

Minutes of the Community Working Group Meeting

Lord Howe Island Museum Library 30/11/2016

4.30pm – 5.40 pm

Attendees: Penny Holloway (CEO LHIB Board); Anthony Wilson (LHIB Board); Andrew Walsh (LHI Board); Esven Fenton; Jack Shick; Frank Reed; Karen Wilson; Therese Turner; Beth Wilson; Barbara Ardill; Peter and Robyn Curtin; Mark McKillop; Karen Wilson.

Visitors: Mel Wilson, Joel Christian

Apologies: Helen Tiffin, Ian Hutton.

1. Introductions and apologies

Penny opened the meeting at 4.30pm and introduced Mel Wilson and Joel Christian, National Park Rangers from Norfolk Island.

2. Minutes from last meeting and corrections

No corrections and minutes passed.

3. Action items and matters arising

Jack discussed the video he has made with nontoxic bait showing rodents readily eating bait left in the open but taking their time and being very wary of bait placed in closed bait stations. He will bring the video to the next CWG meeting for viewing.

4. Planning and Approvals – update on progress to date

- Chief Scientist Human Health Risk Assessment

Andrew gave an update on the Human Health study being undertaken by Rambol Consultants on behalf of the Office of the Chief Scientist and Engineer (OCSE). He reported that the consultants will have their report to the OCSE by Christmas and the OCSE would have their assessment of the consultants report to the Minister / Board by middle to end of January.

Anthony asked the group what they thought of the OCSE's engagement process while the consultants were on the Island.

Frank said it was a good process and the consultants would take all the scientific evidence on board while making their assessments.

Andrew informed the group that he has asked the Chief Scientist if she will come to the Island and present the findings of the report to the community with a member of the expert panel. Karen asked when the OCSE consultation closed and Andrew advised the 18 November.

- EPBC application progress

Karen asked if the Public Environment Report (PER) submission period closed on the 2 December. Andrew confirmed this and gave an update on the number of submissions received to date and the process for collating concerns and issues raised through the submissions. He said there is still time to put in submissions.

- **Other applications**

Andrew gave the group an update on other approvals, including Marine Parks and the Captive Management Development Application.

Peter asked if the program had reported to the Commonwealth Department of Environment (EPBC) regarding the Species Impact Statement (SIS). Andrew advised that the Public Environment Report was the Commonwealth process and the SIS was the NSW process looking at NSW listed threatened species. Peter asked if the Development Application is approved through the Board. Andrew said yes and Penny confirmed that the Board's planning consultant assessed the DA and the provided a report for the Board to make their decision.

Penny updated the group on Taronga Zoo's visit to the Island to assess the captive management site at the old Nursery for cage construction.

Andrew told the group that the program had received no information yet from the APVMA application. With the time coming into Christmas he thought we may hear something back in late January.

- **Property management planning**

Anthony gave an update on the property management planning including Island cleanup project. He explained to the group that during the coming months the program will be revisiting properties to discuss baiting techniques and management issues. Karen asked if the project was dealing directly with the Department of Education regarding the school. Anthony advised that the P&C had been consulted and they suggested the project work directly with the Department of Education. He told the group that over 140 tonnes of hard waste that had been collected and removed from the Island.

Joel asked how the cleanup program had been funded. Anthony explained it was a combination of Board budget and Rodent Eradication budget.

Karen has whether the Board had lost revenue through the Island cleanup project. Penny said some had been lost through people putting out hard rubbish for the clean-up rather than paying for it at the WMF. But since most people had had no intention of paying at the WMF to have their rubbish removed, overall there had not been a major loss of revenue.

- **Operational Planning**

Andrew provided the group with updates on the accommodation tender for the REP workforce. Esven asked how many people would be required for the workforce. Andrew said this figure is still being worked out but it will vary depending on how many positions are filled by locals on the island. Obviously specialist positions like helicopter pilots etc will need to be filled externally.

Andrew also told the group that Miscellaneous Services Request for Quote is being developed for courier services, bike hire etc. Detector Dog Request for Quotes has also been advertised for specialist dog trainers for the ongoing rodent and biosecurity detection and monitoring on LHI.

Therese asked where the dog handler would be housed on LHI as accommodation is already in short supply. Andrew replied that he hoped local people would put in for the position. Frank asked whether dogs could detect multiple scents, Andrew advised yes. Mel said she has worked with multi trained detector dogs in the past. Karen asked what the dogs had been trained to detect. Mel replied rabbits.

- **Economic Evaluation**

Andrew explained that the Economic Evaluation report had been received and distributed to the group and community. Karen said that she thought some figures were overly inflated, for example, the amount of Talon purchased. Karen asked how that figure had been calculated. Andrew said that he thought the amount of talon used was based on the amount previously estimated during the 2015 consultation, but it was immaterial to the overall findings.

Peter said all figures were theoretical and if the program failed the \$140 million benefit would not be achieved so the Island would be worse off. Andrew reiterated that the evaluation compared the eradication scenario to the current scenario (which would also be the failure scenario) and the \$140 million benefit was the difference between the two scenarios. Frank said it was a pretty good investment spending \$10 million for a \$140 million benefit.

Therese asked about the cost of the detector dogs. Andrew said that some costs of the dogs (i.e. for general biosecurity) would be incurred regardless of whether or not the rodent eradication proceeded. Therefore only the additional costs associated with REP were considered in the economic evaluation.

5. CWG Issues

Karen said that the current bait being used wasn't working and bait uptake isn't happening due to the large amount of alternative food sources like seeds. Jack said that seeds on a lot of the palm species are also getting eaten by rodents and many are in areas with bait stations. He said that was why spreading bait via hand works better than in bait stations. Mark said that he has bait uptake from his stations (using difenacoum wax blocks in stations). Peter asked if we would be reducing alternate food sources. Anthony said yes where possible like at the Waste Management Facility and naturally by doing the eradication during winter. Andrew highlighted the uptake trials undertaken on island that showed that the Pestoff bait would be taken up even around palm seeds.

6. Communication

Therese said that she noticed the program has a new Facebook page. Andrew said this was in order to disseminate accurate information regarding the program.

Peter said there was lots of information regarding the EPBC referral on the web. Karen asked how people who don't use Facebook would be able to access information. Anthony explained that the program was using different techniques to allow people access to correct information, one-on-one catch-up's, community bulletins etc. Esven asked Joel whether Norfolk Island had a Community TV channel. Joel said that they did and the community find it a good way to access information.

7. Other Business

Rodney entered the meeting at 5.20 pm.

Joel gave an update of the programs being conducted on Norfolk Island (including limited rodent control) and said the Lord Howe Island community has a great opportunity with the funding received to achieve success with rodent eradication.

Rodney said that some of the figures in the Economic Report were wrong according to Sue Potts.

Jack said the group had already discussed the report.

8. Next Meeting

Penny said as we were getting close to Christmas we might have the next meeting in late January. The group agreed.

Rodney said that this group shouldn't be meeting at all until all submissions have been done and all these people can come over to the Island.

Meeting closed at 5.40 pm.