



TASMANIAN FARMERS AND GRAZIERS ASSOCIATION

2005-06 STATE BUDGET SUBMISSION

1 OCTOBER 2004

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
INTRODUCTION.....	4
WATER DEVELOPMENT & SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT.....	6
Water Development Plan	8
Irrigation Partnership Program	9
INVESTMENT, INNOVATION & COMPETITIVENESS	10
Creating the Farmers of the Future.....	10
Labour & Training Shortages	12
Quality Assurance Program	14
Encouraging Young People to Enter Farming	15
BUILDING ON OUR ISLAND ADVANTAGE	18
Emergency Animal Disease Preparedness	18
MANAGING OUR NATURAL RESOURCES	20
Natural Resource Management & Environment	22
Game Management to Control Browsing Damage.....	24
OTHER BUDGET ISSUES.....	25
King Island Shipping	25
Stock Theft & Rural Crime	26
Feral Cat Eradication Program.....	27
Enforcing Code Of Practice For Exotic Sheep Breeds	30

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Tasmanian Farmers & Graziers Association (TFGA) is the peak industry body representing the interests of some 5500 Tasmanian farmers across a range of agricultural commodities crucial to the Tasmanian economy at the State and National level. The TFGA is committed to promoting and participating in the long-term sustainability and development of agriculture in this State.

The Tasmanian Government has recently announced a new development strategy aimed at expanding Tasmanian primary industry and ensuring its long-term prosperity *The State of Growth*. The Premier restated Government's commitment to *The State of Growth* in his State of the State address of 22nd September 2004. The TFGA submission to the 2005-06 State Budget is focussed on developing strategies that will enable progress to occur towards achieving the stated objectives.

The TFGA and the Tasmanian Government have progressed the development of an Industry Action Partnership to a stage where sign off is expected in the short term.

The TFGA supports the full implementation of the DPIWE Corporate Plan. Industry is now expecting that the plan be adequately resourced and the documented outcomes achieved. The TFGA looks forward to working with DPIWE throughout this process.

Managing our Natural Resources

- ✧ The TFGA recommends that the State Government provide financial assistance of \$115 000 per annum to the TFGA for the triennium 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08 to allow the TFGA to expand its NRM Unit, to allow it to work with Government on a project to simplify and make more flexible the task of environmental compliance for farmers.
- ✧ The TFGA recommends that the State Government establish as a major initiative, a program to develop and implement Species Game Management Plans for the major species causing crop, pasture and seedling loss to farmers.

Building on our Island Advantage

- ✧ TFGA recommends that the Government funds a full-time person for 2 years as an industry officer to ensure that the industry is prepared for an EAD outbreak.
- ✧ TFGA requests that the Government develop and publicise a mechanism to recompense these producers for the time they are away from their own businesses, both for training purposes and for participation in the control of a genuine disease emergency.

Water Development & Sustainable Management

- ✧ That the Government allocate funding for the Water Development Plan for the triennium 2005/06, 2006/7 and 2007/08, with a particular focus on improving water storage capacity, refining water management methodology and identifying ways to streamline water administration.
- ✧ That the Irrigation Partnership Program be extended to cover the triennium 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08 and that the scope of the program be extended to include assistance for all studies required to take the project to the point of construction, in addition to the prerequisite environmental studies which have been the focus of the program in the past.



Investment, Innovation & Competitiveness

- ✧ Provision of a Budget allocation of \$98,500 per annum for a 3 year period to assist with achieving Priority Strategy 3 of The State of Growth.
- ✧ Provision of \$35,000 to allow TFGA/RITE/TAFE to develop generic quality assurance resource materials to meet growing demand for Quality Assurance.
- ✧ TFGA co-ordinating an industry action partnership with the State Government and other stakeholders that with State Government financial assistance, will investigate impediments to young people entering farming in Tasmania and develop solutions that create meaningful rural industry career pathways and encourage new farming businesses.
- ✧ Allocation of sufficient funds to allow a full investigation into the impediments to young people entering farming in Tasmania and the development of solutions through the industry action partnership.
- ✧ Establishment of a program by which stamp duty can be waived or reimbursed for first farm buyers.

Other Budget Issues

- ✧ Establishment of a minimum \$250,000 Contingency Fund for the King Island shipping service in the budget of the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources and that the State Government make a commitment to maintain this level of funding in real terms for the next 5 years.
- ✧ Formation of a dedicated stock squad, comprising a full-time officer and 2 part-time officers across the State, with the sole focus of reducing stock theft in Tasmania.
- ✧ The Government, in partnership with Industry, create a Task Force to identify mechanisms to break the current cycle of sheep thefts in Tasmania.
- ✧ Initiation of a review of stock theft penalties with a view to substantially increasing penalties.
- ✧ Maintenance of the training program for rural police officers and its focus on rural crime in general.
- ✧ Establishment of a working group representative of key stakeholders to investigate the feral cat problem including the extent of the problem and identify potential control and management options.
- ✧ Establishment of an education campaign to inform cat owners of their responsibilities and the damage cats can do as well as a funded cat sterilisation programme to minimise the effects of leakage.
- ✧ Commitment of sufficient resources to ensure that current and potential owners of exotic sheep and their crosses are made aware of the Regulations and mandatory Code of Practice under the Animal Farming (Registration) Act 1994 and that the Regulations and mandatory Code of Practice are enforced by DPIWE officers.

The TFGA commends its 2005-06 State Budget submission to the State Government for favourable consideration.



INTRODUCTION

The Tasmanian Farmers & Graziers Association (TFGA) is the peak industry body representing the interests of some 5,500 Tasmanian farmers across a range of agricultural commodities crucial to the Tasmanian economy at the State and National level.

Vision

The Tasmanian Farmers & Graziers Association will be a strong and effective peak industry organisation creating the future for Tasmania's primary producers.

Mission

It will do this by:

- providing innovative and effective **leadership** for Tasmania's primary industries
- being the nationally recognised and respected **representative** voice of Tasmanian primary producers
- **promoting** the development of Tasmania's primary industries
- **protecting** the right to farm in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable operating environment
- **enabling** members to thrive in a continually changing operating environment

The TFGA is committed to promoting and participating in the long-term sustainability and development of agriculture in this State. The TFGA believes in working closely with the State Government through industry action partnerships on initiatives and issues affecting Tasmanian primary.

The TFGA recognises the role that it can play in *The State of Growth* framework and it believes that the initiatives outlined in this submission to the 2005-06 State Budget can assist in achieving the objectives established in *The State of Growth*.

A broader vision for the future of the State was developed following extensive community consultation - *Tasmania Together*. The TFGA continues to play an important role in this process as a key stakeholder representing a major sector in the State; the rural and regional grouping that is specifically identified in Goal 7 of the *Tasmania Together* vision:

To foster and value vibrant and diverse rural, regional and remote communities that are connected to each other and the rest of the world.

This goal is particularly important to the State as a vibrant, growing and profitable rural sector plays a key role in wealth and employment creation that is essential to meet the Vision, Goals, Standards and Targets defined in *Tasmania Together*.



Whilst *Tasmania Together* recognises the importance of the rural sector in wealth and employment creation, *The State of Growth* provides the framework for this to occur.

The TFGA submission to the 2005-06 State Budget is focussed on developing strategies that will enable progress to occur towards achieving the stated objectives. Particular attention has been given to:

- Priority Strategy 2: Water Development & Sustainable Management
- Priority Strategy 3: Investment, Innovation & Competitiveness
- Priority Strategy 4: Building on our Island Advantage
- Priority Strategy 5: Managing our Natural Resources

In focussing on these priority areas, the TFGA is not placing a reduced importance on other priority areas.

This submission has taken into account the Corporate Plan DPIWE 04-06, and TFGA fully supports its implementation.

Note:

There are two recommendations within this submission which are particularly important for the TFGA.

Natural Resource Management

The TFGA recommends that the State Government provide financial assistance of \$115 000 per annum to the TFGA for the triennium 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08 to allow the TFGA to expand its NRM Unit, to allow it to work with Government on a project to simplify and make more flexible the task of environmental compliance for farmers.

(page no.22)

Emergency Animal Disease

TFGA recommends that the Government funds a full-time person for 2 years as an industry officer to ensure that the industry is prepared for an EAD outbreak.

(page no.18)

All recommendations are important, but the attention of Government is drawn in particular to these items.



PRIORITY STRATEGY 2

WATER DEVELOPMENT & SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT

The State Government has correctly identified that water availability and reliability are vital to achieving meaningful growth in Tasmania's primary industry. Most recently this was re-emphasised by the Premier in his State of the State address of 22 September 2004.

The Water Development Plan identifies strategic initiatives to manage and develop Tasmania's fresh water resources. These initiatives range from short to long term with regard to time frame and include specific water development projects, improved environmental outcomes and streamlined administrative processes for water management.

The TFGA understands that funding for the Water Development Plan, as currently committed, will expire at the end of 2004/05.

It is imperative, in the view of the TFGA, that Government commit to an extension of the Water Development Plan for a further triennium. The importance of water to growth and value adding in agriculture remains undiminished, the Water Development Plan has demonstrated its ability to deliver valuable outcomes (Meander Dam; work to date on the Conservation of Fresh Water Ecosystem Values project) and there is still a lot of work left to do.

In particular work is needed on:

- Strategic water storage initiatives
- Maximization of on-farm storage capacity and usage
- Completion of the Conservation of Fresh Water Ecosystem Values project
- Refinement of catchment water management planning methodology
- Review of the operation of the Water Management Act with a view to facilitating farmer uptake of irrigation opportunities.

The TFGA has identified strategies that can assist in addressing these priority areas. The strategies are clearly linked to the goals of Tasmania Together as well as the targets of The State of Growth.



Goal & Objective Alignment

The priority areas and initiatives below, accord directly with a number of Goals in the Tasmania Together report:

Goal 7.1) To facilitate access to employment, basic services, and public and private infrastructure for people in rural, regional and remote communities.	The initiatives focus on facilitating the development of new private water infrastructure and the better utilisation of existing and new infrastructure.
Goal 16) Increase job and meaningful work opportunities in Tasmania	Creation of new water infrastructure and the better use of private water infrastructure will lead to increased employment and job opportunities.
Goal 20.2) To increase primary industry exports by further developing the potential of our primary sector	Primary industry exports will be increased through increased returns on the land and through greater certainty about water availability.



Priority Area 1 Water Development Plan

The Water Development Plan program should be extended for a further triennium, with a focus on further identifying and developing water storage opportunities (strategic and on-farm), refining water planning methodology (including identification of environmental water requirements through the Conservation of Fresh Water Ecosystem Values program) and facilitating uptake of irrigation opportunities by farmers (including through systematic review of the Water Management Act).

Background

There is clearly a great deal more water available for irrigation in Tasmanian agriculture than is currently used. There seem to be three underlying factors which are resulting in this: inadequate storage capacity for holding winter flows for summer use, uncertainty about how much water is available for uptake from water courses in summer, and a water administration system which is not as good as it could be in terms of facilitating irrigator uptake of available water.

Over the past few years the Government has explicitly addressed these issues through the Water Development Plan. This has delivered relevant and valuable outcomes in areas like water storage (Irrigation Partnership Program; Meander Dam), water availability estimation (Water Management Plan methodology; Conservation of Fresh Water Ecosystem Values program) and streamlining of water administration (refinement of Water Management Planning process).

However there is a lot left to do in all of these areas, and the fact that the macro environment within which water is managed by the State, is constantly changing (National Water Initiative negotiations) means that this needs ongoing and concentrated effort.

Water Development Plan

The Water Development Plan program has shown itself to be a good vehicle for delivering improvements in water administration as this relates to irrigation. There is clearly a need for an ongoing systematic approach to water development issues. There must therefore be a strong case for extension of the Water Development Plan for a further triennium.

Recommendation

That the Government allocate funding for the Water Development Plan for the triennium 2005/06, 2006/7 and 2007/08, with a particular focus on improving water storage capacity, refining water management methodology and identifying ways to streamline water administration.



Priority Area 2 Irrigation Partnership Program

The scope of the Irrigation Partnership Program should be extended to include assistance for all studies required to take projects to the point of construction.

Background

In many parts of Tasmania, irrigation water is provided through the construction of 'on farm' storages to supplement or replace direct takes from rivers and streams. The capital cost of construction of these storages is significant and in many cases costs incurred in gaining an approval for a new dam can be quite large. The construction of new 'on farm' storages enables farmers to have greater confidence in water security resulting in a reduction in the risk of a crop not achieving its maximum potential.

Irrigation Partnership Program

The TFGA recognises the important role that the Commonwealth-State funded Irrigation Partnerships Program (IPP) has played in encouraging private investment in water infrastructure in the State. However, with the emphasis on irrigation infrastructure and development that will arise from the Water Development Plan and the Infrastructure Fund, it will be essential to encourage increased private capital investment to fully realise the opportunities that the Government initiatives have provided.

State Budget Initiatives

To maintain this successful program, the TFGA is seeking a State Government commitment for a further 3 years of funding. We understand that the Commonwealth may or may not decide to extend its funding program in this area. Regardless of this State needs to extend its funding. The TFGA feels that assistance under the program should be extended to include hydrological work, dam and system design, design reports and feasibility studies more generally.

Recommendation

That the Irrigation Partnership Program be extended to cover the triennium 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08 and that the scope of the program be extended to include assistance for all studies required to take the project to the point of construction, in addition to the prerequisite environmental studies which have been the focus of the program in the past.



PRIORITY STRATEGY 3

INVESTMENT, INNOVATION & COMPETITIVENESS

Creating the Farmers of the Future

The State Government believes that opportunities can be maximised by building a culture of enterprise that encourages innovation and excellence.

To achieve this, the TFGA believes that the State Government and industry need to recognise the skills issues facing the agricultural sector and should provide the support and initiatives necessary to assist TFGA and Rural Industry Training & Education (RITE) in creating the 'Farmers of the Future'. The 'Farmers of the Future' lie not only within the existing farming community, but the broader community - the encouragement of new farmers is also vital to the future of the agricultural sector.

Background

The TFGA and Rural Industry Training and Education (RITE) have been playing a significant role in addressing the skills needs of the agricultural sector for a number of years. Ensuring that an adequate skills base exists is critical to achieving the goals in Tasmania Together and *The State of Growth*.

Farmers of today are managing multi-million dollar enterprises in an increasingly complicated and challenging environment. They are being required to broaden their skills base far beyond those of a successful farmer in the past. Business skills are needed on a regular basis as capital investment decisions involving significant amounts are considered as part of developing and maintaining the financial sustainability of the farming enterprise. These business skills are vital in developing risk management strategies so important to the 'ongoing' viability of the enterprise

Environmental issues and trends have a significant impact on farming enterprises. As a result farmers of today need to understand the implications of changes to environmental laws and regulations.

Above all else, Farmers of today need to be innovative, constantly looking for ways to improve the productivity and profitability of their farming enterprise. They need to be aware of national and global trends such as the Australian Dollar, quality assurance and traceability, subsidised competitors and global political factors. They are directly linked to world markets and subject to the associated volatility.

Traditionally, management of the family farm has been passed down from one generation to the next over a number of years. This has enabled the transfer of years of skills and experience to the younger generation to be blended with fresh ideas and the ability to adopt new technology.

Evidence indicates that young people are becoming less interested in being involved in the family farm. The financial rewards available from non-farm employment are taking young people away from a farming career, with obvious and significant repercussions for the future of agriculture in this State and the economy.



The average age of farmers is estimated to be between 55 and 60 years, an issue of considerable concern to the TFGA.

Taking the time to reflect on who will be the 'Farmers of the Future' and what they will be like, it is evident that 4 priority areas exist that require the development of strategies:

- ✓ Skills Building
- ✓ Labour & Training Shortages
- ✓ Quality Assurance
- ✓ Encouraging Tomorrows Farmers

The TFGA have identified strategies that can assist in addressing these priority areas. The strategies are clearly linked to the goals of *Tasmania Together* as well as the targets of *The State of Growth*.

Goal & Objective Alignment

The priority areas and initiatives below, accord directly with a number of Goals in the *Tasmania Together* report:

<p>Goal 4) <i>Create a culture that encourages people to learn and develop new skills, including life skills, throughout their lives.</i></p>	<p>The initiatives identified by the TFGA will assist in the creation of a culture that encourages farmers to develop new skills by improving accessibility and relevance of training offered.</p>
<p>Goal 7.3) <i>To maintain vibrant rural and regional communities.</i></p>	<p>Creation of a learning culture will assist rural communities to maintain their vibrancy and promote innovation and leadership.</p>
<p>Goal 8) <i>Provide a valued role in community life for Tasmania's young people now and in the future.</i></p>	<p>Training initiatives will enable young people to develop the skills that would enable them to remain in rural communities and develop in valued community members.</p>
<p>Goal 16) <i>Increase job and meaningful work opportunities in Tasmania.</i></p>	<p>The initiatives identified are focussed on creating the 'Farmers of the Future'. This will lead to increased job opportunities.</p>
<p>Goal 18) <i>Ensure education and training provides our workforce with the skills to support our business and industry.</i></p>	<p>The continued operation of RITE is critical to ensuring that education and training provided meets the needs of the industry and is relevant.</p>
<p>Goal 20.2) <i>To increase primary industry exports by further developing the potential of our primary sector.</i></p>	<p>Physical infrastructure will establish a basis to develop agriculture. Creating a human resource with the right skills will enable primary industry exports to be developed to its full potential.</p>



Priority Area 1 Labour & Training Shortages

The TFGA is seeking a financial contribution from the State Government to assist with the continued operation of Rural Industry Training and Education.

Background

The TFGA believes that an active industry training organisation is essential to assist the State Government in meeting the objectives stated in The State of Growth. However, RITE is currently limited in its operations by the cessation of any government support, as a result many training and education initiatives of value to the rural industry have been deferred and risk being lost.

The TFGA and RITE believe that shortages of skilled labour in the agricultural sector will increase in size and prevalence unless action is taken to address these looming skills shortages.

Rural Industry Training & Education

The TFGA actively supports the work of RITE through the provision of funding as well as 'in-kind' support. RITE can play a significant role in the development of training and education initiatives that will assist in creating the farmers of the future. Presently RITE:

- ✓ Provide advice to the TFGA and respond to education and training issues affecting agriculture and related industries for the TFGA.
- ✓ Provide any advice to Commodity Councils and Committees that they require on education and training issues affecting that commodity.
- ✓ Participate in joint projects relating to industry education.
- ✓ Facilitate the provision of specific training for commodities.
- ✓ Through negotiation with the TFGA, facilitate the provision of industry wide training, i.e. irrigation practices, quality assurance etc.
- ✓ Coordinate and deliver specialist training relating to shearing and shed hand.
- ✓ Facilitate and arrange appropriate chemical training,
- ✓ Maintain the Chemical Accreditation database.
- ✓ Coordinate and deliver the Rural Leadership Training Programme.
- ✓ RITE will assess opportunities to expand the TFGA RTO status to address identified shortfalls in industries.

Previously RITE received funding from the Commonwealth and State Governments through the program that supported industry training advisory boards across Australia. The withdrawal of this funding has required RITE to review its strategic directions and the way that it does business.



RITE has managed to continue to operate on a very reduced budget as it pursues funding that will enable it to once again operate at a level that provides the greatest value to Tasmanian primary industries and enables many potential training and education initiatives to be taken.

The 2002-03 initiative of the Department of Education to employ 3 Industry Liaison Officers will not provide the information and solutions that RITE can provide.

RITE can demonstrate their achievements over recent years:

- ✓ Introduction and review of the current competency based training packages in Rural Production, Amenity Horticulture and Conservation & Land Management.
- ✓ Facilitation of farm chemical training workshops, in partnership with TAFE Tasmania.
- ✓ Management of the Shearer and shed Hand training project, in partnership with TFGA.
- ✓ Developed and conducted Rural Leadership Training and Advanced Rural Leadership courses over the last 5 years, resulting in graduates now taking on leadership positions in a variety of rural and community organisations.
- ✓ Management of the Careers Education project, encouraging the uptake of careers in the agricultural and horticultural industries.
- ✓ Identifying the training and education needs in respect of quality assurance programs

A continuation of these important programs and initiatives has been placed in danger due to the cessation of government support.

State Budget Initiatives

TFGA is seeking a financial contribution from the State Government to allow RITE to again employ a full time Executive Officer. Together with external funding from other sources, this will allow RITE to fully address the training and education needs of the rural industry.

Recommendation

That the State Government provide a Budget allocation of \$98,500 per annum for a 3 year period to assist with achieving Priority Strategy 3 of The State of Growth.



Priority Area 2 Quality Assurance Program

Provision of funding to enable the development of generic Quality Assurance resource material to meet the growing demand for Quality Assurance.

Background

The agricultural industry in Tasmania needs to address the issue of quality assurance in an effective and coordinated manner. Presently, a fragmented disparate system exists with no integration and when this is coupled with the day-to-day pressures that farmers face - it is largely ignored.

Quality Assurance Program

Following discussions at a number of forums including at meetings of the Tasmanian Board of Agricultural Education, RITE has established a working party of key stakeholders to develop a generic QA package. It is intended that this package form the basis to which further modules can be added to meet the requirements of other organisations, eg Tesco's, Sainsbury's etc.

In recent months, RITE has taken the initiative on this issue and mapped the Eurepgap guidelines against the competency standards in the Rural Production Training Package. This indicates that the competency standards are able to meet the Eurepgap guidelines. It is intended that the generic Quality Assurance package would encompass the various accreditation programs that are currently or may be utilised by the farming/production industry in Tasmania, i.e. Eurepgap, NaturesChoice, TQA, CattleCare etc. Delivery of the Quality Assurance package would be by TAFE Tasmania.

Initial discussions have covered a large range of issues surrounding the establishment of a generic Quality Assurance program. It is envisaged that Tasmania Quality Assurance (TQA) will have the role of auditing farms in relation to quality assurance and that RITE/TAFE/TFGA will have the role of delivery and providing assistance with implementation.

State Budget Initiatives

To establish a generic Quality Assurance program, the TFGA requests that the State Government provide financial assistance to RITE to enable RITE to develop the resource materials, learning materials etc to allow the generic Quality Assurance program to be delivered.

The TFGA supports this initiative as once the resource material has been developed, any quality assurance need for Tasmanian agriculture can be addressed. This will enable the development of the skills necessary to achieve the objectives of 'The State of Growth'.

Recommendation

That the State Government provide \$35,000 to allow TFGA/RITE/TAFE to develop generic quality assurance resource materials to meet growing demand for Quality Assurance.



Priority Area 3 Encouraging Young People to Enter Farming

An industry action partnership that will investigate impediments to young people entering farming in Tasmania and develop solutions that create meaningful rural industry career pathways and encourage new farming businesses.

The State Government will establish a program by which stamp duty can be waived or reimbursed for first farm buyers.

Background

Traditionally, management of the family farm has been passed down from one generation to the next over a number of years. This has enabled the transfer of years of skills and experience to the younger generation to be blended with fresh ideas and the ability to adopt new technology.

Evidence indicates that young people are becoming less interested in being involved in the family farm. The financial rewards available from non-farm employment are taking young people away from a farming career, with obvious and significant repercussions for the future of agriculture in this State.

The average age of farmers is estimated to be between 55 and 60 years, an issue of considerable concern to the TFGA. Farm succession and longer term planning require younger people to be able to enter the Industry with confidence. There is little in the way of incentive to attract younger people to enter the Industry.

TFGA has identified two barriers which, if addressed, would

- provide meaningful career pathways
- provide meaningful support for first farm purchasers

Encouraging Young People to Enter Farming

We believe there is an opportunity for the Agriculture Industry to collaborate in the establishment and promotion of defined career pathways for young people wishing to enter the Industry.

Using dairy farming as an industry example, young people can enter at a basic level, either a farm hand, relief milker or as an apprentice, and can progress to either a leading hand at a large dairy or take on a position as a sharefarmer. If they have little or no equity, they take a small share of the milk cheque and as they build equity in ownership of cows their own share of the farm income increases.



They have the opportunity of building business management and farm operating skills with differing degrees of supervision and training available to them. After a number of years, the sharefarmer may decide on moving to a larger farm, taking on a management role on a corporate farm or perhaps eventually buying their own farm. At this stage the cycle begins again - a person who has gained experience through their participation in the Industry may take on an apprentice or a trainee.

The advantage in this system is there are lower barriers to entry with incremental increases in the amount of capital required. The older farmers wishing to reduce their involvement but retain their land are still able to have a degree of control over operations, while at the same time acting as mentors to those who are new and perhaps inexperienced.

This arrangement, depending on individual circumstances, might lead to the possibility of leasing land and/or equipment, or once again, a young producer with more experience may move on to a bigger farm as a sharefarmer with the eventual aim of owning their own land. Certainly the older farmer is able to retain their capital and an interest in the land and operations, if they so wish.

Arrangements could link share-farming agreements with ongoing training and/or productivity increase incentives. Furthermore, it would be expected that the young people could bring energy, new ideas and skills, while the older farmer contributes knowledge and experience as well as the land and possibly the equipment. Once the system is established, easily identified role models would then be available for young people wishing to enter the Industry.

The TFGA proposes that it co-ordinates an industry action partnership with the State Government and other stakeholders that will investigate impediments to young people entering farming in Tasmania and develop solutions that create meaningful rural industry career pathways and encourage new farming businesses. The industry action partnership will identify other funding sources for implementation.

Additional funding would enable exploration of the options, development of guidelines and procedures for the step-by-step establishment of share-farming agreements and training and other support options and recommendations.

An initiative that would assist young farmers to overcome the considerable hurdles of purchasing a farm would be for the Government to provide a mechanism by which stamp duty can be waived or reimbursed for first farm buyers.

Whilst the capital cost of purchasing a farm is very significant, the additional costs incurred by purchasers also add significantly to the actual cost of purchase. It is estimated that the additional costs add approximately 5% to the purchase cost of which approximately 60% of the additional costs relate to stamp duty.



State Budget Initiatives

The Industry Action Partnership will lead to a number of solutions being developed that will encourage young people to enter farming. State Government assistance to undertake the investigations and develop the solutions would be required. The potential exists to secure additional funding from the Commonwealth Government to extend this work.

The reimbursement of stamp duty to young farmers making their first farm purchase is an initiative that would encourage young people to establish their own farming enterprises. The TFGA believes that this would assist in overcoming the increasing average age of Tasmanian farmers and encourage young people to enter farming.

This initiative is important in ensuring that the primary industry sector remains one of the foundations upon which the State will prosper into the future.

The TFGA will co-ordinate an industry action partnership with the State Government and other stakeholders that, with State Government financial assistance, will investigate impediments to young people entering farming in Tasmania and develop solutions that create meaningful rural industry career pathways and encourage new farming businesses.

The TFGA recommends:

1. That the Government allocates sufficient funds to allow a full investigation into the impediments to young people entering farming in Tasmania and the development of solutions through the industry action partnership.
2. That The State Government establish a program by which stamp duty can be waived or reimbursed for first farm buyers.



PRIORITY STRATEGY 4

BUILDING ON OUR ISLAND ADVANTAGE

The State Government has correctly identified that maintaining Tasmania's disease-free status and our clean air and water set us apart from the rest of the world.

The TFGA has identified strategies that can assist in addressing this priority area. The strategies are clearly linked to the goals of *Tasmania Together* as well as the targets of *The State of Growth*.

Goal & Objective Alignment

The priority areas and initiatives below, accord directly with a number of Goals in the *Tasmania Together* report:

Goal 20) <i>Promote our Island industry exports by further developing the potential of our primary sector</i>	The initiatives focus on improving the preparedness of the agricultural industry to respond to an outbreak of an emergency animal disease..
--	---

Emergency Animal Disease Preparedness

TFGA recognises the important part that primary producers will play when working in control centres and elsewhere in the event of a disease emergency.

TFGA recommends that the Government funds a full-time person for 2 years to ensure that the industry is prepared for an EAD outbreak.

TFGA requests that the Government develop and publicise a mechanism to recompense these producers for the time they are away from their own businesses, both for training purposes and for participation in the control of a genuine disease emergency.

Background

It is recognised that DPIWE is improving its ability to respond effectively to an EAD outbreak. However, industry is hardly prepared at all. Industry is in urgent need of a coordinated response plan.

In the event of an emergency, some primary producers will be needed in control centres to take on such roles as industry liaison officers.

Before taking on these roles, training and regular refresher activities will need to be undertaken.

Most of the control centre personnel will be salaried employees, eg from the DPIWE. Whilst they may be working away from home and in unfamiliar surroundings, they will continue to be paid.



However, when primary producers are asked to participate in training, they have to leave their own businesses behind. They suffer a double financial disadvantage.

1. They need to pay someone else to do the work they would otherwise have been doing in their own farming businesses.
2. They are not paid for their time whilst on training and/or refresher courses.

TFGA has already arranged for approximately 12 people to be trained as industry liaison officers in the event of an emergency. This training was entirely voluntary.

The exercises held to date have shown: (1) that a much larger number of people will be needed in the event of a genuine emergency; and (2) that regular refresher training is essential to maintain the new skills.

It will be much easier to recruit and train primary industry emergency personnel, if adequate compensation is paid for their time and for the loss of productivity in their own businesses whilst they are away.

State Budget Initiatives

The EAD Industry Officer will be responsible for ensuring that the major industry bodies have a documented and tested EAD response plan. The officer will also be responsible for ensuring that there are sufficient numbers of trained Industry Liaison Officers and other designated persons. The officer will ensure that the industry's response plan is coordinated with the DPIWE.

The TFGA believes that these initiatives will result in industry being as prepared as possible for the imminent outbreak of an EAD.

Recommendation

The risk of an EAD is becoming a question of when rather than if. It is therefore important for the industry to be as prepared as possible for an outbreak. To assist this the TFGA recommends that the Government fund a full-time person as an industry officer for 2 years.

TFGA requests that the Government develop and publicise a mechanism to recompense these producers for the time they are away from their own businesses, both for training purposes and for participation in the control of a genuine disease emergency.



PRIORITY STRATEGY 5

MANAGING OUR NATURAL RESOURCES

The need to balance economic development with social and environmental needs has long been recognised by the State Government and the TFGA - it is fundamental to maintaining sustainable farming operations.

In recent years there has been a dramatic increase in the level of Government and community interest in the management of natural resource and environmental issues having a direct connection with the farm sector. Notable in this regard have been:

- Water development and water management planning initiatives;
- Native vegetation conservation initiatives;
- The Natural Resource Management (NRM) Framework process;
- GMO (Genetically Modified Organism) issues;
- Game management developments; and
- Air quality policy development.

In developing these issues the Government, as in other areas of policy formulation, has sought input from the community and, in particular, from the TFGA as the principal representative body for farmers in Tasmania.

It is evident that a key priority for both the TFGA and the State Government is to ensure that the TFGA can provide adequate input into natural resource management policy development and projects.

The TFGA has identified a strategy that will assist in addressing these priority areas. The strategy is clearly linked to the goals of *Tasmania Together* as well as the targets of *The State of Growth*. It also builds on the Partnership Agreement which is in place between the State Government and the TFGA.

Goal & Objective Alignment

The priority areas and initiatives below, accord directly with a number of Goals in the *Tasmania Together* report:

<p>Goal 7.3) <i>To maintain vibrant rural and regional communities.</i></p>	<p>The vibrancy of a community is reliant on the capacity and the willingness of a community. This initiative will assist in maintaining the vibrancy through promotion of involvement in issues of interest to the community.</p>
<p>Goal 13) <i>Have a system of government that is open, seeks and listens to people's views and ideas, and uses them in decision making at all levels.</i></p>	<p>Supporting this initiative would demonstrate that the State Government is listening to the views that have recently been expressed by farmers around the State.</p>



<p>Goal 14.1) <i>To promote cooperative behaviour and deliberation in decision making.</i></p>	<p>This initiative will assist in promoting cooperative behaviour through linkages that can be further developed.</p>
<p>Goal 21) <i>Value, protect and conserve our natural and cultural heritage.</i></p>	<p>Farmers are custodians of areas of land that are important in the context of our natural heritage. This initiative assists in enhancing the capacity of farmers in this respect.</p>
<p>Goal 22) <i>Value, protect and maintain our natural diversity.</i></p>	<p>Non-forest native vegetation is an issue of rapidly increasing significance and concern to farmers. The capacity of farmers to address this issue will be increased through this initiative.</p>
<p>Goal 23) <i>Ensure there is a balance between environmental protection and economic and social development.</i></p>	<p>The TFGA recognises and supports the need to ensure there is a balance between environmental protection and economic and social development.</p>
<p>Goal 23.4) <i>To achieve sustainable and appropriate land use.</i></p>	<p>Working with farmers on an ongoing basis will assist the State Government to achieve goals on sustainable and appropriate land use.</p>
<p>Goal 24) <i>Ensure our natural resources are managed in a sustainable way now and for future generations.</i></p>	<p>Assisting and educating farmers on improving their management of natural resources will ensure that natural resources are managed in a sustainable way.</p>



Priority Area 1 Natural Resource Management & Environment

The TFGA seeks financial assistance for the triennium 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08 to allow TFGA capacity enhancement in the area of Natural Resource and /Environmental issue management.

Background

In 1999 the TFGA established a Natural Resource Management (NRM) Unit within its executive structure to allow it to address natural resource and environmental issues more adequately in an increasingly complex regulatory environment. The Unit currently has a staff complement of one full time officer.

The Unit has allowed the TFGA to contribute solidly in areas of NRM and environmental policy since its inception. Recent examples of work by the unit include the preparation and delivery of a case in support of the Meander Dam to the Australian Government, in conjunction with the Meander Valley Council, and active support for irrigators in the Scottsdale area during preparation of a Water Management Plan for the Great Forester River. Current examples are the involvement of the unit in the Government's Native Non Forest Vegetation conservation program, the 1080 Code of Practice review and the proposed review of the operation of the Water Management Act early in 2005.

The Task

The role of the TFGA's NRM Unit is to manage all NRM and Environmental issues of relevance to members, with a focus on those issues which are not of interest simply to individual or small groups of members.

Important subject areas are water, native vegetation, game management, salinity, chemical usage, GMOs (Genetically Modified Organisms) and the State NRM Framework process. Other topics include air quality regulation, noise regulation and greenhouse policy. An important part of the task is engagement with other industry associations and groups like Landcare and Greening Australia.

Within these subject areas the task includes monitoring Government legislation, regulation and policy development; preparing TFGA input to the consultation processes surrounding this, including preparation of submissions and participation in meetings and on committees; interacting with Government officials (State, Local and Commonwealth); interacting with other stakeholder bodies, including the National Farmers Federation; and interacting with TFGA staff and membership.

An important objective for the Unit is simplification of the regulatory compliance environment for farmers and an increase in the level of flexibility built into the way that compliance needs can be met. To the extent that we can do this we will reduce the compliance burden on farmers without compromising necessary outcomes from a Government point of view.



Expansion of the NRM Unit

It has become clear that an NRM Unit of one staff member is not up to the task it faces and the TFGA is seeking to increase the size of the unit to two full-time staff: a Senior NRM Officer (policy and programs) and an NRM Officer (projects).

The current budget for the Unit is some \$120 000 per annum direct expenditure plus the cost of accommodation, management, insurance, etc (supplied by the TFGA and valued at \$20 000 per annum). The Government has contributed \$40 000 per annum towards this with 2004/05 being the last year of a current triennium. The budget for the expanded Unit will be \$230 000 per annum direct expenditure plus the cost of accommodation, management, insurance, etc.

Request for assistance

The TFGA is simply not able to find all of the funding necessary for an expanded NRM Unit from its own resources and we seek continuing financial assistance from the Government in the short to medium term.

We base this request on the fact that the work of the Unit contributes significantly to policies and programs of the Government, most notably *The State of Growth* program.

All five of the priority strategies in *The State of Growth* presuppose a vibrant farm sector, with farmers in a position to take advantage of the business opportunities the strategies are designed to deliver. A major constraint for farm enterprises in that regard is available management time and finance, and certainty with regard to what they can do with their land. The demands of compliance with environmental regulations are unnecessarily onerous for farmers now and they do not provide farmers with the certainty they need for investment purposes. Anything that can be done to improve the situation will directly enhance the ability of farmers to respond to *The State of Growth* opportunities as these emerge.

The TFGA seeks budgetary assistance of \$115 000 per annum, for the triennium 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08, to allow expansion of the TFGA's NRM Unit to two full time officers, with the primary role of the additional capacity being to work on a project with Government to look for ways to simplify and build more flexibility into the environmental compliance task for farmers without compromising essential environmental outcomes.

Recommendation

The TFGA recommends that the State Government provide financial assistance of \$115 000 per annum to the TFGA for the triennium 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08 to allow the TFGA to expand its NRM Unit, to allow it to work with Government on a project to simplify and make more flexible the task of environmental compliance for farmers.



Priority Area 2 Game Management to Control Browsing Damage

The Government needs to expand its current program of game management planning to include all major native browsing problem species in all farming regions of the State.

Background

Browsing by native animals is an increasingly serious problem for farmers in Tasmania. Two factors in particular are behind this: very healthy populations of the wallabies and possums which are the principal problem species, and the serious impact of crop, pasture and seedling loss given the very competitive markets farmers operate in.

Aggravating this situation is the current move by Government to make it even more difficult for farmers to access 1080 as a method of browsing animal control. In fact the Government continues to hold to the *Tasmania Together* target of a complete ban on the use of 1080 by 2015, in spite of the lack of any commercially feasible alternative and in spite of the fact that 1080 is only used as a method of last resort.

The TFGA has worked with the Forestry Sector and Government for many years to find alternative ways of addressing the problem, including various styles of fencing (regular and electric), shooting, scaring devices and repellents, but while some of these have had some effect none has provided a commercially acceptable alternative in all circumstances.

Until now the problem has been regarded by Government as simply one for the impacted land owner, but land owners have been given reasonable latitude to use effective methods to address it. We are now seeing a move by Government to ban one of our most effective measures the use of 1080, out of play, with or without the development of an effective alternative.

The Government has repeatedly stated its support for a healthy and competitive agricultural sector, most recently in the Premier's State of the State address on 22 September 2004. In the circumstances it needs to commit itself strongly to jointly owning the browsing damage problem, on the one hand, and working with the agricultural sector to solve it on the other.

Game Species Management Plans

An effective move to this end would be the establishment of a long term program to develop and implement Game Species Management Plans for individual problem species. These would be Government plans developed in consultation with industry, which establish objectives and a course of action for managing populations of those species - having regard to the commercial needs of primary producers as well as the maintenance of healthy animal populations.

Recommendation

That the Government establish as a major initiative, a program to develop and implement Species Game Management Plans for the major species causing crop, pasture and seedling loss to farmers.



OTHER BUDGET ISSUES

Priority Area 1 King Island Shipping

Provision of adequate funding to ensure that the King Island shipping service continues during periods of disruption during mechanical problems.

Background

The State Government has for a number of years provided a contingency fund within the budget of the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources to meet emergency situations involving the King Island shipping service. This contingency fund is used to provide tugboat assistance for the berthing of the Searoad Mersey. During March 2003, engine problems were experienced with the shipping service, which meant the vessel was unable to berth at King Island without assistance.

This has the potential to have a profound impact on the King Island economy and the operation of a number of businesses that are very highly dependent on a regular shipping service for the movement of shipping containers, i.e. King Island Abattoir and the King Island Dairy Co. With limited cool storage space on the island and over 100 containers per week filled, disruptions to the shipping service have the potential to shut these businesses quickly. The significance of the rural industry to the King Island economy cannot be understated. It is estimated by the TFGA that the rural industry contributes approximately \$100million in raw and value-added product leaving the island

The 2003-04 State Budget reduced the Contingency Fund from \$227,000 to \$49,000 a reduction of 78.5%.

State Budget Initiatives

The TFGA and the King Island Branch of the TFGA believe that the State Government must re-establish an adequate Contingency Fund to enable contingency arrangements to be put in place during periods of disruption or potential disruption to the shipping service. Both the TFGA and the King Island Branch of the TFGA are sceptical that the Partnership Agreement between the State Government and the King Island Council adequately covers the situation.

The present Contingency Fund level is inadequate to provide protection to the primary industry on the Island and therefore the local economy.

Recommendation

That the State Government establish a minimum \$250,000 Contingency Fund in the budget of the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources and that the State Government make a commitment to maintain this level of funding in real terms for the next 5 years.



Priority Area 2 Stock Theft & Rural Crime

Initiatives to reduce stock theft and rural crime through the formation of a stock squad with the sole focus of reducing stock theft in Tasmania, a review of stock theft penalties and a taskforce to investigate the current cycle of sheep thefts in Tasmania.

Background

With the increasing value of prime lambs, the TFGA believes that stock theft in Tasmania will increase alarmingly. Tasmania's sheep Industry has a farm gate value of over \$130 million and a key place in Tasmania's economy. The impact of stock theft in recent years has been particularly hard on producers trying to rebuild their flocks after the recent prolonged drought.

Addressing Stock Theft & Rural Crime

The size of the stock theft would indicate a high degree of organisation with large numbers of sheep stolen from individual properties at a time. It would appear that, due to the issue being given greater media coverage and the commitment of police officers, there has been a reduction in the level of stock theft.

However meaningful breakthroughs in this area continue to be hampered by the absence of a dedicated stock squad in Tasmania. Tasmania remains the only State without a stock squad, a necessity for combating the organised crime networks that are targeting fine wool sheep in Tasmania and disposing of large quantities of stock and wool.

There are currently no police officers dedicated to this issue in Tasmania. The three officers who have commitments in this area have made vital contributions, but are often ordered into other fields, resulting in a patchwork approach to stock theft.

State Budget Initiatives

The TFGA believes that the current policing activities can be enhanced through the establishment of a dedicated stock squad and continuation of the training program for rural police officers.

The TFGA recommends

1. That the State Government form a dedicated stock squad, comprising a full-time officer and 2 part-time officers across the State, with the sole focus of reducing stock theft in Tasmania.
2. That the Government, in partnership with Industry, create a Task Force to identify mechanisms to break the current cycle of sheep thefts in Tasmania.
3. That the State Government initiate a review of stock theft penalties with a view to substantially increasing penalties.
4. That the State Government maintain its training program for rural police officers and its focus on rural crime in general.



Priority Area 3 Feral Cat Eradication Program

An investigation of the feral cat problem that quantifies the extent of the problem and identifies potential control and management options.

An education campaign to inform cat owners of their responsibilities and the damage cats can do as well as a funded cat sterilisation programme to minimise the effects of leakage.

Background

Feral cats are a continuing problem in Tasmania. They present three specific problems the effects of which have been difficult to get information about and to date we have unable to be quantify. However, the problems caused are well documented and figures from non-Tasmanian sources could be applied to Tasmania.

The three specific problems presented by feral cats are:

- a) Animal Health - Spread of disease to sheep
- b) Human Health - Spread of disease to humans
- c) Predation of native vertebrates

1. Animal Health - Spread of disease to sheep

Cats carry two diseases that can have a major impact on farming, Toxoplasmosis and Cyclospirodosis.

Toxoplasmosis is a disease caused by a protozoan parasite of cats. The organism, *Toxoplasma gondii* reproduces in the cat's gut, and the infective stage of the parasite, the oocyst, is passed in the cat's faeces. Cats are therefore, the definitive host of the disease.

Sheep become infected by ingesting the oocyst when they graze infected where cats have defecated or from hay or grain similarly contaminated. Non-pregnant sheep that have been infected with Toxoplasmosis develop a lifelong immunity and are no longer at risk of Toxoplasmosis induced abortion. However the tissue cyst remain in the muscles of the sheep.

In sheep, infection in ewes in early pregnancy causes inflammation of the placenta resulting in foetal death and often abortion. Infection in later pregnancy causes a live infected lamb to be born which is often weak.

Toxoplasmosis is well documented as causing great financial loss in the agricultural industry, being a major cause of abortion and stillbirth in sheep flocks in Britain, Australia and New Zealand. Toxoplasmosis is the most frequently diagnosed cause of abortion in sheep and accounts for approximately 80% of sheep abortions in the UK. Abortions are higher in colder areas, and while 30% of ewes in a flock aborting would be considered at the higher end of the scale it is not unknown.



The disease is known to affect other animal species however the impact is relatively small. Cats re-infect themselves by consuming an animal that contains the tissue cysts, typically some type of rodents and birds. Once the tissue cyst is back inside the cat it goes through a cycle that ultimately results in the release of the oocyst back into the environment.

The other disease Cyclosporida is similar in many ways to toxoplasmosis, is a reportable disease in some countries and can be transferred to sheep (and humans) by cats in a similar way to Toxoplasmosis. Sheep found with Cyclosporida cannot be exported. It is not known whether Cyclosporida is present in Tasmania or present in the feral cat population here.

2. Human Health - Spread of disease to humans

Humans and other animals may act as intermediate hosts for the disease. In humans, Toxoplasmosis causes a variety of disease syndromes in humans, ranging from flu-like symptoms to miscarriage or birth defects in infants when women are exposed during pregnancy.

Both major hospitals the Launceston General Hospital (both emergency and infectious diseases departments) as well as Royal Hobart (emergency and infectious diseases also) as well as the Public Health Department were unable to provide figures for incidences of Toxoplasmosis. However, it is not one of the 64 diseases on the Public Health Register, as it does not cause epidemic problems, it is therefore not reportable. Consequently none of the institutions contacted keep numbers/statistics on this disease.

3. Predation of native vertebrates

Research on feral cats on small islands shows that the impact on native vertebrates is high as the cats will eat lizards/birds etc that are specific to that area whereas in the mainland areas, while feral cats continue to eat birds and lizards, when these numbers decrease they are adaptable enough to eat other vertebrates, therefore competing with and replacing other predators in the food chain.

Feral Cat Eradication Programs

Currently there is no policy being developed for eradication of feral cats as there is no capability. The general opinion within the Department (Environment) is "It is beyond us". The eradication of the feral cat population on Macquarie Island took 5 years. This was not only due to logistics but also funding/resource availability. From the Tasmanian perspective, being a much larger area and the high probability of leakage i.e. domestic and stray cats turning feral, the Department is not capable to undertake such a programme without a far higher allocation of resources.

Research work has been undertaken over the last 10 years to produce a specific toxin/bait that can be used on a broad scale to control feral animals including cats. Mainland State Environmental & Heritage Departments (Western Australia, Victoria and New South Wales) have been undertaking this research for the purpose of eradicating foxes but cats have also been included in this research.



We have been made aware of a programme in Western Australia, called “Kitless cat clinic”, in which Vets provide the sterilisation operation of cats free of charge while the owners pay for the drugs, however to date, we have been unable to find out who is funding or running the programme or any other details.

The Animal Brands and Movements Act has previously regulated the movement and identification of livestock in Tasmania. A recent Amendment Bill, now defines the Act as 'An Act to provide for the compulsory identification of cattle, sheep, pigs and other animals, the regulation of the movement of animals, a system of permanent identification of animals, and incidental and other purposes'.

This Act could apply to cats - the consequence of this is that the permanent ID of cats through micro-chipping could be made compulsory. One strategy for managing the feral cat problem is compulsory registration of pet cats combined with hefty fees for cats that are not sterilised. This reduces the impact of 'leakage' of domestic cats into the wild.

While eradication is not considered feasible, the appropriate funding and implementation of a proper cat management programme in local areas to reduce feral cat numbers is feasible. The starting point of a suitable programme would be to quantify the problem, identify potential control and management options and implementation of the most appropriate. There needs to be consultation with all key stakeholders including primary producers.

Running parallel to this programme there needs to be an education campaign to inform cat owners of their responsibilities and the damage cats can do as well as a funded cat sterilisation programme to minimise the effects of leakage.

State Budget Initiatives

The State Government have long recognised our island advantage and the need to maintain a disease-free status. As stated in *The State of Growth*, our island status is acknowledged as a special quality to be nurtured and promoted - our customers increasingly value this situation.

The disease threat that the feral cat problem currently poses to the agricultural sector and ultimately the community cannot be understated. The TFGA believes that initiatives are needed to reduce the threat to agriculture.

The TFGA recommends:

- 1. That the State Government establish a working group representative of key stakeholders to investigate the feral cat problem including the extent of the problem and identify potential control and management options.**
- 2. The State Government establish an education campaign to inform cat owners of their responsibilities and the damage cats can do as well as a funded cat sterilisation programme to minimise the effects of leakage.**



Priority Area 4 Enforcing Code Of Practice For Exotic Sheep Breeds

The new Regulations and mandatory Code of Practice for the management of exotic sheep breeds will have no value unless they are enforced.

TFGA requests that the Government commit sufficient resources to ensure:

- (1) that current and potential owners of exotic sheep and their crosses are made aware of the Regulations and mandatory Code of Practice under the Animal Farming (Registration) Act 1994; and
- (2) that the Regulations and mandatory Code of Practice are enforced by DPIWE officers.

Background

The Regulations and mandatory Code of Practice for the management of exotic sheep breeds passed the Tasmanian parliament on 31st August 2004.

The TFGA Wool Council, together with other major participants in the Tasmanian wool industry, (Roberts Ltd, Elders-Webster, Tasmanian Superfine Wool Growers and Tasmanian Quality Wool), have pursued this issue vigorously in order to protect the State's existing wool industry, worth between \$85 and \$100 million annually at the farm gate.

The reason for this vigour is the risk of contamination of traditional wool from the pigmented and medullated fibres grown and shed by these exotic sheep breeds (Dorper, Damara, Karakul and Awassi).

In the states where these breeds have become established (WA and SA), contamination of wool by pigmented and medullated fibre has become a major problem and is leading to significant discounts for sales of wool.

The passage of the legislation puts Tasmania in a unique position to protect its national and international reputation as a supplier of high quality wool with very low levels of contamination.

However, if the newly passed Regulations and mandatory Code of Practice are not enforced, the owners of these sheep and their crosses will be able to spread them with impunity. This will place Tasmania's highly respected wool industry at huge risk from fibre contamination.

