

Submission to the Senate Inquiry of Environmental Biosecurity

(Senate Environment and Communications References Committee)

Submission from:

Pamela Lloyd

Thank you for the opportunity to request vigorous action on the agricultural and environmental damage which result from inadequate biosecurity measures in this country. I am not a scientist, but will make a few observations as a very ordinary person.

1. The ongoing financial drain, environmental damage and human energy which our existing 'invaders' have required of us do not seem ever to have been costed. I would like to see an analysis of what it has cost over a specified period to deal with just any one of a number of pests, e.g., serrated tussock, myrtle rust, cane toads; and for a similar analysis of what it would have cost if we had dealt with this particular pest as soon as it became known as such. I have no doubt in my mind that we are spending a lot of money and heartache continually trying to catch up with pests that have become out of hand, because we did not take action at once. As a landowner, I listen to our neighbouring farmer in the West Wimmera, who talks with much frustration about how he tried to alert the relevant government department about boneseed (in the 50s I think), which he maintains came in via feed from South Africa. He had no response. Now we are spending untold dollars and man-hours trying to get it out of the area.
2. The money which is spent on trying to catch up is money which doesn't get spent on agricultural research and support, or more park rangers. It's backward-looking spending, not innovative creative spending.
3. Introduced pests are not **either** environmental **or** agricultural. They invariably affect both areas. Foxes don't just destroy lambs; they are also busy with our native fauna. The bridal creeper which is taking over our local roadside verges and bush blocks in the West Wimmera is also damaging the local farms.
4. Our natural environment as an industry. As a bushwalker I see how weeds are taking over the bush. The Wombat State Forest, for instance, is, in increasing areas, being exponentially strangled with blackberries. When the last eucalypt is a dead trunk, and the last forest track unwalkable because of thistles, who will want to go there? This might seem dramatic, but it is happening in certain areas. My bushwalking group, The Melbourne Womens Walking Club, organizes boneseeding days in the You Yangs, but we are aware of how inadequate our efforts are. Tourism in our unique rural areas is an industry.

I am sure I'm not saying anything new. I am writing this because I want you to know that ordinary citizens are very distressed by successive governments' almost casual attitude to destructive introduced species.

I would like to support the establishment of Environmental Health Australia to

- analyze past failures (see point 1 above);
- co-ordinate a nation-wide approach instead of our current piecemeal responses;
- direct better-funded resources to foresee potential incursions, monitor new incursions, and develop plans to keep them in check.

As well, with an increasingly high population of urban residents who have little connection with rural areas, we need to promote public awareness of this issue, and what ordinary citizens can do, eg. Don't release cats into the bush, don't grow agapanthus, maybe even join local groups which do weeding in public spaces. Nurseries need to become more responsible, and should be prosecuted for selling 'weeds,' and captains of contaminated ships and animal smugglers given firm jail sentences preferably with a poisonous snake as a cell-mate.

Thank you again for the opportunity to participate in this enquiry, and I wish you the best in your deliberations,

Pamela Lloyd