

**VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE PARLIAMENTARY ENVIRONMENT
AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE REPORT ON PROBLEMS CAUSED BY
LONG-BILLED CORELLAS, SULPHUR-CRESTED COCKATOOS AND GALAHS
(COLLECTIVELY REFERRED TO AS COCKATOOS)**



INTRODUCTION

In September 1994 the Environment and Natural Resources Committee was given a reference by the Governor in Council to inquire into problems caused by cockatoos in Victoria. I would like to take this opportunity to record the Government's appreciation of the former Minister for Natural Resources, the Hon Geoff Coleman, for initiating this inquiry. The recommendations of this report represent significant progress in addressing this complex issue, and are a credit to Mr Coleman's foresight.

The inquiry was initiated as a result of long-standing and intense frustration caused by the perceived effect of cockatoos on rural enterprises, particularly cereal crop growing and tree-planting programs, and a perception that the Government was not taking sufficient action on the issue. This was coupled with a widely held view that numbers of these cockatoos are steadily increasing. Specific concerns included damage to:

- germinating and ripening cereal crops, particularly wheat and oats;
- oilseed crops eg. sunflower and safflower;
- a range of fruit and nut crops;
- both young and mature trees;
- aeriels and other communications equipment; and
- softwood timbers on houses.

The Committee received 142 submissions, heard evidence from 58 witnesses and conducted four inspections to see the extent of the problem at first hand.

The Committee's Report was laid before the Parliament on 15 November 1995 and contained 15 recommendations. These recommendations covered the areas of research into damage assessment methods and costs of damage, application of practical actions such as streamlining bird control measures, providing alternative food sources and extension.

The Government supports the majority of the Committee's recommendations although in some instances there are differences in respect of approach and timing.

Critical to the success of the integrated approach to cockatoo damage control put forward in this report is the employment of two full-time extension officers. Recommendations

indicate specific areas in which extension is required but, in reality, this activity underlies all aspects of the adoption and application of successful cockatoo damage control strategies.

The Government also accepts the Committee's emphasis on the need for assessment of bird damage to germinating and ripening crops. As a first step, the Government will develop and pilot test techniques with Landcare groups that have expressed an interest in this issue.

The report suggests an integrated approach to bird damage control, in which the Department of Natural Resources and Environment will support practical demonstrations in cooperation with interested Landcare and industry groups. This will be a significant advance on current practice. To ensure an appropriate, integrated approach, a steering committee will be formed to provide a link between industry, Landcare groups and the Department.

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment has now been formed by the integration of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Department of Agriculture, Energy and Minerals, Surveyor General, Registrar General of Titles, Valuer General and the Office of Geographic Data Coordination. The integration of these agencies will assist in the sustainable management of our natural resources. In the case of bird damage control the location of all responsibilities within a single department represents an important step which will assist coordination within Government and with farmers and other groups.

The *Parliamentary Committees Act 1968* requires that in response to the final report of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

...the appropriate responsible Minister of the Crown shall, within six months of the report of the Committee being laid before both Houses of Parliament, report to the Parliament as to the action (if any) proposed to be taken by the Government with respect to the recommendations of the Committee.

The Government has now reviewed the overall recommendations made by the Committee, and I am pleased to provide responses. The Committee's detailed report comprises an important advance in the treatment of this complex and controversial subject and it could not have been prepared without the cooperation and commitment of all those involved. I would like to thank all concerned for their efforts.



Hon Marie Tehan, MP
MINISTER FOR CONSERVATION
and LAND MANAGEMENT

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Inquiry into problems in Victoria caused by Long-billed Corellas, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and Galahs

To —

- (a) investigate the nature, extent and severity of problems caused by Long-billed Corellas, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and Galahs; and
- (b) identify any factors that may have contributed to damage caused by these birds;
- (c) review scientific and other investigations and assess the effectiveness of current control methods carried out in relation to Corella, Cockatoo and Galah damage and recommend —
 - (1) farm management systems and techniques and programs which can minimise damage;
 - (2) bird control/management techniques and programs necessary to reduce the impact on private property, crops, regenerating vegetation, other environmental values and public facilities, without compromising the viability of the species;
- (d) identify the implications of implementing the recommendation[s] in (c).

VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT RESPONSES TO THE ENRC RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1

THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, ENERGY AND MINERALS¹ DEVOTE SIGNIFICANT ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO:

(A) DETERMINE THE EXTENT TO WHICH HORTICULTURAL, CEREAL CROP AND OILSEED CROP YIELDS ARE AFFECTED BY LONG-BILLED CORELLA, SULPHUR-CRESTED COCKATOO AND GALAH DAMAGE;

The Government supports the recommendation but considers that it would be more logical to act on this Recommendation after implementation of Recommendation 1(b) because the assessment techniques, the subject of Recommendation 1(b), are required to properly address Recommendation 1(a). Following the development and pilot testing of practical crop loss assessment techniques (for grains and horticulture) their application would need to be extended over a number of years to overcome the major variation from one year to another. The Department of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) has had experience in assessing the extent of grain yield losses and is aware of the difficulties involved in achieving a reliable result. In addition to making loss assessments over a number of years, the results of activities taken under Recommendation 9 could be included to increase the sample size and so improve the reliability of the measurement

AND (B) DEVELOP AND DISSEMINATE TO THE FARMING COMMUNITY RELIABLE, SIMPLE AND RAPID TECHNIQUES FOR ASSESSMENT OF BIRD DAMAGE TO GERMINATING AND RIPENING CROPS.

The Government supports this recommendation and considers this is the critical starting point in moving to address many of the recommendations in the report. Because of the sporadic nature of bird damage to grain crops and the extensive nature of cultivation, the ability to achieve a reliable, simple and rapid method of damage assessment will be exceedingly difficult if the loss measurement is to be in dollar terms. At the seedling stage, it is relatively easy to count losses of seedlings but these do not easily translate into yield losses. However, assessments of yield losses close to crop maturity can be reliably translated into yield and, hence, dollar losses.

The previous Department of Agriculture, Energy and Minerals has, in the past, developed techniques for sampling and assessing damage to grain crops from diseases, insects, weeds and pests; these could be adapted to assessing losses from bird attacks. Their reliability will depend heavily on counting only the damage specifically due to birds. This presents some difficulties in identification.

¹ The Committee's recommendations focussed on actions to be undertaken by the then Departments of Conservation and Natural Resources and Agriculture, Energy and Minerals. As members will be aware, these agencies have been amalgamated to form the Department of Natural Resources and Environment. Ministerial responsibilities and titles have also been altered and where necessary the Minister now responsible for implementing the Government's responses is identified.

NRE will develop and pilot test these techniques with Landcare groups that have expressed an interest in this issue. Once the process is established, NRE could train the facilitators and key people from these groups in the proper use of the techniques. Similarly, NRE considers that simple techniques to assess fruit crop damage could be developed and applied in cooperation with grower groups.

The proposed actions on control of bird damage identified by Catchment and Land Protection Boards in their Regional Catchment Strategies will be given a high priority in the development and implementation of integrated regional cockatoo damage mitigation programs.

RECOMMENDATION 2

THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES SURVEY THE ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF AGRICULTURAL AND HORTICULTURAL DAMAGE CAUSED BY LONG-BILLED CORELLAS, SULPHUR-CRESTED COCKATOOS AND GALAHS AT LOCAL, REGIONAL AND INDUSTRY LEVELS.

The Government supports this recommendation, however, it considers that it is not feasible to undertake this recommendation until techniques to measure physical damage have been developed as proposed in Recommendation 1(b). Initial work should therefore focus on Recommendation 1(b).

RECOMMENDATION 3

THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES SURVEY THE EXTENT OF DAMAGE CAUSED BY LONG-BILLED CORELLAS, SULPHUR-CRESTED COCKATOOS AND GALAHS TO TREE-PLANTING PROGRAMS FOR COMMERCIAL AND LANDCARE PURPOSES.

The Government supports the recommendation. The ENRC inquiry was initiated partly as a result of complaints about such damage. Assessment of the scale of this problem is essential in order to develop an appropriate response. The most cost-effective way to undertake the assessment will be for the two extension officers proposed by the Committee in Recommendation 14 to train and assist Landcare and other interested groups in the assessment of damage.

RECOMMENDATION 4

THAT THE MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES AMEND SECTION 7A OF THE WILDLIFE ACT 1975 IN ORDER TO DECLARE THE LONG-BILLED CORELLA, SULPHUR-CRESTED COCKATOO AND GALAH UNPROTECTED WILDLIFE FOR THE PURPOSE OF COMMERCIAL CROP PROTECTION IN VICTORIA, SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:

- (A) DESTRUCTION OF LONG-BILLED CORELLAS, SULPHUR-CRESTED COCKATOOS AND GALAHS SHOULD BE BY FIREARM ONLY;**
- (B) DESTRUCTION SHOULD BE RESTRICTED TO LANDOWNERS AND OCCUPIERS ENGAGED IN THE RURAL PRODUCTION OF COMMERCIAL CROPS, THEIR FAMILIES AND EMPLOYEES; AND**
- (C) DESTRUCTION SHOULD ONLY TAKE PLACE ON LANDS WHERE COMMERCIAL CROPS ARE BEING GROWN.**

The Government supports this recommendation in part but has decided to declare the Long-billed Corella, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo and Galah Unprotected Wildlife where injury or damage is caused pursuant to section 7A of the Act. Section 7A provides for protected wildlife to be declared unprotected *where it is causing injury or damage to: any building, vineyard, orchard, garden or other property; any crop, grass, trees or other vegetation*. It is the view of the Government that this recommendation should not be restricted to landholders engaged in the rural production of commercial crops. Recognition must be given to the need to control widespread and serious damage to trees, buildings, recreational reserves and other property. The right to destroy birds will be restricted to landowners or occupiers where this damage occurs, their families and employees.

Furthermore, the Government believes the method of control should not be limited to destruction by firearm only. where damage pursuant to Section 7A occurs, the Government has decided that destruction to the Long-billed Corella, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and Galahs should be by firearm, trapping and gassing. Trapping and gassing is considered an effective, humane technique for removing cockatoos causing damage in Victoria. Assessment of the benefit of removing birds this way will also be undertaken (Recommendation 9). It is important to note the use of poisons is not permitted as part of this approach.

The Government's response provides a consistent approach to address the problems caused by these birds throughout the State. Long-billed Corellas and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos are already declared Unprotected Wildlife in most municipalities where they cause significant problems to commercial crops in Victoria. There does not appear to be any administrative or other practical reason why other landholders who experience damage to trees, property, recreational reserves, gardens, other vegetation or other property caused as a result of these birds should be required to obtain an Authority to Control Wildlife before they can legally destroy the birds. The Galah causes similar problems in areas of Victoria where it is numerous.

It is considered that there will be no threat to these three species as a result of this measure, which simply removes the requirement to apply for a permit. The Government's response provides a consistent, equitable approach for all landholders who experience bird damage throughout the State.

RECOMMENDATION 5

THAT THE MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES AMEND SECTION 54 OF THE WILDLIFE ACT 1975 IN ORDER TO INCREASE THE PENALTY FOR ILLEGAL POISONING OF WILDLIFE FROM 50 PENALTY UNITS AND SIX MONTHS IMPRISONMENT TO 100 PENALTY UNITS AND SIX MONTHS IMPRISONMENT.

The Government supports the recommendation. A package of proposed amendments to the Wildlife Act currently being considered already includes an amendment to effect this change.

RECOMMENDATION 6

THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES INVESTIGATE AND REPORT ON THE VIABILITY OF ALPHA-CHLORALOSE FOR THE HUMANE CAPTURE OF LONG-BILLED CORELLAS, SULPHUR-CRESTED COCKATOOS AND GALAHS WITHIN 12 MONTHS OF THIS REPORT BEING TABLED.

The Government supports the recommendation. The Government notes that there are potential problems in using the alpha-chloralose for the capture of these birds, including possible effects on other birds and wildlife and strongly supports the proposed review by NRE with a report to be presented in twelve months time.

RECOMMENDATION 7

PROVIDED DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES INVESTIGATIONS ESTABLISH THE VIABILITY OF ALPHA-CHLORALOSE FOR THE HUMANE CAPTURE OF LONG-BILLED CORELLAS, SULPHUR-CRESTED COCKATOOS AND GALAHS, THAT THE DEPARTMENT PERMIT THE USE OF ALPHA-CHLORALOSE SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:

- (A) LAND HOLDERS MUST APPLY TO THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES FOR APPROVAL TO USE ALPHA-CHLORALOSE;
- (B) BAITS TREATED WITH ALPHA-CHLORALOSE SHOULD BE SUPPLIED TO LAND HOLDERS AT COST;
- (C) THERE BE STRINGENT DEPARTMENTAL GUIDELINES AND CONDITIONS FOR ITS USE;
- (D) THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD PROVIDE INSTRUCTION IN THE USE OF ALPHA-CHLORALOSE, AND IN DISEASE CONTROL;
- (E) LAND HOLDERS SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING THEIR OWN PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT TO REDUCE THE RISK OF CONTRACTING DISEASES, PARTICULARLY CHLAMYDIOSIS, FROM THE BIRDS BEING HANDLED;
- (F) TREATED BAIT SHOULD NOT BE STORED BY PRIVATE PERSONS UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES OUTSIDE THE CONDITIONS OF PERMIT;
- (G) SURPLUS OR UNEATEN BAIT EITHER SHOULD BE BURNED UNDER DEPARTMENTAL SUPERVISION OR RETURNED TO DEPARTMENTAL STAFF; AND
- (H) BECAUSE ASSESSMENT SHOULD BE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THE METHOD, THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD GIVE PRIORITY FOR ACCESS TO ALPHA-CHLORALOSE TO LAND HOLDERS INVOLVED IN COOPERATIVE, INTEGRATED COCKATOO DAMAGE CONTROL PROGRAMS.

This recommendation is supported by the Government, provided the outcome of investigations establish alpha-chloralose as a viable method in the capture of these birds (Recommendation 6), and subject to a review by NRE of the conditions for the use of alpha-chloralose.

RECOMMENDATION 8

THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES MAKE AVAILABLE TRAPPING AND GASSING EQUIPMENT TO LAND HOLDERS ON A USER-PAYS, HIRE BASIS, SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:

- (A) HIRE CHARGES SHOULD BE \$20 PER DAY FOR LAND HOLDERS AND \$10 PER DAY FOR MEMBERS OF LANDCARE GROUPS;**
- (B) THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD PROVIDE INSTRUCTION IN THE SAFE OPERATION OF THE EQUIPMENT, AND IN DISEASE CONTROL;**
- (C) LAND HOLDERS SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING THEIR OWN PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT TO REDUCE THE RISK OF CONTRACTING DISEASES, PARTICULARLY CHLAMYDIOSIS, FROM THE BIRDS BEING HANDLED;**
- (D) BECAUSE ASSESSMENT SHOULD BE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THE METHOD, THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD GIVE PRIORITY FOR ACCESS TO TRAPPING AND GASSING EQUIPMENT TO LAND HOLDERS INVOLVED IN COOPERATIVE, INTEGRATED COCKATOO DAMAGE CONTROL PROGRAMS;**
- (E) AT LEAST TWO SETS OF THIS EQUIPMENT SHOULD BE AVAILABLE IN THE NORTH-EAST OF VICTORIA; AND**
- (F) LAND HOLDERS SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO RETURN GAS CYLINDERS TO THE DEPARTMENT IN A REFILLED STATE.**

The Government supports this recommendation in part. Five years of direct NRE field experience has shown that an effective and humane technique for removing cockatoos causing damage in Victoria is trapping and gassing the captured birds by placing them in a drum of carbon dioxide. This causes rapid death and is considered a most humane method of killing birds. The RSPCA has endorsed this method of destroying cockatoos.

The introduction of charges for the use of this equipment is, however, not cost-effective. Staff time spent in administering the collection of monies, reclaiming and maintaining equipment after use is not compensated by reasonable hire charges.

The Government supports an alternative approach. That is, to continue to provide this equipment, on loan, to Landcare and other relevant groups wishing to use it. At the same time, assessment of the benefit of removing birds this way can be undertaken (Recommendation 9). If the removal of birds results in reduced damage levels, then a review of the trapping and gassing equipment will be undertaken to establish the most effective means of providing it to Landcare and other relevant groups. If damage levels are not reduced then the use of the equipment will be discontinued.

RECOMMENDATION 9

THAT THE MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES CONFER WITH THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH A PROGRAM IN WHICH THEIR DEPARTMENTS ASSESS AND DOCUMENT THE IMPACT ON DAMAGE LEVELS OF THE REMOVAL OF LARGE NUMBERS OF LONG-BILLED CORELLAS, SULPHUR-CRESTED COCKATOOS OR GALAHS AS A DAMAGE CONTROL MEASURE BY TRAPPING AND GASSING OR OTHER MEANS.

It has been established that 'large numbers' is in the range of 2,000 to 3,000 birds.

The Government agrees with the principle that destruction of wildlife should only be undertaken if it can be demonstrated that there is a significant benefit to be derived from such destruction. Assessing damage levels after removal of birds will establish whether the practice of trapping and gassing or other removal of birds can be justified on the basis of reduced damage, or whether this destruction of wildlife can be discontinued if it is found not to result in significantly reduced damage. Government considers that a joint Steering Committee comprising representatives from NRE, Victorian Farmers Federation, Landcare and other groups would be well placed to determine if the expected benefit of removing a large number of birds as outlined in recommendations 4 and 8 is realised. The effectiveness of control techniques will be reviewed and effects on bird populations monitored as part of this process.

The Government considers that in order to implement this recommendation several innovative research techniques would need to be developed to measure the impact of bird damage. This recommendation could lead to activities that allow a reasonable attempt at assessing yield loss and the interval of protection while bird numbers recover. It would contribute some data to address the economic effects of bird damage (Recommendation 2). The assessment program would also be conducted as part of integrated cockatoo mitigation extension programs outlined in Recommendation 14.

RECOMMENDATION 10

THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES COORDINATE DEMONSTRATIONS OF DECOY FEEDING OF COCKATOOS AT CEREAL CROP SOWING TIME UNDER THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:

- (A) THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES DONATE DECOY FOOD FOR DEMONSTRATION PURPOSES;
- (B) THAT GROWERS DONATE THE LABOUR REQUIRED AND UNDERTAKE TO SCARE BIRDS FROM THEIR OWN CROPS FOR THE DURATION OF THE DEMONSTRATION;
- (C) THAT THE BIRDS ARE NOT DISTURBED AT THE DECOY FEED SITES;
- (D) THAT FULL COSTING OF LABOUR AND MATERIALS BE COMPILED, TOGETHER WITH THE EFFECTS, IF ANY, ON DAMAGE LEVELS AND FREQUENCY OF BIRDS FEEDING IN CROPS; AND
- (E) THAT DEMONSTRATIONS BE ORGANISED WITH LANDCARE GROUPS OR GROUPS OF COOPERATING GROWERS.

The Government supports the recommendation. The use of various kinds of foods or crops as decoys to lure birds away from valuable crops is a well established practice overseas. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that provision of supplies of grain or other suitable food can attract large numbers of cockatoos daily, during which time they are not damaging crops. This may be one of the most cost-effective ways of reducing damage to germinating cereal crops and other crops, but it remains to be fully evaluated. If participating land holders are shown the benefits of this technique through demonstrations with Landcare and other interested groups, then they are likely to adopt it themselves and the practice may then spread.

RECOMMENDATION 11

THAT THE MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES AMEND SECTION 87 OF THE WILDLIFE ACT 1975 IN ORDER TO PROHIBIT OR REGULATE THE RECREATIONAL FEEDING OF LONG-BILLED CORELLAS, SULPHUR-CRESTED COCKATOOS AND GALAHS WHEN THIS ACTION DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY LEADS COCKATOOS TO CAUSE DAMAGE TO PROPERTY OR TO THE ENVIRONMENT, OR WHICH COULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE SPREAD OF DISEASE AMONGST WILDLIFE.

The Government will consider amending the Wildlife Act to enable the provision of food for wildlife to be prohibited in individual cases where such feeding leads to the problems identified by the Committee, or related to human and animal health and safety. However, the social, economic and environmental costs and benefits of such an amendment will need to be carefully considered.

RECOMMENDATION 12

THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, ENERGY AND MINERALS INVESTIGATE POTENTIAL SCREEN PLANTS SUITABLE FOR THE PROTECTION OF SUNFLOWER AND SAFFLOWER CROPS, AND OTHER CROPS WHERE APPROPRIATE.

The Government supports this recommendation, however, it considers the establishment of dedicated research investigations on this issue to be of low priority. Some useful information may be gleaned through working with Landcare groups using paddock scale trials to test the effect of perimeter plantings of tall growing crops such as ryecorn. Additional effort would depend on the results of the assessment of economic impact.

RECOMMENDATION 13

THAT DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, ENERGY AND MINERALS INVESTIGATE COMMERCIAL CULTIVARS OF EXISTING CROPS FOR EVIDENCE OF DIFFERENTIAL SUSCEPTIBILITY TO DAMAGE BY LONG-BILLED CORELLAS, SULPHUR-CRESTED COCKATOOS AND GALAHS, AND CONVEY THE RESULTS TO GROWERS.

The Government considers that, at present, it would be a better use of resources to address other more viable options for reducing crop damage than investigating commercial cultivars of existing crops for evidence of differential susceptibility to damage, as in this recommendation.

In respect of the crop types grown in Victoria, there is no evidence, even anecdotal, that shows that these birds shun some cultivars in preference to others. While it would be relatively simple to investigate possible sources of differential susceptibility through a literature search, senior crop plant breeders in NRE doubt that this would identify any traits worth including in breeding programs. Consequently the Government considers that, at least for the present, resources should be used to address more viable options.

RECOMMENDATION 14

THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES:

- (A) EMPLOY TWO FULL TIME EXTENSION OFFICERS (TO COVER BOTH NORTH-EASTERN AND WESTERN VICTORIA) TO LIAISE WITH THE FARMING COMMUNITY, IN ORDER TO MOTIVATE, ASSIST AND UNDERTAKE DEMONSTRATIONS OF INTEGRATED COCKATOO DAMAGE MITIGATION PROGRAMS IN COORDINATION WITH LANDCARE GROUPS AND OTHER INTERESTED LAND HOLDER GROUPS. SUCH DEMONSTRATIONS MUST INCLUDE ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS AND COST EFFICIENCY OF THOSE PROGRAMS. FUNDING SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT TO ENABLE THESE ASSESSMENTS TO BE MADE;
- (B) PROVIDE EXTENSION MATERIAL THAT EXPLAINS AND ENCOURAGES THE USE OF INTEGRATED BIRD DAMAGE CONTROL STRATEGIES INCORPORATING A RANGE OF SCARING METHODS AND DECOY FEEDING;
- (C) PROMOTE AN EDUCATION PROGRAM ON THE LONG-BILLED CORELLA, SULPHUR-CRESTED COCKATOO AND GALAH, WITH THE AIM OF PROVIDING INFORMATION ON THE BIOLOGY, ECOLOGY AND BEHAVIOUR OF THE BIRDS, AND OF DISCOURAGING THE FEEDING OF BIRDS IN INAPPROPRIATE AREAS. THE PROGRAM SHOULD INCLUDE REFERENCE TO FEEDING OF BIRDS IN URBAN AREAS; AND
- (D) BECAUSE ASSESSMENT SHOULD BE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF SUCH METHODS, GIVE PRIORITY FOR EXTENSION SUPPORT TO GROUPS OF LAND HOLDERS INVOLVED IN COOPERATIVE, INTEGRATED COCKATOO DAMAGE CONTROL PROGRAMS

The Government supports the recommendation. The two additional extension officers will form part of the Government's integrated advisory services program with a priority focus on bird damage control.

Extension officers will be instrumental in the implementation or dissemination of the requirements of most of the recommendations arising from the ENRC inquiry. Extension is important in increasing knowledge and acceptance of innovative techniques and of the value of integrating existing techniques into a coordinated strategy. An important aspect of the work of the extension officers will be to undertake evaluations and compile data on the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of the various measures demonstrated. As this information is compiled, those experiencing bird damage problems will be better able to make informed choices about the most cost-effective means to reduce damage.

NRE already works extensively with land holder groups to address production and natural resource issues and extending the cooperation to the above program could be readily accommodated within current arrangements.

The Government considers that a joint steering committee to coordinate the implementation of these recommendations would be appropriate.

Publication of a series of case studies of successful crop protection using decoy feeding (some were mentioned in the submissions to the Inquiry) would be a useful addition to the education program. Addition of appropriate wildlife information notes to NRE's CD ROM 'Agnote' system would also be valuable.

RECOMMENDATION 15

THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, ENERGY AND MINERALS PROVIDE EXTENSION MATERIAL AIMED AT:

- (A) ENCOURAGING GRAIN TRANSPORTERS TO MINIMISE SPILLAGE;**
- (B) ENCOURAGING CEREAL CROP GROWERS TO USE RAPID CROP DAMAGE ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES;**
- (C) ENCOURAGING GRAZIERS TO FEED GRAIN TO STOCK AT TIMES OF THE DAY TO MINIMISE AVAILABILITY TO BIRDS; AND**
- (D) ENCOURAGING CEREAL CROP GROWERS TO ADOPT STRATEGIES THAT MINIMISE GRAIN RESIDUE IN STUBBLES.**

The Government supports the recommendation. NRE and other organisations already have much of this material available (except for the rapid assessment techniques). The measures are also clearly in the farmers' financial interests, for example minimising spillage and grain losses from the harvester and implementing feeding times and strategies to avoid birds. It would be necessary to review the current information, endeavour to fill in the gaps and to build a logical package of material.