

ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Subcommittee

Inquiry into the control of invasive animals on Crown land

Sale — 6 October 2016

Members

Ms Bronwyn Halfpenny — Chair

Mr Tim McCurdy — Deputy Chair

Mr Simon Ramsay

Mr Tim Richardson

Mr Bill Tilley

Ms Vicki Ward

Mr Daniel Young

Staff

Executive officer: Dr Christopher Gribbin

Witness

Mr Barry Tayler, Gippsland Wild Dog Advisory Group.

The CHAIR — Welcome to Mr Barry Tayler. I apologise for the committee starting these public hearings a bit later than was scheduled. This is the first of the public hearings we are intending to conduct within regional areas, where of course the issue of invasive animals is a problem. Just before we proceed, I have to go through a few formalities in terms of welcoming you to the public hearing and also just advising you that anything you say at the hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege in accordance with the parliamentary committees legislation, but as soon as we have finished the hearing, whatever you say outside of the hearing will not be protected by parliamentary privilege. Hansard staff will record all the proceedings. You will be given a copy of the transcript of your presentation, and you will be given the opportunity to correct any inaccuracies if you believe there are any there. With that, perhaps we could get started. Would you like to say a few things before we go to questions?

Mr TAYLER — Yes.

The CHAIR — Before we start, Mr Tayler, in terms of your position with the Gippsland Wild Dog Advisory Group, maybe you could provide just a short history of your background so we have that on the transcript.

Mr TAYLER — I have got a four-page thing here on the reason why I am here and what I am about. Maybe it would be better if I read that. It will only take 10 minutes, and then you could ask me questions on that.

The CHAIR — Sure, that is fine, and of course we have your submission as well.

Mr TAYLER — Thank you for coming anyway, because it is very important to us as farmers to have representation from the government. I am Barry Tayler from Newry. I represent the Gippsland Wild Dog Advisory Group. I only started the advisory group around six or seven weeks ago. The response from farmers has been terrific, and I have actually got a lot of those farmers, about 200 at the moment, across the interface and through to East Gippsland. I am chairman of the group at the moment.

I have about 200 acres of dryland farm on the Avon Wilderness interface. If you know where that is, it is just out the back here. We raise beef cattle from poddy calves and have a small piggery and a few sheep for our own consumption. I have been a farmer for most of my life, and I bought this property about 12 years ago, starting out with sheep, goats and poddy calves. In the 12 years spent on this property we have seen the wild dog problem go from an inconvenience to a major impact. All the money, thought and power being put in by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, which is described as DELWP, is not giving a visible outcome for farmers. If there are results, they are not being felt by those affected by the problem; therefore farmers feel that nothing is being done.

I have 40 years experience as a deerstalker, hunting in the most remote and hard-to-access areas. In the early days dogs would track me all day, remaining about a kilometre behind and voicing every 10 minutes or so. When I shot a deer, no dogs would come near the carcass until my scent had disappeared, usually some days, and then only if they were starving. The areas I refer to are not as remote anymore. Trail bike riders and four-wheel drivers are carving new tracks through the bush, making them like superhighways for pest animals, and trophy hunters are leaving more food in the bush to feed the carnivorous populations.

We have had good rainfall, and the great alpine fires have seen massive regrowth for vermin to live in on public land. The department's response to this has been to tell the farmers to improve and electrify their fences and to trap, bait and shoot for themselves. 'Be part of the toolbox' is the phrase we have all heard everywhere. Well, we are sick of the toolbox. We have not got big enough trucks to cart them. Farmers have enough to do in their farming without doing all this as well, to rectify a problem not of their own making.

There are a couple of stories from out of East Gippsland that I will read now. One farmer stopped reporting two years ago when he changed from sheep to cattle. Because he was not reporting anything, the department assumed the problem had resolved itself, so it did nothing in the area. This only came to light in discussions with another farmer.

Regarding companion animals, I have seen firsthand that maremmas do not always work on large acreages. A farmer that swears by them actually has had sheep mauled in hard-to-access parts of his property. He swore by maremmas. His neighbours have shot some of his dogs because they have caught them killing sheep on their properties. This solution appeases the greenies, but it can exacerbate the problem.

Another farmer asked the department for help, but they refused to help him as his back fence was in poor repair. Until he fixed the fence, they were not willing to do anything. A fence makes no difference to a dog, and the attacks were on stock inside his property. He was not losing stock that had crossed the boundary.

In the three-year period before the government stopped the wild dog bounty, hunters shot 2129 dogs and the government trapped 1500. That is at least 3630 dogs known to be gone. How many baits were taken in that time? How can you know? And the ones taken could have been taken by any number of animals apart from dogs. Even humans take them for whatever reason. Dogs are a much bigger problem than foxes for farmers, but the bounty continues only for foxes.

We as farmers know that a trap in the ground gets results and that a trapped dog can be dispatched fast and painlessly with a shot to the brain. Why are we trying all these new, costly and time-consuming methods which do not always work? Baiting, for instance, is great for foxes and some old dogs and pups. Have you people heard about the canid ejectors, which the department wants us to use?

The CHAIR — Maybe you could explain it.

Mr TAYLER — It is a cylindrical pipe about 7 or 8 inches long and about an inch in diameter. In the top of that you put a bait, a 1080 bait pill, and on the outside of that you put a bit of lure meat or something like that, and then it is on the ground and then the dog is supposed to come along and pull that out and the ejector ejects the 1080 straight into his mouth. They do not work and they will not work, and it is a total waste of money. But they persist with these ideas.

Now, wild dogs are not scavengers or ground scent trackers. Baits are only of interest to them when they are starving, with no food source available, and we all know there is plenty of food source available. Where there is livestock there is food and fun together. Wild dogs are predators — killing machines. They kill as much for fun as for food. Today's dogs are bigger and stronger and more intelligent and fearless than they have been before. This intelligence makes them more elusive. They maul and torture and leave animals alive while they move on to another. They can wipe out a whole flock of sheep when they only need food for a few.

Trappers who retire are not replaced, but the department claims to have replaced them with workers from other areas. These are not properly trained and experienced trappers. About 10 years ago in central and East Gippsland, we had 26 trained and experienced full-time trappers. Now central Gippsland has 9 full-time and 4 casual trappers and 5 FSOs, or field service officers. Now, those people can be out fighting fires, they can be clearing tracks, they can be doing all sorts of jobs, and here they are, when a trapper goes on holiday, out trying to put traps on the ground and look after them. It does not work. They do other jobs apart from that as well. East Gippsland has 8 full-time and 2 casual trappers and 4 FSOs. This means 17 full-time, 6 casual and 9 FSOs all up. So, yes, they have more staff, but not the right ones in the right areas.

We have more people on the ground, but numbers trapped has decreased by two-thirds. There used to be a total of about 1500 dogs trapped each year by the trappers. Recently there has only been about 1500 trapped in three years, even after the population explosion. These figures speak for themselves.

This is not a party-political issue. It is an issue for the whole of the state. Farmers should not have to change the livestock they farm which is suited to their particular land just because of a feral problem. Other vermin only impact on the land. Dogs impact on land, livelihoods and the wellbeing of people and livestock. We believe wild dogs should be at the top of the invasive animals list, not the bottom.

There are a couple of things we need to do as soon as possible. The first thing is to remove the buffer zone, which is a 3-kilometre buffer zone from private land into the state parks. That needs to be removed. That was put there for the reason that dingoes are outside that line and the wild dogs are inside. Well, they forgot to tell the dogs. We also need dedicated full-time trappers, and that means dedicated full-time trappers. That is all they do. That is from generations. The ones we have got now are three generations of trappers. They have got to know how. They know how to do it, and they are doing it the way they can.

We need more cooperation between the department and the farmers, not just saying, ‘yes, yes, yes’, and do nothing. We can tell them where the problem is, and they need to act on it and not tell us that they are coming up with some other brainy city idea. And the bounty, as I have said in my statement there, speaks for itself — it got more dogs. They cost \$100 a head. The government had to pay \$100 and they got nearly twice as many dogs just from shooters — and then they take it away. And the other thing is the time line on the trap checks — the trap checks when the trap goes in the ground; you are allowed three days before you need to check that trap, which allows you the time to get out in the bush to it and do all the rest. I think the idea that they want to get that down to 24 hours is so ridiculous that it is not worth even mentioning. That is all the notes that I have got there. Thank you for listening.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Mr Tayler. Perhaps I will start off with a question. Just in terms of the actual damage that the dogs are doing, can you give some figures in terms of the amount of livestock maybe in the last six months or so, just from what you have learnt from talking to people? I appreciate that you have only just started up the advisory group — we understand that the problem is huge — but can you give us a bit of an idea of how big it is.

Mr TAYLER — It is an awkward question. I have not gone into that, and I will be. I can assure you that there are farmers that I know in East Gippsland who have gone out of sheep altogether, and they used to run two and three thousand mob of sheep. They have just given it away because they would lose them. They got out there every day. There was a fellow in Swifts Creek last week. He went out and found 42 maimed, wounded, injured. He had to put them down — and the farmers are waking up to that every day. So if you have got sheep or goats or anything like that, you are waking up to that every day, and it is bound to get to you in the end. I am definitely going to find that out, and what the monetary value would be for what Victoria has lost in the production of wool, lamb meat, all the rest of it, because farmers have gone out, had to give it away because of the problem with the dogs. So I am working on it.

The CHAIR — As I said, I appreciate you have only been there a short time, so thanks for giving an answer. The other question is: we have heard a little bit about professionals — I will not say hunters — those that are paid and make a living out of getting rid of invasive animals versus this idea, which our inquiry is looking at, of sporting or hunting organisations also being used to get rid of invasive animals. Do you have any thoughts on whether they both can be used, whether one is better than the other? What do you think about that?

Mr TAYLER — Well, it is a good idea. But I really believe that the logistics are probably pretty hard, and who is going to look after it and who is going to police it and who is going to do that? I think that is where that will end up. It will just end up being said all the time, because it just will not happen. There are some farmers that love shooters on their property and there are farmers that just do not want them near at all, and until you get every farmer involved in something, you are sort of knocking your head against the wall, you know. Yes, a good idea. If it comes to fruition and it can be policed correctly and in the right way, and you do not have people doing the wrong thing, then yes, we are for it — no doubt about that.

We want the problem back under control, so anything to get that. We are never going to eradicate it — that is never going to happen — but we need the control. We dropped the ball 15 years ago. They dropped the ball, and that was it. They would not do what the farmers asked, and here we are now. Where are we going to be in the next 20 years when we have got rabies, foot and mouth disease, all the other diseases that are coming back because we are overloaded with all this stuff in the bush. No.

The CHAIR — What you seem to be saying today and in your submission is that it is not just even about the money; it is about the way of getting rid of the dogs. Is that right?

Mr TAYLER — Well, the government has a certain budget for the problem and to deal with that. That is one of the aspects that they get budgeted for. Now the money that they are spinning off to the dog bit is nothing. I do not know where the money is going, but it is certainly not going into the dog business, because I proved that in that statement. With their FSOs and the other people that they have got there, they are pulling them out from the people they have already got. They are not putting extra people on, so I do not know.

Mr RAMSAY — Thanks, Barry, and thanks for your written submission and your submission this morning. My apologies for being late. I am perhaps just going to draw on a bit of experience from when I was the president of the Victorian farmers. We did quite a lot of work in this area in East Gippsland in relation to wild dog control. I concur with some of your recommendations, and certainly all of the issues that you raised are part of a management program, or should be part of a government management program, which we have found to be quite effective over the years. That is the bounty and that is trappers, as was found not only in East Gippsland but certainly also in the northern part of Victoria, where they have been very successful. Aerial baiting has proved to be successful in some of those higher, mountainous country areas — Tallangatta, a bit north of Tallangatta, where they have been trialling it over a number years and found it to be successful as well. So a culmination of all those things, I think, would add to a proper management control system for not only wild dogs but also other invasive pests. My understanding is the government has sanctioned wild dog advisory groups that work under Minister Pulford — —

Mr TAYLER — In the north-east, yes.

Mr RAMSAY — In the north-east. Is there such a formality in East Gippsland in relation to — —

Mr TAYLER — We have nothing to do with that. We are a totally independent body for farmers, and that is all we are.

Mr RAMSAY — Okay. So this is not a ministerial advisory group as such?

Mr TAYLER — No, not at all.

Mr RAMSAY — So you are not bound by the conditions surrounding groups in the north-eastern region.

Mr TAYLER — No, not at all. Totally independent of anything.

Mr RAMSAY — So your only relationship with the department then is locally here with you representing a group of farmers talking to the department in relation to controllers.

Mr TAYLER — I have been on the wild dog management zone committee with the department at Heyfield for Licola, Heyfield and this area here for some seven years, I think. I have been on that for seven years, going to their workshops and committee meetings and things that they have throughout the year of which they only have about one or maybe two. That is to design the mapping for the baiting and the trapping in our area. I have been on that for seven years. The only government input that I have ever had is with them.

Mr RAMSAY — I guess my point is: why is there not a formal wild dog advisory group that works under the minister where you can draw on all those resources about proper mapping, a close relationship with the department and a management system for wild dog control, rather than a sort of ad-hoc approach — if I can use that phrase loosely — in your own small group?

Mr TAYLER — Back in April I sent a letter to Jaala Pulford, the minister, explaining what we were up to and what we were doing and what assistance she should give us. Nothing. Nothing. I have still heard nothing.

Mr RAMSAY — We might investigate that, because there has always been an issue about wild dogs in East Gippsland and it is well documented. It would be surprising to me if there is not a sort of formal group working under the authority of the other groups in the north-east.

Mr TAYLER — Yes.

Mr RAMSAY — The buffer zone area, if I can just talk to you about that, because my understanding with wild dogs — and I have to say the community has a role here because a lot of these wild dogs are just abandoned domestic dogs, particularly coming out of the townships where they are just left and then invariably they just go into the bush. They do tend to reside in the Crown lands, then come out onto the farmlands, and they will pull down not only sheep but calves as well. I have seen evidence of that plenty of times.

Mr TAYLER — Can I just pick you up on one point there? You are saying that dogs come from the community and they head into the bush and become wild.

Mr RAMSAY — No, I am saying some do. I am saying the community has a responsibility.

Mr TAYLER — Well, I am saying that none that I have ever seen do that, and if they did they would be killed by the wild dogs that are in there. There is no doubt about that. I can assure you of that. I can say too that my dogs in my area, if I go 2 k into the bush that way, my dogs are in threat of being killed by a wild dog. If that wild dog comes into anywhere my dogs are — it will not. It will turn back straightaway, because it smells that that is not its territory. These dogs are territorial. They know where to go; they know what to do. So if a dog coming from out of the community goes there, he is dead. He is going to be dead — it is only a matter of time. He will either starve to death, or he will get killed by wild dog. I know that for a fact. In my area — and that is where your area differs from ours on lots of different things. That is why I have set up this one from Licola right through to East Gippsland, because we are totally different to you on this side of the mountain. True.

Mr RAMSAY — I am not from the north-east, by the way, either. I am from down the south-west.

Mr TAYLER — Okay. Well, you are different again.

Mr RAMSAY — In relation to using professional shooters as against sporting shooters, my understanding is that your view is that professional shooters would be more capable and more effective and productive in shooting wild dogs than, say, sporting associations or others that — —

Mr TAYLER — No, I would not say that.

Mr RAMSAY — What was your commentary before on that, then, in response to the Chair's question?

Mr TAYLER — The main thing was policing the whole thing. How are you going to keep it all together and make it all work as one uniform unit? It is a bit difficult. You are going to have higgledy-piggledy bits everywhere. Everyone seems to think that you can just walk out in the bush and shoot a dog. That is not the case. Wild dogs are wild dogs. He knows you are there 15 minutes before you step your foot out of the car, and he does what he needs to do in that period of time to either evade you or hide or watch or do whatever. That is just the way the animal is. For hunters to walk into the bush and just say, 'We're just going to go and hunt and look for dogs', you could walk around the bush all day — three days — and not even see a dog. You might not even see a mark on the ground. And yet you cannot tell me that you going to go to an area and find 20 dogs that will stand there waiting for you to shoot them. That just does not happen. That happens with deer, happens with pigs and happens with everything else. It does not happen with dogs.

Mr RAMSAY — But is not that the point of mapping properly where these wild dogs are?

Mr TAYLER — Well, with your mapping, that is fine too, but a dog has a roaming area, and his roaming area could be from Sale to the high country there, back over to my place and back around. He has

got a 70 to 100-k run. The dogs in my area might be there today and then — we work on about a three or four-week turnaround, so if that dog is going my place today and he keeps going, I wait about three to four weeks and I guarantee you he will be back. It might not be exactly that day or whatever, but it will be in that period of time. And that is their habit. Once they have roamed that area and done a few runs around there over a period of months, they will then move on. They will move 10 kilometres and do that.

With the normal deer hunters shooting these dogs and handing them in when the bounty was on, that is when you come across them. The hounds are in the bush chasing the deer out for the hunters to shoot. Well, the wild dogs that happen to be in there too come running out, and when you have got blokes standing all around the perimeter on a 5000-acre block of bush, the dog comes out — bang! That is how the dogs get shot. You get the farmers like me who shoot one now and again. They just happen to be out there with a rifle. ‘Oh, there’s a dog’ — shoot. So that is the way it works.

I do not know, but as I say, if you can get these shooters and all that together and to work on a plan and do whatever, yes, well, it is beneficial, but I cannot see — if the department is getting the budget to do their job, they should be doing the job. We have got enough people running around the bush with rifles — and do not get me wrong, I am not a rifle hater — I have got plenty of them myself — but you know what I mean. Like, even when I go out in the bush, I have got to be careful because I know there are other people there. So you are putting more people into the bush.

Mr YOUNG — Thanks, Mr Tayler, for coming in. Talking about punters shooting dogs, the way you described it, it seemed to be a pretty opportunistic sort of approach. Hunters do not really target dogs; it is not the reason they go out. What do you think the abolition of the bounty has had as far as an impact on hunters taking those opportunities goes?

Mr TAYLER — Can you say that again? I could not hear the first bit.

Mr YOUNG — What do you think the impact of abolishing the bounty has been on hunters taking those opportunities?

Mr TAYLER — Well, they just do not bother now. You have got to look at it from their point of view. People need to step into the shoes of other people to find out what is going on instead of just whatever. If you are a hunter and you are out there, whether you are a deerstalker or you are a hound hunter, \$100 is \$100. If you are deerstalker you might be there three or four days and not even see a deer or shoot a deer or whatever — but, ‘Oh, there’s a dog!’. You are shooting him. There is 100 bucks. You come back. There is \$100. It pays for the trip. It pays for the fuel. You are getting something. You are helping us.

It is the same with the deer shooters. With the hounds on, running, and a dog comes out, it does not matter; they are not going to scare the deer away by firing a shot, because he is going to run somewhere else and somebody is going to shoot him. So that is the way that operates. So, yes, you really need to think about the way these people are and what they are doing and put yourself in their shoes, because that is what I would do. If I see a dog, I shoot it, but if I am stalking a deer and I know that that deer is just over there and I have got 100 yards to go before I pin him and a dog walks across there, there is a big choice. Do I shoot the dog, or do I shoot the deer? It depends how much money I have got on the fridge, doesn’t it?

Mr YOUNG — They are certainly not going to do it if they are not going to get paid for it.

Mr TAYLER — That is right.

Mr YOUNG — You are out there to shoot a deer, are you not?

Mr TAYLER — That is right.

Mr YOUNG — As far as hunters contributing to that, you talked about numbers of how many were shot, and we know how many were shot by virtue of the fact that we had a bounty, so there was a bit of a track on that. Do you think there is anything that could change to assist hunters having more opportunities?

Mr TAYLER — Yes. As I suggested to a few other people, put it up to \$150. Yes, that would, but I think \$100 is pretty good. Look, foxes are \$10, and look how many foxes get shot. We have people just specially going out with hounds doing creeks and things like that to get foxes for a bit of entertainment and a few bucks on the side to buy a few slabs of beer at the end of the year, but that is how it works.

Mr YOUNG — What about areas that hunters are not allowed to go in?

Mr TAYLER — Well, we have had those areas too, and that is part of my problem because the Avon wilderness was shut up for 20 years. Within that 20-year period of time you can imagine what happened in there. That is part of the problem I have got now. So, yes, shutting up areas is not a good idea.

Mr YOUNG — You would not have had that kind of problem if you are allowed to have hunting and at least some dogs being removed by hunters.

Mr TAYLER — Yes, well, you are moving things around; you are not just allowing them a spot to stay and breed.

Mr YOUNG — Yes, and you talked about that before. You reckon it is actually a population of wild dogs out there that has been breeding for generations rather than your loose ones coming out of town —

Mr TAYLER — Well, there was on my property, when I first bought my property back then. I do not know the dog trapper in the area. I mentioned to him, ‘Yes, I’ve got a bitch down there. She’s coming in and killing my sheep’. I ended up shooting it anyway before he even bothered trapping it. You have just got to be on the ball and at it all the time, but on my property they had a den set up, and they have been there for years. So where they are not being pestered — say, your locked-up areas — they are just going to breed nice and happy. Then they move out from there each day, they can do whatever and go back. That was what was happening then, but it does not happen now, because we do move them around a bit.

Mr YOUNG — As far as trappers go, I am not really too familiar with the legislation or regulation on what they do, but you talked before about the three-day time checks. What would be the implications if that does change to 24 hours, and where did the idea of 24 hours come from?

Mr TAYLER — I think you will find that is coming from the government, but I am not going to say that. I did not say that. What it will do — the minority of trappers that we have got, their workload is fairly great now doing what they do, and then within that they have got their sick days that they are allowed, they have got their long service leave and all this sort of thing. It makes it very hard for them and anyone else to do that trap run every day. As well they do baiting too, but it seems to be that in my area they do trapping one couple of weeks, then they give that away where I am, then they go way off somewhere else and do some baiting and then they come back. So in that period of time we have lost our run — our feel, if you like — as to what is going on. That is where that situation was. You just cannot physically do it in 24 hours. It needs that three days. You have got to allow time for a dog to get in there. He might not get in on the first day; he might get in in the last 10 minutes as you are driving around the corner. You just cannot.

If people are worried about inhumane things like his foot caught in a trap, there is no damage to the dog even if he was in there for two weeks. He would starve to death. He would not even bleed to death, because there is no blood, and it does not hurt him; it just holds him. In saying that, your hunters come along, they go along the trap — ‘There’s a dog. It’s caught in a trap’ — ping. They leave it there. Trapper comes along when he is doing his run — ‘Oh, they shot that one. That’s good’. That happens anyway. So that might happen in the first day if it is in the trap, but they do need that three days. You have got to have that three-day leeway. I just have got one other thing.

Mr YOUNG — Go for it.

Mr TAYLER — From the fires that we had, I do not know — five or six years ago? A bit longer than that — it would have been the great Alpine fire. Since that period of time the growth of the bush and everything else went ballistic. When that happens people know too that kangaroos, when there is plenty of

tucker around, will breed more often. All wild animals will do the same, no matter whether it is wombats or whatever. Wild dogs are no different, and just for something of curiosity, there were two dogs that I shot there. One is a bitch, and the other one is her pup from the year before, which was running with her. She was due to pup. I took the pups out. There are seven there — seven pups — and there were seven females and one male. That is good years. If we had been in the drought years, she probably would not have had any, or she would have had two or three pups. They were good years. So that is what we are up against. I do not know where you had wild dogs on your list, but they definitely need to be on the top.

Mr YOUNG — No worries.

The CHAIR — Can I just quickly ask one other one, which is about what you have mentioned today and also in your submission about consultation, just to give us a bit of an idea of where you say that is falling down. Is it just that what you are saying is being ignored, or is it that you are not being spoken to — just for us to come up with recommendations and ideas about doing things differently, because there were quite a few ideas around that.

Mr TAYLER — The general information is apart from my own information. The general information from all my farmers is that they have given up with the department. They tell them the stories and they tell them where the problem is, and it falls on deaf ears.

The CHAIR — Okay, so just no action about it.

Mr TAYLER — No, and from my point of view with the department working with him at closer range is that I had a meeting with Mike Timpano, who was the boss down here at Traralgon for DELWP. It took me quite a while to get in to see him. We sorted out this, the same things that I put there — the buffer zone and the bounty and all of that — and where is he now? He has been posted to the mine site drama that is going on down there, so he does not have anything to do with this. So that was a total waste of time. It seems to be every time you get someone who is interested in what you are doing, they disappear. Whether there is a reason behind that or not, I do not know.

Mr RAMSAY — I think the other thing is that the financial impact is always underestimated, particularly in the interface areas on farming land, where a lot of people are not able to farm sheep anymore because of the wildlife problem.

Mr TAYLER — That is right, yes.

Mr RAMSAY — And the cost of not being able to have that flexibility and farming operation to run sheep is always undervalued.

Mr TAYLER — There is another major problem that is happening in our area, and it is that larger farms are being cut up into hobby farms and 10-acre blocks and 20-acre blocks, and those people come down on weekends to their new property. They buy a few sheep, goats, whatever. They put them on there. They come down each weekend to make sure it is still there, and then all of a sudden after a period of time the novelty wears off the place and they might come once a month or whatever and they come back and they are missing livestock. They do not know where they go; they do not know that we have a dog problem. They are actually helping the situation by having their stock there unattended and the dogs feasting on them. So that is another problem that is going to increase. One of my things with the department was that we need to get some information out to these people to let them know that there is a problem and that if they do have a problem, to get in touch with someone, because they do not know. They are newcomers to the area; they have got no idea. But anyway that is that.

The CHAIR — Thanks very much for coming in. Sorry again that we started a bit late. I hope that did not inconvenience you or anything.

Mr TAYLER — No, that is all right. It does not matter. I have been waiting 20 years, so 15 minutes is not going to make any difference.

The CHAIR — Good. I forgot to make an announcement about the public meeting tonight starting at 5.00 p.m.

Mr TAYLER — I am too far away to come to that. I will just grab my things and be off.

The CHAIR — Good. Thank you.

Witness withdrew.