

Chair's Address to AGM

October 2010

Helen Cathles, Chair, IA CRC

To preface my Annual Report, I'd like to highlight to you the excellence in this CRC. The excellence in the individuals. The excellence in the science. The excellence in the governance. The excellence in the management and leadership. The strong collaboration.

The fact that this CRC is needed, now and into the future in Australasia if we want

- a strong agricultural sector
- healthy urban communities
- to protect our biodiversity

Our challenges and opportunities are Australasia wide and international.

Our June full program review brought together key researchers, industry commercialisers and end-users in an intense forum to take stock of our research program and how we are positioned for our adoption end-game.

With many of our PhD students nearing completion, the review provided a special opportunity to be exposed to their varied research results and how they dovetail into our larger research demonstration projects. Their contribution to fertility control, understanding feral animals as a source of disease, demonstrating the impact of community action, or how natural predators and attractants can be used in control, are just a few areas of value being added to by our fabulous student cohort.

The review also demonstrated the continued strong progress being made across the board. It was very heartening to see new technology development move from the research phase to the registration and commercialisation phase – such as with our new wild dog and fox chemical control, PAPP.

Work on strategic controls also achieved important milestones, such as starting work on integrating the daughterless genetic construct into carp, building on many years of work on the model fish species.

It underscores that this CRC has been able to unlock historically unprecedented levels of innovation in this sector. It has replaced the almost complete lack of innovation for over 30 years from the 1960s to 1990s, with a product innovation spike to be delivered by IA CRC this decade.

The IA CRC has been able to deliver this because:

- It is both vertically and horizontally integrated enabling seamless progression from end user investment and involvement in research design, research and development, followed by commercialisation and/or adoption.
- It achieves critical mass by bringing together a broad range of partners focused on delivering much needed products and knowledge to improve management
- It has fostered a strong collaborative culture between researchers, research agencies, investors and commercialisers and government and industry end users.

An insight to the success at this stage of the IA CRC can be seen in the Annual Awards for 2010.

The Chair's Prize for Scientific Excellence – awarded to **Prof Rick Shine**, University of Sydney. Rick has made a substantial contribution to our understanding of ecological conservation and has worked tirelessly to present research outcomes from his work, as well as the work of the CRC and the Australian Research Council.

The Participant's Prize for Invasive Animal Management – awarded to **Greg Mifsud**, Biosecurity Queensland, Queensland Department of Employment, Economic Development & Innovation. Greg has been working on cooperative pest management programs and continues to do a brilliant job of raising the profile of wild dog issues and co-operative management options, as the National Wild Dog Facilitator. Adoption of the nil tenure, best practice and collaborative management principal now has an uptake covering all western Shires in QLD: is starting in Victoria and being considered for integration in some parts of WA.

The Chief Executive's prize for achievement as an IA CRC student – awarded to **Jessica King**, IA CRC-supported student with the University of Sydney (affiliated with the UTS and ANU). Jess has significantly enhanced our knowledge of invasive animals during her candidature. As a 'Balanced Scientist', her work is crucial to our current understanding of the lifecycle of Neospora. She has a remarkably successful publishing record and has actively communicated her findings.

Additionally this year the 'Economic impacts of vertebrate pests in Australia' report has been acknowledged, on at least two occasions by Ken Henry, Commonwealth Treasury Department, Secretary.

Other individual achievements include:

- **Glen Saunders** was recognised in the Australia Day honours for his work on biodiversity and vertebrate pest research with an AM.
- **Helen Scott-Orr** was also recognised for service to Veterinary Science with the Public Service Medal in the Australia Day honours.
- **Steve Lapidge** was awarded the Fulbright Professional Business/Industry Coral Sea Scholarship, to work with the USDA National Wildlife Research Centre in Colorado, on development of Nitrite for feral pigs and other species. Steve has just returned this week from the US.
- And to top it all off, the outstanding achievement of **Dr Tony Peacock** who was awarded the 2010 Australian Government Eureka Prize for Promoting Understanding of Science, in a branch of science that I have heard referred to as the 'least sexy' of all sciences.

The connection with the community through regular communication on the radio, and a strong media presence with competitions, science exhibitions and the like, are playing a very important role in the IA CRC achieving our goals.

And while we do need to better understand the community attitudes and what drives adoption and where necessary, change. We do know something of our IA CRC impact now in that regard, through regular monitoring via the Valuemetrics online survey.

Looking forward, the key is to position the CRC in the world of challenges and achievements regarding invasives and community impact.

We continue to have real concerns about invasives as they "quietly" undermine biodiversity, agriculture, affect urban environments and compound health issues, plus concerns the impact invasives will have under all predictions of climate change. We are confident that we can meet the challenge as a well-coordinated and innovative team working with the community nationally and internationally.

So earlier this year, the Governing Board decided to go for a five year extension bid to maintain this momentum, and enable the full delivery of our new key technologies before exiting the CRC Program in 2017.

Our track record to date means that involvement in this extension will be an astute investment, which will ensure the delivery and full roll out of new strategic controls for carp and rabbits (worth more than \$1.4 billion over 15 years), next generation genetic techniques to detect new and emerging pests at very low densities, and our new suite of wild dog, fox and feral pig toxins and bait delivery systems.

Leading the CRC into our extension bid process is **Andreas Glanznig**, we welcome Andreas as the newly appointed CEO. He takes over from Tony Peacock, who now heads up the CRC Association as their new CEO. On behalf of the Board I thank Tony for his dedication and enormous contribution over the past five years with this CRC.

Looking globally at the impact of invasives, the IA CRC international partnerships are setting a sound base for an expanded international approach to invasive animal management. A more comprehensive, international, cooperative research and management approach may yet provide the most powerful tools.

If we take international research and resource sharing one step further, this will ease the collective burden globally and build results through harvesting input from the great diversity of cultures. Just as currently, our cooperative approach nationally has led the way to an impressive turn around in wild dog control.

How fortunate we are to have such a large network of partners to help move to the next phase, our extension bid and then following into a more self sufficient future to keep addressing the insidious and never ending problems of invasives.

As a wool producer facing the impacts of pest animals every day, being at the helm of such a high performing CRC is something that I'm very proud of. I look forward to continuing this partnership to ensure that Australia is on a far stronger footing to deal with the some \$700 million a year pest animal impact to agriculture, and the immeasurable impacts to the environment and well being of land managers.

My sincere thanks to all members and staff of the IA CRC for your earnest and dedicated work this year. In particular, thank you to retiring Directors, Atticus Flemming and Chris Hancock, both have made a valuable contribution with their skills and networks and finally to recognise and thank the Board for their dedication and thoughtful counsel which underpins the IA CRC.

In closing I open the challenge – to meet the Australasia invasives challenge, and grasp the opportunities while we continue to achieve great things in this closing of our current CRC. Congratulations to all on another outstanding year toward achieving our goals!