

*Foundation for Rabbit-Free Australia Inc*  
**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2009**

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

### **Chairman's Report**

The past year has involved FRFA in a series of events centered upon the 150 year anniversary of the introduction of the European Rabbit to Australia.

We have worked with the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre (IA CRC), the Rabbit Management Action Group (RMAG) in Canberra, as well as on air with the ABC.

In all these cases FRFA has been able to contribute intellectually as well as financially. In these public events, FRFA has found itself to be sought out in the role of the "Honest Broker", when represented to the Public or more importantly, to the Government. Dr. Tony Peacock of the IA CRC, has made it clear that while FRFA's financial commitment to these projects, by necessity, has been small, it is our "non for profit, community led" status that has been important when making representation to Governments. When a Government funding body receives programme bids from Government organizations, it is important that the private sector is seen to be backing the proposal. FRFA has fulfilled such a role.

The year began with our endorsement and contribution to the ABC led "on air" Rabbiting On Programme. FRFA joined others including Australian Wildlife Conservancy and Haighs Chocolates in providing the prize for the winners in the Australian Wide competition. The event was able to focus upon the 150 year anniversary through out regional Australia. The winners of the two classes both came from W.A., so the travel money was well used.

FRFA was also included within the "Rabbit scan" project run by the RMAG. For us this involved radio interviews speaking upon the need to establish quantifiable numbers on the resurgent rabbit population, as well as scientific comment

as to the possible reasons for the decrease in the efficacy of the RHD virus.

More recently, FRFA has been part of the successful bid to gain funding from the Federal Government for the "RHD BOOST Program". FRFA has committed to provide limited monies for the next three years toward this programme as it seeks to investigate whether the other various strains of RHD occurring around the world, might be useful in revitalizing biological control. The committee recognizes this programme as the best reasonable hope, in obtaining an increased biological control, in the medium term, for Rabbit numbers.

The debate as to the rights of FRFA for the "Easter Bilby" concept, were reinvestigated this year. The thought that the major confectioners were able to side step FRFA's trade mark, was enough for the committee to look again as to where we stood in the commercial world. Upon investigation, it seems that FRFA does indeed have trade mark rights on the name "Easter Bilby", which of course has long been honoured by Haighs Chocolates. It does not, however, have any easily defensible rights to the form of the chocolate Bilby.

Preliminary legal advice, provided pro bono thanks to the contacts of Dr. Tony Peacock, confirmed this and advised that FRFA would have to establish that it formed and sold the first chocolate Bilby in Australia. The committee was able to consult with former member and chair, Dr. Rob Morrison as to some of the previous history of the original court proceedings. Based upon his and other long serving members experiences and advice, the committee has decided to not proceed with any legal investigations due to the extensive time and potential costs associated.

We remain delighted and vocal about Haigh's commitment to the cause and reserve the right to make comment on the possibly misleading 'Chocolate Bilby' sales made by the other manufacturers, into the future.

FRFA has continued to speak with the ZOOS SA over the year and although much time has elapsed, we have broad approval from the Director, Dr. Chris West but await the cooling of the "PANDA MANIA" to conclude more detailed discussion.

At the end of this meeting, we will lose the considerable assistance of Keryn Lapidge as our executive officer. Keryn has long signalled to the committee her inability to continue due to work and family commitments. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Keryn very much for her help in running the foundation and for her intellectual assistance in all things FRFA 'ish. The foundation will now seek part time administrative support.

I would like to thank the membership for their continued support and the Committee for the work that they have undertaken this year and look forward to increasing our collaborative efforts in 2010.

Mr Timothy J. G. Rogers,  
Chairman  
November 2009