,000 feet straight back up and down and it is impossible, unless you use helicopters, to get into there.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: You make the point that because the boundaries are national parks and State forests, therefore, there are dogs. Can we deduce from that that the dogs are using the national parks as safe breeding grounds?

Sir OWEN CROFT: Yes. They are also developing the area on our eastern fore country, which will be declared as key areas for the retention of dingoes. National parks have a problem because they have to retain the dogs as the dingo but control them on the outside so they do not eat our sheep. There are core areas down the eastern country for the retention of dingoes so we always have that problem. They do breed in that country, there is no argument about that. That historically has always been their breeding country. If you are lucky enough to be on escarpment country with a property fence, that is a potential defence because there is a fence at various stages but on our southern area, which is open country, it is impossible to fence or the cost is fairly high to do it.

Mr SCHAEFFER: I would like to pick up on a couple of things that have been said. Dingoes initially inhabited all land. If you go back in history and read reports of our ancestors in the shepherding days, they inhabited all grazing land. They have now been in the forest country, national parks or unoccupied Crown land, in the main. We control feral pigs differently to the northern slopes board. Their board is half cropping where we have very little cropping and mostly grazing. The terrain makes it very difficult to poison them. That is why I said in my submission that 1080 poisoning was less effective and trapping was another tool that was used. Also, it was time consuming. Putting the traps in some terrain is almost impossible. You would have to walk in or fly in. Our number one method of controlling pigs in those areas is helicopters shooting in conjunction with baiting and trapping. I think that is all I would like to say at this stage. Thank you.

Mr PHILLIPS: We have interagency work with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and it works very well. They are easy to work with. One thing I would like to make clear today is that we have had a lot of trouble working with State Forests. It is like hitting your head against a brick wall. One of the biggest land-holders who said no was State Forests and the land-holders look at me and say, "Why the hell would I join if State Forests won't". They are extremely hard to work with in pig control.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: What reason did they give you?

Mr PHILLIPS: Money.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: That is all?

Mr PHILLIPS: You are lucky to get an answer. At times I have waited by the phone for two weeks for a phone call from them. It is difficult to work with them so if you could have a yarn to somebody about that, that would be great.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: Do you have a copy of the letters sent to the National Parks and Wildlife Service?

Mr PHILLIPS: I would have copies, yes.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: Could they be made available to the Committee because I would like to be able to table them. I move that those documents be tabled when they are received.

(The witnesses withdrew)

DONALD COLEMAN NOAKES, President, Yarrowitch-Tia Wild Dog Control Association, Old Woombi, Walcha, affirmed and examined:

ALLAN BRUCE WIGGAN, President, Barnard River Wild Dog Control Association, The Wrendren, Nundle, and

BRIAN TOMALIN, Vice-president, Barnard River Wild Dog Control Association, Chittick, Shearers Road, Hanging Rock, and

BRUCE MOORE, Secretary, Barnard River Wild Dog Control Association, Olsland, Nundle, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: Are you conversant with the terms of reference of this inquiry?

ALL WITNESSES: Yes.

CHAIR: If you should consider at any stage during the evidence that, in the public interest, certain evidence or documents you may wish to present should be heard or seen only by the Committee, the Committee will be willing to accede to your request, but that may be overturned by a vote of the Legislative Council. Do you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr NOAKES: I have updated figures on dog activity for this year that the Committee has not yet seen. The other thing I have is a map that is on the board and it is on a scale of 1:100,000 for the Yarrowitch-Tia Wild Dog Control Dog Association area. The red part is the National Parks and Wildlife Service area and the green part that you can hardly see is State Forests. The blue part shows where the dog activity has been over the past five years in our district. That dog activity is sightings of dogs, killings and all the rest of it. I would also like to make reference to the point that Owen Croft made about the quolls study which was in the area of our district.

The area they are doing the quolls survey in was first aerial baited in 1962 and has been continuously aerial baited since then until three years ago and is now mound baited. The quolls survey found in the first two years of the study that in the first year there were 27 trapped and in the second year there were 36 in a 10-kilometres stretch of road within national parks and forests. Obviously baiting has not wiped out the quolls in that area. That is about all I really wanted to push through. The only other point is that fencing in some of this country is not an option as far as dog control is concerned because of the steepness of the terrain. You could not maintain a dog fence in that country.

Mr TOMALIN: I have just a brief opening statement. There are a couple of developments since we made our submission and one of them is the report by *Kortner and Gresser on the impact of 1080 baiting on foxes and its impact on quolls. That really has confirmed what we have known for a long time, namely, that the 1080 baiting of wild dogs and foxes actually tends to benefit quoll populations. The other thing that has developed since we put in our submission has been the preparation of management plans in conjunction with the Rural Lands Protection Boards [RLPBs], State Forests and the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The intent of the plans is really to manage the habitat for dogs where there are supposed to be pure or near pure populations, and to minimise the harm or prevent predation on private property.

What we are looking for out of those plans is to eliminate preparation of livestock and we would also be looking to the agencies to implement measures to minimise the predation of native fauna. We would also be looking to the agencies for how they are intending to manage the wild dog populations and that will have to include how they manage the food or the prey species for the dogs, how they manage the feed for those prey species, and how they intend to maintain those core areas without further hybridisation, which means keeping the hybrid out and keeping the wild dogs and the dingoes in. I also want to touch on the advantages of 1080 for controlling dogs. We have better knowledge of how strategic bait placing can be and how accurate it can be.

The strategic nature of aerial baiting is quite important. We can place the baits exactly where we need to control the dogs and to minimise the impact on other non-target species. It is cost effective. As Don Noakes said, over the years since aerial baiting started in about 1962, it has developed up until the last two years into a buffer between the wild dog population in the gorge country to the east and the sheep country to the west. A buffer zone has created basically a dispersal sink that gets baited once a year to take out the wild dogs in that area over about a

12-month period by baiting dogs from the eastern parts and moving them to recolonise. Then they are picked up again the next year before they do too much damage to the grazing country in the west.

The side effect of dog control is fox control. We believe—and a lot of our experience tells us—that the aerial baiting program that we have had for nearly 40 years is quite environmentally sensitive. Areas where we have been baiting continuously or for a long period are places where we find our best concentration of the small native wildlife. When I talk about historical methods—trapping, fencing and shooting—that was done by farmers in the past up until we had aerial baiting. We got control of the dogs again and people can run sheep in places where they could not in the 1950s and 1960s. Unfortunately we are now being asked to return to the use of methods which have been ineffective in the past.

The buffer zone was created by 17 co-ordinated baiting programs which basically went on once a year for about an eight-week period from Singleton to the Queensland border. That gave us nine or 10 months protection from wild dog activity. Current methods that are being employed now, which are going back to ground baiting, include mound baiting, which is an improved method of ground baiting which is what we had in the past. We are being asked to go back to trapping and fencing which are all methods that failed previously. Our experience in mound baiting is that if you have got pigs present, you get about five to six mound baits and the pigs take all the bait anyway. After a long period of mound baiting, it becomes ineffective.

We can talk about perimeter baiting which is in force in national parks and in State forests at the moment. To us, it is ineffective because it puts too much baiting in the wrong places. The National Parks and Wildlife Service policy seems to be one of target control programs and again they are tending to be ineffective. In our experience over the years, control programs have been effective when they have been implemented over a broad scale which is what happened with the one from Singleton to Queensland aerial baiting program. Research that was done in Queensland by Allen and Gonzalez supports that. When they are baiting over 520 square kilometres, they had virtually no effect on calf predation. They got to bait 50,000 square kilometres and that had an immediate impact. To have effect on wild dog control, it needs to be targeted and it needs to be over a broad scale otherwise the dogs just re-infest the areas that she had just taken them out of. The message in that is that really you need to control populations of dogs, not just around the fringes. We believe that they should be improvements in the current practices and we will speak in more detail about that.

We believe that there are problems with the overarching legislation. While it may contain very good measures for wildlife protection, in practice the provisions are virtually impossible to implement. We need to return to a co-ordinated strategic baiting program which involves returning to aerial baiting and we need to reinstate the buffer zone which has been proven to be effective in the past. There are some other relevant matters that we would like to talk about if we have time related to the benefits of 1080 and the environment. We have some historical information that was taken by professional trappers in the 1950s and 1960s who actually trapped just one dog. We have quite a lot of historical information. Our association's records are quite extensive and go back almost to the 1940s.

A while ago somebody mentioned that terrain and its effect on the control of dogs. The escarpment country is different from the country we operate in. At both ends of the tablelands there is a break in the range which is basically a superhighway for dogs and we are on the highway, which is just their migration route. They come up the escarpment and onto the tablelands and they are in clear country. They do not travel very far west. In the timbered country and the country that we are in, it is a natural travelling stock route for dogs.

Mr MOORE: I would like to quickly go through the history and give the Committee a bit of background information. The first graph shows scalp receipts for nine Pasture Protection Boards on the eastern side. The Barnard River Wild Dog Control Association it is just one small part of that. They are dogs' scalps that were paid for. The dramatic change was the introduction of aerial baiting. That is basically all I can draw from that graph. The next one shows that there is very much a shortage of long-term figures. The main thing to draw from the graph is the time spent to catch and kill a dog. These graphs are from the Barnard River Wild Dog Control Association and tomorrow we will look at a relatively small valley. There were 20 dogs and 10 dogs were killed with three professional trappers employed. Those trappers were being employed by the landowners on a call basis. Each landowner put in a certain amount, based on the number of sheep he had. It is running at 11.7 or 12 days for a professional trapper to catch a dog.

The point of that is that in the times when we really had bushmen who were very skilled and who were engaged in that full time, it took them as long as 12 days to catch a dog. There seems to be a move back to using trappers as well as the other methods. We say that by going back 50 years, we have proved on our own property that we basically went broke relying on full-time trappers. If that again becomes one of the main tools, it will make sheep

producers non-viable. That graph shows the huge amount of time it takes, 11.7 days, and the point is that when you have a full-time trapper coming to your property, he will set the trap and work out where the dogs are probably coming to. He will set the traps and go away again.

It is up to the landowner to maintain those traps, run them every second or third day, because he cannot leave a dog there forever. He will get out and you have lost him. There are a lot more hours and a lot more days than those 12 days per dog if we can only source that information, which, of course, we do not have now, for years down the track. The third sheet shows 1956 records for dog scalps and the whole thing just ceased. Aerial baiting controlled our dog situation. We were using only small quantities of bait, 800 kilograms per tonne of meat. That meat was much smaller and poisoned in a different manner. That is a totally different situation. The next sheet shows us going basically to the current situation with the size of the bait and the amount of poison put in the bait. Initially, we had to use three to four tonnes of bait with fixed-wing planes to get control. We achieved control. We were missing about 0 to 52 per sheep over the whole association.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: Can you define what you mean by "control"?

Mr MOORE: In our area, which has 30 producers, if we lose 100 or 200 sheep per year we are willing to accept that. We consider that a minimal loss. There are some dogs in our country, but they are not seriously economically impacting on us. That would be our definition. We are not talking about elimination. The original goal of 1080 aerial baiting was the elimination of the dingo. We reduced the numbers very significantly and now, with the dogs being reported as resident, that elimination failed. It was never achieved. Even if we had baited from here to the coast, elimination is not an economic possibility, and I do not think it is a social goal at present. But when we are talking about this buffer zone and large scale baiting, we are talking about a narrow strip on the eastern fringe of sheep country from Singleton to Tenterfield on the eastern side of the Tablelands. It is about 10 to 20 kilometres wide where there is strategic bait placement with a helicopter. But that is jumping the gun a little bit.

We went from large quantities with fixed-wing plans down to less than two tonne with a much more co-ordinated baiting system. Your neighbouring association was doing it at the same time, but they were also targeting specific dog movement paths. Rather than just fixed-wing planes, you flew over the country with a helicopter and you went to locations where the old-timers told you that was where to trap a dog. We were able to reduce our amount of poison dramatically from four tonne to 1½ tonne and achieve the same level of control. In the last two years our predation is starting to increase again. We are seeing it because that strategic bait placement procedure is being compromised. Our access to those specific wild dog paths has been restricted. That sheet contains information about where we are suffering stock losses and where we are trapping the dogs. Most of that activity is either within or next to forest areas. Regardless of their tenure they are forest areas. Wild dog predation is associated with forest country.

The next sheet shows the cost effectiveness until recently of the wild dog aerial baiting program. Helicopter hire is a community government cost—34 per cent. The other large part of the pie graph is labour, which is made up of members from the local farmers association, so it is not Government input. The meat, again, is from local farmers. Until the last year or two more than half of our program has been self-funded. That is something we have been pushing and something I would like you to bear in mind in regard to the alternate perimeter baiting and mound-baiting techniques. I refer to the advantages of 1080 baiting as we see them. Its greatest advantage is its ability to control all dogs. The problem with other methods is that there is a lot more impact of man with the bait, with travelling along the road, et cetera. History has shown that with the old bait-shy dogs, or the trap-shy dogs, because with aerial baiting the meat is dropped from a plane, there is no man scent and the figures show that we achieved wild dog control with that method.

It is a very strategic method. We have our flight plans. We use GTS technology. We fly at treetop, we place the baits on long saddles, bridle trails and crossing points. We have local knowledge of where a dog will travel. It is strategic. It is not overall open slather, high density baiting. The buffer zone creates what we call a dispersal sink. In that 10 to 20-kilometre zone at the eastern side in of the sheep country we will remove the dogs on an annual basis. We are not taking out every one because it is not that effective, but we will suppress the numbers in that narrow zone. It seemed to take nine to 12 months for the dog to recognise the areas that we are now being told are called dingo habitat, where there are much larger populations of dogs. We talking about the true escarpment and towards the coast, heavier forested areas. Dogs are coming back into our buffer strip within the next 12 months and recolonising. It has become quite a large and efficient once-a-year operation.

Perhaps closer to my heart is the additional benefit of fox control. We have been going for 38 years. I am a sheep producer and I keep a very close eye on the predation on my lambs. We have virtually no foxes on my

property. The only foxes that come to our place basically come from our front road, through the forest. They come from road kills. They keep coming along, they come in and that is where we strike the foxes. They come from an uncontrolled area along the main road. This morning I had the wind taken out of my sails. I brought a specimen along to the National Parks. I was of the belief that it was an extinct species. In 1963 we sent similar samples to Taronga Zoo and we were told it was the eastern bilby, which is supposed to be extinct. I brought this along and National Parks has identified it as a long-nosed bandicoot. I cannot tell you whether it is the same type of animal that it was in 1963.

Last week in rainy weather I came upon that animal by chance. Birds had not had a chance to take it away. It was dead in open forest country not that far from where we baited. We have maps to show where we have baited every year for 38 years. We have removed foxes from that area, and that area can be 10 acres or 10,000 acres, depending on what sort of animal you are looking at. But the thing is, we have removed the foxes and the most likely cause of that animal's death was the quolls. I know that there are a lot of quolls in that area. I know that there are very few feral cats. The officers could not be very sure, but it looked like a cat or a quoll killed it. They said that to have that animal you must have a healthy environment. We suppress the dogs. We greatly suppress the foxes, yet we have other things and we have had them on a regular basis. That is both sides winning. I will be very disappointed if we cannot keep an effective wild dog program going to maintain that protection in that forest country that we have been baiting. The side benefit of foxes is an underplayed benefit.

Mr WIGGAN: I am one of the survivors from the original Barnard Valley area. Mr Moore's family is the other family that is there after the dogs ate everybody out in the late 1950s. I have seen a change in my lifetime, and I certainly do not want to see the change go back the other way. I have seen the heartache and despair of the dogs eating sheep and dogs eating wildlife. I was never privileged as a child to see the sort of wildlife that I can see every day of the week since the introduction of aerial baiting. That was never, ever evident. What has made that possible is aerial baiting cleaning up feral dogs and foxes. I make it very plain, feral dogs; feral dogs and bread twice a year, unlike a dingo. There are twice as many of them than there would have been before. Once they start to eat sheep or something it is like having a front-door key to the butcher shop. It does not cost too much. It is not very expensive to go in and get food.

If you want to see the country cleaned out and devoid of wildlife, leave feral dogs and foxes in abundance over there like they were when I was a boy and you will have nothing. We have to have a long, hard think about how we look after and maintain our national parks and forest country. We are never, ever going to improve the environment unless we put it back to the way it used to be, and that is without foxes and without dogs. Otherwise we have not got a chance. I had this little bilby, or whatever it was. I had my doubts as to what it was. I am not going to argue with National Parks. If you want to see those things back in the national parks there will have to be a damn big think about a doing the same as a few graziers did 40-odd years ago in the Barnard Valley.

CHAIR: Are you able to get the co-operation of all the land-holders to address specific wild dog problems?

Mr TOMALIN: No. Some people do not want to take part in the program.

CHAIR: Who are they?

Mr TOMALIN: They are private land-holders.

CHAIR: Why do they say they do not want to participate?

Mr TOMALIN: They believe that it is affecting the little birds, and they are worried about non-target species, et cetera. To some extent they are philosophically opposed to controlling them or virtually any animal. There are some people who believe that everything should be left to natural causes.

CHAIR: Can you work around them successfully?

Mr TOMALIN: It is difficult. There are a couple in strategic locations, in particular, who will not let us bait on their property. It is very difficult to get around that because you can put the baits all around them, but the places where you need the baits are not going to get the dog.

CHAIR: You said that State Forests was not co-operating in one particular area. Do you have good co-operation with State Forests?

Mr TOMALIN: We have co-operation. That is a problem I have with the development of many management plans. At this stage we are expected to work around State Forests and National Parks policies without addressing the issue, and looking at how we can get control. At this stage our current baiting programs are being restricted by National Parks and State Forest on what they will allow within their management areas.

CHAIR: With Rural Lands Protection Boards representing the land-holders, do you think there is still a need for wild dog associations? Do they still perform a valuable role?

Mr TOMALIN: Yes. The boards could not perform the operation that we perform. We are basically the operational part of feral animal control.

CHAIR: Pigs and foxes represent an equal problem as that of wild dogs. Therefore, is the Wild Dog Association a misnomer? Should it perhaps be called the feral animal association?

Mr MOORE: In our area dogs will put your existence at risk. We can live with foxes, pigs, deer and goats. To ring up 30 people and try to get a team of men for three or four days running, you need to hit the hip pocket nerve and you have to have a single goal to really achieve that level of voluntary input.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: You have just criticised State Forests and the National Parks and Wildlife Service because of what they will or will not allow your organisation to do under their jurisdiction. Would you like to take this opportunity, as you have parliamentary privilege, to state what you would like them to do to assist you with the feral animal problems that you have in your area?

Mr TOMALIN: You have opened up a can of worms. I can understand the restrictions and restraints on their operations. But the problem, as I see it, is the overarching legislation that they have to work under and we have to work under.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: What would you like them to do?

Mr TOMALIN: I am coming to that. The Threatened Species Conservation Act and the Environment Protection Act both provide in theory very good protection for environmental issues. In practice they are not working. It is restricting National Parks and to some extent private land-holders from reacting quickly to these issues. National Parks and State Forests certainly have to do an amount of investigation before they can allow an aerial baiting program to take place and that is a requirement under the legislation. If we cannot get the Acts changed to make them more workable we need environmental impact studies, reviews, et cetera done quite urgently so that we can get on with the job that we know works. In developing management plans we have started the process of drawing up a map, which is available for Committee members, of tracking where the dogs are coming from, their breeding grounds, their travelling paths and where the stock predation occurs.

We did remove land tenures from the maps. We drew lines on the maps. The next step is to put the land tenures on the map and work out what control measures we can take. I would like to see National Parks and State Forests come to those meetings with an open mind as to what control measures are best suited to get back those effective controls. We do not want to have to work around their internal policies, which say "We have a piece of country but you can only put the baits around the edges of it." The dogs travel through it and cross the bait line in only one or two spots. We need the baits in the right places to get effective control. Basically, I am asking that they come to the meetings with an open mind.

Mr MOORE: I use the term "perimeter baiting" as against strategic baiting. Perimeter baiting may be one, two or three kilometres into forestry areas as against strategic baiting, which is in the 10 to 20 kilometre buffer strip. The stumbling block is the limiting of that extra one or two spurs to get the bait that will achieve the results rather than a prostituted effort on the fringe.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: What is your estimated efficiency of aerial baiting in terms of how many baits you drop and how many dogs you catch with those baits?

Mr MOORE: We have records for 20 or 40 dogs being seen in a year, that is tracks being noticed, the dogs being seen or the dog being destroyed in that buffer zone within or just next to sheep country. We are not talking of thousands of animals. Aerial baiting with one to two tonnes of meat—

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: How many baits?

Mr MOORE: It would be 4,000 to 8,000 baits. It is four baits to a kilo in round figures. We achieve 12 months control, so we believe we are eliminating the majority of those dogs but because of the geography, we are there but the dog breeding ground further to the east is not being impacted on and recolonisation occurs within a week of the bait becoming non-viable, depending mostly on the weather and rainfall. The 1080 is biodegradable and is diluted, becoming null and void with water so if we get an inch or two inches of rain after baiting, the baiting program is compromised. The thing is to find the right bait. The major difficulty is that with our system we draw our maps and figure out where to put the baits three or four months before we actually do the baiting.

There are various restrictions and it becomes quite impractical to say that we only need 500 kilograms but we have to put in an application for two tonnes because our bait plans cannot be altered and this is done three to four months before we actually do the job. If the dog movements change in those three to four months—and some dogs are controlled by being shot or trapped—we still have the flight plans that have to go through the bureaucratic process. The huge side benefit of the fox control is that they have been controlled on a very long strip and I have seen huge benefits in native fauna. I cannot see low level of efficiency being a concern.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: There has been a lot of talk about mound baiting and we have seen a lot of evidence about that as a viable alternative to aerial baiting. If it were to fully replace aerial baiting, how many mound baits do you estimate you would need in your areas respectively and do you think that mound baiting could ever be as efficient as aerial baiting?

Mr MOORE: No, I do not believe it could ever be as efficient, going back on the earlier evidence about the amount of manpower there. Mound baiting is not unlike a dog trap and three trappers running in that area full time for 12 months would set less than three traps for the one dog because the time to get from one location to another is so great. The main difficulty with mound baiting across the State is that it is a success in some areas and a failure in others is because of the terrain and access. In our country access is impossible. It is horseback or an overnight type situation. Can that be done every three days to maintain a bait trail? You just do not do it. People would go out of business. In some areas east of Armidale you will see a barrier fence and mound baiting, along with other methods, has a major role to play but in broken escarpment country physical access is impossible not only because there are no roads but also in the wet climate, when there is 15 inches of rain in forest country, vehicle access is also impossible.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: How accurate is helicopter baiting? Are you looking at 10 square metres or 50 square metres?

Mr MOORE: Better even. We fly along the river and we drop them on the lee sides and there are cliffs on the other side. If you run half a kilometre or even 100 metres on a bridle trail where the brumbies run there are baits. Where there are treetops the helicopter ground speed is not great.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: You have spoken a little about the relationship between National Parks, State Forests, agricultural land and so on. What is the preferred structure you would see as appropriate, given that in your submission you talk about the need for buffer zones around these areas where the dogs are? Have you any comments on what sort of structure you would like to see put in place between the National Parks and Wildlife Service, State Forests and agricultural land?

Mr MOORE: Structures as in a regional plan?

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Let us think in terms of land tenure. Do you see that it would be appropriate to have national parks where the core dingo areas are bordered then perhaps State Forests areas where more intensive baiting could be carried out before you get into the agricultural land?

Mr MOORE: To take that down to the ground level, because that is why we are here, my merino breeding area is bounded by national park. It was State Forests but it has been taken over by National Parks so I do not think we can go back to having National Parks having one rule and then State Forests having another. It used to be that way. We need to take the land tenures off the map, look at where we need strategic placement for dog control and then overlay land tenures back there to try to develop a minimal use, maximum benefit operation. In my view that will involve aerial baiting in National Park and State Forests country. All national parks are not dingo habitat possibilities. We have smaller areas that cannot maintain a dog population; they pass through, whereas other national parks and State forests in conjunction do have viable dog breeding country.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: We have received evidence in previous inquiries from a number of different organisations and bodies that have put certain arguments to us. In view of your expertise in dealing with wild dogs I would like you just put this to you to give you an opportunity to agree or disagree with what has been put to us. Mr Tomalin referred to pure and near pure dingoes. It has been put to us that hybridisation is likely to increase and consequently we will basically have all wild dogs rather than pure bred dingoes. Is it possible to keep separate pure bred dingoes from the hybrid wild dog?

Mr MOORE: An eminent biologist, Laurie Corbett, from Wodonga said that by the year 2100 there would be no dingoes, no matter what government effort is done to maintain it. It is just evolution.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: I also was fortunate to hear that. It has also been said that the option of aerial baiting is not effective because huge amounts of bait are lost in the trees. As someone who is effectively using aerial baiting, would you care to comment?

Mr MOORE: Yes. The size of bait is like the size of a fist and they will not poison strips of meat. It has to be chunks of meat. You can see them drop to the ground. When you are in a helicopter flying like that, the tree cover is not as dense. I would not like to try to land in the leaves. You would go straight through.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: The other person who dealt with that suggested that the baits needed to be left on tree stumps or something that was high enough for a wild dog to get up to bite but too high for a quoll. It was suggested that that was the way to protect the quoll community. The arguments that have been put to us are interesting, but we just need to hear the other point of view.

Mr MOORE: We put in our submission that there was a forest environmental impact statement [EIS] conducted on one of the forests in a national park in our area. The independent biologist for the EIS found healthy quoll populations in that forest and in a forest near where Don Noakes comes from. There were very healthy quoll populations and we have en masse bait runs that have gone on there for 30-odd years. We have never believed that aerial baiting compromises quoll populations and it has now come round that we have enhanced quoll populations.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: A deal of evidence was put to us by a number of organisations that one should not poison any animal, that poisoning is inhumane and has pain associated with it, et cetera. I note in the Barnard River Wild Dog Control Association's submission that the final paragraph on page 8 deals with the perception of pain that is associated with 1080 poisoning of dogs specifically. Are you aware of any further research work that has occurred since the evidence you have brought to us from 1996 by Gregory? Do you have any further evidence in this regard relating to pain which would support Gregory's findings?

Mr TOMALIN: There is no other scientific research that I know of at this stage. My own experience with one of my dogs who had picked up a bait was that he had no idea of what was happening. Certainly he was off his head and it was a very distressing death, but he knew nothing about it.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: I move:

That the documents be tabled.

Motion agreed to.

(The witnesses withdrew)

(Short adjournment)

PATRICIA ELIZABETH McRAE, Grazier, Fairburn, Wollomombi, and

DONALD HUGH CAMERON, Vice-chair Armidale branch, New South Wales Farmers Association, Applecross, Wollomombi, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: In what capacity are you appearing before the Committee?

Ms McRAE: I am appearing as a private land-holder who over many years has suffered problems and on behalf of other similarly affected neighbours.

CHAIR: Are you conversant with the terms of reference of the inquiry?

Ms McRAE: I am, yes.

CHAIR: Are you conversant with the terms of reference of the inquiry?

Mr CAMERON: I am.

CHAIR: If you should consider at any stage during your evidence that, in the public interest, certain evidence or documents you may wish to present should be heard and seen only by the Committee, the Committee will be willing to accede to your request, but that may be overruled by vote of the Legislative Council. Do you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr CAMERON: Yes. In representing New South Wales Farmers Association members in the Armidale area, I point out it is an area where we have the full range of feral species—wild dogs, foxes, rabbits, goats and wild pigs. I believe that they are all a threat to the environment. I believe that the balance between the species is terribly important, that is, the balance between the feral species and the native species. I say that because there is a food chain interrelationship between them. When that gets out of balance, one or other species will get out of control and then start doing either damage to the environment or to sheep or cattle. One of the big problems as I see it that we have in controlling feral species in this area has been the large change in land management in the area because of the ingress of more and more national park area and because there are insufficient funds to properly control the species within the area and around it.

In addition to that, the perceptions and priorities of the managers of national park areas are different, or seem to be different, to those of private land-holders. This has led to a conflict between them, or a conflict of interest between them, and I think that we need a lot more co-operation between the managers of national parks and private land-holders in order to work together to control a common problem. A lot of primary producers in this area belong to Landcare groups and many of the Landcare groups take part in fox and wild dog management programs. They are very concerned not just to control wild dogs and foxes but to control the whole range of feral species so that the whole environment is protected, including the economic environment.

The increased area of national park has had a tremendous effect on the control of feral animals, particularly in this area, as we have such a large interface area between national park areas, forestry areas, Crown land areas and privately held land. The borders between these areas are terribly convoluted around the gorge country. This makes fencing very expensive and very hard to maintain, and as you heard earlier this morning there are areas which are not really able to be fenced. As I see it, the broad range of control measures, ranging from trapping, shooting, fencing and poisoning, are all very important and they all play a part in control. I think each one has to be made use of to its best advantage and they all have to be used across-the-board so that you get effective control.

There is another side issue which I believe is also very important and that is the role that the feral species may play in the spread of any introduced diseases, whether those diseases are exotic diseases or diseases that are already here. I think that we really need to keep proper control of feral animals so that we are in a good position to control any disease which comes in. I am thinking in this context of foot and mouth and the local one that is already here, hydatids, which is carried by many of the species. It is transferred through the dog and can be transferred from the dog or its habitat to human beings. The people who visit national parks are at risk from getting hydatids through drinking water or handling scats or by breathing dust that has blown up from scats and that type of thing. I think there is a very important role of controlling hydatids by controlling feral animals.

Ms McRAE: The area I am about to speak about is our property Fairburn which is the area outlined in black. As you see, for a short distance it borders onto the Cathedral Rock National Park and for most of its eastern boundary onto the State forest which is leased. The National Parks and Wildlife Service has actually expressed an interest in purchasing this area to add to an existing national park. We first heard about this approximately 15 years ago. It has created its own blight because the eastern side has a dog proof fence which is no longer dog proof. It was originally placed there by the early settlers and was manually laced. It was six foot high and it actually did quite a good job because traps could be set along that fence and you could actually check whether the dingoes were trapped in. In the 1970s it was suggested that we, R. A. McRae and Sons, put up a new fence. It was suggested by the Department of Agriculture and supervised by a fellow—perhaps I should not name him.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: You have got privilege.

Ms McRAE: It was Philip Da Silva, who was very well known. This was an innovation with electric fencing for internal fences as well as for barrier fences. Over the years the fence proved to actually be ineffective because kangaroos tracked underneath and then the dogs soon followed. But they still remained in the north-eastern area of the property, in the more timbered areas. We have seen that currently they range much further. They have been right over to the western side of our property and have been seen round our wool shed which is only approximately 300 metres from the house. They seem to have less fear of man. They attack mobs of sheep at any time. We just seem to be going along really well and suddenly we go out and find an absolute disaster.

Recently we had 200 lambing ewes with 80 lambs on the ground and 38 were found dead one morning. They attack for their own entertainment as well as for a food source. Sometimes these dogs become bait shy because they are more interested in the fun of a kill as well as in feeding themselves. We have noticed that they have become more powerful and have different characteristics from those of the original dingo. My husband's family were original settlers on this property which at that stage also included all the country to Ebor, but that is now a national park and State forest and was a total operation of 29,000 acres. Fairburn is now 5,000 acres and is freehold. We see problems with our sheep being pushed further onto the western boundary. In some cases we actually see that we create our own drought as only one-third of the property is now used for sheep.

In this day and age of survival, we actually need to be able to depend on two enterprises. This country is not suitable for farming because the soil is fragile and our summers are short. We feel that in this day of accountability and responsibility, it is not unreasonable to expect some compensation for damage if we are in fact providing the food source for these animals who have actually moved out of the protected areas, especially in the winter. It is probably not unreasonable to believe that by the time they have got across to that part of the country, they have probably consumed every small animal in the national park as well as those in the timbered area of our property which also offers protection for small native animals.

We have lots of problems that are outside our control. These can be drought, markets and foreign exchange, fashion fads and trends, and to that we have to add the damage to income and production, the suffering of those animals who are left in agony and, lastly, the stress that is inflicted on the land-holders. Holidays have been known to be cancelled when a dog is in, and constant surveillance is necessary until the predator is apprehended. We do not advocate the demise of the pure bred dingo. It is a wonderful animal and it has truly wonderful natural instincts, but we see that the number of feral animals that are actually in, or that are thought to be in, the national park could be the cause of the very demise of this animal as they crossbreed. I quote a publication titled "Dingoes of the New England and Guy Fawkes River National Park of North-East New South Wales: Are There Any Left?":

Preliminary findings indicate 75% of the NENP [New England national park] are pure bred dingoes but serious threats of hybridisation exist with the occurrence of 50/50 hybrids in the population. In the Guy Fawkes River National Park—

That relates to us because it is under the same control from Grafton which is quite a long way from where we are situated with an outpost at Dorrigo—

18% are pure bred dingoes and 72% are 3/4 dingo crosses but 50/50 hybrids are also present in the population. Hybridisation is clearly a serious threat to the survival of the dingo species in both these reserves.

I can also mention this publication in which there has been some research on hydatids:

... presence of hydatids within the wild dog population of New England tablelands has implications for both the livestock industry and Service staff when surveying dingoes and handling scats.

We also understand that the National Parks and Wildlife Service has included the neighbouring properties in a plan for a buffer zone. I may stand be corrected on that but we have heard that from many sources. Why is not a buffer zone included in the land owned and controlled by the park? If privately owned properties are designated to be used for this purpose, there should be some recognition of that role by compensation for resulting losses and extra work that is needed for surveillance and trapping of the animals.

Our grandchildren are the sixth generation of the original family property. Over many years we have created a breed of sheep that have been heavily culled and selected. They do not have as many fly strikes as others because of the culling. Animals that are destroyed by feral dogs, and we say feral dogs because dingoes used to range closer to the eastern side of the property, are irreplaceable. You cannot purchase a mob of sheep from somebody else's mob that would fit in with your own mob because it is a different wool type and they are other people's culls.

CHAIR: Over the years have you or your husband's family noticed a change in the feral animal population, and what types of feral animals they are?

Ms McRAE: Over the last, probably, 50 years pig hunters have come to try to eradicate the problem of the feral pig. Sometimes they come because of the sport and, while some are very genuine pig punters, others have been known to go to the dog pound and pick out a very nasty looking animal and set it upon the pigs. If it does not work those dogs have been left out there for many years. I could not tell you what breed they are, but they are powerful dogs.

CHAIR: They are the ones interbreeding with the dingoes?

Ms McRAE: Yes. Dingoes are known to have only one joining opportunity a year. They also have smaller litters for their very survival, whereas domesticated dogs have two breeding opportunities a year and they can have up to nine or 10 in a litter.

CHAIR: There were not so many problems with dingoes as there are now with crossbred dogs?

Ms McRAE: No. The dingoes used to range mainly in that back timbered area, and we just kept that for cattle. When we were first married, which is 37 years ago, we had twice as many people employed on the property and prior to that it was one person's job to ride the barrier fence, which was pretty intact in those days, and relace any broken holes and set traps if dogs had been a problem. Now they are so game they are actually seen in several numbers. Once upon a time you saw only a lone dog unless it was a bitch with small pups. Now they range much further.

CHAIR: It is quite a different problem to what it used to be?

Ms McRAE: It is indeed, and our special problem is that, although the National Parks people have been wonderful, they are sympathetic, but their hands are tied because of policies. As soon as we have a problem they come and seem to want to help, but the last time we had a problem, which was August—and that had been going on for months and months—they came and set a mound on our property, which had two baits in it, but the dog was bait shy. We tried to bait before that, but we could not get a look at the dog because it was ranging over such an area away from that eastern boundary that it was hard to track. If my husband can get a line on the dog he can usually track where it has jumped down from a higher level onto a more dirt-covered area. There he sets a rubber-claw trap with great success, normally, but when it gets over into that area it is ranging over such an area that we cannot get a grip on where it might be.

CHAIR: Do you know whether there are more or less foxes than there were 50 years ago?

Ms McRAE: In our area we have had a very dedicated land care group, which has included other neighbours who are not in the land care, and we have co-ordinated our fox baiting so that this year our lambing ewes have had an incredible percentage. We are very pleased with our results this year. We pushed our breeding ewes right over onto the western side and, as I said before, that creates its own drought because they eat out that side of the property. It looks pretty miserable. But because we have been able to keep them right over on the west, which is not good management, we have had a better lambing percentage because of the reduction in fox numbers.

CHAIR: What proportion of the property involves foxes and what proportion was dogs prior to that program?

Ms McRAE: Foxes are only a problem when ewes are lambing. One could say they eat the rabbits, which is good, but the main damage is done to lambs when ewes are lambing, whereas the dog will strike any sheep. It usually attacks it, rips out its kidneys and leaves it maimed, or runs as whole group of them into a dam where some are drowned. You go out to the mob to inspect them twice a day and you always know when there is a problem. You can hear the bleating. Obviously, the sheep are traumatised. We have some sheep that will never run again with the mob. They stick their heads in the air. They have been scared witless by their terror.

CHAIR: What about alpacas?

Ms McRAE: I mentioned alpacas in my submission. Somebody had suggested that perhaps we needed some alpacas, which are thought to keep dogs away from sheep. A neighbour got two and put them out with a mob of sheep. He said that they were pretty to look at and great fun but that they were fairly ineffective. You would probably need a mob of alpacas as big as the mob of sheep for them to be effective. We also looked at the Mareema dogs.

CHAIR: And they take the baits, as you said in your submission?

Ms McRAE: Yes, and they would be affected by any 1080 baiting program we might have on the property.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: In your presentation you said you felt that National Parks had insufficient funds to control feral animals. Is that correct?

Mr CAMERON: Right. The reason for this is the large area of national park that has been declared of recent years and the lag behind in its ability to finance all the new area, and to properly man it.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: Do you feel that National Parks, not just the local people with whom you interact regularly, have the will to control feral animals, or do you think that is a secondary consideration?

Mr CAMERON: There is a variation in that will. To give you a bit of an idea, my property lies just immediately to the west of the McRae property on that map. You will notice there is a National Park about halfway down this side, the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park, and another out on that side, the Cathedral Rocks National Park. They are controlled by different branches of the National Park. The Oxley Wild Rivers is controlled from Armidale. We get very good co-operation from them. The Cathedral Rocks National Park is controlled from Dorrigo, and they do not understand because we are on the far-western end of their area. I do not really know whether they realise they have a problem.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: Is that a communication thing?

Mr CAMERON: I think it is a lack of understanding thing, really. They have a different priority for the whole thing. Dorrigo is not a sheep area. Ours is a sheep area. They do not know the effect of wild dogs on sheep. An interesting thing happens: every now and then between those two National Parks I am absolutely certain that the dogs pass from one to another, both feral dogs and dingo species. They pass up along through a river and a creek up through my property and then to the McRae property. As they go through they eat out. They are passing through. By the time you find the damage the dog has gone. If you lay a bait there it is too late. You cannot anticipate when the dog is going to come back again. That makes it tremendously difficult. It is open country, and you do not know exactly where to put a trap. That creates a problem.

One of the dogs that the McRae's had working last year on their property was shot on the north-east corner of their property. It was killing sheep on the far-western side of my property, some 15 kilometres or west. That dog was passing through my property, or right through the McRae's property right through to my property to the far-western side of my property to kill sheep. Why does it do that? It is travelling a long way. I think it is because it is one of these crossbred-type dogs. I think a dingo would probably come onto the eastern side of our place. I do not know. But we are having a lot more trouble now, since all this area was declared national park. The area we effectively used to bait has been reduced to such a small area, a small amount of bait that we are having more and more trouble.

CHAIR: Can you quantify how much more trouble?

Mr CAMERON: Some 15 years ago I was not having any dog trouble at all on my property. Now I quite regularly have a dog problem.

Ms McRAE: For 23 years after the first aerial baiting, and in that time the fences were actually able to be maintained, we rarely had a problem. But then we started having problems in the mid 1980s, and they became worse and worse until, eventually, in 1997 I wrote a letter to many areas of government about our concern. Over 14 months we had lost 280 sheep, which equals about seven bales of wool. It is quite a loss economically. It is a huge problem as far as increasing the workload and stress. Our neighbours have lost similar numbers, even up until this year.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Does the rural lands protection board that covers your property have a wild dog management plan that co-ordinates things between property owners, State Forests and National Parks?

Ms McRAE: Yes, it has a plan.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Do you have any comments on that plan?

Ms McRAE: I suppose our biggest problem, really, is the fact that that large area of land right next to us has this blight created by the declared interest of the National Park to purchase that. In the interim, over those 15 years, the barrier fence needs replacing. We do not have any neighbour who will actually help us replace the fence. As land-holders the dog fence is our responsibility to maintain, but why is that so? Why is it just our responsibility when it protects everybody?

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: You said that the State Forests area was leased?

Ms McRAE: Yes.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: So it is not actually owned by State Forests, it is leased by them and used. How does that work?

Ms McRAE: No, there are very significant trees there. State Forests is not able to log it. It was leased over some years to a property owner who passed away, so actually State Forests comes to our aid. They actually help with mound baiting out in that area but quite often they cannot get through there. If we have lots of rain, especially as we approach winter, which is when we like rain, it is difficult for them to ride along that area and do the mounding. If we had a barrier fence we could use it as a base to trap against and we could see where the dogs have got in and set traps nearby. We could bait alongside it or outside it but we cannot get National Parks help as surrounding land-holders.

We only have about 100 metres of common boundary so we do not have anyone to share that cost with. It costs probably about \$7,000 to \$8,000 a kilometre to do a proper dog-proof fence and that is quite a sum of money for one property owner. I wonder whether the Rural Lands Protection Board has the right name. It is meant to protect our land but charges a levy for noxious insects. We all pay a levy for noxious insects to be treated at their source, which is mostly out west, and that stops them coming over here, but surely some similar levy could be applied to help out with fences when they need to be constructed and with their maintenance.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: What would you rate as the single most important action that would improve the effectiveness of feral animal control in the northern part of the State?

Mr CAMERON: I think a broad brush control program of all feral species and continuation of the use of 1080 is important. Also, there should be more co-operation between landowners and public landowners. That is it in a nutshell.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: Ms McRae, you spoke about buffer zones between your property and that of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. What percentage of your land is taken up by a buffer zone?

Ms McRAE: There is nothing designated. It is just that we understand that National Parks do not believe in baiting and controlling the dog numbers within the national park. When the dog comes on to our land National Parks has a reactive policy. They also routinely go in to bait, I gather, but it seems that until the dog actually comes out and kills, there is no great communication and effective culling of animals. I have read in several publications

that there is a declared buffer zone outside the national park. I do not actually know how big it is. I do not even know if it is policy. It just seems to be that with neighbouring lands they say they will come and assist us with problems when they arise.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: How far into your property do they actually bait? Is it purely perimeter baiting or random trail baiting?

Ms McRAE: Perimeter baiting. Along the dog-proof fence we drop the baits.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: Can you walk us through the sequence and timing of what happens. You have had a dog attack and you have lambs down. What do you do in relation to National Parks and State Forests? How long do they take to react and generally what sort of reaction do you get?

Ms McRAE: When it is seen that it is a repetitive strike we actually phone National Parks at Dorrigo and sometimes Armidale. We contact State Forests and we have meetings at our house. We have general meetings to discuss the problem and usually National Parks come within several days, or they did on the last occasion. That is all I can quote because we are the tail end and a great distance from the headquarters of Dorrigo, which is an outpost from the Grafton office—and we are a long way from Grafton. Our problems do not actually relate to those around Grafton because that is cattle country. The last time they came and placed a mound within the property, they placed two baits, which my husband had to destroy some time later because the dog obviously was not interested in the bait; it was interested in the kill, the fun of sheep running and the terror of the sheep. That continued to be a problem until the dog was shot. We do believe that aerial baiting along the barrier fence should continue. It is just that these dogs that eventually come out onto our property are more game and more streetwise than those that are in the park.

CHAIR: Who shot the dog? How was that organised?

Ms McRAE: It is hard to see a dog. You might see it disappearing into the distance. It was quite unusual in that our neighbour's son was travelling along the road and he actually saw the dog. He got his gun, went after the dog and shot it.

CHAIR: Are you sure it was that dog?

Ms McRAE: I know it was that dog. I can show you a photo.

Mr CAMERON: I can back that up because immediately that dog was shot, the killings stopped on our property.

Ms McRAE: We have not had a problem since that dog was shot.

CHAIR: What kind of dog was it? Was it a hybrid?

Ms McRAE: Can I show you a photo?

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: In the meantime perhaps Mr Cameron, in his capacity as Vice Chairman of the Armidale branch of the New South Wales Farmers Association, could tell us how often his organisation deals with State Forests and the National Parks and Wildlife Service to talk through the problems being confronted in relation to feral animals and the various reactions involved.

Mr CAMERON: We have had meetings with them in the last two years, annual meetings, and as a result the rural lands protection board organised for us to set up a wild dog management plan within our area. That plan was drawn up in December and signed off at the end of December. It is in operation for the next 12 months on a trial basis and will be reviewed at the end of that period.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: The rest of the land-holders are generally happy with this, are they? What would you suggest could be done to improve the situation?

Mr CAMERON: I think probably acceptance by National Parks management of their responsibilities and obligations to their neighbours. A lot are fairly new to the job in our area and have not quite got to know the nuances between landowners. You have an obligation to your neighbour to prevent what is on your land going on to

his land, basically. Farmers are required by law to control feral species and it seems to me that National Parks are not compelled by law. In fact, they have regulations that control what they can do to animals and that is an impediment. The other thing is the financing of control programs. The job is very much bigger than the amount of finance that is currently available and it needs a lot more money to be spent on it for the sake of the environment as well as for the sake of the economic position of land-holders.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: In the, I hope, unlikely event that 1080 is not registered for use following the current inquiry, to your knowledge has New South Wales Farmers or the Rural Lands Protection Board given consideration to how they would deal with this problem if 1080 suddenly became unavailable?

Mr CAMERON: That is a pretty good question because 1080 is the best available method. Considerable research was put into its development years ago. It is a poison that is derived from a native species so, to a large extent, it is a natural type of poison. It degrades well in the environment and I do not think there are any other poisons that are of equal value. It really gives me the horrors to think what might happen if 1080 is taken off the market. People could use any number of poisons in a haphazard manner to try to poison foxes and dogs and I think that would be a disaster for the environment. I think 1080 is just so important.

Ms McRAE: It is also targeted at a specific species. It takes a lot of 1080 to kill a bird—more than they could consume. It is my view that 1080 should not be taken off the market unless something is made available that is equally as effective at keeping the dog population within a reasonable size and which can be sustained within the parks without destroying the native fauna and without depending on neighbours' source of income as a source of food. If 1080 were no longer produced we, as land-holders, would have to change from two enterprises to one. One enterprise would be cattle because we cannot farm; it is not suitable country. Goats would not be a suitable alternative because they escape eventually into the national park and create their own problems as well, so dog numbers would multiply and they would then target the smallest of our cattle. We would have a similar problem with calves. As these dogs are getting more powerful they can actually pull down a calf if they decided to target one.

(The witnesses withdrew)

STEPHANIE MAXINE LYMBURNER, Bush Regenerator, Northern Rivers Region Advisory Committee, 126 Coolgardie Road, via Ballina, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: Are you conversant with the terms of reference of this inquiry?

Ms LYMBURNER: I am.

CHAIR: If you consider it any stage during your evidence that, in the public interest, certain evidence or documents you may wish to present should be heard or seen only by the Committee, the Committee will be willing to accede to your request, but that may be overturned by a vote of the Legislative Council. Would you care to make a statement?

Ms LYMBURNER: I am perfectly willing to have all my documents and everything shown to everybody.

CHAIR: Do you wish to make an opening statement?

Ms LYMBURNER: Not really. I have a PowerPoint presentation, the first of the day although probably not the last. We have been hearing quite a lot about things like wild dogs, pigs and various other animals, but in the far North Coast region we not only deal with those problems but also things like chooks and ants. Now that I have your interest, I want to show the Committee a map of the regional area with which my committee deals. I would like you to note that at the very top we border onto Queensland which means that dogs, ants and chooks do not know about boundaries and they will cross from one State to another. Not only do we need to have an integrated program within our own directorate, but we need to be integrated and doing strategic work with the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service as well.

There is an amazing diversity of habitats within the region. On the western border we have rangelands and sclerophyll forests and at the very top part of the region we have significant areas of rainforest along with many endangered species in that area, not only in fauna but also flora. We have also the coastal strip which has amazing pressures from people coming backwards and forwards as well as different ecosystems and fire regimes along that area. The New South Wales Northern Rivers region is one of the most biodiverse areas of Australia and includes, as I have already said, large areas of World Heritage listed parks. They are mainly along the border with Queensland but there are significant parks coming down the Richmond Range as well. In addition to those, we have two significant icon areas that the National Parks and Wildlife Service deals with and one of them is Mount Warning. The other one is the much-beloved and much-abused Byron Bay. Both of those areas have significant problems dealing with feral animals as well as weeds.

We have interstate visitors. The proximity to Brisbane is extremely close so the tourist pressure over the next 20 years will be extreme, especially with the new highway going through. Dotted throughout the landscape we have rainforest remnants which provide habitat not only for flora and fauna but also for feral animals. Relating back to the feral animals and the damage they cause, they cause significant damage to the rangeland areas, the rainforest areas, the coastal areas and down at the base areas which come into the Grafton district. In this particular situation, the Northern Rivers region under the auspices of the directorate put together the Northern Rivers region pest management strategy which deals not only with feral animals but also with weeds.

This document identifies the major pest population within a region and establishes priority control programs. The pest management strategies establish direction for pest management activities within the National Parks and Wildlife Service Northern Rivers region until the year 2004. The aim is to apply best practice, humane and cost-effective methods which will have minimal impact on the environment. In general, this requires careful planning to ensure an integrated approach is used, adopting a range of techniques at critical times and often targeting of one or more species. It deals with control strategies for foxes, wild dogs, pigs, goats, cane toads, cats, chooks and one of these days, although we hope not, ants.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: Fire ants.

Ms LYMBURNER: One of the most integral parts of this particular document, and what needs to be seen by the Committee as being extremely important, is the integrated management between feral animal control and weed control. You cannot separate the two. In this particular document they are looked at in conjunction with one another. If you have feral animals in an area they will open up the area and are highly conducive to the introduction

of a great many weed species. Because of the diversity of species that we have and the endangered species that we have in a particular area, the threat of weeds is almost greater than the threat of wild animals. The Committee will be able to see from the map the diversity and the regional areas that abut State forests, so we need to work in conjunction with State Forests and the Rural Land Protection Boards [RLPBs].

Shortly I will deal with a pied oystercatcher-mode program and fox control under legislation that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is bound to implement in relation to a threat abatement plan for foxes. The Committee might think that cane toads do not constitute a threat but they eat a lot of the little toadlets such as tadpoles of native toad and frog species. Since they invaded this particular area, they have inflicted damage on many of our local species and they are also toxic to many of the snake species—in particular, the red belly black snake. Some farmers might like that, but the reality is that those snakes have a part in the broader ecosystem. The little pamphlet was produced and it is distributed through the National Parks and Wildlife Service offices. It is also in tourist bureaus and is handed out at schools. As well as that, there is a series of posters and a small film—an educational package which unfortunately limited funding has prevented from being distributed in some of the schools and in some of the border areas.

We will get to the all- important fire ants. Two particular reserves within the directorate have had feral chickens dumped there. People are taking animals that they no longer want, usually bantams and roosters, and are dumping them. Of course there are always a few hens and so we get a problem with feral chooks. You may well ask what a feral chicken can do and what sort of problem it can create. They scratch around and disturb the forest floor and they disturb the plants that are germinating. There is a possibility of their introducing Newcastle disease and other diseases that are bird related. There is an enormous number of birds within the Northern Rivers region and if a disease were to come in, some of the threatened and not-so-threatened species would be affected. More importantly we have an animal known as the—just a few of them, I hasten to add—Mitchell's rainforest snail. It is a critically endangered species and a recovery plan has been written for it. The chooks eat them and so we have fewer of these important snails. The Newrybar Swamp Feral Pig Management Committee's presentation will be made by Lisa Wellman after lunch.

Following a previous statement related to the National Parks and Wildlife Service and other organisations, I point out that the National Parks and Wildlife Service in this area has assisted with the development of plans of control of wild dogs with the Rural Lands Protection Board. The plans have been written and accepted and I have copies of two of them. They are the first plans in this State to be a co-operation between those two organisations. They represent a co-operation between the Lismore Rural Lands Protection Board, the Casino Rural Lands Protection Board and the Koreelah and Legume areas of the Northern Rivers-New England board. They have identified problems within those particular areas and some of those areas have been dealt with already. The plan also deals with dog baiting programs. It refers to interrelating between the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the specific RLPBs and it is a wonderful thing that they can finally get together and start working together. The dog baiting programs are also identified in these plans.

There is concern in the community in regard to dingoes being hybridised with wild dogs and in turn creating a super dog with superior hunting skills. I think we have already heard various people talk about that but I suspect that Lawrence Corbett's rather negative view about the fact that in 2100 we will not have any dingoes left means that it would be only too easy to wipe clean the slate and say that we will not do anything. I think that that is not the way to go. I think we have to look at conserving dingo species and dealing with the wild dog species. Wild dogs are recognised within the National Parks and Wildlife Service and RLPBs as distinctly different species. There is an urgent need to set up and implement genetic testing of dingoes to assess areas of genetic integrity. There are areas in the western portion of the Northern Rivers region where it is believed that genetic pools of dingoes exist, that is, in the western areas and not in the border ranges.

Another thing which has not been mentioned this morning but which is incredibly important is the lack of enforcement of the Companion Animals Act. Quite often the wild dogs pass by urbanised areas or small towns or isolated farms. Unless the "domestic" dogs are being controlled at that particular time, they will run and go with the wild dogs. They will breed with the wild dogs and, as I said earlier, there is a chance that they will make these wonderful super dogs and they may not come back to farms and urbanised areas because they get used to running with the pack or they are killed. There is a photograph of what we believe to be one of the pure dingoes. Most of us would think that pure bred dingoes are simply a straight colour, but that photograph shows a dappled dog. I think the Hon. John Jobling wanted to have a look at the one related to fire ants because he thinks this is rather amusing.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: No, I do not. It is rather frightening.

Ms LYMBURNER: It is very frightening. Again, in a cross-government organisation program, the Department of Agriculture has put out a brochure and that has been handed out to National Parks and Wildlife Service offices and in various other areas. It gives a description of the ants and tells the size of the ants. Because I work in the bush and I am on the forest floor very frequently, when I heard about fire ants I expected them to be quite large. In fact they vary in size from between two millimetres and six millimetres. They repeatedly bite whereas most ants will bite once and then leave you. Many people have allergic reactions to them and apparently the bite really, really hurts.

Fire ants pose a threat not only to our great Australian lifestyle but to the complete region, with the potential to affect native flora and fauna, agriculture and tourism. They will also have a profound effect on outdoor activities, such as picnics and camping events. In this particular region the pest management officer is the contact person, and is responsible for distributing information to the public and interacting with other government organisations. There are great concerns about the transport routes between south-eastern Queensland where it is established, and the Northern Rivers region along the major highways—the New England Highway and the Pacific Highway would be notable areas they would come through—the transient nature of much of the population in that particular area, and the love of a gardening and outdoor activities.

Often fox monitoring takes the part of putting down little sand pads so that we can assess whether foxes are in that area and, if so, how many foxes are in the area and what other species are also there. Currently, they are targeting species such as the lyrebird and the rufous bethong in a situation where we are just starting to work with those. Obviously, fox baiting for the next financial year has a question mark over it—and the measuring of response of targeting species to baiting. Fox threat abatement plans in the Northern Rivers region covers nine reserves. One thing we have not referred to get the need for extra support staff in research for the REFs, which will be an incredibly important part of the success of the threat abatement plan in this particular region. The fox baiting program is one of the success stories for the Northern Rivers region. It was started in 1994 when they realised that there was no fledgling species of the pied oystercatcher that particular year, and they could identify clearly whether foxes working in that area.

In case you are not aware, pied oystercatchers are small black and white birds that work along the coastline and have nests in highly improbable places, like the tops of sandhills in very exposed areas. It is estimated that only 250 birds are in New South Wales at this time. In the past seven years, the time for which this program has been running, 41 birds have fledged. Last year a maximum of 14 were fledging, which is the highest number we have had. It is very exciting when you think about it. Not only is it exciting that we are working and starting to get rid of the foxes in that particular area, but it is also exciting to know that we are working in conjunction across the community with local fishing people, cane growers and bird watchers and doing an integrated project with Southern Cross University. The program received an award of excellence at a recent conference because it is integrated between various people.

What can we do from here? What is the next tack? How can you help us? I would like you to reflect upon the points from now submission. They relate to when undertaking effective pest control programs it is essential to plan and cost the work required. Accurate data is essential for good planning decisions. For example, wild dog management is currently hampered by a lack of a genetic data on population of purity and localities of genetically pure dingo populations on park estate. Remnant pure populations should be managed for conservation as well as minimal impact on neighbouring land-holders. The implementation of a co-ordinated approach to control is essential for cost-effective and efficient control programs. Programs involving the co-ordination of stakeholders' efforts also provide considerable opportunities for raising awareness and skill level amongst land managers, and the broader community.

Vertebrate pests have a significant role in both distributing and creating conditions conducive to the spread of environmental and noxious weeds. Their impact increases significantly the cost of weed management programs. Currently, there are inadequate financial and human resources to undertake required control programs for vertebrate pest species. As you can see, we need co-ordinated and co-operative programs. We need strategic programs, long-term programs, appropriate resources, use of best practice and humane methods, and community education. The Northern Rivers Regional Advisory Committee feels that the regional National Parks and Wildlife Service is fulfilling its obligation with the regional rural land protection boards and other government organisations, as well as implementing successful feral animal control programs. But to meet increased pressure from feral animals, population increases and community concerns they will need increased funding just to continue these programs at the current level, and greater ongoing commitment of funding for new programs, as well as increased human resources for research and the implementation of these programs.

CHAIR: How successful has the North-Eastern Animal Advisory Council been in promoting co-ordination?

Ms LYMBURNER: It has been very successful in promoting itself as an organisation, but also co-ordination with the Department of Land and Water Conservation and rural land protection boards. It has been a big success.

CHAIR: What is happening with the various species of feral animals in that region? Are they stable or rising?

Ms LYMBURNER: I do not think I could possibly say that they were stable, given the fact that they can come back. We need a cross-border understanding of the problems. But in many areas where programs have been successful, yes, they are in control mode.

CHAIR: Is it possible that chooks can establish themselves as a viable population in the wild?

Ms LYMBURNER: If there is a feral chook and a feral rooster, the answer is yes.

CHAIR: They could survive the threat of various predators?

Ms LYMBURNER: They appear to be able to survive various predators. Some 84 animals were collected from the two reserves in the last six months and relocated. The hens were taken by people who wanted chooks and, of course, the roosters had to be put down.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: On the agenda we have submission 120, which is a letter sent in by Terry Moody, against your name.

Ms LYMBURNER: Yes, he is the chairperson of the committee. I am his representative.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: Which stakeholders do you represent on the advisory committee?

Ms LYMBURNER: I represent bush regenerators, land care groups and dune care type groups of people, but basically bush regenerators, the Australian Association of Bush Regeneration.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: In the summary of Mr Moody's letter he comments on a lot of issues that are the primary concern of the damage created by feral animals, but it does not resemble very closely the presentation you have given this morning. If I may say, you have gone around the peripheral of the problems about wild dogs are attacking stock and the specific problems of the agricultural community. What do you think about the use of 1080?

Ms LYMBURNER: I have no experience with using 1080 because I work as a bush regenerator. Having listened to various people talking this morning, I would have to say it sounds as though it is a very effective weapon against feral animals.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: With the differentiation between pure-bred dingoes, the problems created by wild dogs and the problems created by hybrid dingoes, how would you suggest we identify pure-bred dingoes when they are actually harassing farm stock?

Ms LYMBURNER: It is very difficult to determine whether they are pure dingoes or wild dogs that are taking the various animals I spoke of earlier. There needs to be a genetic program throughout the whole region to assess the viability of dingoes and whether we have pure pools within the region.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: You mentioned that wild dogs can move to a community and that there is an attraction aspect: domestic dogs will join wild packs and go off with them.

Ms LYMBURNER: Yes.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: Do you have any evidence of that? In giving evidence we want evidence.

Ms LYMBURNER: No, I cannot.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: Vague statements about things is not evidence.

Ms LYMBURNER: I cannot answer that question effectively. Perhaps later on during a different part of the proceedings someone might be able to answer that question more clearly.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Have you had anecdotal evidence to that effect?

Ms LYMBURNER: Yes.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: So that comes from people whose dogs have disappeared after a wild pack has been through their area, or from people who have seen what they took to be domesticated dogs running with a wild pack?

Ms LYMBURNER: I would think the latter. I think animals that they have seen.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: Is the pied oystercatcher a migratory bird?

Ms LYMBURNER: I do not think so.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: You referred to the need to preserve populations of pure dingo.

Ms LYMBURNER: Yes.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: How would you define a pure dingo? Does it have to be 100 per cent or 70 per cent?

Ms LYMBURNER: I would say 100 per cent dingo and they can, apparently, identify that genetically.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: How do you propose they would identify those populations to determine that purity? Would every dog need to be tested?

Ms LYMBURNER: I think that dogs from certain populations within protected areas would need to be tested.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Would you agree that dogs that did not have 100 per cent dingo genes should be controlled as wild dogs?

Ms LYMBURNER: I do. In my opinion, yes.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: I want to follow up on the questions about 1080, which is a very important issue the Committee has to consider. Did you say, in response to Mr Jones' question, that 1080 should be continued to be used in national parks for wild dog control?

Ms LYMBURNER: Yes.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Do you believe that 1080 should continue to be used in national parks to control wild dogs?

Ms LYMBURNER: On the perimeter of national parks and in a strategic way, not in a reactive way.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Do you believe aerial baiting should continue in national parks, particularly given the evidence we heard just previously about the placement of baits using helicopter and GPS technology?

Ms LYMBURNER: Under the circumstances we spoke of earlier, yes I do. It sounds as though it is the most effective way of controlling wild dogs in national parks given the terrain of the area.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: This was asked of an earlier witness because, apart from focusing on the problems, we should be asking people to suggest solutions to the issues we are dealing with. What do you think should be done to improve the effectiveness of feral animals in this area?

Ms LYMBURNER: I am sorry, could you repeat that?

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: What would you rate as the single most important thing to help improve the effectiveness of feral animal control in this area?

Ms LYMBURNER: I would say planning would be the most effective and having an integrated project along the lines of this draft document.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Who would you involve in that planning process? In other words, who would be essential in order to make that planning work?

Ms LYMBURNER: Stakeholder groups, the Department of Land and Water Conservation, the Rural Lands Protection Board and National Parks.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: What is the composition of your regional advisory committee?

Ms LYMBURNER: We have 14 members on the committee.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: Could you please name them and the groups they represent?

Ms LYMBURNER: Terry Moodie, who represents the Bonalbo area. He is on the Total Catchment Management Board.

CHAIR: You may take this question on notice, if you wish.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: I am happy for you to take this question on notice. You say you are a bush regenerator. If you had to give a simple mission statement, how would you describe your position?

Ms LYMBURNER: Somebody who implements an integrated and strategic plan for removing exotic species from native natural bushland.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: No relative of a bushranger, obviously.

Ms LYMBURNER: No, definitely not.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: You gave us a fairly impressive overview of the planning program and possibly the implementation of some of those plans and programs. How many of those programs are active and in place now?

Ms LYMBURNER: This particular one is simply a draft document. It is out for public comment. It is the Northern Rivers Pest Management Strategy. It is out for public comment and will be so for the next three months.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: I move:

that the Northern Rivers Pest Management Strategy be tabled.

Document tabled.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: Do you have any other active programs in place?

Ms LYMBURNER: The two dog documents that I have here. There is the Legume/Koreelah Wild Dog Association Dog Management Plan and perhaps I could take this question on notice and provide you with copies of the other document.

Documents tabled

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: I would like to know how many of these impressive programs are active, when they were put in place and how long they have been operational? Are there any?

Ms LYMBURNER: Yes, these two are active.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: When did they become active?

Ms LYMBURNER: I cannot answer that question because I do not know. The South Ballina Pied Oystercatcher Protection program is also active.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: How do you propose to test the efficacy of the programs, by whom will the test be run and over what period will the program be tested?

Ms LYMBURNER: Perhaps it would be better if I take that question on notice so that we can provide more specific details to you later.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: Who is the lead agency of the Northern Rivers Regional Advisory Committee?

Ms LYMBURNER: The person being represented on that committee?

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: No, someone is normally the leading agency or senior body. Who would be the senior body on that committee?

Ms LYMBURNER: I am not quite sure what you actually mean by "body". Terry Moodie is the chairperson and is the most vocal member of that committee. Are you aware of what the National Park Advisory Committee is?

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: I am, but perhaps you could tell the Committee.

Ms LYMBURNER: It is a select group of people from within community. They cover a wide range of areas of expertise and interest. We have people on our committee who lecture at the university and also councillors from the various shires in that regional area.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: How are such people appointed and by whom?

Ms LYMBURNER: Advertisements are put in the paper and applications to become a member of the advisory committee are made. They are assessed by the regional people and all applications are sent down to the Minister for the Environment, who then reflects upon who could be on the committee. He appoints them. It then goes back to the regional director and he, in turn, contacts those people he would like to have on his committee.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: The regional people being National Parks?

Ms LYMBURNER: Yes, given that we have a National Parks Advisory Committee.

(The witness withdrew)

(Luncheon adjournment)

LISA JEAN WELLMAN, Chairperson, Newrybar Swamp Feral Pig Management Committee, and Pest Management Officer, NSW NPWS Northern Rivers Region, Colonial Arcade, Main Street, Alstonville, and

MICHAEL FREDERICK THORMAN, Noxious Animal Control Ranger, Kempsey Rural Lands Protection Board, PO Box 108, Bellgrave, sworn and examined:

JOHN DAVID WILLEY, Chairman, Kempsey Rural Lands Protection Board, PO Box 108, Bellgrave, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: Are you conversant with the terms of reference of the inquiry?

ALL WITNESSES: Yes.

CHAIR: If you consider at any stage during your evidence that, in the public interest, certain evidence or documents you may wish to present should be heard or seen only by the Committee, the Committee will be willing to accede to your request, but that may be overturned by a vote of the Legislative Council. Would you care to make your presentation?

Ms WELLMAN: I point out that although I am sitting here in a National Parks and Wildlife Service uniform, today I am actually presenting on behalf of the Newrybar Swamp Feral Pig Management Committee of which I am the chair. Other members of the committee would like me to make their apologies and they represent a number of different organisations.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: Your submission has a National Parks and Wildlife Service badge on it.

Ms WELLMAN: Yes, it does, and that is because the committee actually comprises a number of organisations. I will begin my presentation and explain who constitutes the committee. Basically the committee comprises the Tweed-Lismore Rural Lands Protection Board and Neil Hing is the noxious animal ranger for the board. It also consists of the Ballina Shire Council's waste management facility manager and the regional airport manager. It consists of Ballina police through the membership of Inspector Malcolm Turner. It also consists of local land-holders and there are three local land-holders on our committee, namely, Margaret Howes, whose land-holding is to the north of the subject area, Colin Beddoes, who is a land-holder in the western portion of the subject area, and Ms Fiona Folan, a land-holder on the eastern portion of the subject area. I am a representative of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Liz Dargin is a ranger for the Ballina Nature Reserve which is within the study area.

Basically the Newrybar swamp area comprises a combination of different land tenures, some of which are owned by the Ballina Shire Council, namely, the tip area, the airport facility, an area of uncleared land to the north of the airport and located right next to the township of Ballina, and land in Lennox Head which is not very far south of Byron Bay. Basically the whole swamp area is very extensive and covers approximately 76 square kilometres. A lot of that has now been filled in for residential purposes and the remaining area is a swamp in State Environmental Planning Policy [SEPP] 14, namely, wetlands. That is a significant vegetation type. Within that area we have the Ballina Nature Reserve which was dedicated in 1975. It occupies 665 hectares of the overall area. As I mentioned, because it is wetlands, basically the vegetation within the subject area is dominated by paperbark, swamp and mangrove forests.

The image on the screen shows a picture looking back towards the west. I do not have a pointer to be able to describe it to you but in the background in the foothills you are looking towards the Alstonville Plateau area which is cleared for mainly agricultural purposes such as macadamias and avocados as well as other such horticultural enterprises. There is a swamp in the foreground and there is a residential area which is directly adjacent to that on the eastern seaboard. The nature of the issue basically is that feral pigs were introduced in the Ballina area approximately 25 years ago. That is based on anecdotal evidence from both land-holders who have resided in the area and the Rural Lands Protection Board from previous rangers who have been with the board system. One of the main concerns to the committee is the proximity of the feral pigs to the urban areas, which are quite substantial in terms of population, and their proximity to the regional airport.

There are a number of services that operate between Sydney and Ballina on a daily basis so there are quite a lot of visitors and people who are using that facility. They are also around the waste management facility which is actually a burial tip so there are exposed areas and pigs frequent that area. This particular site in New South Wales is

a priority because of the location of the tip, the airport and the eastern seaboard. Vessels may pass through on the ocean side and the establishment of foot and mouth disease as well as other diseases is of a very high concern to all of us. This has been raised particularly with the New South Wales feral pig coastal task force. I understand in my position that the Ballina site was one of the high priority sites for the whole of New South Wales with regard to the establishment of foot and mouth disease.

There are a number of things that the Coastal Taskforce were keen to see that we were actually putting in place in terms of management of feral pigs within the area because of that threat. In my capacity as a pest management officer and also with Neil Hing who is the noxious animals ranger, we confer with the North Eastern Pest Animal Advisory Committee on the success or otherwise that is occurring as a result of our works that we implement within the Ballina area. This is just an image showing the Committee the real closeness of the houses and the proximity of the residential area to the area that is infested with pigs. As I mentioned, this map shows the Ballina township area on the eastern side. There is just east Ballina, west Ballina, et cetera, and the blue dot shows the location of the Ballina tip. The horizontal line is actually the Ballina airport runway and it is an east-west runway. It also shows the location of the Ballina Nature Reserve, which is in the centre of the diagram.

The purple line demonstrates the location and distribution of feral pigs at this particular point in time that we know of. The Pacific Highway is actually the western boundary. Over the past few months we have had reports that piglets have been seen on those sites so it is an evolving distribution which changes, depending on the circumstances. The management approach is used by all the stakeholders. Because we knew we had a problem and that it was in the interests of all land-holders in the area, we held a public meeting. From that public meeting, the management committee was actually formed. The delegates of that committee were nominated on that particular day. One of the key tasks of the committee was to prepare a management strategy which identifies the roles and responsibilities of all the stakeholders concerned. It was actually in writing so that all of the land managers had a fair understanding of their responsibilities to undertake the control of feral pigs within the local area.

Now that we have a strategy, which is included in our submission, we seek to implement the actions in the strategy that have been identified. We attend bimonthly progress meetings to check on some of how we have been working in relation to some of those actions which are fairly variable. I will run through the objectives of the strategy with you in case you have not had a chance to have a look at those. Obviously we want to decrease the pig numbers within the area. We want to minimise the environmental impact on not only threatened species and their habitats but also on water quality. We want to minimise the possible health risks to humans from exotic diseases that are carried by the feral pigs.

We want to minimise the safety hazards from feral pigs, in particular air traffic at the airport, and that is a real situation. The pigs actually frequent the airport on the runway and the airport staff do have to make sure that there are no pigs on the runway prior to an aircraft landing or departing from the airport. Also the vehicular traffic on local roads—I did mention that the Pacific Highway is one of our western boundaries—that is a serious problem. Piglets and other pigs had been killed on that stretch of road which is obviously one of the major thoroughfares from Sydney to Brisbane. Also there is just the general safety of local residents and visitors to the area.

During extremely wet periods the pigs move out of the lower country into the higher country, right up into the back of residential areas in search of other sources of food and higher ground. That poses a safety risk to people who are living in those areas. The minimisation of damage to crops and pastures by feral pigs is an interesting one because the actual crop surrounding the study area is sugarcane and sugarcane farmers are not ratepayers to the Rural Lands Protection Board. The Rural Lands Protection Boards undertake a number of control programs in co-operation with the cane farmers and they get no return out of it because they are not actually being paid for that. However the Tweed-Lismore Rural Lands Protection Board is an extremely good board and is willing to actually assist those land-holders, together with the rest of us land-holders in that area, to try to improve the situation that we have at hand.

One point the committee would like to stress is that rural land protection boards do not always have a great rate base, and they may not be paid for the work they undertake. It is out of the goodness of their heart that they do some of this work. What do we do as a committee? The committee wants a co-ordinated approach to pig management in the area. We want to implement the strategy that we have all signed off on. National Parks has agreed to the actions in it. Ballina Shire Council has agreed to the actions in it. The land-holders within the area and the representatives of those land-holders have agreed to the actions within that document, and the rural land protection board has also agreed to the actions in it. We want to make sure that we all implement what we have agreed to, to be co-operative in our control programs, which is trapping. We want to increase community awareness because of the location of our area to highly populated areas. We want to gain their support for the control we

undertake in the area. One of the main things we want to stop is the illegal dumping of pigs and we want it investigated. We have evidence that pigs have been dumped on purpose in the surrounding area.

CHAIR: For what purpose?

Ms WELLMAN: Just to be there to be hunted or to be there to be convenient to people who would like to try to kill pigs by whatever means they might use, whether it be firearms, dogs or spotlighting them. It is a real issue for us. That is why we have Ballina police working with us. My understanding is that the rural land protection who would does not have the legal ability to pull over a vehicle that has feral pig is all pigs in the back, or in a cage. The arrangement we have with Ballina police is that should anybody see a vehicle transporting feral pigs, we would like their assistance to stop that vehicle and question them so that prosecution can take place for illegal transportation. It is a very serious problem.

We wanted to seek funds for our project. Because we have prepared a plan about what we want to do, a number of organisations involved do not have access to funding. Although National Parks has funds for pest management and we have a person, like me, in the role to try to facilitate things, Ballina Shire Council does not have someone who will be available to undertake control of pigs. It has a council ranger who is supposed to implement the Companion Animals Act. However, that does not really transform into pig control. We find that staff at the airport are being trained by National Parks staff and the rural lands protection board in how to operate a trap, how to set up the free feeding, how to destroy the pigs by as humane method once they have been caught and how to dispose of them accordingly.

You will probably ask why we trap. Basically, because the committee feels that it is the best practice and the most humane method available within our study area. We have considered other options. For example, 1080 has been considered but because of proximity to the urban area and the existence of small rural holdings we cannot meet the distance restrictions for 1080. Shooting is not an option in our area, either. The Police Service has advised us that because of the line of sight and the type of vegetation within the area, and also proximity to the urban area, it is not advisable to discharge firearms in there except for the actual destruction of a pig caught in a trap. Basically, that leaves us with trapping, which is acceptable to the community, to destroy these animals once we have trap them.

One of the main features of our strategy is the request for public assistance. It is really important in this inquiry that the public understands all the work these types of organisations are trying to do. One thing we hear about, through our committee members, is that people hear about pigs but they do not report it. We have tried to set out a system for them to report sightings of feral pigs, whether it is to the National Parks, the council or the rural land board so that we can be more proactive in setting traps in the right locations. We also want to try to report illegal transportation. As I mentioned, we have evidence that pigs have been introduced on purpose to an area in spite of a particular individual. We were unable to take that any further because no-one saw them do it, but they have been bragging about what they did to that person. It was intent. We know where they get the pigs from, which is out in the western areas.

One of the other problems is access arrangements. As you can see on the map, National Parks has a small holding in the middle of the area. Therefore to undertake trapping on National Parks estate requires the assistance of land-holders in the adjoining properties. Without their consent to access their property we do not have access to our estate. It is really important that those land-holders support what we are trying to do, and that they assist us and the rural lands protection board to gain access to those areas and allow us to place traps on their land and work with them. Ballina council learned a lot from having the technical expertise from the rural land board, both the veterinarian and the noxious animal ranger. They were encouraging people to compost meat scraps, which is one of the main ways that foot and mouth disease could start within the area. Ballina council then had to advise people that they were doing something incorrectly by composting meat scraps.

The other thing we wanted to try to encourage them to do was to cover their compost heaps. In extremely wet periods when pigs were traversing some of the residential areas, they were eating out of people's compost heaps. It was really a high threat. The chance of something establishing was potentially very high. We have put together a brochure, which is in print at the moment. We can only provide a draft of that. It will go out to all the ratepayers within the study area to advise them of what they can do to help us to reduce the risks of disease, and also safety, helping us to do the best job we can in the area. Earlier Ms Lymburner referred to our proximity to Queensland. Unfortunately, a high number of people like to trespass into the National Parks estate, private property and the Ballina Shire Council estate with pig dogs. Land-holders in the area are quite distressed because they feel they have no ownership of their land.

Four-wheel drives turn up in the middle of the night with spotlights and their dogs. They get out, then they go ranting and raving through the bush and they can never catch up with them. Because they are coming down at all sorts of hours of the night then take off, they are not able to get registration details or anything like that. As soon as anybody turns up they are off. Land-holders are really keen to try to stop that kind of trespassing. They are seeking the assistance of local police to do that. A number of those things are beyond our control, but we really want to try to stop any new infestation of feral pigs in our regional area. We know that feral pigs are transported and illegally dumped in our area. At the end of last year in Toonumbar National Park two boars were released. Trapping is currently under way to try to trap those two animals. No feral pig population is known to be anywhere near that area. That is a real concern to us.

I have a document that was with the submission from National Parks that deals with the Pest Animal Management Program 2001, which states that it is documented elsewhere in the State that there are deliberate release of feral pigs, and it says that feral pigs have recently been released into Weddin Mountains National Park near Grenfell. This is the first report of feral pigs in this reserve or on surrounding properties. We know that in our area there are certainly instances of that. If there are instances in other areas of the State, something really has to be done about it. Our community is really concerned about it. We do not want to have to deal with other feral pig populations within our area. This problem has also been discussed at the North-Eastern Pest Animal Advisory Committee. The North-Eastern Pest Animal Advisory Committee has prepared media releases, which were released in the area the participants come from.

There were other areas within the Armidale, Glen Innes and Dorrigo areas where new areas of feral pigs had been recorded, or the populations seemed to be increasing. That committee is very concerned about the status of feral pigs within its jurisdiction. Earlier you heard about other pest animals, such as feral poultry. It is a really serious situation. We must try to catch these offenders before our jobs are made are tougher than they already are. We are trying to do the best we can do. The land managers cannot be everywhere at once to try to physically catch people releasing such animals into different areas. That brings us to reserve requirements. Our committee has already identified what we need in the strategy we prepared. An FIS was attached to that strategy, which shows that we identified a total amount of \$229,000 was required from the actions in the strategy.

What we see is a feasible option to be considered as part of this inquiry into the establishment of a structured system for the allocation of funds and technical support, for people doing vertebrate pest management. In the weeds world a system like that is currently in place, such as the North Coast Noxious Weed Committee, which actually gets funds from New South Wales Agriculture. From there they have a co-ordinator, which is funded to about \$30,000. They have money for administration. They had been able to fund participants of that committee for specific actions that may be in other weed plans within the regional area. Our committee actually proposes that another system should be set up that could be accessed by committees such as our own where we do not have great access to funds at this time. The development of regional strategies would be really good to be able to assess, say, the status of feral pigs within the whole regional area.

Although the National Parks has a regional pest management strategy, which identifies all of the pests, whether they be weed or vertebrate, within an area, there are no such plans for local councils, such as Ballina shire, that would make their job so much easier if they could, firstly, understand the pest they were dealing with in their area. The rural lands protection board has vertebrate pest plans, so it has considered its pest options. But it would be important if we could try to get some figures together on what is required to implement some of the actions if we were able to go that way. One of the other important factors our committee would like to see is legal support to really stop further dumping and establishment of feral pig populations and other species in New South Wales, not only in our local area but everywhere. If the continued establishment of more populations of this occurred, the money we are already spending is inadequate. We are going to need phenomenal amounts of money to get anywhere, to make real head roads in control programs.

For feral animal control in New South Wales, our committee believes that there needs to be provision of increased funds, which would facilitate a structure to see co-ordinated vertebrate pest management across all land tenures. It would facilitate expansion of existing programs, such as our own that is in operation at the moment, and it would also see the implementation of new programs whereby such planning documents, if we could do them at the regional level, we could seek to implement those new areas that may be required to undertake control, most importantly, to get greater community awareness. People out there really do not know that the damage and associated penalties with some of these pest animals. You have also been provided with some information, and a copy of an ABC *Stateline* television show that documented feral pigs and the problems they cause.

They are the kinds of things that need to be communicated to the public at large so they can really see the damage caused by these things, how much money is being spent and how many people are involved in trying to undertake control because without such programs the community at large does not understand the extent of the problems that everybody is trying to deal with. The continued success of the Newrybar Swamp Feral Pig Management Committee is that we need support from all stakeholders. At the moment we have support. We want to be strategic in our control. We have a long-term commitment and we are hoping to have a co-operated and co-ordinated approach into the future. We also want to integrate with other programs, such as weed control.

An example of that is that National Parks actually have a document where we have written about the restoration, rehabilitation and weed control requirements for Ballina Nature Reserve, which would apply to surrounding areas because of the similar vegetation types. With the implementation of such documents we can all be more successful in all our pest management operations, both from a weed perspective and a vertebrate perspective. Obviously, a lot has to do with the provision of funding to all these people and the provision of technical expertise. Without positions such as my mine and the Rural Lands Protection Board, land-holders really do not have the available information to be able to make decisions about how they should be undertaking control, when they should be undertaking control and how to deal with it to be successful. All of these things need to be considered so that we can do the best job we possibly can. That is all I have to say on behalf of the committee.

CHAIR: Mr Willey, would you like to make a statement?

Mr WILLEY: Yes. In the Kempsey Rural Lands Protection Board the major problem is dogs, then foxes and now we have a problem with deer and an isolated pig problem. We have an area of 940,000 hectares and 454,000 hectares of that is Crown land or controlled by National Parks or other government bodies. That is a major area for feral animals to continue to breed. We have been denied permission to aerial bait that area this year and have received letters from National Parks and State Forests. That causes great concern about how we will control these predators because we have complaints from people that they are coming into backyards. I have a photograph of a domestic dog that has been slaughtered and torn apart by wild dogs. They get hungry and they come in to eat what the domestic dog is not eating and if he goes to defend his feed bowl they are into him.

It is only a matter of time before some little kid will walk around the corner and say, "Look what's happening to my dog" and he could also suffer a vicious attack from these animals. We have seen that in Sydney and on Fraser Island. When they get hungry they resort to many things and, unfortunately, when native animals are gone, they will come looking for something else. You know yourself when you are hungry you will stop into McDonald's if you have to get rid of the hunger pains. With regard to the Wild Dog Association there is a problem with public risk insurance. For each individual member of the association it is not a proposition to have that insurance coverage and we hope that the Rural Lands Protection Board, under the Act, can cover those people so that they can carry out mound baiting for the rest of the year. That is our main problem. I will now leave it to Committee members to ask questions.

CHAIR: I am impressed by your feral animal survey and native animal survey. What conclusions do you draw from those surveys?

Mr THORMAN: That is the first survey of its kind that I know of. It is very hard to draw conclusions without other surveys to compare them with but that shows an abundance of wildlife species and native species, including quolls in areas that have been traditional baiting areas. It also shows noxious animals, foxes, wild dogs and their influx right across the board area from the coastal strip right through to mountain areas.

CHAIR: Will you go on doing surveys in the future?

Mr THORMAN: We hope to. In conjunction with National Parks we hope to do one every four years or so.

CHAIR: Are other areas doing similar surveys that you could join in with?

Mr THORMAN: Not that I know of.

CHAIR: It might be helpful to do that.

Mr THORMAN: It would be. Unfortunately, we do not have the technology to make full use of that sort of information and fully interpret it but we are gradually working to a position where we have GIS systems to better

pinpoint this information and correlate it to program the effect they are having on native species and whether we are controlling pests that we need to control.

CHAIR: Do you have any anecdotal or other information on the effect of aerial baiting on quolls?

Mr WILLEY: On that information it does not appear to be affecting the quolls.

CHAIR: If there is a follow-up in four years time and there is aerial baiting you can see whether there is any effect on sightings in those areas?

Mr WILLEY: Yes.

CHAIR: Your submission talks about an inability to reach consensus on important issues regarding the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. Can you expand on that?

Mr THORMAN: In regards to baiting with the Government and National Parks, there has been conjecture—and I have been in the job for two years so it is longer than that—in regards to aerial baiting and how it affects the quoll species and other native species where programs were implemented. They are now being declined because of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, which says we must not bait in areas where there is a quoll habitat, but it has never really been proved one way or the other because the money or time has never been spent on it. We are actually impacting on quolls and other forms of wildlife. You have heard today there is a school of thought that baiting is helping wildlife species to survive at a better rate simply because they are not being attacked by a higher order predator.

CHAIR: This area needs more research?

Mr THORMAN: Yes, it certainly does. Most of these things are hearsay and speculation. You can only do them by eyesight. It is extremely hard to monitor the impact of both wild dogs and foxes simply because you cannot literally see what is actually left. These problems usually start with someone saying, "There's not a lot of bandicoots or wallabies about" and all of a sudden you notice there are not many around and you have a dog attacking calves and livestock. That is where the problems come from. As they get through the wildlife, which is killed or chased off, then they look for something else, and that is livestock.

CHAIR: You talk about problems with rural subdivisions. What you mean?

Mr THORMAN: That is the word from Port Macquarie and Coffs Harbour. It is pretty well documented that there is a large influx of people coming into those areas. The highways from Sydney are a lot better than they used to be 10 years ago and people are moving here and buying land for rural lifestyles or holiday-type places. Quite a bit of land is held in speculation for future development. There are a number of people on those lands who are not traditionally farmers. They come from city lifestyles and have their own policies and ideals. They want to set their own lifestyles. Often their incomes are earned away from the farm, derived from an outside source. These people are extremely hard to bring into baiting programs. They see baiting programs in a very poor light.

The good side of 1080 baiting has never been advertised to people. They only see the bad side of it and the benefits are often never shown to them. These people will often have dogs of their own that they let roam freely. When they are approached on the matter they say that they have come up to enjoy the rural lifestyle. They believe that they have the right to let their dogs roam on their 30 or 40 acres but the dog impacts on wildlife and impacts on other people's income in the form of kills. These people just will not be involved with control programs. You cannot enforce the Rural Lands Protection Act on them simply because you are talking about a dog or a fox that is continually on the move. With rabbits you can see that the burrows are there so there must be rabbits. If it is a dog they say, "It is not my dog, it's your dog or the National Parks' dog." It is hard to implement programs on small acreage places when they are seen in such a bad light and there is no monetary loss to these people.

Mr WILLEY: A lot of these people believe that their dog stays on the front veranda all night while they are asleep. That is where he stays and he does not go anywhere else. They do not realise that if there is a bitch on heat he will wander a long way to get it. Half of them do not even realise what their dogs are doing.

CHAIR: And they join other packs sometimes?

Mr WILLEY: Yes.

Mr THORMAN: Quite often dogs are left to fend for themselves. A lot of people think it is funny that their dogs go chasing kangaroos and that sort of thing. It does not perturb them. They will come home overnight, walking inside, start watching television, forget about the dog and the next morning they come out and the dog is sitting there so they think that is where it has spent the night. It has probably covered 15 to 20 kilometres in that night with three dogs down the road. Quite often this is the trouble with baiting programs because people notify for one kilometre round but they actually end up catching the dog five or six kilometres away because the dogs have travelled. There is no way of knowing what sort of dog is causing the trouble when the dogs come from faraway. They get caught up in these programs and who is to blame? Is it the person who has been having the trouble or the people who did not keep their dog tied up?

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Are there any commercial pig farmers in the area where the wild pigs are?

Ms WELLMAN: No.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: So there is no chance they could have been farm escapes?

Ms WELLMAN: No.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: You talked about pig dogs. Do you see any justification for controlled pig dogging in that area—I am not suggesting it should be done in the way you described but given that you cannot use shooting and 1080 as well as trapping?

Ms WELLMAN: One of the committee members, Colin Beddoes, has pig dogs and works his own property, but the nature of the swamp is that the dogs gets bogged down and it is actually more life-threatening for the dogs working in the thick of the swamp. He will not put his own dogs in there and he actually radio collars his dogs on his own property, so really there are not many options available because people would be risking the lives of their dogs, if they value them, and not these other people who are bringing in rogue dogs.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: I am not suggesting it be done uncontrolled.

Ms WELLMAN: The nature of the site itself probably does not allow for that.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Mr Thorman, you said in your opening statement that you had been denied permission by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and State Forests to undertake aerial baiting. Was that on National Parks and Wildlife Service land and State Forests land that that permission was denied?

Mr THORMAN: Yes.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Earlier you spoke about controlling dogs on residential blocks and the 40-acre blocks and so on. Have you looked at implementing an education program for those people, particularly as they would be in breach of the Companion Animals Act by not controlling their dogs at night?

Mr THORMAN: Yes. As far as education programs are concerned, we try to stipulate the sorts of things required through our newsletters from the Rural Lands Protection Board but it is my feeling that we need more of a national approach on television or something like that and a more concerted effort. There is all sorts of information on anti-1080 programs that are coming out of three or four different bodies and that is warranting attention, but often the effects of a well-run and properly managed 1080 program have never been highlighted. I have never seen anything highlighted about it. A lot of people are even unaware that it is an obligation in rural lands to control their own dogs and to control wild dogs.

Mr WILLEY: It is very hard to get across to people that the little domestic dog that sits at the kitchen table to whom they feed food scraps will go out and be a vicious killer. People do not believe that their dog does those things and that is the problem. We have to try to get through to those people that their animals are just as bad when they get in a pack.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: The triangles indicating dog distribution, are they individual sightings?

Mr THORMAN: Yes, they are.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: This question is directed to whomever of the fellows from Kempsey wishes to answer it. We have received over 100 written submissions and so many of them refer to the need for better co-operation between the different agencies that are involved. Do you feel that the agencies involved in the Kempsey Rural Lands Protection Board area are co-operating properly? How do you feel that the State Forests people and the National Parks and Wildlife Service will fit into that co-operative structure?

Mr THORMAN: We have got a pretty good relationship with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and State Forests in the area, albeit that they have denied us aerial baiting permission. It is simply from their point view or perspective a management thing to do with the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act provisions which state that they will not bait in areas where there are threatened species. That is all well and good but private land-holders need to protect their stock and there is constant conflict about where and how they can bait. The National Parks and Wildlife Service staff are trying to go into mound baiting programs wherever they can get access to their land. We are trying to encourage private land-holders to bait in conjunction so that everyone is working together. Quite often with these sorts of areas especially on the coastal fringe, as you heard earlier the terrain plays a big part in how you go about controlling pest animals. Where we aerial bait and in the steeper or mountainous type of country that we are in, quite often you cannot get reasonable access into that country any more.

It is a bit hard to explain. Crown land management in effect holds the high land inasmuch as most of the national parks are on the top of ridges, but in the lower country at the bottom of rivers, that is farming country. Farmers will bait the country as much as they can, but you have always got to keep in mind that they have got their own dogs working there. They have ongoing programs with cattle such as marking and drenching and whatever, so their country is constantly being used. They are backwards and forwards over it with horses and dogs and they cannot afford to have bats out in the country on a continuing basis or anywhere where they might reasonably be working backwards and forwards. They are always looking to the high country and saying that if they can get the baits up there, it is out of their way and they only have to worry about their own dogs. We are still getting the protection because as the dogs come down out of the country they are picking up the baits. It is a continual striving to find common ground between Crown land and private land-holders so that we can keep baits going as they are needed.

Mr WILLEY: We are working with them at the moment with the deer. We have a problem with the National Parks and Wildlife Service in relation to deer. We sit down and talk to them and we try to help them through the Rural Lands Protection Act provisions relating to pest animals. We have a good relationship with each other and we try to help when we can.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: The maps that you have given us in your submission seem to show a lot of fox sightings in your board area. What particular approaches are you taking to deal with that problem?

Mr THORMAN: If someone rings up and has a fox problem, we will always help them if we can. The trouble is that foxes within board areas are predominantly in built-up areas and the fox programs suffer the same problems as the dog problems. People will not have baits in and around the place because of the perceived problems with them.

The Hon. JANELLE SAFFIN: Forgive me if you have already spoken about this, but I understand that you have worked with the National Parks and Wildlife Service to collect information about native animals. You did that through the ratepayers. Can you speak a little bit about that and what you found. How effective was that?

Mr THORMAN: I will try to elaborate as far as I can. The initial survey was done before I was employed at the board but it was done through the stock and land returns. There was an information sheet put in that and basically we asked land-holders if they had seen the native animals listed and whether they were rare, common or very common. We also asked them about the pest animal species. It is fairly involved in the way it is done, but each rating notice was tied, or a portion of it was tied, to a position on the map. It was fairly involved. There are new systems with JIS and the global positioning system [GPS] and they make it a lot easier. Hopefully, as we become more familiar with these systems, there will be no reason why we cannot do this on an annual basis simply because it is not as time-consuming as it was originally.

Mr WILLEY: Originally it started off with us being cut back with our aerial baiting all the time by the National Parks and Wildlife Service so we had discussions with the manager of that area and we thought we would put out this questionnaire. In that way we could pinpoint particular areas where we were having problems and we might have got permission from them to concentrate aerial baiting in that particular areas. That is basically how it got going.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: Ms Wellman, how many pigs you think there are in this area that you have outlined on the map? What are the projections of numbers?

Ms WELLMAN: We really could not be sure as to the numbers of pigs there. It is probably in the hundreds but we really do not know. It would be apparent that dumping of them is quite a regular occurrence from conversations that have been had among land-holders within the area. The Rural Lands Protection Board has removed nearly 80 in one year and that is really just on the periphery because a couple of land-holders were really keen to undertake trapping.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: In the objectives of your presentation, why do you not say that you want to eliminate these pigs? Why do you use the word "control" and not the word "eliminate"?

Ms WELLMAN: We really feel that we cannot eliminate pigs from the area because unless we can stop the people who keep dumping them, there will be a constant source of the problem. We can try to manage to the best of our ability what is there, but unless we can get police assistance and unless we are in the right place at the right time to catch the offenders, then we will never be able to remove them and that is going to be the case with a lot of other feral pig populations throughout the State.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: How much is a trained sheepdog worth?

Mr THORMAN: We are not in sheep areas.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Well, a cattle dog then.

Mr THORMAN: You can go up to \$2,000

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: Mr Thorman, you have said that the National Parks and Wildlife Service denied you permission to conduct aerial baiting. When you sought that permission, did you do so in writing? Did you get an answer in writing? If so, did they specify a reason why?

Mr THORMAN: A letter was sent and a letter was received. They explained that the policy was to go onto the ground.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: Because time it is short, I will help you a little bit. If they are available, could they be supplied to the Committee?

Mr THORMAN: Certainly.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: I think that most of the questions I want to ask have already been asked. Ms Wellman, you indicated in connection with the chronology of the Newrybar Swamp Feral Pig Management Committee's strategy that you are preparing brochures and at this stage they are at the printer.

Ms WELLMAN: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: Is my chronology basically right—that March 2001 was the national parks draft management and May 2001 was the formation of the Newrybar Swamp Feral Pig Management Committee? Looking at the plan that you have placed before the Committee and the financial statement, are you relying on either the State Governments or the government departments to supply the bulk of the money, or was any of it committed in last year's budget? In other words, the Ballina Shire Council's share is \$160,000 of the \$229,000 which is required for fencing in Ballina, so what money have you actually got, or are you acting in anticipation or hope of implementing a plan and hopefully getting some money?

Ms WELLMAN: I guess on the second part I would say both in that the National Parks and Wildlife Service has spent money on purchasing pig traps already.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: A bit over \$1,000, as you indicate in your budget.

Ms WELLMAN: Yes, and the Rural Lands Protection Board has already purchased some new traps. We actually requested more traps because we felt that to be more effective we needed to have more traps in more

locations. We actually made a request to the coastal task force. I believe that the chairperson of the coastal task force has tried to seek funding from other sources to be able to provide further assistance for us, particularly in the light of the fencing. If you allow me to refer to my notes, I have a quote provided by the Ballina Shire Council. They have undertaken part of the fencing required. I have a map. There was an existing fence around the tip area and there was a proposed fence of 825 metres that was required to complete that job. Those figures were based on the completion of that particular task and that was all that was budgeted for in the last financial year. They completed what they did with the money they had available and they will be seeking further funds to actually complete the rest of the fencing.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: Really what I am saying to you is that to make the plan progress, you are reliant on funds hopefully being allocated in the budget statement that is coming out from the council on 1 July, otherwise you will just have to sit there and wait.

Ms WELLMAN: Yes.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: You said earlier that it is not uncommon for four-wheel drive vehicles to drive through private property in the middle of the night to get to the swamp to shoot or spotlight pigs. How often does that happen?

Ms WELLMAN: Pretty much every weekend, from what land-holders have said. It might be on the northern part one weekend, and the western side, the southern side or the eastern side another weekend. It is fairly variable. Obviously, in holiday periods when there is a greater influx of people from Queensland they have more vehicles around and that could be at any time. It could be any time, during the weekdays and not necessarily the weekend. But it is a major concern for them, especially firearms issues.

(The witnesses withdrew)

BRIAN GILLIGAN, Executive Director, National Parks and Wildlife Service,

JOHN O'GORMAN, Director Northern, National Parks and Wildlife Service, and

ANDREW LEYS, Pest Management Co-ordinator, National Parks and Wildlife Service, on for oath.

LEONIE ALISON WALSH, Operations Co-ordinator, National Parks and Wildlife Service, post office box 97, Grafton, sworn examined:

CHAIR: Are you conversant with the terms of reference of this inquiry?

ALL WITNESSES: Yes.

CHAIR: Would you like to make a statement?

Mr GILLIGAN: I appreciate the opportunity to be present for this inquiry in Armidale. I note from your program that during the course of today and tomorrow you will see a lot of things that have a National Parks and Wildlife Service association in one form or another. In many respects that highlights the extent of our involvement in feral animal control programs and also the extent of our collaboration with the range of people who are operating in feral animal control in this part of the State. I note also that you will hear from people who have some association with the Service through our regional advisory committee structures.

I wish to highlight how much the Service relies on the significant contribution that members of our regional advisory committees make. They provide advice to us on the full spectrum of activities of the service. In recent years we have changed the focus of the work of the committee to try to broaden the nature of the involvement. Previously, there tended to be a bit of a focus on the detail of where individual tracks and picnic areas and facilities were within individual parks. We have sought to engage much more with the community on the wide array of issues for which we have some responsibility, and also to tap within the community the level of expertise and local knowledge that is available.

In our most recent appointments to regional advisory committees by the Minister we have focused on encouraging nominations from people across all the community with an interest in national parks, and making sure that those advisory committees were forums in which all issues could be thoroughly addressed and we could get meaningful advice. Against that backdrop, I would like to hand over to Mr O'Gorman, who will give you an outline of the logistics and organisational structure for the activities of the service in this part of the State, then hand over to Ms Walsh and outline some of the specific programs. Obviously, Dr Leys will be here to respond to any questions that might arise once we have done that.

Mr O'GORMAN: I will give a quick overview of the Northern Directorate. I am sure the Committee is familiar with the fact that the Service has four field directorates, North, South, Central and West. It is not too complicated from that perspective. The Northern Directorate is about 1.3 million hectares of reserves. The biodiversity and threatened species mean that New South Wales is probably unique in the world. I will draw the attention of the Committee to a couple of particular issues. We have a relatively high number of reserves. We have more than 270 reserves. The average size of reserves tends to be small, probably about 6,000 hectares or so compared to over 10,000 in other parts of the Service. The national average for National Parks would be 12,000 hectares. That raises boundary issues for us. We have been working through the CRA¹ process over the last few years to get a more contiguous reserve system, and we are purchasing leasehold land whenever it becomes available and as funds are available. That is an ongoing program.

The Hon. JANELLE SAFFIN: Is a copy of that in your submission?

Mr O'GORMAN: No. An overall perspective of the field directorate for Northern, about 380 full-time staff, five regions, about 19 local area managers and about 20 work locations across northern New South Wales. Perhaps for the Committee's comparison, about 1.3 million hectares is probably almost identical to the amount of land held by State Forests. That is a good comparison of public land tenure in northern New South Wales. Getting down to pest management, 54 full-time staff involved in either weed or feral animal control. We have about 7.5

¹ CRA refers to the Comprehensive Regional Assessments required under the National Forest Policy. The CRA process identifies land areas to be reserved for conservation and areas that should be maintained for sustainable timber production ~ *Brian Gilligan, 30 April 2002.*

specialist professional officers who are located at the locations you can see. In the bigger regions, Northern Tablelands has two, Northern Rivers has one, the North Coast, the mid North Coast and the Hunter. That is an overall perspective of resources allocated in terms of human resources.

The total budget for pests is about \$4.5 million in Northern Directorate. Again, that is basically weed and feral animals. About \$3.1 million in salaries and about \$434,000 for operational programs. That was a 41 per cent increase on the previous financial year. There is a break-down there of some specific programs in the Northern Directorate this year: \$175,000 on wild dogs, which is a substantial increase on previous years, foxes, feral pigs and feral goats. One thing I would like to bring to the attention of the Committee is something we have been working on over the last year or so, and that is regional pest management strategies. In the preliminary submission of the Service², the draft Hunter pest management strategy was included in the appendix. Now all five regional strategic plans are complete, and some copies of them have already been made available to the Committee. More can be made available if needed.

These plans have a common framework, a common structure. Dr Leys oversaw the initial structure in the context of what we wanted to put on public display. They are setting out our priorities both for weeds and pests. We will have them on display for about two months, and we are looking to get feedback from the community both for our priorities and the community priorities to see that they are outlined or whether we are missing something. It is something that we have worked pretty hard on and which we think will be a pretty good initiative. We hope that the Committee will pick up the initiative and give us some positive feedback. They will close about midyear and we will review where we go after that. From that strategic plan we will develop a number of individual pest programs that Ms Walsh will talk about. We are already doing some of the programs. In future our strategic plans will be part of our day-to-day pest plan. That is the kind of structure we are looking for to go forward with.

I should mention feral horses, which is an issue that has been of some interest to the community as a result of a feral animal shooting program in October 2000. I am sure the Committee is aware of the very extensive media attention that received. I should also alert the Committee to the fact that the matter is subject to criminal proceedings by the RSPCA against the Service, and the Service is defending its position. About 600 horses were eliminated during that three-day program. As a result of those three days two inquiries have been initiated, one which resulted in the Professor English report and the second report, which was basically a review of the implementation by the Service of the program. That is now available on the Internet and elsewhere. The second report is on the heritage value of the horses and that was Professor Nicholas. That is being finalised for the Minister. There has been a lot of work following up this particular incident. Obviously, there is a way to go before it is before the courts.

The Northern Directorate has feral horses in their reserves, one of which the Committee will visit tomorrow is Oxley Wild Rivers National Park. We estimate there are about 200 horses in the reserve at this time. Obviously, they are in steep difficult areas. We are looking for solutions, like Kosciusko. We will certainly look for our department to deal with the issue in a humane manner. We will involve the community in the program. We have horses in other reserves, Barrington and the Werrikimbee and others, but the main area other than Guy Fawkes is the Oxley Wild Rivers. Perhaps Ms Walsh can go through some of the more successful programs and then we will take some questions.

Ms WALSH: My task now is to give an overview of the range of feral animal programs that we undertake in the Northern Directorate and I stress this will not be an exhaustive list but I hope will give you an indication of the scale of work we do. Something that has been clearly reflected today is that wild dogs are a major issue, particularly for the Northern Tablelands. Our specialist pest management staff in the Glen Innes area have held a series of meetings with neighbours, rural land protection boards, State Forests and the wild dog associations in that area to try to improve the effectiveness of control programs generally there. As a result, baiting programs are much more co-ordinated, with most groups adopting two co-ordinated programs each year. In the Glen Innes area last year there were 86 dogs destroyed as a result of those programs. I should make it clear here that when I am giving the numbers of dogs destroyed, we are taking that from the numbers of baits taken by dogs.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: From the mound baits?

Ms WALSH: Yes, that is right. That is the best measure we have of numbers of dogs destroyed. Moving further south, and east of where we are now in the Oxley Wild Rivers and Cathedral Rock National Parks, the service, State Forests and the Armidale Rural Lands Protection Board have worked together with the Cooney Creek

² Refers to the written submission prepared by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and forwarded to the Feral Animal Inquiry in August 2001 ~ *Brian Gilligan, 30 April 2002.*

and Jeogla wild dog associations in major control programs in these parks and associated State forests and surrounding properties. In those programs 70 dogs were destroyed in Oxley Wild Rivers National Park in 2001. Also, those groups have produced a draft wild dog management plan for that area, which is an important initiative.

Going further south to the Upper Hunter area. The south-east of Tamworth have parks that include Ben Halls Gap and Back River national parks and Tomalla Nature Reserve. The National Parks and Wildlife Service conducts mound baiting programs to coincide with annual aerial and ground baiting programs that are undertaken on neighbouring properties. We are looking to complement and support those programs by undertaking mound baiting programs on national parks. In those parts we are involved with the Armidale, Tamworth and the Hunter RLPBs as well as the Barnard River Wild Dog Association. Barrington Tops National Park and Polblue Crown Reserve occupies a stretch of land between Scone and Gloucester. Here we undertake 1080 mound baiting programs in association with the Hunter Rural Lands Protection Board, Mount Hungerford, Rouchel and Ellerston wild dog associations, as well as neighbouring land-holders.

In that area on national park estate last year we destroyed 127 dogs and 250 foxes. It is important to understand that although I am talking about dog and fox programs separately, they integrate closely on the ground, so that is why I make the comment about the foxes. Most important, those programs have resulted in major reductions in attacks on domestic stock since they started. Wollemi and Goulburn River national parks are south of Muswellbrook. In these areas we are involved in a very large program that runs along the northern and western boundaries of those parks. The National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Hunter and Mudgee Rural Lands Protection Boards, the Rylstone Wild Dog Association and community groups in Widden Valley, Baerami, Martindale and Cassilis are involved in the program.

This is a large program involving more than 200 bait stations covering an area from Bulga, which is near Singleton, to Glen Davis, which is near Rylstone. Just to give you an idea of the diversity that can be involved in one program, officers in this area are working together primarily with sheep farmers on the western boundary, who obviously have a significant stake in the success of that program. Around Bulga our pest officers are dealing with large coal companies, which may be less inspired to get effective results from the program. It is an indication of the variable nature that can be encountered in some of these programs. Not everything is straightforward and simple.

CHAIR: How many were killed in the Wollemi and Goulburn River national parks last year?

Ms WALSH: In that area there were 300 dogs destroyed and probably as many foxes. I make the point also that within that area we have contracted the Rural Lands Protection Boards to undertake some of the baiting and monitoring programs on national park to complement programs of other surrounding properties. Moving across to the coast, things are a little different. In Myall Lakes National Park and Karuah National Park we undertake ground baiting programs a number of times each year in association with Gloucester Rural Lands Protection Board and surrounding neighbours. That is in response to specific problems as they arise. The challenges that our pest management officers face in these areas can be quite different to those on the tablelands. The Committee heard similar comments earlier that this is because of the large numbers of small properties, mostly hobby farmers—and perhaps absentee land-holders—which makes it very difficult to achieve an effective co-ordinated program.

A very important initiative that we are involved with in that area is the Port Stephens Feral Animal Management Committee. This co-ordinates co-operative programs by a range of agencies in and around the urban and semi-rural bushland areas. Agencies involved include the National Parks and Wildlife Service, State Forests, Port Stephens Council, the Native Animal Trust Fund, the RAAF, Hunter Water, sandmining companies and the University of Newcastle. The primary aim of those programs is to protect koala populations in and around those urban areas. That arose from some research that found one of the major causes of mortality in those population was dog attacks.

Still on the coast but further north and west of Port Macquarie is a series of national parks including Biriwal Bulga, Cottan-bimbang, Kumbatine and Willi Willi national parks and Fifes Knob and Gads Sugarloaf nature reserves. Here the service undertakes ground baiting programs to support the aerial baiting programs undertaken by private land-holders. We work closely with the Kempsey and Gloucester Rural Lands Protection Boards and various wild dog associations in that area. More than 80 dogs were destroyed in that area last year. In the Tweed and Lismore area our pest management staff there have been involved in the development of three draft wild dog management plans together with State Forests, Lismore, Casino and Northern New England Rural Lands Protection Boards.

That is a summary of the dog programs we undertake. I understand you have already heard quite a bit about the fox threat abatement plan so you will know it is a driving force for fox control in New South Wales. In the northern directorate we have several key sites under that threat abatement plan. There are 14 sites for the rufous berrong and most of those are joint sites between the National Parks and Wildlife Service and State Forests. We have contracted State Forests and the University of Newcastle to undertake the detailed monitoring programs associated with those sites. For the little terns we have a range of sites from Old Bar to Harrington on the mid North Coast area, Bongil Bongil National Park near Coffs Harbour and the Yuraygir National Park near Grafton. Yuraygir also features in programs to protect the pied oystercatcher.

Earlier today there was evidence given about the adult pied oystercatcher. There is also a fledgling and if you are a fox, that is a tasty morsel and cannot run fast. We have those programs for the pied oystercatcher and from South Ballina to Evans Head beaches. Under the fox threat abatement plan we also have programs in the Bellinger River National Park for the Bellinger River tortoise and the brush-tailed rock wallaby in Woko National Park north of Gloucester and northern Wollemi. The broad-toothed rat program is linked to wild dog control in the Barrington Tops National Park. We also have fox programs outside the threat abatement plan. We are involved in a program co-ordinated by the Southern New England Landcare Committee, which is a large-scale program involving 800 land-holders. It covers an area stretching from Nowendoc, which is south-east of Tamworth, to Guyra. It is a co-operative program involving the Southern New England Landcare Committee, Armidale Rural Lands Protection Board and the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

I understand the Committee will be hearing more about this tomorrow so I will leave you to enjoy the suspense of that. In the Hunter estuary there is a fox control program focusing on the Kooragang and Hexham nature reserves. Again, that is a collaborative program with the Hunter Catchment Management Trust, the Kooragang rehabilitation project, the Shortland Wetland Centre, Port Waratah, EnergyAustralia and the Maitland Rural Lands Protection Board. The prime aim of that program is to protect migratory waders, such as sandpipers. That program destroyed 80 foxes last year.

In the Upper Hunter there are a series of nature reserves including Towarri, Cedar Bush, Wingen Maid and Camerons Gorge. Here we undertake fox control programs prior to lambing. That is in association with adjoining neighbours. The same is also true of the Goulburn River and Coolah national parks to the west of Muswellbrook. Again, our co-operative program is in association with neighbours and the RLPBs. You have heard a bit about feral pigs and some detail about the important initiative in the Newrybar Swamp Nature Reserve. We also undertake pig control in the Barrington Tops, Ben Halls Gap and Towarri national parks. This is a trapping and aerial shooting program that destroyed 193 pigs during the last year.

In the Glen Innes area pigs are an issue in the Kings Plains National Park, Arakoola Nature Reserve and Kwiamble National Park.

The service has combined with the Northern New England Rural Lands Protection Board, Landcare groups and neighbours in a collaborative trapping and baiting program. That resulted in about 400 feral pigs being destroyed in 2001. In the Armidale and Walcha areas, in the Oxley Wild River, Werrikimbe, Nowendoc and Mummel Gulf national parks and Ngulin Nature Reserve there has been an ongoing integrated program of aerial shooting, baiting, trapping and ground shooting. That has succeeded in keeping pig numbers in those reserves to a very low level. It is collaborative program with State Forests and the Armidale Rural Lands Protection Board. It covers a number of private properties as well as State forests. We have succeeded in keeping low numbers in the reserves but, unfortunately, there are still large numbers of pigs on other private properties not included in the program.

Feral goats are also an issue in the Northern Directorate and we tend to use aerial shooting fairly widely, particularly in rough terrain. This is a humane and cost-effective method when you are dealing with large remote areas or with low numbers of feral goats. We use radio tracking collars that are placed on the animals that we trap. They are then released and they rush off to their mates to show off their flashy new collar, making it easier for us to find them. They are known as Judas goats. Our pest management staff face a major problem in maintaining their control over feral populations because many of our reserves are surrounded by properties with significant feral goat populations but with very few active control programs. As a result those properties tend to become a source of ongoing infestation back into the reserves, which undermines the efforts of our pest management staff.

We have programs in the Arakoola Bluff River and Severn River nature reserves and the Torrington State Recreational Area in the northern part of this region around Glen Innes. A number of aerial shooting programs last year resulted in the destruction of 570 feral goats. West of Armidale, at Warrabah National Park, we removed 115

goats last year and in the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park where feral goats have major environmental impacts, an aerial shooting program supported by ground spotting teams resulted in bringing that population to a very low level. In the Hunter area in Towarri National Park we have removed 200 goats since that area became a park three years ago. Unfortunately, a number of neighbours have goats and only one is a full-time goat farmer.

In the Coolah Tops National Park, we have removed approximately 200 goats from that park in the past three years. More than 3,000 goats and been removed from neighbouring properties and in that case all of the adjoining land-holders have feral goat populations but none of them is a full-time goat farmer. As you are also aware, feral deer is an emerging issue in New South Wales, including the northern directorate. We have had populations reported in the upper Hunter, Coolah, Mudgee, Port Stephens and all along the Putty Road. We have undertaken some surveys of these populations as the first step towards developing some management strategies.

In the Hastings area of the mid North Coast, the pest management officer there has been involved in establishing a working party to prepare a management strategy to deal with the increasing numbers of feral deer in the mid North Coast area. That working party includes the National Parks and Wildlife Service, State Forests, the Gloucester and Kempsey Rural Lands Protection Board, the Hastings Council, the RSPCA, the New South Wales Police Service, and representatives from the deer industry. The police are involved because feral deer are potentially a major public safety issue in some of those areas. Farther north the National Parks and Wildlife Service is working with State Forests to remove a small herd of fallow deer which recently invaded the Guy Fawkes River National Park and Marengo State forest. We are trying to jump on that one before it becomes another major problem.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Just on that point, where would the fallow deer have come from?

Ms WALSH: I am not sure. I imagine it would be from the neighbouring properties. We can find that out and confirm it for you.

Mr GILLIGAN: In most of the instances where deer occurred throughout the national parks areas, they have come from adjoining properties. The ones in the Royal National Park were the exception, being Indonesian rusa deer that were actually brought in. They were pinched from a ship that was on its way to New Zealand with them. They did not do great things for New Zealand, either, but someone decided that they might be an attraction in the Royal National Park. They were initially put in an enclosure there but the enclosure was not maintained whereas in most areas up and down the coast they have come from one or other of the various commercial deer farming operations. There are a total of six deer species that can be some degree of a problem to us in terms of land management.

Ms WALSH: You will also notice that cane toads are another emerging issue. They potentially can have very significant environmental impacts which have been detailed in the National Parks and Wildlife Service submission to this inquiry. I just make the point that the service ran a successful cane toad awareness program and education program in early 2000. The aims of that were to increase community awareness of the cane toad problem, to involve the community in reporting new infestations south of Grafton and also to involve the community in control programs. A good example of that are the cane toad musters that the pest management staff in the Grafton area have run.

Mr GILLIGAN: I think some members of the Committee have expressed an interest in attending one in Port Macquarie.

Ms WALSH: You would be very welcome. To summarise all of that, let me say that feral animals are a very high priority of the National Parks and Wildlife Service in the northern directorate. We have had a 41 per cent increase in the feral animal budget this financial year and that includes a 218 per cent increase in funding for wild dog control. We have a very strong focus on co-operative and integrated programs because they are seen to be the most effective and we employ some specialist and very experienced pest management staff whose job it is to work with the other agencies and our neighbours to develop the most effective programs.

As reflected in the budget, there is an increased emphasis on wild dog control and an important part of that is the development of wild dog management plans in a number of areas. We have a number of key sites for the fox threat abatement plan and that is accompanied by a 101 per cent increase in the budget for fox control. I have also spoken about some of the fox programs that we undertake that are outside the threat abatement plan. I have given you some idea of the programs we undertake to target feral pigs, feral goats, feral deer and cane toads. That completes my presentation.

CHAIR: Today we received evidence, albeit anecdotal to a certain extent, on the question of aerial baiting and its effect, non-effect or beneficial effect on quolls. Do you have anything you can give us to explain what the science is on those? Does aerial baiting in fact lead to an increase in quoll populations, or is there any evidence to show that they decrease quoll populations?

Mr GILLIGAN: I will make a couple of introductory points before I ask Dr Leys to give you a more detailed response. Yes, we are interested in research on the topic. At the outset I stress that we do not have any ideologically fixed position against aerial baiting but we do have a statutory obligation to consider the environmental impact of the work that we do, including our feral animal programs. The restrictions and limitations that we have put on aerial baiting to date are based on the outcomes of the advice that we have had as a result of those investigations. We are continuing with research work, the work that Bob Harden has done up in this New England area.

I know that Dr Leys will be able to talk to you about that because it has targeted the impact on quoll populations of the foxoff bait that is obviously specifically used in our fox programs as distinct from the dog programs. The Committee will have heard in its Cooma hearings of some of the research work that we are doing as a collaborative venture with various parties in the Cooma district to try to address the Kosciuszko problem, but at this stage there are some preliminary outcomes from Bob Hardens' work. I urge some caution in drawing conclusions from that simply because they are preliminary. Dr Leys will be able to provide more detail.

Dr LEYS: I will touch on just a couple of points. This morning you heard of the work undertaken by the National Parks and Wildlife Service research scientists—Bob Hardens group here at Armidale—and that work was to determine the impact of 1080 baits in the commercial foxoff medium and look at the impact of 1080 baits on the quoll populations. We know from research that has been done previously that quolls will eat foxoff baits, at least unpoisoned foxoff baits. Unpoisoned foxoff baits have been shown to have been eaten by quolls. We know that there is sufficient 1080 in a foxoff bait to kill a quoll or at least have a high chance of doing so, but what the research that Bob Harden undertook to do was to say what the impact was of putting out those baits in the field. Will the quolls take them? If they do take them, what is the impact of that bait on the quolls population?

We know that it can kill individual animals. As we understand it, you have a copy of the preliminary report that Bob Hardens' group prepared for Environment Australia. This research was partly funded by Environment Australia and the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The results of that were very exciting because they indicated that where the baits had 1080 loaded into them, the quolls rejected them. That is very significant and could have significant implications for us with regard to fox baiting. You may remember when Paul Mahon outlined the fox threat abatement plan at Nowra and we went through the best practice guidelines, we identified that we have a set of best practice guidelines where we have quolls and we have less onerous guidelines where there are no quolls.

If the final analysis of this work indicates that the quolls are not at risk as much as we thought, it obviously has major implications for the time, labour and expense of our fox control in areas where quolls exist. That obviously relates to large parts of the tableland areas. It may also have implications for 1080 baits in non-foxoff baits. What we have to be awfully careful of doing here is extrapolating too far at this stage. They are only preliminary results. If we start to extrapolate too far, we will be guilty of probably not undertaking work that Bob Harden would never have found if he had relied on previous work because previous work had indicated that non-poisonous baits that were loaded with a dye in the middle of the baits were found by the quolls and eaten. Unless Bob Harden had gone to the trouble of actually loading the poison into the baits and doing that in the field, we could never have obtained these results.

You have already heard about the next step from Tony Flemming in Cooma. One other thing that the Cooma advisory panel would be doing is investigating the impact of dog baits. As you will be aware, dog baits have double the amount of 1080 that the fox baits have. He is looking at the possibility of looking at the impact of these in the Kosciuszko National Park. In addition to that, there is a project based out of the University of New England where there is a research fellow who is interested in studying the effect of aerial baiting on quoll populations. That is alluded to or reported on in the submission that we have provided. The National Parks and Wildlife Service and New South Wales Agriculture will be providing some support funding for that work. That work will be done off-park in the existing aerial baiting run. There will be research projects which will monitor the quoll populations in aerial baiting and non aerial baiting areas with meat baits loaded with six milligrams of 1080.

CHAIR: How does mound baiting compare with aerial baiting as far as you are aware in controlling hybrid dogs?

Dr LEYS: I guess I will repeat what was said in Sydney and that is that the toxicity of the bait is not changed whether it is delivered from the air or put in baits that are placed on the ground or buried in a bait station. The issue is whether the wild dogs or the foxes are able to access that bait. With aerial baiting, it is a co-ordinated program, as you have heard this morning and previously, that is undertaken generally from May to June of each year. It is a once-off drop with a number of baits from an area stretching from Queensland down to the Hunter area. In those areas where we are not able to aerial bait, as Ms Walsh indicated in the northern tablelands, we have replaced those aerial baiting programs with mound baiting programs. In general terms, depending on the particular area, the baits are there for a longer period than they are with aerial baiting because they are replacement baiting.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: Mr Gilligan, it seems to me and perhaps many people who have appeared before the Committee that the basis of your objection and reason for holding back on aerial baiting has been the doubt surrounding the environmental impact on quolls. That would be a fair assumption, would it? When did National Parks and Wildlife undertake particular research in relation to 1080 and the quoll population by whatever form of data may be used?

Mr GILLIGAN: The basis of our caution at the moment is the Species Impact Statement done by Dr McIlroy. Dr Leys would have to give details of how long ago.

Mr LEYS: 1999.

Mr GILLIGAN: He did that on behalf of the Service. Dr Leys may have more details.

Mr LEYS: I think we briefly outlined this in Sydney. In the past we have been involved in aerial baiting over more parks than we are currently aerial baiting. It was brought to our attention that, because of the potential impact on non-target species, primarily spotted-tail quolls but not only, there is a chapter in this species impact statement by Dr McIlroy that outlined the other species as well, but certainly in the areas in which he reviewed and did this species impact statement, the spotted-tail quoll was the main species at risk. As things have evolved over the past 10 years, as the community and as we as an organisation have become more cognisant of what are the likely non-target impacts, and within existing legislation, and in this particular case it is the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, which indicates that we have to undertake an appropriate level of environmental impact assessment. It is consulting with people within our organisation and it was decided that we would need to do a further species impact statement, and that is what was undertaken in 1999.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: Firstly, the whole thing is based on what you and Mr Gilligan described as a potential impact. In view of the importance of the use of 1080 and the ability to deal with this, what other information has National Parks knowledge of in this regard? What other information has come into your possession other than the particular survey that you quote?

Mr GILLIGAN: First of all, John McIlroy's work took account of an array of other pieces of work that were done. I am conscious that some work was also done in Victoria, which has drawn some conclusions that we question. The Victorian work and Dr Leys might clarify if I am not clear about it, drew conclusions about a quite high level of impact on populations of quoll. We are questioning the validity of some of that. We believe it should be checked. That is part of what is happening in the work going on down in Kosciusko. I guess that is why I keep coming back to the fact that we do not have an ideological problem here with aerial baiting. In fact, there is a significant advantage for us in terms of the efficiency of our programs and the cost of our programs if, in fact, we can use aerial baiting.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: There is obviously a problem for a number of other people that need that. We are looking at the three-year period. Three years ago you expressed concern about a potential impact. We have to come back to its potential impact. McIlroy produced a submission you are working on and there is a Victorian one of doubt. Would National Parks and Wildlife not reasonably have asked: what research have they undertaken? What are we implementing? What do we propose to do? You have taken a fairly bigger premise on a potential impact. It appears it is nothing more scientific than the fear you have of a potential impact in this field.

Mr GILLIGAN: No. What we have done is ensured that we have kept our end of the deal by making sure that as part of the integrated programs undertaken on the collaborative bases with other land-holders, if we are the ones who have the grounds for nervousness on the environmental impact of aerial baiting, we are making sure that on the land for which we are responsible mound baiting is done and we really do not have any grounds for doubting the effectiveness of that ground-baiting program at this stage. We are doing continuing work in the Snowy area because of the issues we discussed at the Sydney hearing. But, as Dr Leys has indicated, there is an argument that

says: Hang on, if you have the poison in the bait in the location, how it got there does not matter an awful lot. Arguably, if you have a well-maintained mound-baiting program, although it might cost us more to do it because of our consciousness of the environmental impact, we have that bait in a position where it can deliver an outcome longer than by aerial baiting.

Mr LEYS: The Victorian research was undertaken with non-poison baits, but baits that were dyed. That technique was used until Bob Harden did this work. That is indicated in an area where it was aerially baited, where they captured quolls, collared them³ and released and captured them again after the area had been aerially baited. That indicated that about 60 per cent of the quolls in an area would access and eat the baits. That was the work done by the Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment. That work is reviewed by John McIlroy in the SIS. He also reviews all other work done previously. I point out that that work is discussed in our submission under aerial baiting. We have covered all that. John McIlroy is a former principal scientist with the CSIRO. He has done considerable work published in national and international peer review journals on the selectivity of 1080 and in the non-target impacts.

When he undertook the first species impact statement, which included reserves including Kosciusko National Park and Oxley Wild Rivers National Park that indicated that on the information available to him it was too great a risk to undertake aerial baiting in three of those reserves. In two of those reserves he indicated that in the areas we wanted to aerially bait, the risk was acceptable. Those two reserves were Washpool National Park and Oxley Wild Rivers National Park. In Washpool National Park the NPWS district at that time decided that it was able to replace the aerial baiting program with a ground-baiting program. With Oxley Wild Rivers National Park in the particular area that was considered crucial to the co-ordinated aerial abating program that has been done in northern New South Wales that you have heard about, we were not able to replace it in those particular areas with a ground-baiting program, and we have continued to aerially bait.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: I am not questioning Mr McIlroy's position, his qualifications or his professionalism. I am questioning the potential impact and information available to him. It would seem to me that a reasonable person, looking at what both of you have just put to the Committee might well draw a conclusion that simply said that National Parks and Wildlife took a position of the least resistance, and the easiest course, and let us do nothing. That may be unfair, but it is a reasonable conclusion to draw.

Mr GILLIGAN: So, can I take it from that you are saying that Dr McIlroy is an unreasonable person?

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: No. I am saying that you have not done enough to go further with other selected tests and look at the question of whether his findings are or are not sufficiently correct.

Mr GILLIGAN: We are continuing to work.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: Doing nothing.

Mr LEYS: That is not correct because, as we have just outlined, Bob Harden is undertaking this research. You have a copy of that preliminary report. We are funding additional research looking at the impact of aerial baiting on quolls. It is not that we are not doing anything. It is not that we have not undertaken aerial baiting and are not doing anything. In a number of reserves we have replaced the aerial baiting program with a ground-baiting program.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: We may have to disagree.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: When you say you have replaced the aerial baiting program with a ground baiting program, at what extra cost have you done that? I note that Mr Walsh said there had been a 218 per cent increase in funding for wild dog control. What increase has there been in the actual number of wild dogs killed? Surely, the bottom line is if you are going to spend more money on it you are going to kill more dogs. If the extra money you are spending is going into mound baiting rather than aerial baiting, is it really effective?

Mr GILLIGAN: We partially answered that question in the Sydney hearings when we outlined the program with regard to Biadbo where, in fact, we have reliable information that we have taken out some 250 dogs in that particular program. That was some little while ago, so it may be more since. The difficulty we face is the fact that everyone down there was acknowledging that even with taking out that large number of dogs, if you have a problem

³ Meaning a collar with a radio-transmitter attached ~ *Brian Gilligan, 30 April 2002.*

pack of half a dozen dogs you can still have significant stock losses. Any amount of baiting in terms of aerial baiting or mound baiting may still have a problem getting those wily half a dozen dogs if we are targeting preventing those particular stock losses. That is where what we have had to do is particularly intensified, the integrated control programs that involves some baiting and some trapping and a limited amount of shooting, although the effectiveness of that is very limited, and some fencing in some areas where it is strategic.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Evidence was given to us this morning that irrespective of how well the mound baiting station is prepared there still remains some remnants of human activity which the very wily dogs will pick up. The evidence we heard this morning suggested that with properly applied helicopter aerial baiting and accurate placement of baits there is absolutely no remnant of human scent on those baits and the very wily dogs are much more likely to pick up that type of bait.

Mr GILLIGAN: I do not know that I can comment in detail, only to say that you talk about a well-prepared bait and a well-prepared mound location. Equally obviously there is a quality control element in both.

Mr LEYS: It is quite obvious that when we are ground baiting there are bait-shy animals. I think that is accepted, and I think Paul Mahon explained that at the hearing in Nowra. What we do not know with aerial baiting is how many of the baits are taken by dogs. All I can do is refer you to research that has been undertaken with a simulated aerial baiting program, in other words bait laid out on the ground. The result of this work, which has been published in two scientific peer review publications, indicated that with non-target species, again the dogs, 92 to 100 per cent of the meat baits were taken by feral dogs. That is the only research I am aware of, and that is reviewed in this SIS, that indicates that there is a larger take by species other than wild dogs. One of the things we do not know about aerial baiting is which of the animals are taking the baits, except in this particular case.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Perhaps we need to look at the end result and the reduction in stock losses in those areas, and if there has been a 218 per cent increase in funding for wild dog control I would challenge you to tell any one of the land-holders whose land adjoins national parks to suggest there had been a similar decrease in the number of their livestock that have been attacked. In fact, quite the reverse applies. Those areas in which only mound baiting is occurring are the areas in which increased dog attacks are occurring.

Mr GILLIGAN: That is a matter of some conjecture.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: We have taken evidence to that effect.

Mr GILLIGAN: I appreciate that that may well be the case. I am simply signalling that there may be a counter argument that can be put that would question that conclusion being drawn. At the end of it, what we have recognised is that we have to work with all the people involved. We have to work with the adjoining land-holders and we have to have an integrated program. As I have said already, we are not ideologically opposed to aerial baiting, but we have the statutory obligation to address the environmental impact issue, and we are doing the work that will clarify that further.

In the meantime we are taking an integrated approach that focuses on intensifying the control measures that are available at the locations where there is an impact and we are doing it throughout the State. We are giving people undertakings that we respond and we respond quickly. I believe you have heard from various submissions before the inquiry that that collaboration is working in many areas but I acknowledge there are some areas where you have a rogue pack of dogs where we collectively still have a problem and it is a very difficult problem because we are concerned about the impact that is having on our neighbours as well as anyone else.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: If I can take you back to your opening statement in which you said that you tap into local expertise and knowledge in structuring the advisory committees, do you include Wild Dog Association representatives on your advisory committees?

Mr GILLIGAN: The call for nominations—

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Are there any Wild Dog Association members on your committee?

Mr GILLIGAN: I note that in the local area here, for example, we certainly have rural lands protection board people. Whether we have Wild Dog Association members, I am not sure. Someone else may be able to answer that.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: I suggest that you should be looking at actively seeking those people. Wild dog associations are made up of primary producers, land-holders, graziers and stock owners, who are suffering these losses as we speak. I suggest they could give you the feedback you require to increase the effectiveness of some of your programs, particularly in relation to the cessation of aerial baiting.

Mr GILLIGAN: I respond by simply saying we certainly have sought to get the widest possible cross-section of nominations for those committees. I have talked to the Local Government and Shires Associations and the New South Wales Farmers Association in terms of trying to get as wide a cross-section as we can, so much so that I have been criticised by some of our other stakeholder groups that I am diluting the involvement and the composition of these committees. I have made a very deliberate effort to have those committees around the table composed of people who are going to be able to bring forward all the issues that we need to focus attention on and to be able to debate those issues and give decent advice on.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: As executive director why do you not take the initiative of actually asking one of these organisations to join?

Mr GILLIGAN: The composition and formation of the committees are set out in the statute and it is a question of calling for public nominations. At that time I have encouraged the various bodies that I mentioned to make sure that their nominations are there so that the Minister, in putting the ultimate composition and membership of the committees through the Cabinet process, would have those opportunities. I will continue to encourage them.

Mr LEYS: Although it is an important process to have the right people on the advisory committee, when it comes to wild dog control, wild dog control in the tablelands areas is being developed through the wild dog management plans being organised by all the stakeholders. That includes not only public land managers, State Forests, National Parks, New South Wales Agriculture and the Rural Lands Protection Boards, it involves the wild dog associations as well and the New South Wales Farmers Association. That is where the detail of how we go about wild dog control is developed, through those wild dog plans.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: We received a submission on feral horses that stated there is a belief that the National Parks and Wildlife Service has an extreme malfeasance towards the Australian brumby in comparison to other feral animals. Have you any comments on that?

Mr GILLIGAN: The service suffers from no such complaint and condition. We have, nonetheless, had to face up to the situation that feral horses in New South Wales do cause significant damage in many of the parks and reserves for which we are responsible. Whether we like it or not, and whatever comparison may be drawn between other continents and Australia in terms of other people's treatment of horses, we have to face the reality that the evolution of the modern horse happened on those other continents. There have been horses in North America, for example, for 60 million years. There have been horses in Australia for 200 years and one can see the difference. The Australian landscape has not grown up and evolved with horses as part of it.

That said, what we have to do is manage the parks and reserves for which we have statutory responsibility. We believe that we must treat feral animals in accordance with our statutory obligation. Horses are feral animals in the context of our management of parks and, therefore, we have to control them and remove them wherever possible. I would stress that we have had a fairly tough lesson in the Guy Fawkes experience in that we must acknowledge that the community, or significant sections of the community, feels significantly differently about feral horses than they may feel about many other feral animals. The only others that come anywhere near to feral horses are probably deer and maybe that is the big brown eyes and the configuration of the face, but whatever it is, there is certainly a strong affinity that we must acknowledge.

To that end when we are undertaking control programs with regard to horses we must accept that such programs will almost certainly be contentious and that they must be undertaken with a greater than usual level of community consultation and engagement to consider all aspects of the issue. If you have a look at the work we have done since the Guy Fawkes cull in October 2000 you will see that we have changed significantly the way we approach feral horse management. If you look at the work we are doing in Kosciusko at the moment on developing a horse management plan with extensive consultation, we are looking at all the options that can be considered down there. We have just gone through a major public consultation exercise with regard to feral deer management in the Royal National Park using the same sort of model.

What we will do with Guy Fawkes and feral horses in Oxley Wild River National parks is to continue the work of formulating the horse management plan for Guy Fawkes and to apply the lessons learned that there are as far as they are applicable to Oxley Wild Rivers and also to apply the outcomes of the heritage horses study to look at what are the options for us removing the horses from the park and what are the options for managing those horses that may have heritage value elsewhere, rather than trying to manage them within a national parks system, which is arguably a compatibility problem.

Through the most recent work we have done we have a strong working relationship with the RSPCA. We are working closely with them to devise practical measures to ensure that both animal welfare considerations and the feral control requirements can be met in practical programs. That is a challenge, not just for us but for every landholder in New South Wales because there are some legal obligations with regard to both of those that I will not go into here because they are obviously the subject of court proceedings, but there are potentially significant implications there for every landholder in New South Wales engaged in a feral animal control program.

We are strongly committed to ensuring that we fulfil our statutory obligations with regard to feral animal control programs, including feral horse programs, but at the same time we will make sure that animal welfare considerations are properly addressed. We will also make sure that any heritage values that are attributed to wild horses can be addressed in the course of those programs as well, and that is a challenge.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: You took a position some time ago about stopping aerial baiting. I think you would agree that that decision was made on incomplete information. Due to the weight of evidence which has been brought to this meeting in recent times of landowners in very dire straits because of an explosion, particularly with feral dogs, will you consider allowing the reinstatement of aerial baiting to try to alleviate the problems of your neighbours pending further information?

Mr GILLIGAN: The short answer is yes, we will consider it. That is precisely what we are doing with the program that we are committed to with the panel down at the Snowy Mountains.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: Will you implement it?

Mr GILLIGAN: That is why we have a research program going on there, along with the intensified control program. The simple answer is yes, we will consider it, and we will thoroughly consider it.

(The witnesses withdrew)

(Short adjournment)

GARY JAMES SWANSON, Horse Team Manager, The Australian Brumby Heritage Society, Mount Pleasant, Enmore via Uralla, sworn and examined:

CHRISTINE ANN HAIRE, Co-ordinator, The Australian Brumby Heritage Society, Kararly, 7 Bowman Park Estate, Arding via Armidale, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: Are you conversant with the terms of reference of this inquiry?

ALL WITNESSES: Yes.

CHAIR: If you consider at any stage during your evidence that, in the public interest, certain evidence or documents you may wish to present should be heard or seen only by the Committee, the Committee will be willing to accede to your request, but that may be overturned by a vote of the Legislative Council.

Ms HAIRE: We understand that.

CHAIR: Would you care to make an opening statement? I understand that you have a video presentation. Is that right?

Ms HAIRE: We would ask leave of the Committee to show a very short video instead of making a long opening address. We would do so for the purpose of informing people who are perhaps unfamiliar with why we are here in the first place and people from the city who may not have had the opportunity to see some of the news footage. It is very brief. We would like to make a few remarks after that and we would be quite happy to go straight to questions, if that is all right.

[Video shown]

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: I think I should clarify with the Chairman a particular point which relates to the fact that a court case has been undertaken—*RSPCA v National Parks and Wildlife Service*. In my view, as far as the Committee is concerned there is no problem in discussing any matters that relate to the brumby, where the brumbies lives, or any other matters that a reasonable, but if there is a reference in any form to the specific court case, it will be incumbent upon the Chair to apply the sub judice rule and the Committee will not be able to proceed down that track. Any other comments relating to other matters will be all right. The fact that the television footage is a historical record and is in the public arena is fair. I raise this matter to prevent problems occurring, should the witnesses discuss any specific court issue or issue in argument before the court. I raise that as a specific point before we go any further.

CHAIR: Obviously it is a good point. I am sure you will not be discussing the court case.

Ms HAIRE: Not at all. As the Hon. John Jobling stated, the footage is offered purely as an historical public record to give members of the Committee the opportunity to see footage that many city people did not necessarily get to see. This is the reason why we are here to give a submission to the feral animals inquiry. Obviously the same 30-year failed practices that the National Parks and Wildlife Service have been running—they seem to be coming from the top—in managing this particular aspect in its parks are not working, and the National Parks and Wildlife Service has no intention of changing what it has done for the past 30 years, regardless of its representatives saying that they want community involvement. We have put in a Plan of Management to Government—in fact, to the Minister for the Environment—to manage these horses who were never a problem before the parks took over.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service has taken vast tracts of land in the Northern Tablelands and intends to take even more under its latest Wilderness submission. It will end up being in the vicinity of 400,000-odd hectares. The National Parks and Wildlife Service is taking more land out west at Pilliga and is taking more land down south as well. It has left the horses with absolutely nowhere to go. Years ago when these horses were managed by the country people who lived in the regions, they were never a problem. They were managed humanely, they were managed properly and they were managed from the ground. The National Parks and Wildlife Service cannot be all things to all people. It does not have the expertise to do that, and we have.

CHAIR: How should they be managed?

Ms HAIRE: Years ago before the parks came along, the horses were never allowed to get to any population level that we are looking at now. But let us get the population level into perspective as well. The National Parks and Wildlife Service keeps telling us that these horses are doing all sorts of extraordinarily big environmental damage. The National Parks and Wildlife Service claims to have shot 606 of them. I am not going into the court case because this is also in the National Parks and Wildlife Service's English report into the culling. I am just stating figures. The National Parks and Wildlife Service used the Global Positioning System [GPS] for every horse. No 606 horses were ever found.

The total count from four different aerial surveys in the Guy Fawkes River National Park slaughter was 226. The National Parks and Wildlife Service now says that the number of horses left in the Guy Fawkes River National Park is approximately 80. Ladies and gentlemen, please get it into perspective. We are talking about an area of 135,000 hectares. This is ridiculous. In the total of New South Wales, according to the National Parks and Wildlife Service's own figures, there are 3,417 brumbies ranging over an area of parks of 3,211,971 hectares, and that does not include the latest wilderness areas that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is now going after. We now know that the parks have 7 per cent of the State and that does not include the wilderness proposals that are out there just now and that are about to have the rubber stamp put on them.

When they are talking about environmental damage regarding brumbies in New South Wales, the National Parks and Wildlife Service will show you figures and research from the Northern Directorate. That is not applicable to our State. We ask the Committee and the Chair to please question the figures that are put in front of you before you run down the same ramp that they are trying to run you down. They are now saying that they will go back to mustering. May I please point out that in their own records, when they started mustering—which I may say started only in 1992—they killed more than 50 per cent of the horses that they mustered. They tortured them and then they were killed. This was not, if you like, deliberate, but what can you expect when you get a wild horse and tie it to the bumper bar of a four-wheel-drive vehicle and drag it up an escarpment? You can expect some problems.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service personnel are not horse people and they do not want community and regional involvement. We have tried to do this and every time we go to them to try to do something like that they come out in the paper and say, "Oh yes, we are very keen on community involvement", but the reality down on the ground where we live is that that is not what happens, no matter what the director-general has stood up here and told you today. We were just in time to see him tell you about Kosciuszko and about what they are doing with the horse program down there. Would you like to know the reality? The reality is that they are turning a blind eye to the doggers and other people who go in and pull foals off mares down in Kosciuszko—anything to get rid of the horses. There is no practicality.

We have not come here today to say that we would like to work co-operatively with the National Parks and Wildlife Service. We have now come to the conclusion, as have many other organisations before us who are much longer in the tooth than we are, that you cannot work with National Parks and Wildlife Service personnel. I must ask that the Committee start to be as foresighted as is the Minister for Conservation and Environment in Victoria. She discovered that only three-eighths of the budget was getting to the people on the ground for wild dog control. She then allocated the budget directly to the regional committees so that they could make decisions. We are asking for the same thing.

We would be prepared to set our benchmark of excellence of management in the Northern Tablelands such that you could then export it to other parts that currently have brumbies, and currently have little groups that are resident in that area and want to do the same thing. If you ever care to look at the reports that have been released of where the brumbies are, there are very few left. We are running out of time to keep them. The Parks' stated public objective is total eradication. That is another nice way of saying extinction. It has no care for the fact that we have now proved these horses have been there since the white settlers came before 1850. We have proven that, but that is not good enough.

The Environment Minister's Heritage Working Party that he set up at Dorrigo, where we presented a submission and proved to them with documented and oral history from surviving members of the Australian Light Horse that a number of the best of the horses ranging in the Northern Tablelands were mustered for war duties up to and including the Second World War in 1939. We provided proof of the horses' historical and heritage value, but that meant nothing.

The terms of reference were written by the same bloke who found that the slaughter you just saw on the television was humane. He said that regardless of whether heritage value is found, the horses will be removed.

What is the point? Country people are so damned sick and tired of coming to inquiries, of putting in submissions and of finding that we do not have a democratic voice. The Wilderness that has been proposed in the Northern Tablelands was proposed by seven green groups. Some 1,490-odd objections were raised from people within the first two years of their assessment. Did that stop the process? No. The process went on for another two years, and it will go through because the weight of democracy does not exist in the National Parks. I do not know what you are going to do in Government in terms of getting this monolithic department under control, but I dare say you have had an earful today and we are not here to make your afternoon any better. All I can say is that we have a Plan of Management. We have the people who know the wild horses and the country, people who have lived here for generations and have the experience to do the job. But we are not even getting a look in. They do not want to do it because basically they want to make the brumbies extinct.

They took every last bit of country where these horses live, and now they say that they have to go. It is not good enough. The Australian people do not want this. They do not realise that it means this. The fact of the matter is that we are paying for this. Do we not get a little bit of a say in our heritage? We seem to pull it out whenever we want to promote it tourism-wise, the Great Australian Muster out at the Royal Easter Show, the Olympics Opening and that sort of thing. But the reality is that they are slaughtering these horses like you would not believe. We say that the answer is not the same 30-year failed management plan. The answer is proper management on a regional level, by regional people. Then you have a long-term solution to what will happen with the Australian brumby. Ultimately, if you tie that into your tourism aspect and have your annual options you will find that we have researched our work so well as to know the American experience quite well, as to know the American problems that were encountered and to have built-in safeguards against those as well. I would appeal to the Committee to perhaps consider another way of doing things.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: You said that you advised the Heritage Group that was set up to look at the heritage value of horses and that you could identify and work out which horses and which group of horses had heritage value.

Ms HAIRE: No, I did not say that. I said that we could prove that horses had been here since the 1850s.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: There is no way you could determine that the group of horses in one area of the State had been there for a longer period than another?

Ms HAIRE: This is the whole point. This is what National Parks will not accept. The horses have been in each of these areas that we are looking at, whether it is Kosciusko or up here—Kosciusko has more romance than up here and we have better quality horses than they may have—but when you go down to the Oxley, which you will do tomorrow, and see the country that you have seen on the television, you will then understand that the little groups of horses that you are seeing, perhaps around this area, do not mix. The Parks would have you believe that there are hundreds of horses galloping through the bush and leaving nothing but a wrecked bush behind them. That is not the truth. In fact, they live in smaller groups.

Allowing any population to build up to a point where it is a problem is a mistake, and the National Parks absolutely at the top seems to run on a program of neglect and management by slaughter. It does not matter if we are talking horses, kangaroo, deer, or bats: Yes, we will go and slaughter 6.9 million kangaroos this year. But two weeks ago on television they were saving a kangaroo with an arrow through its neck that cost \$3,000. I do not get it. The logic is insane. It does not make sense. When we are looking at a department, that has the enormous budget that this department has, whenever you criticise this department the first thing it says is, "We need more money." Good Lord, it gets more money than health and education and everything now!

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: My intention in asking you that question was to find out if anybody had done any DNA testing similar to what they have done with the dingo population.

Ms HAIRE: Minister Debus has spent \$135,000 on this Heritage Working Party. It has gone off and spent something like \$70,000-odd on genetic testing, which they are sending over to America to some colleague over their that also hates horses. The fact of the matter is that the genotype of the horse has not been done, so what they expect to prove, I have no idea; I cannot tell you. To me this is just craziness. It last year's Budget Estimates Committee, Minister Debus told you people that the horse slaughter in Guy Fawkes cost \$30,500, the total expenditure being \$135,000. I am sorry, that is just part of the cost of the Heritage Committee. The slaughter, if you would like to cost it out which we have done, is just under half a million dollars as at November last year. If you want to keep going down these roads, that is fine, we do not mind; it just means more members for us.

CHAIR: Your statement, which is extremely well researched, and could become a book at some point, is confidential, so nobody can read it. Do you need to keep this confidential?

Ms HAIRE: We are amateurs at this. We are country people. Obviously, we are not experienced at doing these things and we did not really have anybody to ask. If I had known Russell Keith before then, I would have possibly given him a call and asked what his advice would have been.

CHAIR: We can discuss that later, but in the meantime we have to refer to your submission when asking questions.

The Hon. JOHN JOBLING: Before they consider doing that I would suggest, in their interest, because it is submitted to us as confidential we cannot therefore discuss anything relating to this, nor can it be made public. But in the interests of a court case, question marks of defamation or anything else, I would suggest that they take legal advice.

CHAIR: I will not ask you anything too specific. You have mentioned things in your submission that are not confidential, for example, various management techniques used in France and elsewhere for overpopulation of horses. Can you now give us any idea precisely how you would manage the horses in, say, Guy Fawkes River National Park? How would you manage them if they were to become overpopulated?

Ms HAIRE: The point is that they become overpopulated only if this is allowed to be so. In other words, if you are not going to put in commonsense, down-to-earth control measures, such as our Horse Team people would do, and this would include shooting humanely which was done back in the early 1970s and late 1970s before the Parks took over, obviously a horse-experienced person can identify an animal that should humanely go. You start to work out where your categories of loss come. First of all, you do not go in there with a gunship and kill the lot, and I do not care what species are you are talking about, this is a ridiculous thing for any environmental agency to do. It is craziness to get to that point.

Mr Swanson can tell you more about the control measures. In terms of management, it is something that has been done before, but then everybody was locked out and were told that they could not do it any more. Then nobody could take out any good horses, could not put down humanely those that perhaps required being put down, which happens on the best studs too, I might tell you. If some animal is not well or healthy, or has a bad injury, it must go. These are the sorts of things that we have expertise on the ground to make the decisions.

CHAIR: Could Mr Swanson comment on his idea of management plan for horses?

Mr SWANSON: I have been involved in this country for 25 years doing stock work prior to when the National Parks took it over. I have gained a certain degree of experience with these horses by watching their behaviours, their patterns, and I feel that in certain times of the year, a lot of this country can be accessed by vehicle that can get up into these areas that we are talking about and set lightweight trap guards with rubber lines which can be set up so there are no injuries, with a vet and an RSPCA person present at times if we need to remove the horses we want to remove—

Ms HAIRE: This is for promotional stuff, your auctioning thing, your annual big-time thing.

CHAIR: As they do in Europe, for example?

Ms HAIRE: Exactly.

Mr SWANSON: And selectively manage the horses.

Ms HAIRE: Properly.

Mr SWANSON: Being on the ground you get a better idea, as you will see tomorrow, you cannot manage this type of country from the air. You cannot do it. You have to be down there in amongst them to understand how horses behave to be able to trap them.

CHAIR: If you were to have to remove 50 horses from there, do you think you could do that within a reasonable time, and do it humanely?

Mr SWANSON: What are you talking in time?

CHAIR: One month, two months or three months. Could you do that?

Mr SWANSON: I feel that I could have a lot of this country well under control within three breeding seasons. Easy.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: It would be possible to take out 50 horses over a 12-month period, for example?

Ms HAIRE: But you would not want to do it if they were being managed. The idea is you go down and pick the eyes out of them for the muster, promote it and start getting it on the tourist maps as well. It would be an "Annual Brumby Run", something this country probably has not seen in more than 100 years. It would be a big thing because nobody has ever thought of doing it.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: Is Greg Everingham known to you?

Ms HAIRE: No, only from the television. I have never met the gentleman. He is not involved in our group at all.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: Is he known to you, Mr Swanson?

Mr SWANSON: No.

Ms HAIRE: But, obviously, he is another person who knows this country and knows these horses. We have generational knowledge here that is completely and utterly wasted. Everyone runs around talking about feral animals. Here is one aspect we could solve without a big deal and a lot of money. Goodness me, I do not think it would cost anywhere near what the program would be to totally eradicate the horses from the State, which you will never do, by the way.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: You have mentioned a number of issues with regard to solutions to the problem. The National Parks and Wildlife Service has a responsibility to ensure that it manages and controls, and in some cases tries to eradicate, feral animals from national parks and at that area for which he has responsibility. Would you see as a viable alternative to a nature reserve having horse reserves somewhere that was well fenced, using land not suitable for other commercial activities, and trying to preserve brumbies in that environment where they are not damaging the habitat?

Mr SWANSON: I challenge you to find evidence that the horses are causing land degradation.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: The National Parks and Wildlife Service has a responsibility in relation to feral animals.

Ms HAIRE: I heard that, but why? Why do the horses have to go? The point of it is this: think of it the other way round just for a minute, if you can. You are always told the same propaganda that the rest of us are told and that is, that National Parks have a responsibility. Yes, indeed they do. They have a responsibility to the community. We are sovereign. They forget they are only part-time caretakers of that land. We own that land and when people come out in the majority against this and say, "We do not want this", I think it is about time governments started to listen. If you look at National Parks' track record, even over the past five years, it is pretty damn poor. I do not think anyone could dispute that. When I give you that figure of 3,000 brumbies, that is not something I made up; it is from their records. Why should those horses have to go, given that they have been in this area since white settlement and it is the Parks that have taken over their land.

I also point out that where those horses were shot in October 2000, six months later they released the Northern Wilderness Assessment Report, which assessed that exact area where the horses were shot as being "99 per cent pristine". There is a contradiction here. I think we are being fed a lot of lies. As some of the more expert overseas environmentalists have said, "There is an awful lot of disinformation going on out there and you would be very wise to question more of it." I think that is the case here. Please remember we live here. We know what is going on. It is a bit difficult to make judgments if you are not part of the region and know the problems and the economic mess a lot of these things cause. In the city, a lot of times, people are fed this line that "We have a responsibility to

do certain things", the warm fuzzy stuff of saying "We work with the community." It is just not like that in the country, it really is not.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: I think we will have to agree to disagree on some issues, but this Committee was set up in response to community concerns and that is why we are having these inquiries. We also like to hear both sides of the story. I also appreciate it when people can look at alternative ways of doing things. The National Parks and Wildlife Service has its position and you have your position. Have you any suggestions for a middle or common ground in which some advantages could be achieved?

Mr SWANSON: There have been no guarantees.

Ms HAIRE: As Gary says, that is the only ground in the middle, but as for working with the National Parks, unfortunately, we have watched other organisations bigger and better than ours try and work with National Parks and I can tell you it does not work. Everybody who has tried has ended up getting the rough end of the stick, if I can put it bluntly. The fact of the matter is that the hardest thing you are going to do and the most money you will spend is trying to eradicate these horses or remove them. The sensible thing is to put in place proper management. This is a new idea according to National Parks because nobody has tried this in the 30 years that they have taken over these vast tracts of land. It has always been kill them or rip them out of there and to hell with what happens as a consequence.

There is another alternative. National Parks could fence all their land. There are buffer zones around the Parks. Now they are going crook about people who live as neighbours to the Parks who own horses. They keep pushing the buffer zones back more and more. If this keep going, I personally believe that the farmers and graziers may as well pack up their tents, go on the dole, and hand the whole bloody State over to Bob Carr. I think that would be better. But that is what we are looking at. You cannot keep pushing the buffer zones out and saying, "You can't have horses because you are a neighbour of a National Park." The alternative would be to fence the Parks, or why do we not get down to identifying the most valuable Parks in the State and only manage those small areas properly and return the rest of the vast tracts of land to regional committees to manage, and start getting a bit back out of these areas instead of what is happening now. This is not a new suggestion.

(The witnesses withdrew)

ALAN RUSSELL BIRNIE JACKSON, Retired Veterinarian and member of the National Parks Association, 4 Hillview Road, Armidale, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: Are you conversant with the terms of reference of this inquiry?

Mr JACKSON: Yes, I am.

CHAIR: If you should consider at any stage during your evidence that in the public interest certain evidence or documents you may wish to present should be seen or heard only by the Committee, the Committee would be willing to accede to your request but it may be overturned by a vote of the Legislative Council. Would you care to make an opening statement?

Mr JACKSON: The Committee will have received from the National Parks Association of Sydney a detail submission. I have been asked to make a supplementary submission. I have been a long-time member of the National Parks Association. I am also a long-time member of the Advisory Committee of the National Parks Association. I am a veterinarian of 50 years standing with a background in animal welfare, having been on international animal welfare ethics programs and a one-time director of the University of New England.

I would first like to reinforce some of the statements that were made earlier about the ruggedness of the eastern fore country or the great escarpment because it is pertinent to what I have to say later on in my address. The escarpment is not just a straight line going up and down the east coast. The country evolved slowly over 20 million years and it is about the eastern flowing streams that cut down the escarpment. To give an example, in the Macleay and the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park the escarpment follows the tributaries of the Macleay River hundreds of kilometres and encloses an area of some 200,000 hectares. Some of that along the river flats is quite accessible but the vast majority is rough, inaccessible country with a vertical profile exceeding 2,000 feet. That needs to be kept in perspective when we talk about the control of feral animals in that area.

As a scientist I would like to emphasise that all control programs that we indulge in must be based on adequate documentation, investigation and research. I will quote as examples work done on goats by Bob Harden, an EPA scientist based in Armidale. Prior to this work being done the goats were virtually uncontrollable. The numbers were brought down but within six months the numbers were back up to what they were before. Following their work, which involve many aspects of ground work, tracking of animals such as Judas goats and the like, the goat population is down to where it is no longer a problem and it is likely to be kept down just by natural predators, wild dogs, for example.

Secondly, I refer to the excellent work done by Gerhart Kortner under Bob Harden on research into quolls, which has been mentioned sufficiently and I will not repeat that. As a veterinarian it does not surprise me that quolls react in a different way to other species. As every veterinarian knows, every drug on every species will have a different effect, dose rate, clinical application, toxic level, palatability and it is very dangerous to take one drug that is responsive to one animal and use it, anticipating what might happen in another.

Exotic diseases have been mentioned today and to some extent the reaction is ho-hum, we have heard it all before. There are two things I would like to reinforce. One is that within New South Wales the Government has seen fit—I guess it is because of economic rationalism—to reduce the frontline veterinary services and also cut in half the number of laboratories that we have here. The other States are no better off. I can refer back to the United Kingdom where for example when the foot and mouth disease was endemic in some of the European countries, there were periodic outbreaks of the disease. The United Kingdom veterinary services were probably the finest in Europe. They had widespread laboratory services and great veterinarians. It was not until foot and mouth disease was more or less eradicated from Europe itself that the UK no longer tended to get outbreaks of foot and mouth disease and they closed down and reduced veterinary services. Of course they subsequently received an outbreak which originated in Hong Kong. I do not need to go into many of the details of the disaster that followed the introduction of the disease. They had reduced veterinary services and no longer had the expertise that they had years ago.

I do not wish to dwell on this too long for obvious reasons, but we live in dangerous times. For some reason, people of some cultures feel that it is appropriate to destroy the cultures of other people. It is not difficult to appreciate that an insidious way to bring the economy of this country to its knees is by the introduction of exotic diseases. We will face this in years to come, I am sure. I now come to the main question which initiated this hearing and that is the control of horses in this area and elsewhere. I come from a long background of bushwalking and I

know the Guy Fawkes River National Park very well. From the time before it was initially gazetted in the early 1970s I visited the park a number of times and in the 1980s. I camped along the river and walked up and down the river banks with others. At no time during that whole period had I ever seen a wild horse. Cattle were a problem, but I had never seen a horse.

Having joined the advisory committee in Armidale my attention went to the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park and I did not get back to the Guy Fawkes River National Park for some years. I went there in June 2000 and was absolutely astounded at the number of horses that were there. In an area of approximately 15 to 20 kilometres near where we were walking I counted some 50 animals broken up into perhaps five groups. We never got within about 200 metres of them. They obviously had been hassled by people trying to muster them over the years. The other thing that astonished us was the degree of destruction that these animals had done. We followed horse tracks which were deeply incised along the river. Those tracks went back up into the high country. In effect we were walking through horse manure for some 20 kilometres. The difference between the population in the 1970s or 1980s and in 2000 absolutely astounded me, but when you start to think about the population increase that is possible—adult mares will go into foal each year and can foal every year in good conditions or good seasons that occur—and if you take a figure of 20 per cent, which is probably the lowest of the figures that could be quoted, populations will double every four years with the compounding effect, not every five years. If you take it higher than that to 25 per cent or 26 per cent, it will double every three years. You can see that there is a very great problem of horse numbers increasing, provided that they have the capacity and the area in which to do so.

It is history of course that in October 2000 the National Parks and Wildlife Service carried out a cull. In my present capacity as a member of the national park's advisory committee, I went down and inspected those horses. I understand that I cannot give evidence on that although it amazes me some of evidence that has been given—perhaps by non-professional people. In relation to the control of horses over that period, it is well documented that horses were at low levels. We can confirm that I visited in the early 1980s and when handed over when the park was taken over, they probably were quite low levels—certainly less than 100 head. I think it is agreed that they were kept in check by ground shooting. It is documented in a number of ways, particularly by P. A. Wright, who wrote a book, *Memoirs of a Bushwhacker*.

I have no problem with ground shooting and I will discuss that matter later. Subsequently, as has also been documented, the National Parks and Wildlife Service attempted to control the horses by mustering and trapping. In fact it was not necessary for the National Parks and Wildlife Service to do all the work. The ordinary work was done by local stockmen. They were given the task of getting them out. People such as Mr Everingham, who was mentioned earlier, were given the job of removing those horses. Later on as those efforts proved to be pretty futile or less than ideally successful, and the National Parks and Wildlife Service came in and helped them build yards and helped in many ways. But in that whole period of time with all the efforts that were made, they removed 156 horses in nearly 10 years and the estimate was at a cost of approximately \$1,000 a head for each one. In spite of the fact that they were removing these horses, they were not making any impression on the increases in horses. In fact the horses probably increased tenfold during this period.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: I know Mr Everingham. I also know the figures which he has quoted to me bear no resemblance to the figures that you are quoting. Other figures that you are quoting, how accurate are they, or are they what someone thinks?

Mr JACKSON: My observation is accurate. I went to the park on a number of occasions in that time and I saw no horses.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: Mr Everingham has advised me of figures which contrast starkly with the figures that you are giving this Committee now. Therefore I am asking for the authority for the figures that you are quoting.

Mr JACKSON: The figure of 156 is given in Professor English's report to the Minister.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: If that is the authority virtue you are quoting, let us put that on the record.

Mr JACKSON: Yes, that is the authority. The figure is in Professor English's report and that was over a period I think from 1992 to 2000.

CHAIR: That is in his report?

Mr JACKSON: That is in his report, yes. Of course it is well documented and it was mentioned earlier that there are serious animal welfare issues in getting those animals out. I refer back to the fact that this park now has in excess of 100,000 hectares of extremely rough areas. Much of it is simply inaccessible and there are great difficulties in managing horses. I will come back to aerial shooting that was the method used during the cull, according to the last protocol which was agreed to by both State governments and the Australian Veterinary Association. Without effective control, it is quite clear that the area will repopulate in the same sort of time as it repopulated previously. I will very briefly deal with some of the control methods in the past.

We have mentioned ground shooting, we have mentioned trapping and mustering and aerial shooting and repopulation, but let us have a look at those from the point of view of the future. As I have said, there are serious difficulties with ground shooting. It was effective in the past and for good animal welfare reasons it probably would be unacceptable in the future. It is possible for a good marksman to shoot one angle. The animal must be shot through the brain and you must get the animal into an area where the marksman is capable of handling it, remembering that this is rough country. Certainly if you shoot one, the rest of the animals will run off. If you fail to drop that horse, it will disappear.

As I have mentioned in my submission, there is a time-honoured way of destroying animals and that was to put a gut shot into them. The horses are extremely susceptible to peritonitis and a gut shot will inevitably cause death after a period of sickness and extreme pain. After that, the horse will just go off and die. No horse that has had a gut shot through the gut will survive, and this was a time-honoured method of getting rid of horses that were invading.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: As a veterinarian, are you satisfied that that is a humane way to kill horses?

Mr JACKSON: I think it would have to be the most inhumane method you could possibly imagine.

The Hon. MALCOLM JONES: The images that we saw on the television, as a veterinary surgeon, is it acceptable to you to dispose of animals in that manner?

Mr JACKSON: Yes. I think if you wanted to have an aerial shoot then you could, if you can get a good visual position. This is one of the reasons why aerial shooting, if it properly undertaken by trained marksmen, is an effective way. The heart of horses is very large and the majority of horses when they are shot will run off, but if you shoot them from the air you can shoot down through the withers and you can split the great vessels of the upper thorax and the atrium of the heart, and the horse will drop like a stone because it suffers an immediate drop in blood pressure.

CHAIR: I must say that we are going a bit too close to the court case in this answer, or too close to the bone, if you know what I mean.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: We heard earlier that brumbies, or feral horses, have a right to be here because they have been here since white settlement. We could make the same comparison with, say, whites who came over on the First Fleet. Do you think there is any real merit in having wild horses?

Mr JACKSON: I do not have a problem at all if people have an affinity with horses. They should be kept in an area where they can be properly and humanely managed, and the populations controlled. Oxley Wild Rivers and Guy Fawkes national parks are not those places. As I said in my submission, over many years in Guy Fawkes River National Park those horses have been subject to being shot at, particularly like gut shot, the most inhumane method of control. Brumby running and other sorts of animals have been subjected to racing through rough country and have suffered broken legs and the like. They have been burned in bushfires. They have died of starvation in trucks. They are born in rough country with broken legs. That is not the place where horses should be. Horses originated from Asia and Europe. Nowhere in the world are there naturally occurring wild horses. They are domesticated species and they deserve more than living in those areas.

If people have a wish to keep them, and I have for sympathy with that, then they should be taken and cared for in suitable areas, not in Oxley Wild Rivers. It will be a major problem to keep the animals in Oxley Wild Rivers at the best of times, but they cannot be humanely maintained. In my opinion people who advocate this are doing the horses a disservice and they will be subject to the same problems and same inhumane treatment they have suffered over the years. The brumby runners that are present in Victoria and southern New South Wales, this is a weekend sports. They go out and chase these things, and a great time is had by all. They usually end up catching one or two

that has become weak and they have a great weekend. It does absolutely nothing to control feral horses, yet they are against the humane treatment of them.

The Hon. JANELLE SAFFIN: On page 13 of the National Parks Association submission it says that dingoes are a native species.

Mr JACKSON: This is the submission from Sydney?

The Hon. JANELLE SAFFIN: Yes. I have two questions. First, is it the National Parks Association submission? It appears to be from the Environmental Liaison Office and also says Nature Conservation Council, Greenpeace, Total Environment Centre and ACF. Is it a combined submission, or is it the submission of the National Parks Association?

Mr JACKSON: I was only given this on Thursday, and I am assuming that it is the submission prepared by the author on behalf of all those people. That would be my estimation.

The Hon. JANELLE SAFFIN: Page 13 refers to dingoes and policy. It states that you consider them to be a native species. Then it states "(see feral definition)". I could not find that anywhere in the submission, so I am not too sure which feral definition you are referring to. Perhaps we could be given that information. It then goes on to state that at this stage the policy does not include the minutes provisions, but the National Parks Association foreshadows inclusion in future policy. Do you know about that?

Mr JACKSON: No, I do not.

The Hon. JANELLE SAFFIN: If someone from the National Parks Association explained that, it would be helpful. There was another thing in the submission I wanted to talk about. It states that peak environment groups disagree with certain parts of the findings of Professor English, but it does not go on to state what they are. I would be interested to have some more information about those gaps.

Mr JACKSON: I received this on Thursday. I have not been particularly briefed on it. I understand that this was submitted in Sydney.

The Hon. JANELLE SAFFIN: Yes. I am confused. I thought you were representing the National Parks Association, hence I was referring to its submission.

Mr JACKSON: I am. I was asked to present additional information other than what was in this, and I have put in the submission.

The Hon. JANELLE SAFFIN: Which is separate?

Mr JACKSON: Which is separate, yes. I only had between Thursday and today to prepare that, so although you have it, you may not have had time to read it.

The Hon. JANELLE SAFFIN: No, I have not. I am sorry.

(The witness withdrew.)

(The Committee adjourned at 5.20 p.m.)