

## **Notes from the Rodent Eradication Program Community Working Group Meeting**

**Lord Howe Island Museum Library 18/11/2015**

**4.30pm – 6.20 pm**

### **Attendees:**

Penny Holloway (CEO LHIB Board); Anthony Wilson (LHIB Board); Ian Hutton; Rob Rathgeber; Barbara Ardill; Karen Wilson; Libby Grant; Jack Shick; Carole Rathgeber; Rodney Thompson; Jim McFadyen; Ian Fitzgerald; Pam Goyen; Beth Wilson; Esven Fenton; Therese Turner.

### **Apologies:**

Frank Reed; Bill Shead; Mark McKillop; Helen Tiffin; Bert Simpson.

### **Notes of Meeting**

#### **1. Introductions and apologies**

Penny opened the meeting, thanked everyone for attending, made introductions and gave apologies.

Rob asked if the meeting could be recorded. Ian said it was best not to as it would inhibit some people from talking. Rob asked for a show of hands as to who didn't want the meeting recorded and 5 hands were raised in the negative. Penny said that the meeting would therefore not be recorded.

#### **2. Aims and Terms of Reference of Community Working Group – discussion**

Penny said that the Terms of Reference (ToR) had been circulated at the last meeting and also by letter. Penny suggested that the ToR should be discussed as part of the next item on the agenda.

#### **3. How the group will work together – discussion and agreement**

Penny reminded the group of the Board's process for resolution in relation to the decision to go forward to the Planning and Approvals stage (overhead shown on smart board). Penny then asked people for their opinion on rules for the conduct of the CWG meetings. Recorded on the whiteboard were the following proposals:

1. Focus on the aims and the process to progress Stage 2 Planning and Approvals (Ian)
2. Be polite, general manners as with normal general meeting procedures (Karen)
3. One person speaks at a time (Karen)
4. The ability to raise issues (Rodney)
5. Go through the chair to talk (Karen)
6. We can add more as we go (Jack)

No disagreement was raised by the group to the six rules of conduct.

Penny then discussed the Terms of Reference of the group and asked for comments. No comments were raised.

#### 4. Minutes of the last meeting

Penny presented the minutes from the last meeting and asked for comments. Therese asked Penny for confirmation about the rules for entering houses in that a court order would be needed. Penny confirmed the access requirements and presented the group with the Board's procedure on accessing leasehold land citing that the Board requires a warrant or court order to enter houses.

Rodney asked why we are proceeding with the draft PMP document. Penny asked him to focus on the discussion of the minutes but clarified that information collated from the PMP process is required for the APVMA application. Rodney asked why people had to agree to allow baiting on properties to get approval. Karen explained the process for the APVMA application.

Rodney advised he has legal advice that it is not right for the Board to ask a person to sign something as we haven't got approval for Stage 2. Penny explained there is approval from the Board to proceed to Stage 2: Planning and Approvals, but this is not the same as an approval to use Brodifacoum off-label. This has to be given by the APVMA.

Ian asked whether there could be a clause saying we will sign the agreement subject to AVPMA approval. Rob said that approvals from all other bodies were needed as well.

Rob asked about the relevance of talking to people now regarding their properties and why APVMA approval was not sought first. Penny advised we need all the information collated first regarding how we would tackle issues on properties, livestock management, health issues etc, before making an application to the APVMA.

Rob disputed this and stated that the APVMA will say: subject to providing these things you have this approval, and the residents should be consulted after that. Penny asked to have that discussion after the minutes were agreed to. Karen asked to move on.

#### 5. Planning and Approvals – update on progress to date

Penny provided an update on progress for the Planning and Approval stage. Staff are now on deck: Anthony who started on 12 October and Andrew, who will commence work on 30 November after arriving on the Island next week. Pete McClelland will still be providing assistance in a specialist capacity to the program. Rodney asked whether Pete was involved in Henderson Island. Penny said he was involved in the review after the eradication program was conducted. Rod stated that Henderson Island had failed so what's the difference here. Ian commented that there are lots of different factors involved with every eradication attempt on Islands and this must be looked at on a case by case basis.

Carole asked Penny about who does have the knowledge about dispersing brodifacoum on inhabited Islands. Penny said this was part of Stage 2 and we would seek advice on all aspects of the program, including working on inhabited Islands, from specialists in the area.

Barbara asked whether we shouldn't we get the information first. Penny advised that there is a lot of information on Island eradication programs. Carole disputed this in relation to inhabited Islands.

**Action- Seek information on inhabited island eradications**

Jack suggested a meeting with all the leaseholders on the Island with Anthony and Andrew to discuss what's happening on each property. He said that Anthony had spoken to his father for a couple of hours and it went really well.

Penny advised that we are gathering information through the PMP process and when completed it will all be sent off to the relevant authorities, including health.

Rob stated that we should get the approval first. Anthony said that it was in the wrong order if we got approval first without consulting with all leaseholders and the APVMA approved bait being spread over the whole Island either via aerial or hand broadcast for the program.

Rob said that he had been informed by people Anthony had visited that he had been trivialising the amount of poison to be spread on the Island and saying it's minimal.

Anthony said that he had been asked on several occasions during the PMP inspections about the Board planning to drop around 55 tonnes of poison on the Island. Anthony has been explaining that the actual amount of poison in that amount of bait is just over 1 kilo of brodifacoum, not 55 tonnes as some people are saying. The majority of the weight is the grain cereal which is the attractant to the rodents, not the poison constituent.

Carole said that Anthony was not an expert. Anthony said that he had been asked a question and had stuck to the facts. Penny confirmed what Anthony has been saying about the % of poison used in the bait.

Karen asked whether school approval was required. Anthony advised that school approval was required and that he had forwarded the Draft Rodent Eradication Plan to them so that they could update their Risk Management Audit requirements.

Rod asked why bait stations could not be used. Ian said that they won't work on the cliffs and mountains.

Beth said that if only bait stations were used you would get approval from residents. Beth had prepared a paper for the group listing 15 reasons why bait stations would work.

Penny thanked Beth for preparing the paper and agreed that bait stations would have an important place but said that it would not be feasible only to use bait stations due to the need to have baits placed in positions around the Island where rodents could simultaneously access them.

Ian asked whether the APVMA could comment on whether bait stations can be used. Penny advised that this was not the APVMA's role, but we would get advice from experts.

Jack said that weeders used winches in the mountains to get to difficult to access weeds and it took 3 weeks to do one small section. It would therefore not be possible to service bait stations in those hard to access areas due to the time it would take.

Rob said that he had a document that states if eradication fails bait stations would be used.

Ian said that would only be for control but that he couldn't talk specifics unless he saw the document.

Penny said that right now we use bait stations for control. With eradication we need a range of techniques in order to reach hard to access areas.

Rod asked whether we realised that throwing bait around was killing everything.

## 6. Project Management Plans

Anthony distributed the new PMP with changes from community members included. Penny outlined again how the PMP process works.

Rob said: “you are using two inexperienced people making decisions- you should resign Penny it’s a disgrace”. Ian asked Rob to retract the statement, but he refused.

Karen asked whether Anthony could provide information on health issues while he was going around to properties with the PMP doc. Anthony said that he had provided information to those who requested it and he was happy to discuss it with Karen.

Rob asked whether group members would sign Conflict of Interest statements in regards to who would gain from the program. Penny advised that the group was an advisory not a decision-making group and therefore conflict of interest considerations did not apply.

Penny said that some group members have expressed concerns about Anthony going to people’s residences and thought that being accompanied by another community member to some households would be a good idea. Karen said that some people would be anxious about Anthony visiting. Anthony said that he was very happy for any family member or friend to accompany him where necessary.

Carole asked why we are discussing off label use when it’s not allowed to be used in other countries. Barbara asked why we are pursuing off label use when it’s illegal. Rob asked how important it was to have signed PMP documents signed to get APVMA approval.

Penny said that it was the APVMA’s role, in Australia, to approve off-label use of any poisons, including brodifacoum. It would be a very specific detailed and planned approach. APVMA will look at all the information and take all risks into account.

Therese asked about point 5E in the PMP document whether in regards to notifying all residents this also applied to lodges. Penny confirmed that it did.

Ian advised that brodifacoum is already used on the Island by some residents who buy the poison from supermarkets.

Rob asked whether still births would be discussed when people are wandering around talking to people.

Penny brought the group back to Karen’s comment regarding having someone else present during the PMP inspections. Karen asked whether it would be the resident’s choice who accompanies them. Penny confirmed that this would be the case.

Ian asked whether we could have a list of people who can attend visits. Penny said that it was entirely the resident’s choice to have someone with them.

Libby said she was concerned about having bait placed in every guest room in lodges. Penny said that this would be discussed on site during the PMP visits.

Therese asked who was legally responsible if something goes wrong with a guest. Rodney asked about people being up the hill dying by drinking the water. Jack said that brodifacoum is not soluble in water so it’s not a problem.

Rob asked about who is liable when guest houses advise tourists there may be exposure to brodifacoum.

Penny said that the Rodent Eradication Program is a Board program, that the Board is responsible for managing risks and that the Board had public liability insurance.

Rob said that he had read somewhere that the Board won't be responsible, people will have to apply to the State. Carole asked whether the program was written into the Board's insurance.

Penny said that there was a difference between providing compensation and public liability insurance.

Rob asked whether information about public liability could be placed on the bottom of the PMP document. Penny said it would be made clear that it is a Board program.

Barbara asked what insurance company would insure hand broadcasting and bait stations. Penny said that leaseholders were already spreading bait and using bait stations on their leases.

## **7. Communication**

- **How to communicate with the group outside of meetings**
- **Communication with the community**

Penny asked about communication methods and how the group wanted the information to be distributed.

Contact details and preferred means of communication were obtained from all those at the meeting.

Penny said that communication with the group would be via email, or where someone did not have access to email, via a note in post office boxes.

## **8. Other Business**

Rodney said he been told that Board staff have been told they have to agree with the program or they will be sacked. Penny said that this was categorically not correct and that Board staff were entirely free to have their own view on the program.

Jim said that he was on the fence either way with the program so the answer to that question is no.

## **9. Next Meeting**

Next meeting to be organised for around a month's time.

Meeting closed 6.20pm.

