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CABINET DECISION

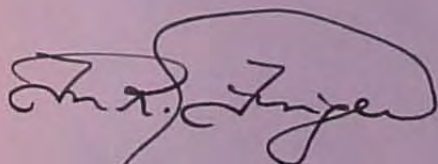
No. 3745

Submission No.: 3202

Title: CONTROL OF CANE TOADS

Cabinet -

- (a) decided that the Premiers of Queensland, Western Australia and New South Wales be approached with a view to formulating a joint proposal to the Commonwealth including funding for implementing a research programme into the biological control of cane toads; and
- (b) asked the Director General to initiate contact at officer level with the three Premier Departments regarding the proposal.



(M.R. FINGER),
Secretary to Cabinet.

4 September 1984

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FOR CABINET

SUBMISSION No: 3202

Title:	CONTROL OF CANE TOADS
Minister	Hon. I.L. Tuxworth, M.L.A. Hon. C.N. Padgham-Purich, M.L.A.
Purpose:	To recommend the implementation of a research program and improved monitoring techniques related to the control and introduction of cane toads.
Relation to existing policy:	Consistent
Timing/ legislative priority:	Commencement of the programmes should occur without delay.
Announcement of decision, tabling, etc:	A press release should be made just prior to the start of the programmes.
Action re- quired before announcement:	NIL
Staffing implications, numbers and costs, etc:	1 x Technical Officer Gd.1 - Conservation Commission 1 x Technical Officer Gd.1 - Dept. Primary Production
Total cost:	Conservation Commission - \$65,000 first year, \$55,000 each of following three years Dept. Primary Production - \$62,000 and \$50,000

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DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Department/Authority.....

COMMENT ON CABINET SUBMISSION No.

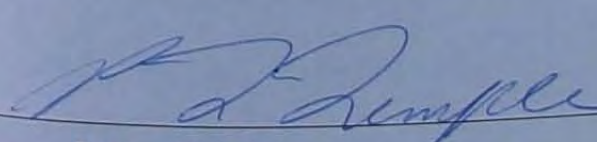
CONTROL OF CANE TOADS

TITLE:

COMMENTS:

Submission supported. The question of funding during the current financial year can be considered in the context of the First Budget Review.

SIGNED:


P.F. TEMPLE

DESIGNATION:

Deputy Under Treasurer

DATE:

1/8/84

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PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSIONER

Department/Authority

COMMENT ON CABINET SUBMISSION No.
CONTROL OF CANE TOADS

TITLE:
CONSERVATION COMMISSION OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

COMMENTS:

This Office offers the following comments in respect of the attached submission.

- It is noted that two departments are involved in the proposal. It would be desirable for one department to be identified as having overall responsibility for the project.
- There are two major border crossings which would require monitoring (the Barkly Highway, and the Burketown - Borroloola road). How will one inspector manage both crossings?
- A full investigation into biological research already undertaken by the Queensland Government, and the Commonwealth should be undertaken before the NT embarks on any major research programme of its own.
- Serious consideration should be given to engaging local Aborigines under the Community Employment Programme, to undertake the monitoring of the Border crossings, and to assist in field research, thus providing valuable training in the area of conservation field research, and possibly creating genuine job prospects.

SIGNED: K S POPE

DESIGNATION: PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSIONER

DATE: 31 JULY 1984

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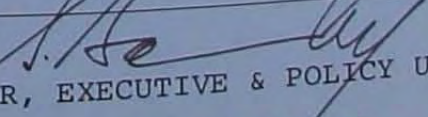
Department/Authority LAW

COMMENT ON CABINET SUBMISSION No.

TITLE: CONTROL OF CANE TOADS

COMMENTS:

There are no constitutional or legal barriers to the proposal.

SIGNED: S.R. BAILEY 
DESIGNATION: DIRECTOR, EXECUTIVE & POLICY UNIT
DATE: 30 JULY 1984

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THE ISSUES

1. This Submission will seek approval to implement:
 - . a research programme on possible biological control of cane toads;
 - . improved monitoring to minimise risk of accidental, man-assisted introduction of cane toads.

BACKGROUND

2. Cane toads were first introduced into Australia (Queensland) in 1935. Since then there has been a steady expansion of the range of the animals into northern New South Wales and westwards through the Queensland Gulf country. In the wet season of 1982-83 toads were first discovered in the Wollogorang area of the Northern Territory.
3. Apart from natural increases in their range, toads have been found in the Darwin area, obviously having been brought in by the importation of plant and soil material or by various forms of mobile transport from interstate.
4. The Conservation Commission has continually monitored the

spread of the toad populations into the Territory and, as a result, estimates that the animals are expanding their range at a rate of 33km/year.

CONSIDERATION OF THE ISSUES

5. Cane toads can pose serious threats to native fauna. Research carried out in Australia and in other parts of the world has produced evidence that the toads:

- (a) eat various species of native fauna;
- (b) poison species of native fauna which attempt to eat them;
- (c) compete for food with species of native fauna;
- (d) out compete native species for shelter and resting places; and
- (e) in the tadpole stage, out-compete native amphibians in breeding habitat.

6. In addition there are other possible adverse effects from toad infestation, e.g. pollution of bores, water holes and drinking troughs, clogging drains, pollution of

swimming pools, killing of domestic animals which attempt to catch them and much else.

7. There is also evidence to support the theory that toads pose a threat to human health as carrier of hook worms, Salmonella and various other forms of bacteria and parasites. Cane toads are known to feed on human faeces, so that in areas where standards of sanitation are low, a high human health risk would prevail if such areas were subjected to toad infestation.
8. From studies already undertaken, biological control seems to be the only practical way of controlling cane toads but much research needs to be undertaken into the most effective control mechanisms. The studies proposed would be conducted over four years.
9. Monitoring of plant and soil imports will minimise the potential for accidental introduction of cane toads (and other pests). Of particular importance is the importation of live plants for commercial fruit growing and domestic gardens. Current operating activities of the Agricultural Quarantine Service are directed chiefly at international movement of plants, animal and their products. The salaries of inspectoral staff are paid by the Commonwealth Government for this international role.

The more frequent and thorough inspections of interstate consignments necessary to significantly reduce the risk of toad introduction will require addition to agricultural quarantine staffing.

OPTIONS

10. The options available to Cabinet are:

(a) to take no action;

(b) to undertake research into biological control mechanisms;

(c) to improve monitoring of the importation of plant and soil material; or

(d) to undertake both biological research and seek to improve monitoring.

11. To accept option (a) would reflect a denial that toad infestation is not only a potential threat to the environment but also to human well being.

12. Acceptance of either option (b) or option (c) above will afford some measure of control. However, the most effect

can obviously be gained from a combination of these two options, viz. option (d).

13. Option (d) is recommended.

THE PUBLIC IMPACT OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

14. There is an ever-increasing public interest in environmental issues. People of the 'Top End' are aware of the threats posed by cane toads. The public is expected to support proposals geared to meeting the cane toad invasion.
15. Community groups expected to favour the proposals include the tourist industry, conservationists, pastoralists, farmers, pet owners, and scientific and educational institutions.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

16. Cost to the Conservation Commission is expected to be \$65,000 in the first year and \$55,000 in each of the following three years. Department of Primary Production costs will be \$62,000 initially and \$50,000 p.a. in the subsequent years.

EMPLOYMENT AND STAFF CONSIDERATIONS

17. Implementation of the programmes will require:

(i) employment of one (1) Technical Officer Grade 1 by the Conservation Commission to conduct field research at the border area. This position will be required for the duration of the programme (4 years).

(ii) the creation of one (1) agricultural quarantine officer (Technical Officer Grade 1) in Department of Primary Production to monitor the importation of plant material. This position would simultaneously permit increased surveillance for exotic diseases and pests other than cane toads.

COMMONWEALTH, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

18. At the 1984, CONCOM conference, the cane toad was recognised as a problem of national significance. The Commonwealth, Western Australian and Queensland governments stated willingness to provide additional funds for research. Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service has actively supported the Conservation Commission cane toad research

programme.

CO-ORDINATION AND CONSULTATION

19. The submission is the product of consultation between the Conservation Commission and Department of Primary Production.

LEGISLATION

20. Nil

PUBLICITY

21. Suitable publicity will be arranged in advance of the start of the programme.

TIMING

22. It is desirable for the programmes to commence as soon as practicable.

RECOMMENDATION

23. It is recommended that Cabinet approve the implementation of:

- (a) a four year research programme into the biological control of cane toads; and
- (b) increased monitoring to minimise the introduction of cane toads.

C. D. Padgham - Punt
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Minister for Housing
and Conservation

W. J. ...
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Minister for Primary
Production