

The Australian Advocate

Shining Light Where Other's Won't



Dr Ann Tennae PhD

Read what our resident miniature correspondent has to say in this edition. P.7

ABC DRAGGED OVER COALS FOR BIAS

BY Rob Mellett

THE Australian Broadcasting Corporation once occupied a rarefied position in Australia's media landscape, historically regarded as a sober, evidence-based source of information. Its greatest asset was the trust invested in it by the public.

In recent years, however, faith in the ABC has been shaken by a series of high-profile stories that have tarnished its image and raised questions about its editorial standards.

'ABC drops defence in former soldier Heston Russell's defamation case to avoid naming source'

A significant blow to the ABC's reputation came in 2023, when the broadcaster lost a landmark defamation case brought by former Australian Special Forces Major Heston Russell. The Federal Court ruled that ABC reporting from 2021 defamed Russell by conveying serious and unsubstantiated allegations about his conduct in Afghanistan. Justice Michael Lee found the ABC had conveyed 10 defamatory imputations and rejected its public interest defence, awarding Russell approximately \$390,000 in damages.

Multiple editorial missteps included the editing of the number of bullets fired and failing to seek or fairly consider Russell's response before publication.

More recently, ABC coverage of political events has also attracted intense scrutiny.

In late 2025, the ABC was accused of editing US President Donald Trump's January 6, 2021, speech in a way that implied incitement to violence while it omitted calls for peace. The ABC defended its approach, saying the edits did not change the quote's

meaning or mislead audiences.

Such high-profile critiques feed broader narratives of bias and selective emphasis in political reporting, weakening the ABC's claim to impartiality.

The ABC's own Editorial Policies state the ABC must be 'independent and impartial', 'not take editorial positions', present 'a diversity of perspectives' on controversial issues and to treat people 'fairly and respectfully.'

More specifically, Section 8(1)(d) of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983 states it must 'provide comprehensive broadcasting services of a high quality, using a diversity of sources, that are accurate and impartial.' : the words 'accurate and impartial' are the core legal test used when bias complaints are assessed.

Domestically, ABC reporting by its journalist Kenji Sato has triggered anger over his fire ant program coverage.



Kenji Sato - ABC News Reporter

Such high-profile critiques feed broader narratives of bias and selective emphasis in political reporting, weakening the ABC's claim to impartiality.

In 2024, he was labelling residents who refused pesticide treatments as 'conspiracy theorists', and by mid-2025 he was publicly criticising University of Queensland academics Dr Conny Turni, Dr Peter Parry, and Dr Nick Hudson as 'misinformation pushers' for their views on vaccine safety

and fire ant eradication issues.

An ABC editor's note later appended responses from the academics, acknowledging errors in the original coverage. In another instance that same month, an editor's note amended a report to state that hot water treatments to kill fire ants were 'not very effective' after earlier reporting stated they did not work at all.

According to the ABC's own Editorial Policy on Impartiality, the broadcaster must 'present a diversity of perspectives... so that no significant strand of thought... is knowingly excluded or disproportionately represented.'

On debates such as the National Fire Ant Eradication Program, this standard seems to have categorically been failed.

However, the ABC Charter covers itself by stating that 'balance' in every single program or story is unnecessary and that, instead, it must be achieved over time.

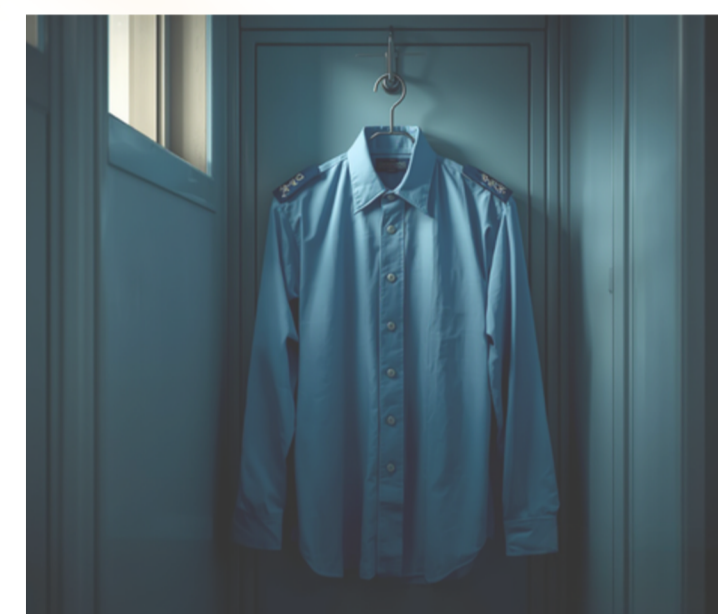
Currently ABC coverage of the Israel-Palestine war is under the microscope.

Data scientist Richard Bean studied the the ABC's coverage on ABC Radio National Breakfast and discovered Israeli guests were featured 92 times on the program while Palestinian guests featured 40 times in a sample of over 450 interviews.

Despite this, the ABC is now being condemned for failing the Jewish people after the recent events at Bondi Beach.

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Inside the QPS exodus



QUEENSLAND Police Service (QPS) faces a staffing crisis that no recruitment campaign can disguise.

If the exodus continues, the cost won't just be measured in empty desks - it will be measured in the safety and security Queenslanders can no longer take for granted.

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Invasives Fight Running Blind

BY Rob Mellett

PROFESSOR David Lindenmayer, a world-leading expert in forest ecology, conservation science, and biodiversity management speaks **EXCLUSIVELY** to The Australian Advocate.

Professor Lindenmayer, delivers a stark warning: Australia is fighting invasive pests with inadequate monitoring, poor long-term planning, and limited accountability.

Despite vast spending on eradication programs targeting everything from fire ants to feral predators, he says science is too often sidelined - and critical ecological impacts go unmeasured.

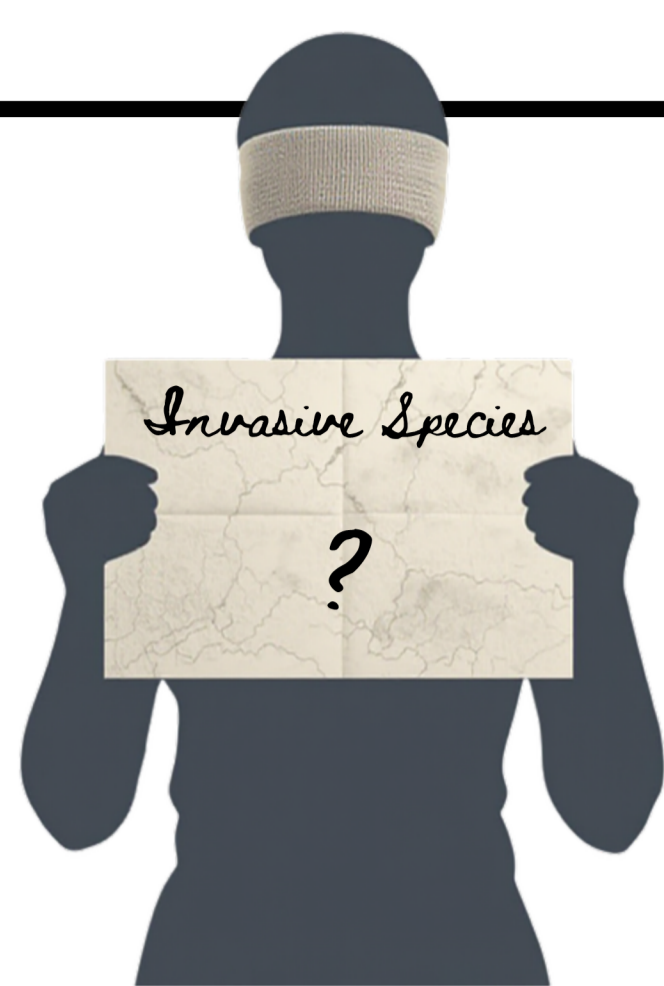
From broad-scale poisoning to delayed interventions, Professor Lindenmayer

argues many programs are reactive, poorly evaluated, and risk unintended harm to native wildlife. His concerns are echoed by other leading ecologists, who warn that weak oversight allows small invasions to become national crises.

As governments defend major pest programs and promise tighter controls, this investigation asks a confronting question:

Is Australia managing invasive species - or running blind?

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Professor: Invasives Fight Running Blind



by ROB MELLETT

IN AUSTRALIA'S long, expensive battle against invasive species, few voices are more authoritative than Professor David Lindenmayer.

A world-leading expert in forest ecology, conservation science, and biodiversity management, Professor Lindenmayer runs five large-scale, long-term research programs spanning farmland, wood production forests, plantations, and nature reserves. He has published more than 1,400 scientific works, including nearly 950 peer-reviewed papers and 49 books. Yet he warns that in Australia, science is being sidelined in the fight against invasive species.

In an exclusive interview with the Australian Advocate, Professor Lindenmayer paints a bleak picture of how billions of taxpayer dollars are being spent with very little monitoring of the effects of pesticides on native species or the success of eradication programs. He said the lack of robust evaluation is a national policy crisis.

Professor Lindenmayer said a critical concern is how the billions of dollars spent on pest management are allocated.

'A lot of money is spent – and control is essential – but often the problem is not well thought through nor well monitored – and in some cases sustained control does not occur – so gains made in the past are not sustained and the problem returns', he said.

He warned that broad-scale poisoning efforts, which can trigger trophic cascades or

shifts in predator-prey balance, are rarely planned with sufficient foresight. 'These effects are not anticipated, but should be', he said.

Australia operates one of the world's most extensive invasive species management frameworks, combining national and state delivery, Indigenous ranger programs, and targeted eradication campaigns. These programs address vertebrate pests, invertebrate threats, and invasive plants, including feral deer, pigs, cats, foxes, rabbits, and wild dogs. The government claims invasive species cost the economy an estimated \$24.5 billion annually, with cumulative losses over decades approaching \$390 billion.'

The Invasive Species Council reports that Australia now has more than 2,700 invasive alien plant species, with the total increasing by around 20 new species each year. Of these, around 267 species have documented impacts on threatened species or ecological communities, including 207 plants, 57 animals, and three pathogens.

Between 2021-22 and 2024-25, the Australian Government committed \$49.1 million through the Supporting Communities Manage Pest Animals and Weeds Program, with a further \$11 million announced in the 2025-26 Budget.

The Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program is the country's largest single biosecurity response, with about \$593 million committed from 2023 to 2027.

Tropical Fire Ant Eradication projects in Queensland and the Northern Territory include high-profile initiatives such as Yellow Crazy Ant management, with prior federal funding of around \$25 million. Oxitec and gene-technology trials target species such as fall armyworm

and tiger mosquitoes, operating through private-public partnerships with CSIRO and international collaborators.

Despite these programs, Professor Lindenmayer stresses a disturbing paradox. 'Often the pest programs are simply harvesting the doomed surplus – and they are too late – the best and most cost-effective and ecologically effective control is when the problem is small – e.g., fire ants – when it is a problem then it's too late', he said.

He added that the problems are not due to the idea of eradication itself: 'Key issues are poor understanding on the invasive species, not well constructed control efforts and then very poor monitoring on the effectiveness or otherwise of the intervention', he said.

Long-term monitoring, a cornerstone of adaptive environmental management, is widely acknowledged as lacking in Australia.

'The record of long-term monitoring in the environment in this country is woeful', Professor David Lindenmayer said.

'There should be a national long-term monitoring centre – it would support field programs with good design and a rigorous protocol for monitoring interventions and insistence that data is collected and properly analysed and reported.'

Department of Primary Industries Minister Tony Perrett's reply last month to a petition calling for a review of the National Fire Ant Eradication Program (NFAEP) directly reflects the deficiencies in invasive species programs.

Minister Perrett admitted that 'the review [into the NFAEP] and two other independent reports noted that mismanagement of the

program contributed to the spread of fire ants', and stated that 'since the change of government, eradication is now being closely monitored.'

He confirmed that 'the program has also adopted post-treatment monitoring', identifying post-treatment monitoring as a new measure. Read together, these statements confirm that for much of the program's operation there was no systematic, long-term or post-treatment monitoring, and no verified records demonstrating whether eradication treatments were successful – precisely the type of 'woeful' monitoring failure described by Professor Lindenmayer.

Professor Chris Dickman, Emeritus Professor in Ecology at the University of Sydney and co-director of the Desert Ecology Research Group, echoes Professor Lindenmayer's concerns, particularly about early intervention. 'It's always easier in the very early stages of an invasion to take out an invader over a small area. Once it gets away, it's increasingly hard – and it may well be too late', he said.

Australia's pest management programs rely on some of the most toxic pesticides in the world, many of which are restricted or banned overseas.

Western Australia's Western Shield program uses aerial dispersal of 1080 poison baits over millions of hectares in a battle against foxes and feral cats.

'One of the world's most successful broad-scale programs involves dropping tonnes of 1080 by aircraft every year', Professor Dickman said.

The program is said to have reduced fox densities by up to 80 percent in some areas. Sodium fluoroacetate (1080) disrupts cellular metabolism, has no antidote, and is banned



or severely restricted in the U.S., Europe, and other developed countries.

Parliamentary inquiry reports have documented 1080's indiscriminate nature, including non-target deaths in quolls and raptors.

Para-aminopropiophenone (PAPP) is used in targeted baits for foxes and wild dogs and has no registered equivalent use outside Australia or New Zealand.

First- and second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs), used for rodent control, remain legal in Australia despite being banned or restricted in the U.S., Canada, and the EU due to secondary poisoning risks to wildlife.

In the fight against red imported fire ants, insect growth regulators and fast-acting insecticides are used, including Hydramethylnon and Fipronil. Fipronil is banned in more than two thirds of EU countries and Vietnam because of its toxicity to pollinators and environmental persistence.

For Professor Lindenmayer, the issue is not whether Australia should fight invasive species, but whether it is prepared to do so with its eyes open. Without rigorous long-term monitoring, independent evaluation, and transparency about ecological costs, he warns the nation will continue to spend billions reacting to crises rather than preventing them.



Anthony (Tony) Perrett MP
Minister for Primary Industries

CONTINUED FROM
FRONT PAGE...

ABC DRAGGED OVER COALS FOR BIAS

by ROB MELLETT

Victoria Teplitsky, whose father was shot in the attack, explicitly called out the ABC on air for what she said was its biased coverage: 'ABC, I've got to say, will you cut out the biased reporting ... will you cut it out? Will you let us have a voice?'

She said ABC coverage was contributing to hostility toward Jewish Australians

Meanwhile, Liberal Senator Sarah Henderson publicly condemned comments made by ABC global affairs editor Laura Tingle, which she saw as evidence of bias.

'That one of the ABC's most senior journalists says this murderous terrorist attack 'has nothing to do with religion' demonstrates a shocking lack of judgment ... The ABC has a statutory obligation to disseminate news and information impartially and accurately', she said.

Dr Denis Muller – a veteran newspaper journalist, visiting fellow at the University of Melbourne, and media ethics scholar – argues that declining

trust in media such as the ABC is not new but has now been exacerbated by structural weaknesses.

'Some elements of the media ... have politicised their reporting to a degree that has no precedent in my experience. Structural issues, rather than editorial philosophy, have the greatest impact on trust,' he said.

He said that editorial failures, even unintentional ones, carried serious consequences in a highly polarised environment.

'Every editorial error has the potential to erode public trust in the media, and the current polarised political climate makes the situation worse because it is readily supposed that errors are made deliberately in order to advance some media agenda', Dr Muller said.

'The best the media can do in the face of this is to reassert three longstanding editorial principles: the separation of news from opinion, the application of the elements of impartiality to news reporting,

and the verification of facts prior to publication.

'This requires stronger editorial leadership than we generally see at the moment, and more resources put into the editing side of media, as opposed to the news-gathering side' (Muller 2023).

He said the Russell coverage was an example of weakened editorial processes: 'The Russell case arose from poor editing. The inadequate reporting that led to it would have been headed off by good editing.'

'More generally, resources have a lot to do with it, and that's related to structure. I don't think today's journalists, as a group, are any less ethical or competent than those of my time.'

Dr Muller criticised the broader accountability framework for media in Australia.

'The system of media accountability in Australia is fragmented and ineffectual and that is certainly part of the reason why trust in media is low – and not just trust in legacy media', he said.

Despite these challenges, he said the ABC remains 'by far the most trusted sources of news, and has been forever.'

'Trust in social media as a source of news is lower still, according to the Edelman Trust Index.'

For Australians, the question is no longer simply whether ABC reporting is accurate, but whether the broadcaster will aim for a fair, balanced, and impartial voice in a society divided over politics, science, and public policy.

But perhaps Roger Taylor, on the online forum ABC Friends Victoria, makes an important point when he noted that the drive for clicks and shares seems to be taking a precedence over straight news reporting.

'My concern is that the ABC



has become increasingly pressured to avoid issues that conflict with government thinking ... to become a mouthpiece for government. ... Instead of focusing on matters of importance in a way that encourages meaningful discussion ... the response increasingly is to pursue programs which distract people with useless information, trivia, sporting events, cultural and other controversies and outrageous events that keep people emotionally engaged and intellectually disengaged.'

Fluoridated faith: How weak science and vested interests sold mass medication

Submitted by Fluoride Free Australia with the Permission of Dr Mark Diesendorf

COMMUNITY water fluoridation (CWF) has been promoted for over 70 years as a public health measure to reduce tooth decay in children. However, critics argue that its benefits are overstated, its risks insufficiently examined, and its ethical foundations deeply flawed.

Fluoride is added to drinking water not to improve water safety, like chlorination, but to medicate the population. This raises unresolved ethical issues around consent and dosage control. While fluoride concentration is regulated, individual exposure varies widely depending on water consumption, meaning outdoor workers, athletes, and people with certain health conditions may receive significantly higher doses.

CWF is practiced in only a small minority of countries, including Australia, the United States, New Zealand, Canada, Ireland and Singapore. Most of

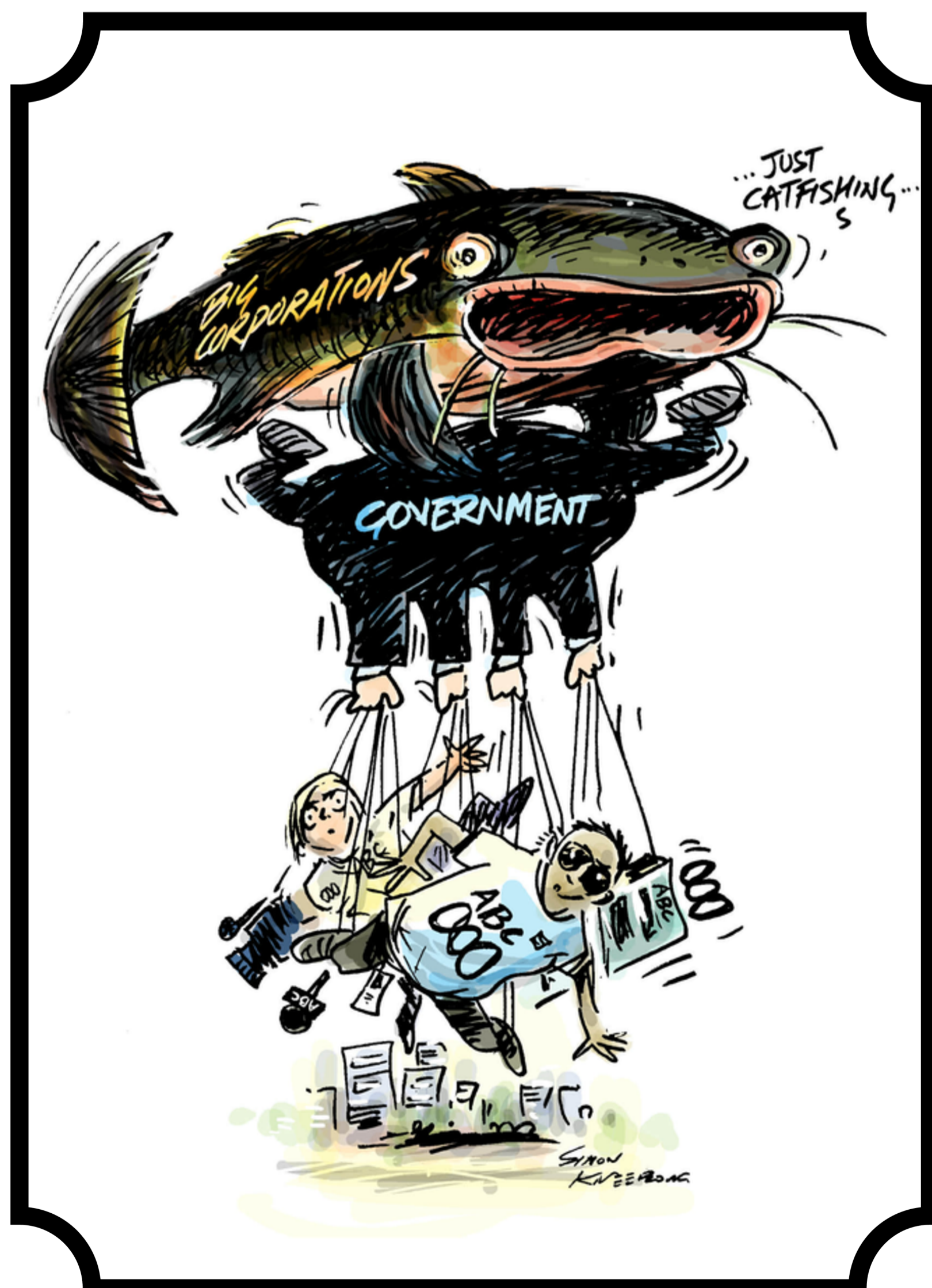
Continental Europe has never adopted or has abandoned fluoridation, often citing Ethical concerns and uncertainties about long-term health effects. Notably, Nobel Prize-winning pharmacologist Dr Arvid Carlsson opposed CWF due to the lack of dosage control and potential neurotoxicity.

Despite decades of promotion, CWF has never been supported by a double-blind randomised controlled trial. The most recent Cochrane Review found only weak and uncertain evidence of benefit, suggesting that fluoridated water may slightly reduce decay in children's baby teeth but offering no clear evidence of benefit for permanent teeth. Earlier studies claiming large benefits have been criticised for poor design and reporting, with similar declines in tooth decay observed in both fluoridated and non-fluoridated regions during the same period.

Research supporting CWF has been influenced by vested interests. Early studies were funded by the aluminium industry, which had incentives to reframe fluoride pollution as beneficial. More recently, the sugar industry has supported fluoridation as a way to deflect attention from the role of diet in tooth decay.

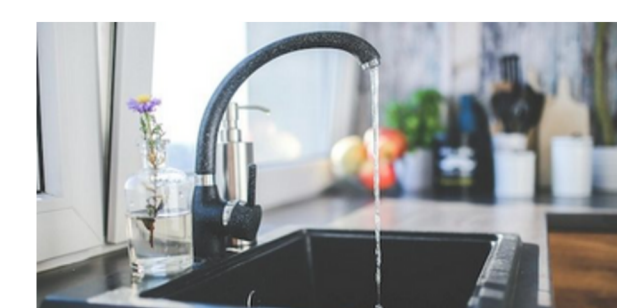
Evidence of harm is mounting. While no randomised trials have examined adverse effects, numerous studies associate chronic fluoride ingestion with skeletal fluorosis and reduced IQ in children. Reviews by Harvard researchers and the US National Toxicology Program report consistent links between fluoride exposure and lower childhood intelligence.

Critics conclude that fluoridation offers no proven systemic benefit, may cause harm to vulnerable groups, violates medical ethics, and persists largely due to political inertia and industry influence rather than robust science.



Read Mark Diesendorf's full report at www.independentaustralia.net/life/health

FLUORIDE FREE AUSTRALIA
For better health
www.fluoridefreeaustralia.org



Danish Cattle Crisis Reveals Flaws in Fast-Tracked Climate Drug Approval

BY Don Want Phd

Summary of an article 'Bovaer (3-Nitrooxypropanol): Regulatory Failure and Incomplete Scientific Understanding' at environmentalhealtheffects.substack.com

Hundreds of farms report health issues after the methane-reducing feed additive mandate exposes regulatory failures.

When Denmark mandated a methane-reducing feed additive for dairy cattle in January 2025, the government promised a major climate breakthrough. By October, more than 350 farms were reporting cattle deaths, declines in milk production, and reproductive failures. The crisis has revealed serious flaws in the regulatory approval process for Bovaer®—a pharmaceutical compound now used in more than 70 countries, including Australia, where it was approved without sufficient safety testing.

Wildly Inconsistent Results

Bovaer® (3-nitrooxypropanol) works by

inhibiting a specific enzyme in the digestive systems of cows to reduce methane emissions. However, research shows that its effectiveness varies greatly depending on the diet, ranging from a 7% reduction in grass-fed cattle to 40-50% in grain-fed operations. Despite this 500-700% variation, regulators approved a standard dose for all production systems.

'I know personally dozens of farmers who have had serious problems with their cows after introducing Bovaer', Danish farmer Andreas Ring told investigators. Within two days of stopping Bovaer®, his herd's health markers improved by 20%. The pattern was clear: issues were concentrated in pasture-based farms feeding high-fibre diets—precisely where research showed minimal efficacy.

Critical Safety Gaps

Animal studies showed that Bovaer® metabolites accumulated in bone marrow, with concentrations doubling with repeated dosing. Yet regulatory assessments lasted only five days, despite cattle potentially receiving daily doses for years.

More concerning, researchers couldn't identify all compounds in animal tissues. The European Food Safety Authority acknowledged that in liver tissue, 'a mixture of putative metabolites was present, making it impossible to elucidate their structure.' Translation: they don't know what chemicals are accumulating in organs.

No long-term studies have examined the effects of consuming products from

treated cattle. Regulators claimed the compound is 'fully metabolised', but this depends on detection limits rather than a confirmed absence. Trace amounts below the 5 microgram per kilogram threshold could be present but undetected.

Attacking Complexity with Simplicity

The cow's rumen hosts one of Earth's most complex microbial ecosystems. Traditional methods can culture only 10-20% of rumen bacterial species. Modern genomic techniques have identified more than 4,941 previously unknown microbial genomes and 69,000 enzymes, 90% of which are entirely novel. This doesn't mean that how they all work together, however.

Targeting a single enzyme in

this barely-understood system exemplifies 'reductionist innovation'—applying narrow fixes to complex biology based on incomplete knowledge. Rumen microbes influence not just digestion but also immune function, metabolism, and gene expression throughout the animal.

Misplaced Priorities

The regulatory push for Bovaer® rests on claims that livestock account for 14.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Yet this masks crucial distinctions. Unlike methane from fossil-fuel reservoirs, cattle methane comes from recently grown plants. This biogenic methane oxidises to CO₂ within 10-12 years and gets reabsorbed—a cyclical process fundamentally different from burning ancient carbon.

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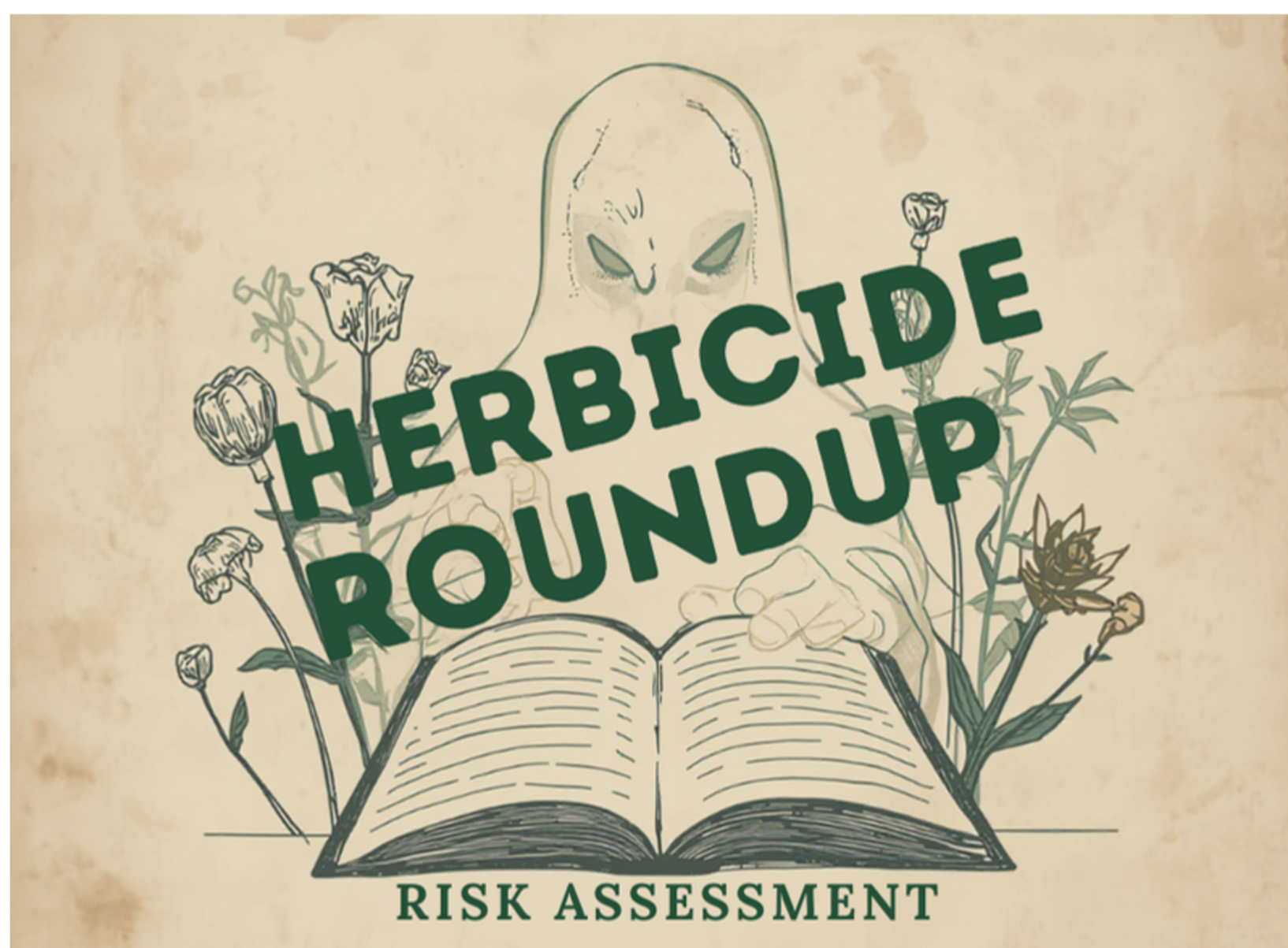
GHOSTWRITTEN SCIENCE - GLYPHOSATE IN THE DOCK

by ROB MELLETT

WHEN the scientific journal Regulatory Toxicology and Pharmacology formally retracted a 25-year-old paper long cited as a cornerstone of glyphosate safety science, it exposed a startling truth: Monsanto employees had ghost-written substantial portions of the study.

Titled Safety Evaluation and Risk Assessment of the Herbicide Roundup and Its Active Ingredient, Glyphosate, for Humans, the 2000 paper concluded that glyphosate-based herbicides posed no cancer, reproductive, or endocrine risks to humans – a conclusion now rendered invalid.

The authors received undisclosed payments yet failed to report conflicts of interest. Regulatory Toxicology and Pharmacology (RTP) editor Martin van den Berg cited 'serious ethical concerns regarding the independence and accountability of the authors ... and the academic integrity of the carcinogenicity studies presented', concluding that retraction was necessary 'to maintain the integrity of the journal.'



For decades, the paper was seen as providing regulatory confidence in glyphosate worldwide. Agencies from the US Environmental Protection Agency to the European Union cited it when approving and reauthorising glyphosate-based products.

In Australia, environmental advocacy group GeneEthics is now calling for urgent action. Director Bob Phelps highlighted that over 500 glyphosate formulations are registered nationally, many containing co-formulants whose safety has never been fully assessed.

'The repeated defence by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) of glyphosate's safety, without a very searching public re-assessment of all the evidence, is more political and economic than scientific', he said.

'The APVMA rejected the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) Group 2A classification of glyphosate as "probably carcinogenic to humans" in 2015, though it was accepted elsewhere. They also discounted the hard evidence

discovered in US class actions that led to around 100,000 non-Hodgkin lymphoma cancer case settlements and several hundreds of million dollars of awards in courts, confirmed on appeal. Market signals, such as zero-tolerance for glyphosate residues in several grain exports, plus the bans and restrictions on glyphosate use in many countries and regional states, must also be counted against its safety.'

The timing of the retraction coincides with independent research challenging glyphosate's safety. A landmark study by the Ramazzini Institute, published in June 2025, exposed Sprague-Dawley rats to glyphosate and two commercial glyphosate-based herbicides from prenatal development through their full lifespan.

Even at doses corresponding to the European Acceptable Daily Intake (ADI), researchers observed dose-related increases in benign and malignant tumours, early-onset cancers, and elevated mortality.

Systematic reviews from 2023-2025 identified multiple mechanisms by which glyphosate could affect human health, including endocrine disruption, reproductive and hormonal disturbances, kidney system damage, and lymphomagenesis pathways.

The European Parliament has cited the 2025 Ramazzini study in questions regarding glyphosate approval under EU pesticide law.

GeneEthics argues that Australia cannot rely on decades-old, corporate-backed studies.

'The APVMA must expedite thorough public chemical reviews, especially of chemicals on the priority list since 1994 but still widely in use here but banned in many other countries', Mr Phelps said.



Inside the QPS exodus

by ROB MELLETT

QUEENSLAND Police Service (QPS) faces a staffing crisis that no recruitment campaign can disguise.

Since 2020, an estimated 2,800 to 2,900 sworn officers have left the force, documented across audits, internal reviews, and media reports. Even aggressive recruitment campaigns, including international drives, have failed to offset departures: over five years, the net gain is only about 450 officers.

In 2022–23, 685 officers departed, while only 483 were



sworn in, shrinking the frontline as demand rose. Last financial year, 709 officers exited – the highest in five years.

The 2025 QPS Commissioner's 100-Day Review explicitly found officers are 'stretched',

'fatigued' and 'suffering burnout'. It noted 'significant mission creep', with officers tasked with non-core policing duties such as mental-health callouts, prisoner transport, child-welfare work, and domestic-violence disputes.

The review, along with a Queensland Audit Office audit, found QPS workforce planning weak, unable to reliably forecast staffing needs. Exit data is incomplete: about 20% of departing officers do not complete surveys, and most responses cite vague 'personal reasons'. Free-text comments exist for only 15% of voluntary resignations and often lack specificity. Supervisors have no formal method to record why staff leave.

Attrition among Australian police is also high and rising. Police Federation of Australia (PFA) figures show that in 2022–23: QPS: 5.6% (up from 3.8%); NSW Police: 8.09%; WA Police: 8.3%; NT Police: 8.6%; Victoria: 5.2%; SA: 5.5%; Tasmania: 5.0%; Australian Federal Police: 6.4%.

NSW provides the clearest picture of the problems: in 2023–24, 1,484 officers left, including 769 medical separations – largely for psychological injury – and

575 resignations. Surveys show 31% report 'unfavourable levels of workplace stress', and 45% feel 'burnt out by their work.' About 20% of officers were unavailable for duty due to vacancies or long-term sick leave.

Former officers, speaking anonymously to the Advocate, described a darker reality. One retired senior officer with 40 years of service said: 'The main reason so many coppers are leaving ... they simply cannot do the work they were motivated to join the police to do. At least 80 to 90% of their time is doing everything other than police work ... police aren't social workers.'

Fear of complaints and disciplinary action, he said, was corroding morale: 'Officers soon find out it is not the job they thought it was. I didn't want to be treated like a criminal every time I spoke to someone on the street.'

'Stress is an accumulative thing – like if you've got a good horse and don't clean its manure, it builds up bit by bit. Eventually, it's a useless horse. That's the same as trauma – it builds up.'

'Professional curiosity used to be one of the most useful tools a copper could develop ... today, if you act on that curiosity, you could almost

bet it's going to cost you something. So you end up just coasting along, and doing no more.'

'Most coppers, once they get near the role of Senior Sergeant or Inspector, the last thing they want is to be out on the road ... because it might mean they have to do some police work, or they might get complaints, and that will stop them getting promoted.'

A second former officer, who served 16 years, described a toxic workplace: 'There are definitely cultural issues ... massive, a lot wrong. So many people are unhappy. It is a very toxic workplace.'

'Officers are exhausted ... compassion fatigue and job fatigue is huge. For QPS to be still losing officers – there's obviously something very wrong.'

She warned staffing shortages would be more severe than publicly acknowledged: 'Fourteen hundred officers short would be the bare minimum. There are stations that cannot cover their core shifts. One officer might drive 40km to pick up another – then they try to cover two districts. Everyone is fatigued.'

Police Minister Dan Purdie defended the government's



Dan Purdie
Minister for Police and
Emergency Services

Unplanned attrition 'is now at its lowest level in three years...'

efforts. He told the Advocate: 'We have sworn in 1,077 additional frontline police officers and 476 more have completed training. Under Labor, police were leaving in droves with unplanned attrition soaring to 3.3%. It is now at its lowest level in three years, falling to 2.8 per cent.'

The Bondi Beach terror attack has underscored the pressures facing police forces.

Acting President of the Police Association of New South Wales Ian Allwood said the force was being stretched to the limits as officers took on increasing roles.

'We are being stretched, worrying about road tolls, meeting the demands of protests every weekend, we just can't be everywhere... You can't expect to have police officers on every corner, we are stretched to breaking point', he said.

He also pointed to the psychological impact of the Bondi events on active and former officers, saying the 'events would contribute to rising cases of PTSD among emergency responders.'

Open letter from QPU President to the people of Queensland

SOURCE: www.qpu.asn.au



An open letter from the QPU President to the people of Queensland

Drop the 'service' we are the Queensland Police

Monday October 6, 2025

QPS management can no longer hide from the fact their own direction of the organisation is flawed and failing to deliver for Queenslanders.

The senior ranks have forgotten what it's like to be on the frontline or they've spent so much time shuffling paper they don't know what's required to be done by first responders in 2025.

The Police Service Annual Report reinforces there's a widespread failure of leadership, direction and planning in the Executive circle. Most of those sitting at the table are more focussed on their own career ambitions than core policing and the well-being of first responders.

The Working for Queensland results indicated 33% of police who have resigned from the QPS had done so primarily due to their belief, the senior leadership was of poor quality.

Even the Police Commissioner in the same survey didn't argue with the sentiments. His response to the data was honest "Our employees do not have confidence in me and my cohort. They need better systems, better resources, more support. That comes back on me."

Despite this truthful evaluation nothing has been done to improve systems and resources for the police answering an extra 66,000 calls for assistance this year.

Instead, this week the QPS announced another organisational restructure. It's not immediate reform and again failing to deliver meaningful action.

This crisis is not caused by the Constables, Senior Constables, Detectives, Sergeants and Senior Sergeants who risk their lives every day.

Police are not only doing their own core tasks of policing but we've been forced to fill the gaps left by every other government departments because we are the only ones picking up the calls for help every hour of the day. It's why we've become known as a police 'service'.

Constantly, police are sent to transport mental health patients instead of patrolling the streets.

Police sit for hours in hospital corridors guarding prisoners instead of patrolling the streets.

Police babysit Corrective Services prisoners and youth offenders in watchhouses instead of patrolling the streets.

Detectives with unique investigative skills are regularly reassigned from complex inquiries into criminal activity to prop up rosters elsewhere on the frontline.

There can never be an excuse for a victim of crime to hear an offender isn't being arrested because detectives have been redirected due to a manager wanting to reach their own performance targets.

This is not policing. Every wasted hour is an hour stolen from the community we swore to protect.

Police often go 'over and above' to assist victims of crime and to make them feel safe. I seriously doubt an online survey that delivers a bunch of sterile stats that claim police do not treat people fairly. Any keyboard warrior can make up their own version of facts and sway this type of data. I'd like to know how many of the survey contributors have actually had any interaction with police.

Police are often working in sub-standard stations across the State, some of them I doubt would be allowed to be occupied under current council building codes. While politicians work in what could be considered five-star amenities, most police accommodation is regarded as 'half star'.

Officer stress is compounded by not having police vehicles that are 'fit for purpose' for the operational environment because policy is sidestepped and the views of the frontline experts are ignored.

Queensland deserves an efficient and effective Policing structure not a diluted "service" bogged down in bureaucracy.

At the 2025 QPU Conference our membership voted to advocate for a name change to delete the word service. Let's make it simple, if you need Queensland Police you call the Queensland Police.

I'm confident rebranding to Queensland Police would be straightforward and clear.

The Government could also make good on their promises around law and order to immediately:

1. Deliver a name change, establishing the title Queensland Police.
2. Direct the Police Commissioner not to divert detectives from major cases to fulfill targets and quotas for senior managers.
3. Fund mental health intervention, emergency housing, and social services to minimise police having to step in as the only service provider 24hours a day.
4. Continue with robust recruiting and incentives to increase frontline numbers, deploying officers to communities where Queenslanders need them most.
5. Immediately invest in building new police facilities and liveable accommodation for police in rural and remote areas.
6. Amend the *Human Rights Act* to make victims' rights more important than those of criminals.

The QPU can see no barrier to immediate action on these items. The evidence is clear without more time wasted on reviews and restructures.

The Thin Blue Line is fraying not because of the men and women who wear the uniform, but because of a decade of betrayal from senior officers.

Police take great pride in helping the people of Queensland when they need assistance or in upholding the laws. It's only fair they are supported with the resources needed and a management team focussed on the frontline.

It is time to give policing back to the police and safety back to the people.

Shane Prior
QPU General President
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APVMA: REGULATOR OR INDUSTRY HANDMAIDEN

by ROB MELLETT

THE Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) regulates the chemicals that affect the nation's food, water, and environment.

Glyphosate in vineyards, fipronil in baits for invasive species, and paraquat on farms – the agency oversees them all. Yet beneath the administrative veneer, critics continue to question whether the APVMA is too close to the very chemical industry it is meant to police.

Bob Phelps, founder of the non-profit advocacy group GeneEthics, has long sounded the alarm. 'Public regulators, relying on cost recovery from the corporations whose products they assess and approve, have their independence and credibility compromised. Those who pay the piper call the tune', he stated in a 2018 submission to a Senate inquiry.

Mr Phelps has described the APVMA's funding model as 'legalised corruption', arguing that the agency's financial survival depends on keeping chemical companies satisfied.

He is particularly critical of the APVMA's adverse experience reporting system (AERP), which is intended to flag harmful outcomes from chemical use.

'Now the AERP is more like a pressure valve than a real early-warning system resulting in action', he told The Australian Advocate.

'In practice it has become an ineffectual regulatory

cul-de-sac. The APVMA's default position appears to protect existing approvals rather than treating AERP reports as red flags for action. Many chemicals slated for priority review for decades remain in widespread use today. Most have never been reviewed using up-to-date toxicology and other evidence or the modern testing methods developed in the 21st century.'

'The AERP receives thousands of adverse event reports each year, but outcomes are rarely made public. Re-approval triggers for long-used chemicals were cancelled in 2014, leaving the public largely in the dark about the continued safety of products they encounter daily.'

'Glyphosate, the world's most widely used herbicide, exemplifies the problem', Mr Phelps argues. He contends the APVMA ignores international scientific consensus – including the International Agency for Research on Cancer's (IARC) 2015 classification of glyphosate as 'probably carcinogenic to humans' – while quietly accepting unpublished, industry-supplied studies.

'Glyphosate-based herbicides contributed around \$1.5 million per year to the APVMA's then \$35 million budget', Mr Phelps said.

He warns that 'reduced scrutiny for cumulative and synergistic hazards... inevitably pushes borderline cases into "low-risk" channels', creating a regulatory system that appears to protect industry

at the expense of public safety.

Nearly all of the APVMA's funding comes from the industry it regulates. In 2022–23, fees linked to chemical sales accounted for more than 95 percent of the agency's \$47.2 million budget, according to the APVMA's annual report.

Mr Phelps has repeatedly called for arm's-length funding through the Federal Treasury, arguing that around \$50 million a year would be a small price to pay for credible oversight of chemicals affecting the entire population.

A 2023 Clayton Utz strategic review of the APVMA, commissioned by Minister for Agriculture Senator Murray Watt, corroborated many of these concerns, identifying 'serious allegations of poor governance, poor workplace culture and poor leadership.'

While the review stopped short of accusing the agency of direct corruption, it confirmed structural vulnerabilities that could facilitate regulatory capture. The APVMA's board chair and chief executive resigned following the assessment, with findings pointing out the agency had prioritised registration timeframes over monitoring and compliance, adopting an approach to regulation that 'appears to align with industry interests.'

Mr Phelps remains critical of the APVMA's approach to scientific evidence, which he says creates a tacit invitation for ghostwritten studies. He

argues that industry-submitted research – often unpublished and un-peer-reviewed – frequently forms the basis of chemical safety assessments.

'The bigger indictment is that the regulator still does not routinely commission independent studies or require peer-reviewed corroboration of industry data', he said.

The stakes of such practices were underscored recently, when a Monsanto-ghostwritten glyphosate study was formally retracted by the journal Regulatory Toxicology and Pharmacology.

Not all experts view the APVMA as compromised. Adelaide University molecular pharmacologist Dr Ian Musgrave argues that fees simply recover 'the not inconsiderable costs of processing these applications.'

'There is no incentive to give roadworthy passes just because a fee was paid', he said.

Dr Musgrave points to regulatory interventions – such as restrictions on dimethoate in blueberries – as evidence that the APVMA prioritises public safety. He also argues that simply detecting trace pesticide residues does not, in itself, indicate regulatory failure, noting that environmental monitoring responsibilities often sit with other agencies, including those reporting under the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan and local government pest management programs.

However, without independent oversight and transparent funding, Mr Phelps argues Australians cannot be fully confident that the chemicals they encounter every day are safe.

He believes the problems are more insidious and harder to police: a regulator structurally dependent on the industry it oversees, insulated from meaningful external scrutiny, and inclined by design to prioritise speed and commercial certainty over precaution and masking a deeper alignment of industry interests.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Responses to December Article LIMITED & DEFINED

In my opinion, we would be better off following the federal constitution instead of state as the states are making up their own rules and so called mandates which aren't even laws without our consent.

Such as the stupid masks and the sign in covid app to enter a store. That was Queensland overreach. Not to mention at present, strangers being able to enter your property without your consent to spread poison for an ant you don't even have.

At least under federal law they need your consent. So I'm sticking with federal law on that one.

Helen

That's all very well but of course the Constitution is not recognised in the court system as it's a corporation and so are all the governments and their 'departments' and the so called elected 'politicians' – supposedly our 'representatives' – are just employees of the corporations whose job it is to do as the corporation demands for its profit or agenda.

None of those entities are working for the people who constitute the Constitution. It is all the colour of law in a bad painting.

Armanda

WANT TO HAVE YOUR SAY?



Email the Editor at
The Australian Advocate

media@aagpilot.com



UNDER THE GOVERNMENT'S HEEL

BY Dr Ann Tennae PhD

next election cycle, pending evaluations, cost-benefit analyses, and a strategic policy alignment review. Naturally.

Energy Bills Surge While Paperwork Reaches Catastrophic Levels

Winter arrived early and was harsh. Ant colonies that once stayed warm underground are now shivering under leaves, huddling for survival because the cost of heating tunnels has climbed so high it now requires two grants and an accountant. Attempts at alternative heating have not gone well. Matchstick fibre fires were abandoned after someone triggered an 'Ant Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating.' Solar magnifying-glass heating was discontinued after several small fires and one ant receiving a spontaneous tan. Even rubbing our little legs together proved ineffective – although it was excellent for morale.

In response to widespread freezing, the government proudly launched an Energy Rebate for Small Creatures – a scheme so convoluted it may be the first program in history requiring a law degree just to apply. Applicants must provide proof of nest address (difficult when your tunnel collapses every few days), three forms of identification (tricky when everyone looks identical), twelve months of power bills (which is awkward, since nobody has power), and a statutory declaration from a frog. If approved, usually sometime between 2030 and 2042, ants receive a rebate worth about the energy contained in one atom of sugar. The spokesperson shoe beams proudly, insisting, 'We believe this will make a meaningful difference.' Yes – to the frostbite industry.

Housing Crisis: Ants Displaced By Red Tape, Approvals and Investors With Too Many Tunnels

Nothing illustrates government dysfunction quite like the housing crisis. The colony's historic leaf – home to twelve generations – was recently reclassified by human authorities as 'Boutique Micro-Living Habitat: High Investment Potential.' Within hours, rents doubled, bonds

quadrupled and eviction notices fell like confetti at a politician's press conference. Ants scrambled for alternative shelter, but the government's long-promised 'affordable tunnel plan' remains trapped behind a fortress of red tape. Before a single tunnel can be dug, officials demand environmental assessments, airflow modelling, soil-impact reports, underground traffic-flow simulations, consultations with nearby beetles, and a strategic review of the last strategic review. Estimated completion date: not in your lifetime, nor your children's, and possibly never.

Meanwhile, private investors – mostly beetles with more properties than morals – advertise new tunnel apartments 'starting from just three sugar grains per week', with no insulation, no privacy and no refunds. Ants are now living eighty per tunnel in spaces designed for ten. Ventilation is minimal. Rent increases occur hourly. The termites upstairs host parties every night. Yet the government spokesperson shoe assures us, 'We're committed to solving this. A new advisory committee has been formed.' That, frankly, is what we're afraid of.

Final Thoughts

After attending every meeting, every announcement, every bureaucratic spectacle and every staged photo-op involving a shovel that was never actually used, one thing is abundantly clear: the cost-of-living crisis isn't happening by accident. It's being administratively assisted. Food costs are up, energy bills are up, rents are exploding, and the proposed solutions are slow, tangled, or entirely imaginary.

As an ant, I'm used to surviving floods, predators, and the occasional backyard toddler with a destructive streak. But nothing compares to the danger of being managed by bureaucracy. We may be tiny, but we see everything – especially government footprints. And so I, Dr Ann Tennae, will continue reporting from ground level, where the policies hit first, the crumbs shrink fastest, and the ants have just about had enough.

ONE NATION, ONE LAW

BY Senator Malcom Roberts

SENATOR Watt has circulated an edited version of my exchange with the Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia, which omits a large part of the discussion



Senator Malcolm Roberts

I asked the new Islamophobia Envoy about a report he delivered to the Government a few months ago which, in One Nation's view, whitewashed Islamic terrorism and Sharia Law, while advocating for the suppression of criticism under the guise of stamping out Islamophobia.

We have seen how this same approach in the UK has resulted in 65 Sharia law courts and the development of a parallel society between

Islamic and Christian citizens – where criticism of Christianity is permitted, but criticism of Islam is not.

The Envoy lectures on Sharia Law at the University of Technology, so he should be well aware of its provisions and its incompatibility with Australian and Western civilisation.

One Nation will oppose Sharia Law and the development of parallel societies within Australia.

AUSTRALIA'S cost-of-living crisis hasn't just hit families, businesses and communities – it has trickled right down to the smallest creatures in the nation and I have identified that the real culprit isn't mysterious global trends but something far more familiar: layers of government policy so thick the ants are now tunnelling through paperwork instead of soil.

The colony's emergency meeting is held inside an upside-down bottlecap – our equivalent of Parliament House, just more functional. On the table sits a single sugar grain, the last of the colony's rapidly diminishing supplies. It is supposed to feed 400 ants, though it barely counts as a snack for one. Towering over us is a giant, well-polished government shoe – the official spokesperson – proudly declaring, 'Everything is under control.' Under control? The only thing under that shoe is us.

Crumblation Gets Worse While Government Announces Committees About The Problem

New figures from the Crumblation Index – the ant community's main measure of economic pain – show food prices rising so fast you can watch them increase in real time, like a parking meter that's overdosed on caffeine. Sugar grains have tripled in cost; bread crumbs now trade like fine jewellery; and honey has become a luxury investment product. While ants scramble for anything edible, the government responded in the most predictable way possible – by forming a committee, then a sub-committee to oversee the committee, then a working group to coordinate between the committees. Their progress so far consists of agreeing to meet again next month to discuss why nothing has happened.

To 'ease pressure', the government unveiled a Sugar Relief Package consisting of a single additional sugar grain for the entire colony. Delivery is scheduled for some time

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LNP win has minor parties pointing fingers

by ROB MELLETT

THE recent Hinchinbrook by-election results delivered a rare win for a sitting government and highlighted yet further fractures in Queensland's conservative minor-party landscape.

LNP candidate Wayde Chiesa won the north Queensland seat with 41.2% of the primary vote, ultimately securing 53.7% of the two-candidate-preferred (TCP) count, boosted by One Nation's decision to direct its 13.5% primary vote to the Liberals. Katter's Australian Party (KAP), which had held the seat since 2017, crashed to 30.1% primary and 46.3% TCP.

The swing of about 17% to the LNP marks the first time since 1998 that a state government has bucked the by-election hoodoo to win back a seat.

Former LNP senator and now People First Party leader Gerard Rennick told The Australian Advocate that One Nation's decision to

prefer the LNP proved the party could not be relied on.

He accused One Nation leader Pauline Hanson of prioritising media stunts over building a sustainable party.

'The key takeaway from Hinchinbrook is that you cannot trust One Nation', Mr Rennick said.

'They talk out of both sides of their mouth – slagging off the LNP one day and then preferencing them the next. At least Katter's party has consistently fought for things patriotic Australians believe in.'

He said he now hopes the Nationals will split from the Liberals, calling the prospect '50/50', and believed it could occur if Senator Matt Canavan became leader.

One Nation rejected Mr Rennick's criticism of the Hinchinbrook result, saying the preference for the LNP

over KAP reflected the KAP candidate's historical ties to Labor rather than a hidden agenda.

A party spokesman said: 'While One Nation virtually tripled its primary vote at the Hinchinbrook by-election, we have not blamed any other party for the fact we did not win the seat. That responsibility is on our party, not anyone else.'

'One Nation does not control or direct the preferences of voters; we can only make recommendations. Our recommendation that voters preference the LNP candidate over others was, to all appearances, an important factor in the LNP's win.'

'That we did not recommend a second preference vote for the KAP candidate was entirely due to his strong links and history with Labor.'

'There was no other factor in the decision. One Nation did



LNP Wayde Chiesa - Photo Credit heraldsun.com.au

not pre-select the KAP candidate for Hinchinbrook; that was entirely the KAP's responsibility, and so is the failure of their campaign.'

Political analyst Professor John Cole, Emeritus Professor at the University of Southern Queensland, said minor-party unity remains unlikely, a view backed by media reports in Cairns that claimed talks to merge KAP and One Nation collapsed because Senator Hanson would agree to a deal only if she remained in control.

'One Nation is primarily a protest vehicle,' Professor Cole said.

'Nick Dametto's departure as the local MP was central ... KAP's best candidate went off and became mayor of



Townsville. People voted LNP because they see in David Crisafulli someone more serious about roads, hospitals and power prices. There's no consistent record of deals between the conservatives and One Nation. One Nation attracts people – often men over 50 – who feel left behind. Pauline is their lightning rod, and she's not going anywhere.'

While Hinchinbrook highlighted minor-party tensions locally, One Nation continues to build momentum nationally. The party recorded its highest-ever national support in a December Guardian poll, hitting 17% primary vote following Senator Hanson's burqa stunt in Parliament and Barnaby Joyce's defection to One Nation in his New England electorate. One Nation's strongest demographic remains voters aged 55 and over (21%), followed by 35–54-year-olds (19%), with only 10% support among 18–34-year-olds.

EDITORIAL: Who Decides Who is 'Fit and Proper'?

'FIT and proper person.'

It's a phrase that carries enormous power in Australia. It decides who can hold a licence, who can work with vulnerable people, who can run a business, who can enforce the law, and who can exercise government authority. It can open doors or shut lives down. And yet, for a test that affects so many Australians, it is one of the least understood and least scrutinised powers in our legal system.

There is no single definition of a fit and proper person. Courts describe it as a mix of honesty, integrity, judgment, competence and public trust. Regulators describe it as a 'risk test'. Bureaucrats call it a 'suitability assessment'. In some cases, you don't even need a conviction to fail it. You don't need evidence tested in court. You don't need a judicial finding. An allegation, a concern, or 'adverse information' can be enough to exclude someone from entire professions and industries.

This is where the public should pay attention.

Over the past decade, governments have quietly expanded the reach of fit-and-proper tests. Blue Cards, NDIS Worker Screening, Aged Care Screening, Weapons licences, ASIC and APRA director tests, Teacher registration, Disability and biosecurity officers. Anyone who interacts with vulnerable people or handles public power is now subject to a murky, subjective process that can label them unfit, often without a court ever examining the facts.

Government departments are run by unelected officials – often career public servants whose tenure can span decades. These life-time employees wield enormous power over ordinary Australians, yet they operate with minimal accountability. They can, without justification or meaningful right of reply, refuse to engage with you. Sometimes this happens simply because you question their process, challenge their direction, or highlight that their decisions contravene your human rights.

All too often, departmental power is exercised behind the

cover of 'Cabinet in Confidence'. Decisions affecting entire communities are made in secret. Evidence is withheld. Conflicts of interest, corporate influence, and reliance on incomplete or industry-funded research – what might be called 'undone science' – are hidden from public scrutiny. Ordinary citizens face finalised decisions with minimal explanation, avenues for meaningful recourse are narrow, slow, or complex, and the communities affected are effectively rail-roaded by the process.

Meanwhile, the public has no equivalent power to check whether 'the people who enforce the law' are themselves fit and proper. Public servants, inspectors, authorities and compliance officers operate under codes of conduct, but members of the public cannot request a 'character check' on the people exercising coercive powers over them. At best, we can lodge a complaint and hope an internal unit or the CCC chooses to investigate.

When a government worker



fails the test, the consequences are often hidden. When a member of the public fails it, the consequences can be life-changing.

This double standard is becoming harder to ignore.

We have built an administrative system where everyday Australians can be excluded from work, licences and opportunity without a judge ever hearing the evidence, yet the public must jump through hoops to even question misconduct by those in power. The Queensland Human Rights Act requires decision-makers to act lawfully, fairly and proportionately, but many people subjected to fit-and-proper assessments never feel those rights reflected in the process.

The problem here is not that we have standards. Society needs standards. Vulnerable people deserve safety. The public deserves competent and trustworthy officials.

The problem is 'accountability'. Who watches the watchers? Who decides whether the decision-makers are fit and proper? And why do ordinary Australians go through more scrutiny than the authorities who wield power over them?

'Fit and proper' should protect the public, not become a quiet mechanism for excluding people without transparency. It is time to shine a light on how this test works, who applies it, how fair it is, and whether those enforcing it meet the same standard they demand of everyone else – including their use of secrecy, undisclosed conflicts, and 'undone science' in decisions that can railroad entire communities.

If we are serious about integrity, fairness and human rights in this country, the fit-and-proper test must apply equally – from the top down, not just the bottom up.



Foundation Helps Bereaved Parents Navigate Grief

by ROB MELLETT

STILLBIRTH affects more than 2,000 Australian families every year, yet the support services available are inconsistent and fragmented.

Sarah and Kaliym discovered this gap after their daughter, Elizabeth Rose, was stillborn at 41 weeks in December 2021. As they dealt with their grief, they realised that couples grieving had almost no specialised support in Queensland.

‘Suddenly we had to walk an unexpected and profound grief journey,’ Sarah said. ‘And we quickly learnt we were not alone. More than 2,000 Australian families will experience a stillbirth in any given year, which represents a profound and harrowing loss with lifelong impacts for those affected.’

As a psychologist specialising in relationship therapy, Sarah said she became aware of a systemic gap. ‘I knew the Medicare Better Access Scheme doesn’t cover couples therapy’, she said. ‘I’ve seen how powerful effective therapy can be at bringing couples together. The more we researched it, the more we realised there was no couples therapy available for grieving parents in Queensland.’

The turning point came on Bereaved Mother’s Day in 2022, during a High Tea with other bereaved mothers. Sarah said: ‘Mother after mother told me the same thing – they wanted support that helped them grieve together with their partner.’ By coincidence, she sat next to a bereaved mother who worked

for Red Nose, Australia’s leading stillbirth and infant-loss support organisation. While Red Nose offers individual therapy and peer-based support, it does not provide couples therapy.

‘She told me there was a strong demand for it’, Sarah said. ‘That validated what I was hearing directly from parents.’

Discussions with the Phoebe Joan Foundation, Mater Mothers’ Hospital, Stillbirth Foundation Australia, Precious Wings, and The Pink Elephants Support Network confirmed the gap.

Realising the urgency, Sarah and Kaliym founded the Elizabeth Rose Foundation, a donor-funded program that offers specialised couples therapy for parents after stillbirth or infant loss – the first of its kind in Queensland.

From the start, the foundation’s design has been deliberate. Clinicians must be trained in evidence-based approaches such as emotionally focused therapy, have grief expertise, and demonstrate sensitivity to diverse needs.

‘In Australia, stillbirth disproportionately affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and rural communities’, Sarah said. ‘It’s essential that our services are designed with those parents, not imposed on them.’

The foundation works with First Nations parents to ensure culturally safe care. Telehealth is also offered to reduce barriers for rural

‘Suddenly we had to walk an unexpected and profound grief journey,’ Sarah

www.elizabethrosefoundation.org

families, who are more likely to experience stillbirth and less likely to access specialised grief support.

Seven in every 1,000 babies delivered in Australia are stillborn, but in rural and remote communities, the rate rises to 12 per 1,000, and among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, it reaches 11 per 1,000. ‘We recognise the need to be mindful about how we deliver services’, Sarah said. ‘We want to create campaigns specifically designed to support rural communities and work with clinicians already operating in those areas.’

The foundation also considers other vulnerable groups, including immigrants, refugees, teen parents, and families for whom English is not a first language. ‘For us to offer a quality service across the state in a culturally and linguistically diverse way, we need further funds’, Sarah said. ‘One of our core values is delivering a high-quality service because that leads to longer-term outcomes for bereaved parents. We would rather provide something

smaller and consistent than spread ourselves too thin.’

A key catalyst for the foundation’s creation was the alarming statistic that one in three couples who experience the loss of a child may see their relationship end. ‘It’s a complicated area, but the risk is real’, Sarah said. ‘Grief affects partners differently. Without support, the relationship can suffer at the very moment it needs strength.’

To ensure couples receive meaningful support, the foundation uses a structured intake and monitoring system. Couples are carefully matched with clinicians, and ‘touch points’ occur throughout therapy to check client-therapist fit, assess relationship progress, and find whether outcomes are being achieved. With consent, the data collected may contribute to research, helping improve therapy practices for grieving parents.

‘We believe in continual improvement processes’, Sarah said. ‘Collecting, analysing, and reviewing data helps us understand client

needs and effective treatment methods. We plan to communicate that transparently to clients.’

She said collaboration with other organisations is central to the foundation’s model. ‘We’ve had informal conversations with Mater Mothers Hospital, Red Nose, and several other grief-support organisations’, Sarah said. ‘They’ve helped us think about operational aspects, how to combine that with clinical practices, and how we can inter-refer couples to ensure they are fully supported.’

Despite being largely volunteer-run, demand now exceeds the foundation’s capacity. ‘Grief doesn’t discriminate’, Sarah said. ‘We want to get to a point where we don’t have waitlists, where we can expand beyond Queensland, and where every couple who loses a child can access help before their relationship reaches breaking point.’

The foundation also prioritises transparency and ethical governance. Sarah explained: ‘We focus on being an administrative, regulatory funding body rather than a direct provider of services. Couples choose their therapist, service levels are clearly stated, and feedback pathways are built in to address complaints or conflicts.’

Looking ahead, Sarah hopes for a broader cultural change around grief. ‘We’d like to see more acknowledgment that this is a significant issue’, she said. ‘If we don’t support parents properly, the long-term impact on families – and on the health system – is enormous’, she said.

‘Ultimately, our vision is that no couple should lose their relationship after losing their child’, she said.



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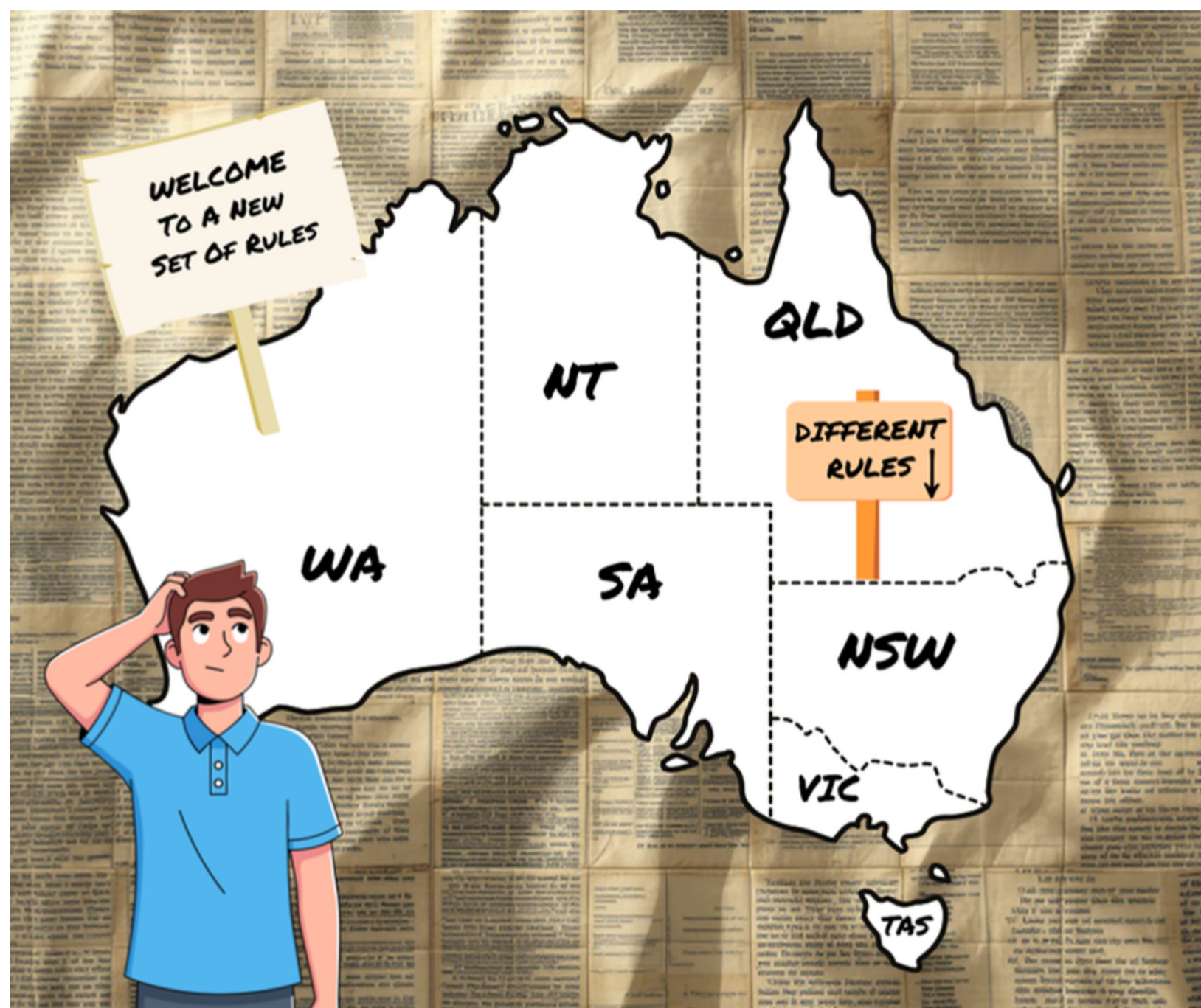
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NAVIGATING AUSTRALIA'S LEGAL PATCHWORK

by ROB MELLETT



AUSTRALIA is one nation – but its laws often tell a very different story. From teenagers' rights to public health rules, criminal laws, and transport regulations, crossing a state border can feel like entering a new country. For citizens and businesses, the inconsistency can be costly and confusing.

Take, for example, the age of sexual consent. In most states and territories, including the ACT, New South Wales, the Northern Territory, Queensland, Victoria, and Western Australia, the legal age is 16. South Australia and Tasmania, however, set it at 17. According to the Australian Institute of Family Studies, definitions of what constitutes sexual activity vary across jurisdictions, meaning the same behaviour can be treated very differently depending on where it occurs.

Public health regulations show a similar fragmentation. Smoking bans in vehicles with minors differ sharply: in the ACT, NSW, NT, Queensland, and South Australia, the ban applies when children under 16 are present; in Western Australia, under 17; in Victoria and Tasmania, under 18. Fines range from around \$110 to \$750.

Meanwhile, the ACT allows civil penalties for small amounts of cannabis while South Australia fines possession of up to 100 grams, and the Northern Territory allows civil penalties for up to 50 grams. Queensland, Victoria, and Tasmania treat

possession as a criminal offence, though police may issue cautions for minor amounts. Differences extend to cultivation, supply, and paraphernalia, reflecting a fragmented approach to both public health and criminal law.

Queensland's Jack's Law highlights how state-specific rules can affect everyday life. Introduced to empower police to detect weapons without a warrant, the law allows hand-held metal detectors in licensed venues, transport hubs, shopping centres, sporting and entertainment venues, and safe night precincts. Expanded in 2025, it removed sunset provisions, broadened police authority, and introduced annual reporting. Unique to Queensland, it has not been adopted elsewhere.

When the world went into lockdown from 2020–22, state and territory governments took markedly different approaches.

Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania, and the Northern Territory at times closed borders entirely or imposed strict entry conditions, including permits, health declarations, and quarantine. New South Wales generally kept borders open with more flexible rules. Lockdowns and mask mandates were also inconsistent: Victoria imposed some of the longest, strictest restrictions in the world, including nighttime curfews in Melbourne, while Queensland and other states favoured

shorter, targeted interventions.

Testing and quarantine requirements for travellers varied as well, meaning residents could face completely different obligations simply by crossing a border.

For industries that operate nationally, such as transport, legal fragmentation has profound practical consequences. Heavy vehicle regulation illustrates the challenge. The Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL) was designed to create a single framework covering vehicle standards, fatigue management, mass and dimension limits, and registration.

Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania, and the ACT have adopted or modified the HVNL locally. Western Australia and the Northern Territory maintain their own regulatory systems. Even among adopting states, local amendments and derogations mean operators face different rules depending on where they are.

Under the Constitution, the Commonwealth has limited power over roads – railways for naval purposes being a rare exception. National economies and transport corridors operate under shared jurisdiction, but core laws like heavy vehicle regulation, police powers, and criminal offences remain primarily state-controlled. Even the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) has limited authority; it can make recommendations, but the states ultimately hold the reins.

For industries and citizens operating across borders, this creates a constant tension. National consistency is desirable for commerce, safety, and fairness, yet state sovereignty ensures that local conditions and priorities can lead to differing regulations. For truck drivers, this balancing act is often felt in concrete ways: fines, extra permits, and hours of idle time while navigating different rules.

Veteran independent truck operators such as Steve Smith said the different rules are a costly headache: 'We've got a multi-billion-dollar bureaucracy called a national regulator, but after 10 years it's still not national. We were promised a one-stop shop and one rulebook. What we got is 10 times the paperwork and none of the consistency. Crossing borders remains challenging.'

He said paying for national registration often leaves him facing additional fees or different rules in other states. Fatigue laws, intended to improve safety, often create unnecessary hardship. 'If fatigue is so serious, why can you buy extra hours with accreditation? You shouldn't be able to pay your way out of tiredness', he said.

'Everyone I know is giving themselves five years in the business', Mr Smith warned. 'If fatigue fines hit \$20,000, that'll finish most of us.'

He said the system often favours large companies. 'Big operators just buy a piece of paper that lets them run 30-metre trucks while I get pinged for 26.5 metres. The system pushes the little guys out and hands the road to the corporates.'

'Load limits, permit requirements, and access rules vary between states. Northern Territory doesn't have any logbook regulations; WA has totally different ones... it's just a bloody dog's breakfast.'

Mr Wilkie noted the personal toll as well. 'I've been an owner-driver for 51 years. I still enjoy the work, but the fun has gone out of it; I wonder if my health issues are caused by the stress of complying with all these regulations.'

Former One Nation candidate and sovereignty advocate Natalie Davis said the dual layers of government acted as a safeguard: 'The Federal Government needs to stop creating governmental departments for areas that they have no jurisdiction over – it's a massive waste of tax-paying funding. The boundaries of responsibility

need to be clarified and the overlap removed.'

She argued Section 92 of the Constitution, which guarantees free interstate travel, is being ignored. 'The NHVR national rego fee is not only unlawful, it is also unconstitutional. There should be no registration fee for travel right around our nation', she said.

Ms Davis highlighted the historical limits on federal authority: 'Australia's states have always held responsibility over their roads, their police, energy supply and their education systems. However, that hasn't stopped the Federal Government from trying to get into these spaces. They can use "discretionary funds" or one-off grants like carrots.'

'Groups like the NHVR make out that they are a "national" regulator, and are funded by the very people they decide to regulate, but the reality is that they have no real authority, because the states still hold the authority – WA has shown that clearly. My take on the NHVR is that while they can be a stakeholder representing the interests of the trucking industry, they actually have no constitutional authority to do what they are doing.'

Australia's patchwork of laws is the product of history, constitutional design, and the balance of power between federal and state governments but for teenagers navigating consent laws, to smokers, to cannabis users, to truck drivers hauling goods across the continent, it can be bewildering and costly to navigate the maze of rules that often feel like they belong to entirely different nations.



CONTINUED FROM page 4

Danish Cattle Crisis Reveals Flaws in Fast-Track Climate Drug Approval

BY Don Want PhD

Summary of an article 'Bovaer (3-Nitrooxypropanol): Regulatory Failure and Incomplete Scientific Understanding' at environmentalhealtheffects.substack.com



During the Late Pleistocene, megafauna produced 5-6 times more methane than current livestock. Mesozoic dinosaurs generated an estimated 520 million tonnes of methane annually—comparable to today's total global methane emissions. These high levels occurred during glacial periods 5-6°C colder than today.

Meanwhile, satellite data identified 1,200 'ultra-emitter' fossil fuel events in 2019-2020, each releasing at least 25 tonnes of methane per hour. A single Algerian oil field plume stretched 200 kilometres and persisted for days. These facilities receive minimal oversight while farmers face pharmaceutical mandates.

Natural Solutions Ignored

Methanotrophic bacteria in healthy grassland soils oxidise 50-90% of biological methane. Modern industrial agriculture has degraded these populations through chemical inputs, soil compaction, and monoculture. Agricultural soils now exhibit methane uptake rates seven times lower than those in native grasslands.

Well-managed regenerative grazing can sequester 3-13 tonnes of soil carbon per hectare annually—potentially offsetting methane emissions. Instead of restoring natural processes, regulators approved a pharmaceutical solution targeting symptoms while ignoring causes.

The Carbon Credit Factor

Bovaer®'s approval occurred amid significant economic incentives. The USDA awarded more than US\$90 million in fiscal year 2023 for dairy methane-reduction projects. Distributors project returns of 'US\$20 or more per cow' through carbon markets—a potential US\$188 million annual U.S. market.

Recent scandals raise red flags. Federal prosecutors charged CQC Impact Investors with fraud for obtaining millions of invalid carbon credits. Investigations found 94% of major rainforest

offset credits were 'phantom credits.' The voluntary carbon market value dropped 61% in 2023 following these revelations.

Only 18 U.S. universities and six USDA research stations can accurately measure livestock methane emissions. Carbon credit protocols don't account for Bovaer®'s diet-dependent efficacy, risking over-crediting when compounds achieve minimal reductions.

International Response

Norway's largest milk supplier suspended its Bovaer® rollout following the Danish crisis. The UK's Arla Foods ended trials early. Denmark's Veterinary Administration now allows farmers to immediately exempt cattle if they suspect health problems—effectively acknowledging the severity of reported issues.

Veterinarian Tina Bennedsgaard noted affected farms were 'mainly pasture-based operations'—confirming concerns about applying feedlot study data to different production systems.

Reform Needed

The Bovaer® approval represents systemic failure. Agencies relied on short-term studies conducted in controlled environments that used grain-rich diets supplemented with undisclosed antibiotics. They approved a universal application despite tenfold variations in efficacy. They accepted incomplete metabolite characterisation and waived pharmaceutical safety requirements by classifying Bovaer® as a feed additive, despite the FDA acknowledging it acts pharmacologically.

Until reforms are implemented, a moratorium on 'enforcement discretion' waivers for pharmaceutical compounds is warranted. Products with climate benefits should be subject to stricter oversight, not to reduced requirements. The burden of proof belongs with manufacturers and regulators to demonstrate safety across all conditions—not with farmers to prove harm after widespread adoption.

The Danish crisis demonstrates what happens when economic incentives and approval timelines override thorough assessment of complex biological systems. The precautionary principle demands caution.

Read the full compelling article on Substack at [environmentalhealtheffects](https://environmentalhealtheffects.substack.com)

Bovaer® - Australian Farming: What's Actually Happening

IN Australia, Bovaer® has been approved for use and has been trialled in the beef sector, including limited commercial supply chains associated with carbon-neutral beef programs. Industry bodies such as Meat & Livestock Australia have reported methane reductions and, in some cases, production efficiencies during feedlot trials. However, uptake remains restricted, largely due to cost, logistics and the requirement for precise daily dosing. It is not widely used across the broader beef industry.

Importantly, Bovaer® is not currently being used in Australian dairy farming. Australian Dairy Farmers have publicly stated in December

2024 that Bovaer® has not been used on Australian dairy farms. This distinction is significant, as dairy systems involve different feeding practices, regulatory scrutiny and consumer expectations compared with beef feedlots.

The Australian Government has stated it does not intend to mandate methane-reducing feed additives such as Bovaer®. Any future use remains a commercial decision for producers and supply chains, shaped by market demand, costs, certification requirements and public acceptance.

As Australia grapples with climate targets, agricultural sustainability and food integrity, Bovaer® has become a symbol of a larger debate: how environmental goals are pursued, who bears the burden of change, and how much say consumers and farmers have in the process.

For now, the facts are straightforward. Bovaer® is approved, used in limited beef contexts, not used in dairy, and remains the subject of ongoing scrutiny and discussion.

Coles Group - Media Release 15 November 2023

COLES is expanding the use of the methane reducing feed supplement Bovaer, following two successful trials which found the innovative product reduced cattle methane emissions by at least 50%.

Approved for use by European Food Safety Authority and available in more than 50 countries, Bovaer will now play a role in Coles' strategy to reduce emissions throughout its supply chain, with three Coles Finest Carbon Neutral Beef

suppliers using the supplement, thanks to a new partnership with global nutrition and health company dsm-firmenich.

Coles commenced the use of Bovaer in 2022 when it participated in trials with one of the country's leading feedlots Mort and Co, University of New England and the manufacturer of Bovaer, dsm-firmenich.

Coles Livestock Sustainability & Innovation Manager Maria Crawford says the trial results gave the retailer the knowledge and confidence to expand the use of Bovaer as an emissions reduction initiative.

'We were very encouraged by the results of our Bovaer trials and have used the findings to introduce the supplement to some of our beef suppliers to help them lower emissions on farm and help to reduce our Scope 3 emissions', said Maria.

'We're looking forward to expanding the use of this innovative supplement to more of our Coles Finest certified carbon neutral beef suppliers and continuing the important research to help support the beef industry's aspiration of carbon neutrality by 2030 as well as Coles' sustainability ambitions', Maria added.

The use of Bovaer builds on the industry-leading Coles Finest certified carbon neutral beef range which launched in April 2022 and is now available in all stores nationally. More recently the range expanded with the release of Coles Finest certified carbon neutral pork. These beef and pork products are certified carbon neutral from farm to shelf in accordance with the Australian Government's Climate Active Carbon Neutral Standard.



PHOTO: Coles Group - Coles Associated Feedlot

PEACE OR WAR - ARE WE LOSING THE ABILITY TO TALK?

by PASTOR MATTHEW LALOR

IN the aftermath of the horrific events at Bondi, Australians are once again asking difficult questions about safety, extremism, and how we respond to hatred without becoming hateful ourselves.

At least those are the conversations many are holding behind closed doors, yet in the public forum these conversations are considered controversial. Our own prime minister appears to be leading the way by refusing to put the words 'Radical Islam' together in the same sentence.

Recently, an image circulated of a man holding a sign that read, 'We are sick of terrorism and those who support it.' As police approached him, he was asked to put away the sign, with concerns raised that the sign constituted hate speech. Yet beneath the eye catching headline was another line that deserved attention:

'Let's have a conversation.'

That phrase exposes a deeper concern in our national moment. Are we losing the ability to have civil conversations? And if so, what is driving that loss?

One of the dangers surrounding censorship and expanding hate-speech laws is the unresolved question of who defines hate. Is it speech that is genuinely hateful, or speech that some people hate to hear? When difficult or unpopular opinions are silenced rather than debated, society risks replacing dialogue with force, and persuasion with coercion.

Civil conversations do not break down merely because people disagree. They break down when individuals lose their peace and allow anger, fear, or moral superiority to take its place. When peace is lost internally, conflict is often imposed externally.

Rather than becoming increasingly committed to silencing opposing voices through judgment, legislation, or intimidation, perhaps there is a better way—one that requires courage, restraint, and a willingness to listen.

Many claim that Islam is a religion of peace while simultaneously enforcing silence through fear, punishment, or violence.

Last year I met a man in Sydney who had recently immigrated to Australia from the middle east. He and his brother had left their Muslim faith and become Christian. Sadly his brother Matthew was murdered for deserting his faith before he was able to leave their nation.

History shows that peace enforced by threat is not peace at all—it is submission. A society without dissent may appear calm, but it is often calm because voices have been crushed rather than heard.

Christianity, at its core, operates in a fundamentally different spirit. True Christianity is not afraid of questions, disagreement, or debate. It does not advance its claims through violence or coercion. Instead, it invites conversation, appeals to conscience, and calls individuals to enter into a supernatural peace with God. This is truly a transformation of the heart rather than a submission to a set of rules.

This was demonstrated powerfully when a woman was brought before Jesus, caught

Instead, he posed a question that pierced the heart of the matter: 'Let the one who is without sin cast the first stone.' One by one, the accusers walked away, confronted by their own guilt. The woman was spared—not by denial of truth, but by the triumph of mercy. Peace came not through punishment, but through grace.

That is the peace the Christian gospel proclaims. It is not peace achieved through war, intimidation, or censorship, but peace experienced through reconciliation motivated by love.

As a pastor, I do not seek to incite violence. I want peace, and I want safe neighbourhoods. But lasting peace cannot be achieved by suppressing speech or escalating force. There is another way—through Christ, who confronted the deepest sources of violence and hatred and overcame them, earning the title Prince of Peace.

To experience the peace of God, one must first make peace with God. From there, individuals can become agents of calm and clarity in turbulent times.

I was reminded of this recently while driving to church. An angry group was



in the act of adultery. Her accusers correctly cited the law, which demanded her death. They asked Jesus for His verdict, believing they had trapped Him to enact judgement rather than show mercy.

Jesus did not silence them by force. He did not deny the law.

chasing someone across the road while a woman lay hysterical in the gutter. I pulled over. As the group moved on, I approached her and simply asked if I could pray. Within moments, the screaming stopped. Tears replaced chaos. The gentleness of God's presence brought peace where force never could.



Pastor Matthew and Louise Lalor

By taking the war within to the Lord, we discover His way—peace through mercy, not judgment; through conversation, not coercion; through transformation, not terror.

In humility we can recognise that all people are not that different, we've all missed it and messed up. When we have the courage to bring that mess to God, he doesn't rain down judgement on us, but gives us mercy and peace through Jesus Christ.

Micah 6:8 He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

My prayer for you is that you will be able attain the peace of God.

From this day forth may no one be able to disturb your peace because the source of your peace is connected to the peace of God within.



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Scott Hansen -APVMA CEO

INSIDE THE BILLION-DOLLAR KPI KILL ZONE

by ROB MELLETT

WHEN Samford Valley's Dawson Creek was polluted by a blanket of chemical fire ant bait in 2024, the vital waterway for wildlife suffered huge ecological damage. Growing numbers of Queensland residents say the pollution of the creek is just one example of many of the environmental tragedies playing out in Southeast Queensland because of the chemicals being used in the government fight against the invasive pest, red imported fire ants. Online posts report sick and dying animals on recently treated properties and of a Gold Coast vet treating a spate of sick dogs for liver toxicity.

One Nation Senator Malcolm Roberts told last December's Senate Estimates hearing that he had visited Dawson Creek in the Samford Valley, northwest of Brisbane, and seen photos of the environmental damage. He demanded answers as to why this was allowed to happen: 'The administering authority ... admitted to disastrously polluting [this] significant waterway... killing extensive native water, reptile and insect species. The material safety data sheet for pyriproxyfen states that the formulation is for R&D use only. It has a rating of "H410 Very toxic to aquatic life with long lasting effects" and "P273 Avoid release to the environment". Section 13 says "Do not contaminate water, food, or feed by storage or disposal and do not discharge to sewer system." The APVMA is most certainly aware of this, and ... for 25 years, it [has] permitted these chemicals to be used.'

His testimony before key players on the National Fire Ant Eradication Program's (NFAEP) billion-dollar initiative has highlighted once again how the fight against the invasive pest appears to have become a KPI-at-all-costs juggernaut.

Senator Roberts showed how public health, environmental safety, and human rights have been effectively sidelined to achieve fire ant eradication.

The NFAEP 2024-25 Work

Plan talks of 'Strategic Objectives' such as achieving '99 percent confidence' in destroying infestations and maintaining 'less than 2 percent gaps' in planned treatment. In a recent response to a parliamentary petition, the Queensland Government framed total coverage as a 'non-negotiable objective', stating that eradication targets take precedence over landholder objections.

However, this '100 percent solution' is being viewed as a statistical fantasy by an increasing number of critics. The program's reliance on Insect Growth Regulators (IGRs) is treated as a silver bullet by the NFAEP, yet historical data – such as the Vanderwoude (2004) report – illustrates that IGR efficacy is limited; even after multiple treatments, control rates often fail to reach 100 percent. When the NFAEP reports 'successful treatment' as a KPI, it is often measuring effort (hectares baited) rather than outcome (ants eradicated).

Senator Roberts last month challenged Scott Hansen, CEO of the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA), over breaches in the broadscale use of pyriproxyfen (Permit PER87728) in areas without ants. Mr Hansen acknowledged: 'The prophylactic use of that chemical is not available under that permit.'

The same pattern emerged with S-methoprene (Permit PER90213). When asked why the program applied the chemical where no ants existed, Mr Hansen admitted: 'That sounds as though it's in breach of the permit conditions and should be raised with the Queensland government with regard to control of use.' Mr Hansen admitted his department had not monitored compliance with permits.

Mr Hansen admitted toxicology and environmental assessment of the chemicals relied on international studies and there had not been

Australia-specific environmental impact research.

When Senator Roberts later asked Assistant Minister for Regional Affairs, Anthony Chisholm, why the program continued its same failed strategy year after year, the reply was telling: 'You might want to give up, but that's not what we will do.'

There was no mention at Estimates of independent environmental monitoring, human health follow-ups, ecological recovery, or a reduction in actual infestation spread over time. For the NFAEP it appears not treating an area is harder to justify than treating it while blanket application looks decisive and proactive. Deviating from the plan risks missing numerical targets and slowing down to reassess efficacy threatens funding continuity.

The program authorises officers to enter private property 'without consent.' If a landowner denies entry – citing medical vulnerabilities or organic certification – Biosecurity Queensland escalates the matter using the Queensland Police Service to secure access. Senator Roberts described these tactics as 'forcing their way on to properties unlawfully, causing fear and distress... terrifying crying children.'

Justine Saunders, Acting Secretary for the Federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), repeatedly deflected accountability when questioned by Senator Roberts. When asked if a medical certificate for respiratory illness constituted a 'reasonable excuse' to obstruct spraying, she replied: 'I'm not prepared to comment.' Regarding the department's financial oversight, she added: 'We are not accountable or responsible for the issues you've raised', despite the Federal Government providing 50 percent of the program's funding.

The lack of accountability extends to internal oversight.

Senator Matt Canavan last year grilled officials on the status of the Tranche Review – a critical assessment of the program's efficacy. Despite assurances the review would be public by December 2025, January 2026 has arrived with no sign of the report. This delay prevents scrutiny of whether funding is achieving results or simply sustaining a hands-off approach to bureaucratic spending on a system reliant on a dated approach to controlling the spread of fire ants.

John McDonald, Director of Research, Development, and Extension (RDE) and Biosecurity for Greenlife Industry Australia, made this point when he told a senate inquiry last year that the NFAEP's red imported fire ant response appeared based on information from the 'United States 50 to 70 years ago', citing an 'overemphasis on old systems and technologies.'

Likewise, Ken Cunliffe, Managing Director of AgEtal, an agricultural testing laboratory, who developed a technique for detecting synthetic RIFA DNA, testified that he was 'denied access to RIFA samples by the NFAEP.' He eventually sourced fire ant samples privately to prove his technology worked. His testimony showed the government was slowing down innovation by blocking private-sector researchers. Richard Shannon, a former manager within the fire ant program, echoed this, describing the program as 'too clandestine to date.'

This country currently lacks specific RIFA venom or sting treatments, despite this expertise being available domestically. 'Australia has the expertise for developing an innovative immunotherapy', a joint submission from Allergy and Anaphylaxis Australia noted, yet the program still relies on chemical suppression rather than medical or biological advancements.

Professor Nigel Andrew of Southern Cross University agreed when he said while the US uses biological controls like fungus and phorid flies, Australia remains trapped in a 'chemical-only' loop because the NFAEP has not invested in the necessary entomological research.

Beyond a lack of innovation,

the program's use of GMO-linked ingredients has also sparked controversy. In May 2024, then-NFAEP General Manager Graeme Dudgeon confirmed that the program's bait carrier is corn grit sourced from Cargill, a major global supplier of Genetically Modified products.

Documents later obtained by the now defunct Ipswich Tribune revealed how former Agriculture Minister Mark Furner had also conceded in September 2024 that the bait contained GMO soybean oil.

For an organic farmer, a single grain of GMO corn grit on their soil can trigger the loss of international export certification.

Despite this, the NFAEP continued broadcasting the product for another year before later acknowledging that the corn grit itself was genetically modified. The news rocked Australia's \$3 billion organic sector. Jake Holzheimer of the Producers Fire Ant Action Group warned that 'GMO contamination may have compromised soils, crops, and certifications, leading to financial ruin.'

Furthermore, the NFAEP has challenged the use of 'Pre-Certification' under the Australian Organic and Biodynamic Standard (AS6000:2015). Officials wrongly interpreted the status to mean 'not yet certified', using this linguistic gap to ignore established protections for farmers in the audited transition phase.

The testimony at Estimates suggests a troubling reality: that funding remains unconditional even when permits are breached and waterways contaminated. Senator Roberts showed through his questions that no accountability trigger exists and funding is effectively unconditional. Government representatives continue to maintain that the program has slowed the spread of fire ants compared with overseas experience; however, no publicly released data has been produced to substantiate this claim.

As the billion-dollar program marches into 2026, the question remains: is the government eradicating fire ants or destroying the very environment it claims to protect?