

## **Belconnen Naval Transmission Station, ACT - matters agreed by members of the two expert panels**

In August 2007 a panel of experts being Dr Sue McIntyre, Dr Hal Cogger, Dr Graeme Coulson and Dr George Wilson provided a report to the Department of Defence concerning the above site.

In February 2008 a panel of experts being Dr Sue McIntyre, Dr Andrew Braid, Mr Michael Linke and Associate Professor David Morgan also provided a report to the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment on the above site.

On 20 March 2008 a meeting with all these experts was convened in order to provide the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment with advice.

Based on the respective reports of each panel of experts and the meeting on 20 March 2008 all the experts agree on the following:

1. The natural temperate grasslands and the threatened species within the grassland at BNTS should be preserved and urgent action needs to occur.
2. The current condition of the grassland is poor.
3. The main cause of the current poor condition of the grassland is heavy grazing pressure by the eastern grey kangaroos (the kangaroos). The situation is compounded by the drought.
4. The current density of kangaroos is preventing recovery of the grassland and threatening its long term sustainability.
5. Kangaroo numbers at BNTS (within the fenced area) should be dramatically reduced before the onset of winter 2008 in order to protect the grassland. In August 2007, the Defence panel recommended in effect the removal of all but 100 kangaroos and were under the impression that their recommendations would be implemented by December 2007. In February 2008 the

Commissioner's panel recommended the removal of all kangaroos by winter 2008. [The ACT Conservator of Flora and Fauna advised, in February 2008, that not all kangaroos needed to be removed if an adaptive management approach were adopted (where kangaroo density is adjusted relative to the grassland's response to kangaroo grazing) and that an appropriate stocking rate would be 1 kangaroo per hectare (approximately 100 to 120 kangaroos). The Commissioner considered all this advice and in February 2008 recommended an adaptive management approach with an initial density of 1 kangaroo per hectare or less. It is noted that currently approximately 60 female kangaroos at BNTS are tagged and are being used for fertility research purposes.]

6. The most humane method of removing the kangaroos from BNTS would be through shooting. However, the Australian Federal Police will not agree to the use of firearms because of public safety concerns. In the absence of the use of firearms, the next best method for the humane removal of the kangaroos is by sedation by darting followed by euthanasia by lethal injection. [All experts have consistently supported euthanasia over translocation including the members of the Defence Panel who, as reflected in their August 2007 report, also acknowledged that there might be overriding reasons for translocation to be the preferred option of the Department of Defence. In doing this the Defence Panel put stringent conditions on translocation and were of the understanding that if these could be met, they would have been implemented by December 2007. These conditions have not been met and the Defence Expert Panel members believe that now only euthanasia should be pursued.]
7. No expert requested or supported a specific research project involving the translocation of kangaroos at BNTS<sup>1</sup>, nor any allocation of funds for such a study. Such research would be expensive and an inappropriate use of research funds when there is such a need for research on a wide variety of threatened species and communities, including those at BNTS.

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<sup>1</sup> While it was agreed that translocation of kangaroos from BNTS should not be undertaken on animal welfare grounds alone, there was some discussion of other issues as well, including the shortage of suitable reception sites, the time involved in securing the necessary approvals and the uncertain fate of translocated kangaroos.

8. No release sites have been nominated. The panels are not aware of suitable release sites that address animal welfare issues for translocated and resident animals nor do they believe one can be found. A permit to release into New South Wales would be likely to draw opposition from nearby land holders.
  
9. All kangaroos remaining at BNTS are therefore to be part of long-term fertility control research with numbers not to exceed more than 1 per hectare subject to an adaptive management approach within the constraints on kangaroo numbers required for fertility control research. Best practice for this site in the view of expert panel members would be for it to be planned and managed as a model urban grassland ecosystem where all threatened species are protected and conserved. The long-term future of the site needs clarification, including the role of the perimeter fencing and the internal fencing.

Dr Sue McIntyre, Dr Hal Cogger, Dr Graeme Coulson, Dr George Wilson, Dr Andrew Braid, Mr Michael Linke and Associate Professor David Morgan.

27 March 2008