

Foundation for a Rabbit Free Australia Inc

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 2005

<p>CHAIRMAN Dr P Allen Chairman</p> <p>SECRETARY Mr R Downward Committee member</p> <p>COMMITTEE MEMBERS Ms F Bartholomaeus Executive Officer Dr J Radcliffe Immediate past chairman Mr T Rogers Representing South Australian Farmers' Federation Ms S Oldfield Committee member</p>	<p>TREASURER Mr W Morgan Committee member, volunteer</p> <p>ADVISERS Mr G Mutze Senior Research Scientist Animal and Plant Control Mr N Newland Past chairman</p> <p>HONORARY POSITIONS Mr A Fuller Solicitor Mr DG Bramwell Auditor</p> <p>CHAIRMAN – RFA NSW Mr D Lord</p>
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Chairman's Report

to the Annual General Meeting held at the Adelaide Zoological Gardens Tuesday 29th November 2005

On behalf of the Committee and Advisors, I am pleased to report that 2005 has been an exciting and productive year for RFA.

The year saw successful progress with previous initiatives planned for the post-RHD period — improving the Foundation's fiscal position and determining the nation's future rabbit research and development needs jointly with Australian Wool Innovation Ltd (AWI). We also addressed our concerns that governments' trend towards natural resource management administrative structures may compromise resources for rabbit R&D and extension, ultimately resulting in poor on-ground rabbit control.

RFA's financial position reached a set target which now provides us with an opportunity to influence and support future rabbit R&D and adoption.

Previous discussions with AWI culminated in RFA convening a national Workshop on Rabbit R&D Directions at the Waite Campus in May 2005. The Workshop focussed on our concerns with declining levels of rabbit R&D with 26 invited delegates representing rabbit researchers, pastoralists, farmers, conservationists, government administrators and national R&D funding corporations. The outcomes clearly demonstrated the need for further short and long-term R&D to tackle rabbits on arid, agricultural and public lands, and provided a number of research directions.

I am pleased to report that Meat Livestock Australia (MLA) and AWI jointly funded a review to develop a grazing industry strategy for rabbit management and abatement. The scope of the review was based on the outcomes of the Workshop. Dr Brian Cooke secured the consultancy and his final report is now being assessed by AML and AWI. RFA looks forward to providing independent views on the directions emanating from the report.

I am also pleased to report that the Australian Government's Department

of the Environment and Heritage is considering the outcomes of the Workshop in current reviews of their threat abatement plans.

RFA's report on the Workshop was sent to Commonwealth and State Ministers of primary industries and environment, and their respective departments and advisory councils for information. Our concern with the threatening consequences of NRM administration for maintenance of rabbit expertise and control, especially in South Australia, was included. This initiative resulted in the RFA Chairman addressing, in September, the Investment Advisory Board of the SA Centre for Natural Resource Management on the need to include rabbit R&D and control in NRM strategies.

A similar letter sent to the South Australian Farmers Federation's Natural Resource Committee resulted in a RFA article on the Workshop's outcomes published in SAFF's *Your Land* which is distributed in the Stock Journal to over 15 000 readers.

October 2005 marked the 10th anniversary of the "release" of RHV in Australia. There was considerable publicity on RHD and rabbits, mainly through the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre with support from RFA. We have kept links with the IA CRC during its establishment.

RFA contributed to national policy on rabbits by forwarding a submission to the Inquiry into the Impact on Agriculture of Pest Animals held by the Commonwealth House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. The inquiry, amongst other things, sought to identify nationally significant pest animal issues and the level of government resources addressing them, and the level of community understanding and commitment to pest animal control. We reminded them that the European rabbit is still the major vertebrate pest animal problem in

Australia. Their report is due to be released by the end of this year.

RFA again supported its two ongoing activities in 2005. RFA financially supported two honours students through the Nature Foundation SA's Research Project Grants, and members participated in the Haigh's Easter Bilby Weekend held in Rundle Mall. RFA's presence at the mall supports a major sponsor and helps to spread the story of rabbits to the public. Interestingly, most of the queries seemed to be from overseas visitors or residents new to Australia.

The Foundation maintained a continuing liaison with Rotary's ACRE program, particularly with the Haigh's Easter Bilby Weekend.

The Committee developed a draft five-year strategic plan for the Foundation which will be presented to you at this AGM. The plan provides a sound basis for the Foundation's activities during that period and also informs people of the Foundation's strategic purpose and planned activities.

I sincerely thank Fred Bartholomaeus and William Morgan for the executive support that they gave the RFA this year, and the Committee and Advisors for their input to advance the achievements of the Foundation. A special thanks to Kevin Heinrich who provided much voluntary administrative support over about the last ten years and to Barry Drew for his wise counsel on fiscal matters — both withdrew from active roles with RFA since the last AGM.

The Organising Committee and invited contributors to the Workshop deserve a special mention for their commitment and input to ensure that the Workshop achieved its purpose.

I look forward to RFA building on its recent achievements in 2006 to work towards a rabbit-free Australia.

Dr Peter G Allen
Chairman, RFA