

*Foundation for Rabbit-Free Australia Inc*  
**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 20<sup>th</sup> November 2007**

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

<b>CHAIRMAN</b>	<b>Dr P Allen</b>	<b>TREASURER</b>	<b>Mr W Morgan</b>
<b>SECRETARY</b>	<b>Mr R Downward</b>	<b>ADVISERS</b>	<b>Ms F Bartholomaeus</b> <b>Mr G Mutze</b> <b>Mr N Newland</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE OFFICER</b>	<b>Mrs K Lapidge</b>	<b>HONORARY POSITIONS</b>	<b>Mr DG Bramwell, Auditor</b>
<b>COMMITTEE MEMBERS</b>	<b>Mr B Barratt</b> <b>Dr C Holden</b> <b>Dr N Long</b> <b>Ms S Oldfield</b> <b>Dr J Radcliffe</b> <b>Mr T Rogers</b>		

## Chairman's Report

During 2007, RFA contributed to furthering national and state rabbit control R&D directions and control programs — the value of the Foundation as an independent champion for rabbit control is gaining broad recognition within research, industry and government circles. I am pleased to report that each of the five goals in RFA's Strategic Plan, 2005-2010, was addressed. Further, RFA's Awareness Strategy 2007 was finalised: a strategy with four themes that underpin the Strategic Plan.

**Supporting R&D programs:** RFA continued to be represented on the national Rabbit Management Advisory Group (RMAG). The Group is strongly influencing political and industry awareness of the need for on-going R&D on rabbit control — particularly now that emerging resistance of rabbits to Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease Virus (RHDV) is evident. RFA backed RMAG's proposal for a national Centre for the Biological Control of Rabbits by sending supportive letters to Federal government ministers and shadow ministers, and industry research funding agencies.

RFA sponsored a seminar at the Waite Campus on the impact of RHD on rabbits in Australia. The key speakers were Ms Maija Marsh, recipient of RFA's 2006 Postgraduate Research Grant, and Dr Piran White, University of York, UK.

**Increased awareness of the continuing threat of rabbits:** RFA corresponded with the Commonwealth Minister for Environment and the Tasmanian Premier and Minister for the Environment urging the need for funding rabbit control on Macquarie Island. The island is a World Heritage-listed site seriously threatened by rabbits and rodents. RFA was pleased to see that the two governments jointly funded an extensive control program.

A submission was forwarded to the Commonwealth Department of Environment and Water Sustainability (DEW) commenting on their draft review of the Threat Abatement Plan — Rabbits. Comments forwarded by RFA

to a Commonwealth Senate inquiry into Australia's national parks last year were included in their final report. RFA's endeavours in responding to inquiries seem to be drawing attention to the need for on-going rabbit control and R&D.

Unfortunately, Haigh's Chocolate could not hold their Easter Bilby Weekend in Rundle Mall this year because of conflicts with other activities in the Mall during the same period. However, we look forward to RFA supporting Haigh's next year.

**Rabbit control included in integrated natural resource management strategies:** RFA Committee members attended a public meeting held by the Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges NRM Board on its strategic plan. They stressed the need to include rabbit control in the plan and to support rabbit R&D. The Committee also worked closely with the SA Murray Darling Basin NRM Board on the production of its practical rabbit control guide for land managers in their region. RFA facilitated communication between staff of the Board and the Australian Government Department of Environment and Water Resources, the latter Department planning the production of a rabbit control guide, nationally. RFA communicated with staff of the SA Arid Lands NRM Board and was pleased to note that the Board is continuing to financially support land managers with warren ripping in their region.

**Increased R&D capacity:** Ms Maija Marsh, a PhD student based in the Invasive Animals CRC at Orange, NSW, was the inaugural recipient of RFA's Postgraduate Research Grant. The title of her thesis is "Transmission and effectiveness of RHDV infection in rabbit populations at different spatial scales". RFA acknowledges and sincerely thanks Rotary's Australian Campaign for Rabbit Eradication for its contribution of \$1 000 towards the Grant. Unfortunately, applications related to rabbit research were not received for the two Royal Zoological Society SA/RFA student grants offered for 2007 — presumably, reflecting the paucity of young rabbit researchers.

**Increasing numbers of members and sponsors:** The Committee was highly aware of the need to increase the numbers of members and sponsors to achieve the Foundation's aims. Activities in 2007 to increase the profile and attractiveness of RFA to members and sponsors were the wide distribution of two newsletters, redesigning and updating the website and producing and distributing a promotional flyer.

**Acknowledgements:** As I end my three-year term as Chairman, I sincerely thank the Committee and Advisors for their commitment to the Foundation during the period — they had the skills and vision to initiate new directions starting with the successful national rabbit workshop in 2005. The Strategic Plan was updated and an Awareness Strategy developed to support it. I believe that RFA is well placed to continue to influence government and industry policy and directions on rabbit R&D and to encourage on-ground control. RFA is dependant on its members for continuing support — thank you.

Special thanks to Keryn Lapidge, Executive Officer, for applying her wide range of skills and enthusiasm to the success of RFA, and to William Morgan, our scrupulous Treasurer.

Congratulations to Dr Rob Morrison, a previous RFA Chairman, on his 2007 Australian Government Eureka Prize for Promoting Understanding of Science.

Sponsorships from Haigh's Chocolates and Mutooroo Pastoral Co. were also most important to the success of RFA in 2007 — thanks.

I look forward to seeing the Foundation move on in its quest to eradicate rabbits in Australia — the threat that rabbits pose to the survival of seedlings planted as a carbon sink in Australia may be a useful new dimension to support the need for rabbit control.

Dr Peter G Allen, Chairman  
November 2007