

LORD HOWE ISLAND BOARD

Business Paper

OPEN SESSION

ITEM

Lord Howe Island Rodent Eradication Project (REP) Implementation.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board note the update to the REP.

BACKGROUND

The REP is now in Stage Three: Implementation and evaluation of the eradication plan.

Stage Three involves delivery of the eradication plan (planned for implementation in winter 2019) over an approximate three – four month period. Key elements are:

- Finalise detailed logistics and operational planning including Property Management Plans
- Assemble and train remaining resources
- Finalise construction of captive management facilities for the woodhen and currawong
- Capture of woodhens and currawongs
- Operational readiness check
- Implementation of ground and aerial baiting
- Follow up monitoring and release of woodhens and currawongs
- Maintaining an ongoing biosecurity and rodent detection monitoring network.

CURRENT POSITION

An update on elements that have changed or advanced since the previous meeting is provided below.

1) Status of Required Approvals

APVMA Permit / Administrative Appeals Tribunal Appeal

After multiple hearing days and concluding with a view of the island by the Deputy President, the Administrative Appeals Tribunal has recently completed the review the conditions of the APVMA permit. On 18 April 2019, a decision was handed down by the Deputy President of the Tribunal that *“the Decision under review is set aside and in substitution the Tribunal directs that the*

conditions of the permit be altered so as to be consistent with the document attached to the tribunal's reasons and to conform with paragraph 57 of those reasons".

The APVMA have issued a revised permit to the parties for comment, reflecting the Tribunal's decision. A final version of the revised permit is expected imminently. The variations to these conditions, the majority of which were proposed by the APVMA with the Board's agreement, do not change the methodology of the REP or its chances of success.

Biosecurity Control Order

The REP team continue to liaise with Department of Primary Industries staff regarding the implementation of the Control Order, if required to be used. This has included DPI representatives on island to deliver training to Authorized Officers and general awareness training of the *Biosecurity Act* to other REP staff. A senior DPI staff member has also visited the island in April to work through implementation of the Control Order and development of protocols in accordance with existing DPI process. The DPI shares the LHIB's view that use of the Control Order is a last resort and all reasonable measures to achieve voluntary compliance for baiting should be utilized first.

Under the Control Order, many residents have now agreed permission for the LHIB to bait. Some residents have completed part of the ongoing training to undertake baiting themselves. Some residents have instead nominated a representative who has completed the training to undertake baiting on their behalf.

Other Approvals

The Development Consents have been received for the temporary demountables at the captive management site and Airport.

The Monitoring and Marine Spill Response Plans have been finalized with Marine Parks

2) Staffing

All project staff have now substantially commenced. This includes:

- Technical Advisor Keith Springer returning to the Island. Keith will also lead the aerial operations
- The Ground Baiting Team
 - The Ground Baiting Manager (Grant Harper), two Field Supervisors, 10 Team Leaders and two Field Officers representing some of the most experienced eradication professionals in the world
 - 38 Casual Field Officers either full time or part time. The large majority of these people are considered locals (i.e. with accommodation and / or employment on the island before the REP)
 - The LHIB enviro and weed teams have now joined the rest of the Field Officers and Team Leaders in the Ground Baiting Team

These staff have been through an intensive induction and training period, which included Chemical Handling training, Code of Conduct, WHS and training in bait station setup and replenishment. Uniforms have mostly been provided.

Significant work has gone into clarifying project roles and responsibilities and in identifying back-ups for all key positions.

3) Community Engagement Update

Ecotourism / Conservation Volunteers update

The Conservation Volunteers program (CVLHI) 2019 has officially launched on the 1st of May with Bird Month. The CVLHI committee are working alongside tour operators and visiting scientists to design relevant citizen science activities which support ongoing research and our conservation efforts on Lord Howe Island. The team from OEH have asked the CVLHI program to assist with data monitoring of Currawongs and Bird Sightings in the settlement for the months of May & June. This data contributes to transect surveys conducted by the Canberra Ornithologists Group in previous years to assess the changes over time.

There has been a large increase in enquiries for this year's Conservation Volunteers program. Many who are enquiring are wanting to add a different element to their holiday, by taking part in unique and educational experiences which are contributing to the Island's conservation.

As there is no set registration process, the Conservation Volunteers program is open to anyone visiting or residing on Lord Howe. Participants can commit as much time as they would like to the program, 1 week, 1 day or just participate in 1 activity. Conservation Volunteers bags will be available at the airport for anyone wishing to partake in the program and more information can be found at the visitor centre.

Community Acceptability and Communications

Jaclyn has continued discussing individual Property Management Plans (PMP) with leaseholders and tenants. At the time of writing this report, 121 of the 125 (97%) Leaseholders (some leaseholders have multiple leases) have agreed a PMP. This is a significant milestone and reflects the community desire for the project to be successful despite differences in opinions on the project.

Communication regarding implementation of the project has increased with updated information recently provided to lodges, operators and wholesalers so visitors (and potential visitors) have factually correct information. Likewise, additional material has recently been provided to residents and other groups (such as the school). Additional material will be produced, including some that has arisen from the Tribunal decision.

4) Operational Planning

Over the past several months, major progress has been achieved on operational planning and logistics. Highlights include:

- Taronga Zoo staff have arrived and taken control of the Captive Management Facility.
 - Initial mulch and sand for the aviaries is now in place, with a contract secured for ongoing mulch delivery during the project
 - 109 Currawongs (of a target 120) have so far been captured and processed into the facility
 - 88 Woodhens (of a target 220) have so far been captured and processed into the facility
 - All birds have undergone initial health assessments and have settled well into their temporary homes

- Taronga staff are now delivering a weekly talk at the Museum on their part of the project
- REP staff have assisted Waste Management Facility staff cleaning up the WMF, particularly reducing alternate food sources in preparation for the REP. Over 90 bales of compacted general waste have now been removed from the island.
- The weekly (Wednesday) organic food waste collection service has commenced
- 101 pods of bait and other essential equipment has arrived on island, in good condition and is now safely in the hanger
- A new fuel truck arrived and commissioned that allows us to use the older Jet fuel tanker to service the helicopters
- A new telehandler arrived allowing us redundancy and reliability to service the project as well as island into the future
- Security arrangements for various assets / parts of the operation are now in place or close to being finalised
- A new mulcher has arrived and is being used to supply some of the mulch for the aviaries
- Completion of purpose built chicken pens to house remaining chickens
- Two Operational Readiness checks on the project have been completed by the Island Eradication Advisory Group.
- Bait stations
 - 23,000 external bait stations have arrived and been barcoded. Over 9,000 of these are now deployed (no bait yet) in the settlement area with remaining setup on track
 - 4,600 mouse stations for inside buildings have arrived and been barcoded ready for deployment from mid – May

5) Budget

An additional \$1.1M of funding through the Commonwealth Department of Environment and Energy has now been successfully secured for this financial year. The funding will be delivered through a contract between the LHIB and North Coast Local Land Services under their regional partnerships agreement with the Department. Payment will be made to the LHIB on invoicing for agreed milestones. This additional funding goes a very long way to addressing the previously forecast shortfall.

Other changes to the project budget from the previous Board meeting include:

- Revised Crown Solicitors fee estimate from the Tribunal hearing now \$100,000 (previously \$50,000)
- \$35,000 administration fee for North Coast Local Land Services (as part of contract delivery)

Update on other actions undertaken to secure additional funding:

- Still progressing reduced amount of additional funds from the NSW Environmental Trust
- Application shortlisted for second round of grant process (now ~\$300,000 over one year) through the Foundation for Australia's Most Endangered Species. A revised proposal is due mid-May 2019.

Fundraising consultant – Xponential Strategy, have prepared their draft report which is summarised in Attachment A.

SUMMARY

The operation is substantially underway and on track for ground baiting to commence in mid-May and aerial operations from 1 June 2019 (weather dependent).

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board note the update to the REP.

Prepared: Andrew Walsh, Rodent Eradication Project Manager

Endorsed: Peter Adams, Chief Executive Officer

Attachment A: Summary of fundraising consultant's report

BACKGROUND & APPROACH TO RECOMMENDATIONS

In mid-November 2018, Xponential was commissioned by Lord Howe Island Board (LHIB) to conduct a Campaign Readiness Assessment to assess public appetite for, and the organisation's capacity to raise, \$4.2 million via a Capacity Campaign over two to three years.

This capacity funding represented the shortfall required to effectively carry out the urgent Rodent Eradication Program (REP) as well as the ongoing Weed Eradication Program and biosecurity requirements, along with Campaign costs.

As an ideal, the LHIB also commissioned Xponential to examine feasibility of raising several early, large gifts before May 2019 to give certainty of funding for the REP.

This report provides insight into likely public appetite for the fundraising case, and leadership and gift capacity among LHIB's stakeholders.

Shortly before finalisation of this Report, LHIB was notified of anticipated \$1.1 mill of additional government funding which will cover almost all the project costs included in the Rodent Eradication Project. In the interests of completeness, the Report presents all the findings from the assessment interviews which were conducted before this was known.

However, the conclusions and recommendations take account of this additional funding.

Overview of Strengths and Weaknesses – the Case

At the outset, Xponential recognised some key strengths of the Case for Support for this project that would likely have a positive impact on its appeal to funders and donors:

1. The Rodent Eradication is a project of global conservation significance.
2. Strong evidence confirms the need for the project eg: rodents have been implicated in the extinction of multiple animal and plant species.
3. The Lord Howe Island community has a long history of successful and ongoing sustainability and conservation programs to protect and enhance the World Heritage values of the island.
4. The REP project has been extensively scoped and risk-managed over 10 years of research and planning.
5. The majority of the required funding (\$9 million) has already been secured which reflects well on the Board's strong financial stewardship.
6. Reputable external stakeholders – including WWF-Australia, Zoos Victoria and the Invasive Species Specialist Group in Rome, have publicly expressed their support for the REP project.

Contrasting the strength of the case, Xponential acknowledges – and this study confirmed – that one key factor poses a challenge to the proposed campaign:

while LHIB has been sensitive to the divide in the community around this project, the Rodent Eradication Program is still perceived as contentious.

This report will explore in detail both the strengths and the weaknesses of the environment in which LHIB seeks to raise the required funds and will propose a strategy that will best position the organisation for success.

An advocacy-led, traditional Capacity Campaign will have limited potential, and the cultivation required to enlist such advocates at this level is unlikely to be achieved within the desired timeframe.



It is for this reason that Xponential has developed a bespoke strategy to capitalise simultaneously on:

- **High interest of a few potential not-for-profit funders or fundraising partners**
- **Willingness of a few stakeholders to open their networks, or to host prospect cultivation events.**



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A bespoke strategy (outlined in detail following page 30) is recommended for a primary campaign with a 15-month active gift-seeking phase from April 2019 to June 2020.
2. The primary campaign should to be managed by the Invasive Species Council, and requiring a full-time or near full-time campaign manager for approximately 18 months from recruitment (then at a reduced level – see 8 below), and contracted support for donor prospect research and campaign administration during much of the period April 2019-June 2020.
3. A campaign target of \$3 million should be adopted, predominantly re-quantified by removal of most of the REP costs, and a small reduction in the weed strategy element of the target.
4. The eradication phase of the REP should not be part of the fundraising campaign except for selected advance gifts already underway.
5. The campaign should present the eradication phase as a past event, with all the remaining elements of the program.
6. With a view to securing funds toward specific elements of the program, LHIB should explore potential partnerships with Foundation for Australia's Most Endangered (FAME) and Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife as first priorities for a secondary campaign.
7. Immediate stewardship of offers of cultivation of potential new donors:
8. The funding of campaign staffing with Invasive Species Council should be of sufficient duration to allow for quality stewardship of donors (e.g. impact reporting, visits, pledge reminders if relevant, and donation thank-yous) through to 2021 (with

the option of extension into 2022 if some donors pledge gifts over three years). This may be achieved with reduced staffing commitment to the campaign after late 2020. See appendix 3.

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

- Recruitment of a Campaign Manager as soon as possible, followed by part-time campaign administrative support under MoU with Invasive Species Council.
- Development of a compelling campaign Case for Support that will act as a foundation document for campaign collateral (brochure) and funder propositions.
- Retention of Xponential for approximately May 2019 to July 2019 to work intensively on development of the Case for Support, campaign strategy and commencement of planning cultivation events.
- Once the Campaign Manager is appointed, consider retention of Xponential in a campaign mentoring role at a level suitable based on the experience of campaign manager recruited by the Invasive Species Council.