

9 October 2015

Ms. Julia Morris Committee Secretary
Parliament House
Canberra

A.C.T 2600

Dear Ms Morris

I would like to thank the Agricultural Innovation to the Standing Committee of Agriculture and Industry for the opportunity to provide a submission. We genuinely believe that this is an exciting time for agriculture in Australia and welcome initiative of this government.

Rabbits are Australia's most costly vertebrate pest. Conservative estimates have rabbit costing agriculture 200 million per annum. Research (Cook, 2001) indicates that one rabbit per hectare is enough to prevent the recruitment of all native perennial plant species.

If agriculture is to sustainable intensify and capture the opportunities to contribute to global food security, the impact of this pest species must be minimized/reduced.

There is growing complacency towards rabbit management, partly due to the success of previous biological agents and a loss of capacity. As a result, there is a decreasing awareness and capacity at large to effectively manage this pest. The social license to operate is getting more difficult, particularly from the urban audience. A poor awareness of the cost and environmental damage caused by this pest is hampering our efforts.

The challenges for innovation in effective rabbit management are two-fold:

1. In many parts of the Australian landscape biological control remains the primary tool for the management of this pest. Globally there are opportunities to assess new bio-agents. On-going investment into the research and development of new and innovative approaches to biological agents is imperative and under resourced.
2. Managing rabbits down to low thresholds and maintaining these levels is imperative to improve productivity capacity of our landscapes. This

requires a re-engagement with the broader community for acceptance of various control methods and additional investment in community-led programs to coordinate works, advocate to decision makers and to provide leadership on best practice for rabbit management across our diverse landscapes.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit to this enquiry, we support Minister Joyce in the leadership he is giving to Agriculture.

We are happy to further discuss any future issues.

Kind regards

Sue Campbell (OAM)

David Lord,