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Natural Resource Commission

GPO Box 5341  
Sydney NSW 2001

## RE: NSW Pest Animal Management Review

To Whom It May Concern,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission regarding the NSW Pest Animal Management Plan Review. We recognize the review's concept of *Shared Problems, Shared Solutions* to better manage pest animal and biosecurity risks that impact on our economy, environment and community.

Please find below a consolidated response from the Lord Howe Island Board (LHIB).

### Background

The Lord Howe Island Group, located 700 kilometres north-east of Sydney, includes Lord Howe Island, Admiralty Islands, Mutton Bird Islands and Ball's Pyramid as well as the associated marine areas. The Lord Howe Island Group is part of the State of NSW. The island was first settled in 1834 by families supplying fresh provisions to passing whaling fleets. Today, the main industry on the island is nature based tourism.

In 1982, the Lord Howe Island Group was included on the World Heritage List, and in 2007 was one of fifteen World Heritage places to be included in the National Heritage List.

The main and only inhabited island, which is volcanic in origin, is 11 km long and between 2.0 km and 0.3 km wide. It has an area of 14.55 km<sup>2</sup>, of which only 398 hectares is in the lowland settled area. The northern and southern hilly or mountainous ends of the Island and a central section form part of the Permanent Park Preserve (similar to a National Park).

Most of the island is virtually untouched forest with many of the plants and animals found nowhere else in the world. Other natural attractions include the diversity of its landscapes, the variety of upper mantle and oceanic basalts, the world's southernmost barrier coral reef, nesting seabirds, and its rich historical and cultural heritage.

The Island's population comprises 360 permanent residents and a maximum 400 tourists at any one time.

The Lord Howe Island Board is a statutory authority established under the provisions of the *Lord Howe Island Act, 1953 (the Act)*. Under the Act, the Board is directly responsible to the Minister for the Environment through the Office of Local Government.

Pursuant to the provisions of the Act, the Board is charged with the care, control and management of the Island and the affairs and trade of the Island. It is also responsible for the care, improvement and welfare of the Island and residents. The Board carries out all local government functions on behalf of the Island residents. It controls all land tenure on the Island and administers all residential and other leases in accordance with the Act.

The Board manages the Island Permanent Park Preserve and the protection and conservation of the Island's fauna and flora.

### **Current Position**

Significant impacts to Lord Howe Island's environmental, economic and community values have occurred through the previous establishment of a range of pests, weeds and diseases. The potential introduction, establishment and spread of new pests, weeds and diseases on Lord Howe Island constitute a major ongoing threat to biodiversity, agriculture, tourism and the island way of life. This is supported by several Biosecurity related, Key Threatening Processes, (listed under both the NSW *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* and the Federal *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*), that are directly relevant to Lord Howe Island.

The LHIB (with support of numerous funding bodies) has invested significant resources into Biosecurity (and Pest Animal Management) management including the following:

- \$3.9 million for the eradication of priority weeds since 2004 (Commonwealth Government - Natural Heritage Trust and LHIB)
- \$300K for African Big-headed Ant eradication (Commonwealth government - Caring for our Country, LHIB and North Coast Local Land Services)
- \$9 million for a proposed rodent eradication programme (\$4.5 million provided by both the New South Wales and Commonwealth governments). Currently in the planning and approvals stage.
- \$80K per annum for rodent control
- \$60K for Phytophthora & Myrtle Rust prevention, with an additional \$10K per annum for Phytophthora bay maintenance and treatment of the one known infestation on island (Commonwealth government - Caring for our Country and LHIB)
- \$60K for development of an updated Biosecurity strategy in 2015
- Eradication of feral pigs (1979), cats (1981) and goats (1999) from the island.

### **Recommendation**

We recommend that consideration be given as to how the Pest Management Plan and associated recommendations can further protect Lord Howe Island's unique environmental, economic and community values, as well as protect previous and current Biosecurity investment from a range of Biosecurity threats.

Suggestions include:

- Special consideration that Lord Howe Island (and other offshore islands) is different to mainland NSW. A range of established and widespread mainland weeds, pests and diseases do not occur on Lord Howe Island. Similarly eradication of pests on Lord Howe Island is achievable in many cases where it may not be achievable on the mainland. This will require local declaration of species such as rats and mice as pests.
- Particular consideration of eradication of rodents and other pest animals from offshore islands where ever possible.

- Consideration of investment in best practice eradication techniques for a range of pest animals on island. The New Zealand Department of Conservation is a world leader in this field.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide comment. We would also welcome the opportunity to be part of ongoing stakeholder consultation during the drafting of the regulations, instruments, policies and procedures that will underpin the Biosecurity Act.

Regards

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'A. Walsh', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Andrew Walsh

Project Manager - Rodent Eradication Project

Lord Howe Island Board

24 May 2016