

*Foundation for a Rabbit-Free Australia Inc*  
**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 14<sup>th</sup> November 2006**

**Patron: His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery AC CVO MC  
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia**

**CHAIRMAN** Dr P Allen

**TREASURER** Mr W Morgan

**SECRETARY** Mr R Downward

**ADVISERS** Ms F Bartholomaeus  
Mr G Mutze  
Mr N Newland

**EXECUTIVE OFFICER** Ms F Bartholomaeus  
Mrs K Lapidge (from May  
2006)

**HONORARY POSITIONS**  
Mr A Fuller, Solicitor  
Mr DG Bramwell, Auditor

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Dr C Holden  
Dr N Long  
Ms S Oldfield  
Dr J Radcliffe  
Mr T Rogers

## Chairman's Report

*"Often do the spirits*

*Of great events stride on before the events  
And in today already walks tomorrow."*

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), English poet, philosopher and critic.

These few lines were probably intended to mean that the future is frequently shaped by actions and decisions of the past and of the present. Being an optimist, I sincerely believe that RFA is entering a further exciting phase in its relatively short history based both on RFA's past achievements, added to in 2006 I am pleased to report, and plans for future directions.

A highlight for 2006, reflecting the success of the national rabbit workshop convened by RFA in 2005, was Australian Wool Innovation and Meat and Livestock Australia jointly funding further rabbit R&D. The commitment is timely because of the current evidence of increasing rabbit numbers in a number of regions across Australia. The funding is being managed through the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre — we are privileged to have Dr Brian Cooke, the project leader, inform us of the current rabbit situation and research directions at this AGM. The 2006 National Feral Animal Control Program funding for rabbit R&D projects also mirrors the outcomes of the workshop.

RFA progressed four of the five goals in its Strategic Plan, 2005-2010, during 2006.

**Supporting rabbit R&D programs:** RFA sent letters to Australian Wool Innovation and the Invasive Animals CRC offering RFA's services to provide any advice or input to program reviews or other areas relevant to rabbit R&D. The offer resulted in RFA being represented on AWI's Rabbit Advisory Committee which will provide input to the Invasive Animals CRC's rabbit program.

**Increased awareness of the continuing threat of rabbits:** RFA's Committee held a facilitated communication workshop to develop a cost-effective strategy to increase the awareness of key audiences of the continuing threat of rabbits and the need for further R&D

on rabbit control. An action plan is being developed from the outcomes of this workshop. The Foundation, together with Rotary's Australian Campaign for Rabbit Eradication, was again active with the Haigh's Chocolate Easter Bilby Weekend in Rundle Mall. Thanks to RFA's members who supported this activity — an activity organised by a major sponsor of RFA.

RFA's website and Newsletter have been revamped in accordance with RFA's next phase — I urge members to promote these means of communication amongst their colleagues. The logo and letterhead were also revamped in 2006.

RFA had a letter published in The Advertiser's Letters to the Editor in response to Nigel Austin's article, "Surge in rabbits hits crops" — the letter expressed RFA's concerns with the continuing threat of rabbits and insufficient resources to manage the threat.

**Rabbit control included in existing and new INRM strategies:** I am pleased to report that RFA was particularly active in 2006 with submissions to three Commonwealth or State Government inquiries/draft strategies related to pest animals (the submissions are on RFA's website).

The Chairman and Treasurer of RFA met with the Presiding Member of SA's Natural Resources Management Council, Mr Dennis Mutton, to discuss ways that RFA could contribute to NRM directions in SA. Mr Mutton considered that RFA does have a role in NRM. To date, RFA has forwarded a submission to the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board's Concept Statement — a precursor to the Board's Management Plan. We plan to comment on other Board Concept Statements when they are released for public comment.

**Increased rabbit R&D capacity:** RFA offered two grants for Honours students for 2006. The offer was not taken up, presumably reflecting the low interest in rabbit R&D in universities at Honours level. The Committee decided to offer a \$5 000 grant in 2006 for a Masters or Doctorate student to stimulate a greater interest

in rabbit and related R&D.

**Special thanks:** On behalf of the members of RFA, I wish to sincerely thank Fairlie Bartholomaeus, our Executive Officer for the last five years, for her outstanding contribution and dedication to RFA — her efforts are reflected in the sound position that the Foundation now finds itself. I also wish to thank Keryn Lapidge, Executive Officer since May 2006, for her willingness and interest in the task — she brings broad experience to the position and has already made her mark with the webpage and Newsletter.

The constructive and professional inputs by William Morgan, Treasurer, Committee Members and Advisors greatly contributed to 2006 being a successful and enjoyable year and have provided RFA with a sound base for 2007.

A special thankyou is given also to Elders Ltd. for the use of office and storage space, and postal arrangements at their Adelaide premises since the inception of RFA. RFA is now conveniently based at Oxford House, Unley, due to the generosity of the Invasive Animals CRC. RFA continues to enjoy the sponsorship of Haigh's Chocolates — thank you.

**Future activities:** 2007 presents exciting challenges for RFA in an environment of apparently increasing rabbit numbers in many areas of Australia. The challenges include contributing to the AWI/MLA funded Invasive Animals CRC rabbit R&D program; commenting on South Australia's NRM Board Concept Statements; implementing RFA's Communication Strategy; and, importantly, increasing the number of RFA members and sponsors.

I look forward to working with the Committee and other RFA members to further RFA's goals towards a rabbit-free Australia in 2007.

Dr Peter G Allen AM  
Chairman

November 2006