

Comments on the Interim Report for the Independent Review of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)*

Summary

Name of author/organisation: Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre

Date: 8/7/09

Which chapter(s) of the interim report are you commenting on? Chapter 18: Wildlife trade, live imports and biosecurity

Key points of submission

We disagree with the conclusion reached by the panel in respect to point 18.69 on page 278, which appears to attribute the following statement to the outcomes of the IA CRC's national workshop on 'Risk assessment processes for the import and keeping of exotic vertebrates in Australia':

'Some submissions argued that the onus to prove that the importation poses an environmental risk should not be on environmental groups; it should be on the importer to prove the safety of importation.⁵⁵ This supports the concept of proponents preparing adequate assessment documentation...'

The state and territory representatives at the workshop unanimously did NOT support the proponent preparing risk assessment documentation, as it could be perceived to be inherently biased and flawed. It was recommended that a suitably qualified independent person be appointed to prepare and assess the required documentation (DEWHA representatives felt that the proponent should still provide risk assessment documentation, but this was disputed by state and territory representatives).

Some participants said it is essential for the integrity of the process, for DEWHA (or an independent DEWHA-employed consultant) to start from scratch and re/collect an unbiased set of all the information required for the risk assessment.

ALL the workshop participants agreed it would be an improvement on the current system to have an independent assessor who could be paid for through the applicant's fees. One of the workshop's key recommendations was for 'A nationally agreed approach for a single risk assessment system, each species assessed once, by an accredited, independent assessor paid for by the applicant.'

We would like the panel to reconsider the statement made, as we feel it does not correctly reflect the discussions and recommendations of our workshop.

Thank-you for giving us this opportunity to comment on the interim report.

Reference : Henderson, W. R. (2009). Workshop Proceedings: Risk assessment processes for import and keeping of exotic vertebrates in Australia. 25–26 February 2009, Canberra. Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre, Canberra.

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