

Lord Howe Island Rodent Consultation

Community Survey Feedback Report

Client:
Lord Howe Island Board

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1 Community Survey Feedback

1.1 Overview

A total of 212 respondents participated in the community survey in relation to the Lord Howe Island Rodent Consultation. This demonstrates a high level of participation – representing 71% of people listed on the Lord Howe Island Electoral Roll.¹

Of all respondents, 208 completed the survey by the advertised closing time. Results from these responses are shown in the graphs provided in this report. A further five survey responses and one submission were received subsequently, up to 3pm Friday 15 May 2015. Results from these responses are also included in this report, but are shown separately.

Of the 208 people, who participated in the survey and completed their responses on time, the number who responded to each question is indicated by the statement “n=”.

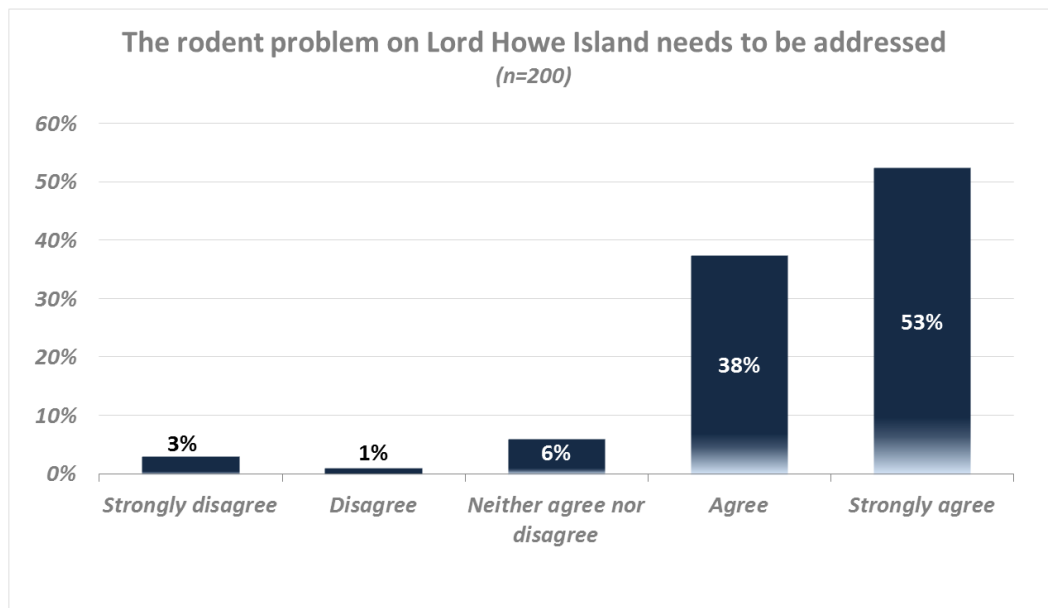
A copy of the survey tool is attached.

1.2 Participant feedback

Q1: How do you feel about the following statement: “The rodent problem on Lord Howe Island needs to be addressed”

Note: 200 of 208 people responded to this question (n=200)

Figure 1



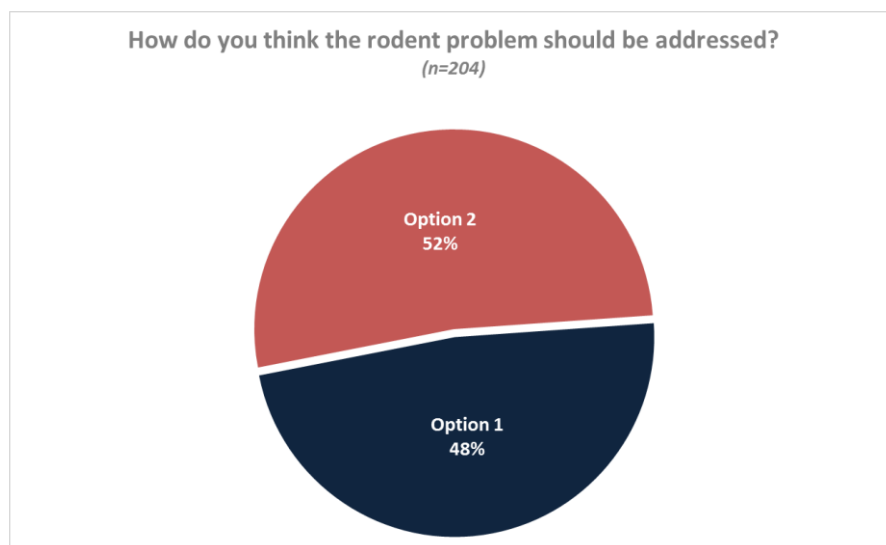
¹ The Electoral Commission has advised that there are a total of 299 names on the Lord Howe Island Electoral Roll.

An overwhelming majority of respondents agreed (38%) or strongly agreed (53%) that the rodent problem on Lord Howe Island needs to be addressed. Another 6% of respondents were undecided on this matter and 4% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Of the five further responses received after the survey close, three strongly agreed and two agreed that the rodent problem needs to be addressed.

Q2: How do you think the rodent problem should be addressed?

Note: 204 of 208 people responded to this question (n=204)

Figure 2



Of the five further responses received after the survey close, three selected Option Two and two selected Option One.

Responses to this question were split.

Just over half of all respondents expressed a preference for **Option 2 (52%)**: Progress to Step 1 of the eradication program, allowing for scientific studies to be undertaken, and for applications to be made for relevant environmental and health approvals.

Other respondents expressed a preference for **Option 1 (48%)**: Retain and expand the current management program.

Cross tabulation of results for this question suggests that participants who preferred Option 2 were more likely (than those who preferred Option 1) to agree that the rodent problem 'needs to be addressed'.

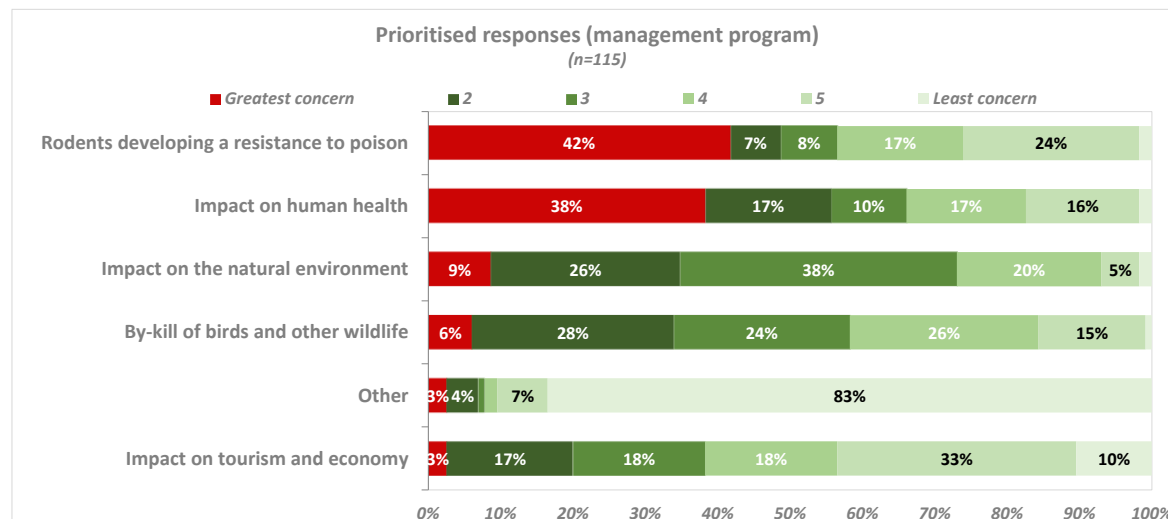
			Q2		Total
			Option 1	Option 2	
Q1x3	Disagree	Count	8	0	8
		% within Q2	8.8%	.0%	4.1%
	Neutral	Count	11	1	12
		% within Q2	12.1%	1.0%	6.1%
	Agree	Count	72	104	176
		% within Q2	79.1%	99.0%	89.8%
Total	Count	91	105	196	
	% within Q2	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Q3: In relation to a management program, I am concerned about:

Please note in responding to survey questions three and four, some participants chose to *prioritise* the response options (in line with the instructions on the survey form) while others *ranked* the response options. This report presents both the prioritised responses and the ranked responses. However, it is noted that results for questions three and four cannot be combined.²

Please number each of the following factors from 1 to 6, where 1 is of greatest concern to you and 6 is of least concern to you.

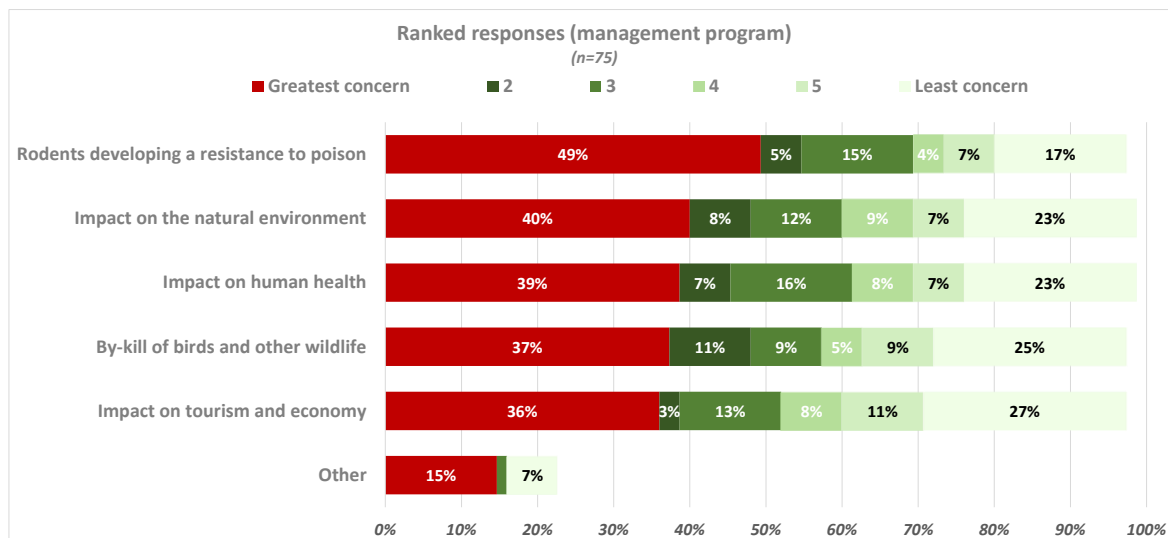
Figure 3



In prioritised responses (n=115), concerns associated with a management program that were most commonly identified by respondents were: rodents developing a resistance to poison; and impact on human health. Impact on the natural environment was identified as a first priority in 9% of cases, and as a second priority in a further 26% of cases. Similarly, by-kill of birds and other wildlife was identified as a first priority in 6% of cases, and as a second priority in another 28% of cases.

² The reason for this is that respondents who answered the question as per the survey instructions (ie with prioritised responses) were only able to identify one greatest concern. Whereas, those who ranked their responses, could effectively identify up to six greatest concerns.

Figure 4



Among ranked responses (n=75), the most commonly identified 'greatest concerns' identified by respondents were: rodents developing a resistance to poison (49%); impact on the natural environment (40%); and impact on human health (39%). By-kill of birds and other wildlife (37%); and impact on tourism and economy (36%) were also identified as greatest concerns.

Table 1 Any other concern/s

In other concerns about a management program, many respondents reiterated the types of concerns that were included in Question Three. Other concerns identified by respondents included: costs to residents / the community; impacts on domestic animals; impacts on livestock / food production; and that a management program may be ineffective. Suggestions made by respondents are included in the table below.

All verbatim comments made by respondents are shown below. Please note, *prioritised* responses are shaded in green and *ranked* responses are shown in orange.

Related rating (from Q3, where 1=greatest concern, 6= least concern)	Verbatim comments
Impact on tourism and the economy as a result of the rodent problem	
4	Costs to residents
1	Any added costs
1	Any increased costs
1	Costs involved in any quarantine and who is paying for same
6	Loss of funding for eradication and ongoing cost
6	Cost of ongoing management
	Extended time taken and inherent costs that have incurred in this process - long and costly.
2	Impact on tourism when the aerial baiting is being undertaken and afterwards. Not a good publicity stunt.
6	Government lack of interest in any ongoing funding (if we don't go with option 2 they won't give subsidies for option 1).

Related rating (from Q3, where 1=greatest concern, 6= least concern)	Verbatim comments
5	Annual cost to the community for control management.
1	The fact that there is no funding for a management program it would be too labour intensive and costly.
	Tick - impact of rodents on wildlife, gardens; use of talon it needs to be banned; residents do not know what ongoing control really means or its cost.
Impact on human health	
3	Concern about human health issues
5	Safety
	(re impact on human health) If aerial distribution goes ahead; (re impact on natural environment) as above bait stations would not cause this problem; the closed mind attitude to total use of bait stations need to be changed. Total eradication is doable safe and non-disruptive.
1	(re by-kill of birds) - my garden/food production; ongoing cost has not been provided; people need to understand the full implications and likely costs of control.
Impact on natural environment	
6	Continuing to poison the environment
6	Impact on natural environment due to rodent activity
2	Impact on natural environment following rats and mice developing resistance to poison eg rat and mice outcompeting native animals
	(re impact on human health) If aerial distribution goes ahead; (re impact on natural environment) as above bait stations would not cause this problem; the closed mind attitude to total use of bait stations need to be changed. Total eradication is doable safe and non-disruptive.
1	Impact on world heritage listing due to inaction on rodent problem.
	Tick - impact of rodents on wildlife, gardens; use of talon it needs to be banned; residents do not know what ongoing control really means or its cost.
By-kill of birds and other wildlife (including domestic animals and livestock) as a result of existing baiting practices	
2	A resistance to first generation poisons means baiting will have to be done with second generation poisons and all wildlife will be in peril including flora.
6	Impact on livestock ie beef chicken fish vegies etc
4	Dogs chicken cattle etc, health and wellbeing.
	(re rodents developing resistance to poison) shouldn't happen if maintained properly; (re by-kill of birds and other wildlife) this is almost impossible if current method occurs; that for many years now the LHIB has not maintained the program hence noticeably more rats around.
	Tick - impact of rodents on wildlife, gardens; use of talon it needs to be banned; residents do not know what ongoing control really means or its cost.
Rodents developing a resistance to poison	
5	Gradual increase in resistance but percentage will increase albeit much

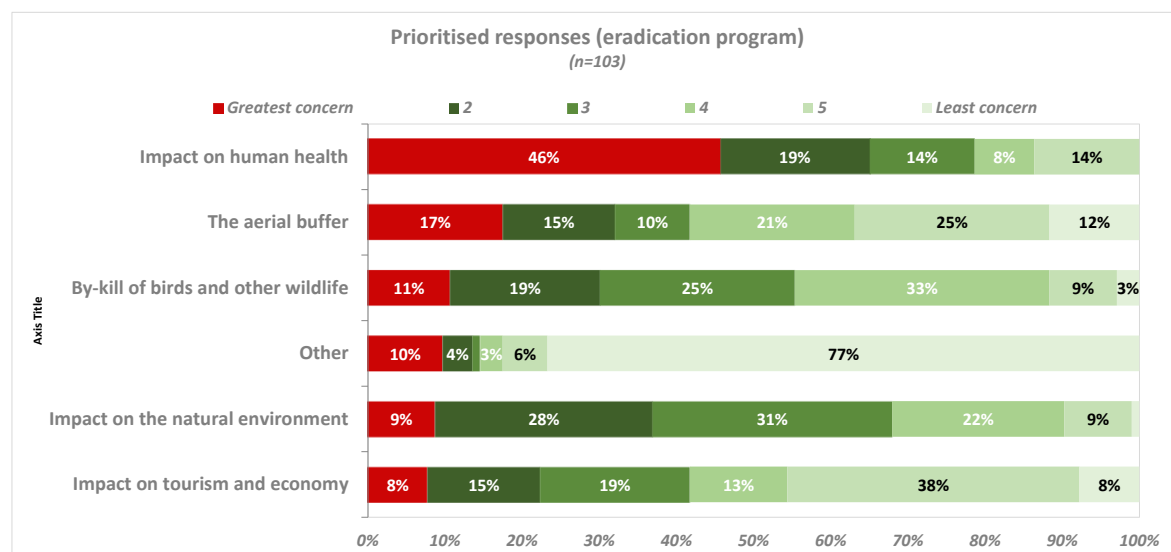
Related rating (from Q3, where 1=greatest concern, 6= least concern)	Verbatim comments
	slower than if aerial baiting.
1	Inevitably resistance will occur
1	(re rodents developing a resistance to poison) - Brodifacoum is a potent poison causing internal haemorrhage in rats and humans alike; Please read the instructions on the talon packet; Dot point 3 the death threat.
3	Continual use and increased use of poisons in the future.
Management Program will / may be ineffective	
6	It's not guaranteed to success
5	That it does not work
6	Delay in eradication
Suggestions	
1	Bell laboratories in America have developed a rodenticide called rampage which has no secondary kill.
1	Please consider Bell laboratories, new vitamin D3 rodent bait rampage, distributed by Agserv P/L phone 9647211
1	Continue existing baiting and allow leaseholders to put baits around when they want
1	Continue leaseholders rat baiting whenever they want (more regularly)
	All of the below are equal concern to me. Have other alternatives been considered? For example Vitamin D3 which has no secondary kill.
6	Tamper proof bait stations would bring positive results.
6	Status quo with better management and target areas with high risk! Education!
Other	
	The time between issue of this document and closure of acceptance is too short.
	All are worrying
6	Do not trust the biased science they are using for this program.
2	The irreversible destruction by rats of our wildlife
No concerns	
6	None
6	None
6	Nil concerns

Q4: In relation to an eradication program, I am concerned about:

As noted previously, in responding to survey question four, some participants chose to *prioritise* the response options (in line with the instructions on the survey form) while others *ranked* the response options. This report presents both the prioritised responses and the ranked responses. However, it is noted that results for question four cannot be combined.

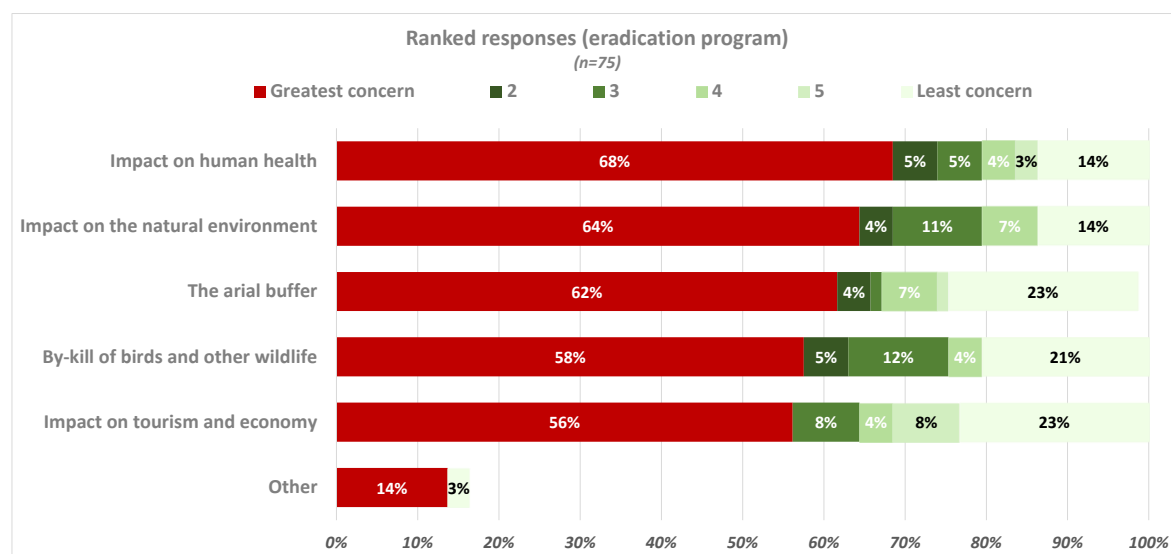
Please number each of the following factors from 1 to 6, where 1 is of greatest concern to you and 6 is of least concern to you.

Figure 5



Among prioritised responses (n=103), the 'greatest concern' associated with an eradication program that was most commonly identified by respondents was: impact on human health. This was identified by 47 respondents (46%) as their greatest concern. The next highest 'greatest concern' was the aerial buffer (18 respondents / 17%).

Figure 6



Among ranked responses (n=75), the most commonly identified 'greatest concerns' identified by respondents were: impact on human health (68%); impact on the natural environment (64%); and

the aerial buffer (62%). By-kill of birds and other wildlife (58%); and impact on tourism and economy (56%) were also identified as greatest concerns.

Table 2 Any other concern/s

In other concerns about an eradication program, many respondents said they had no concerns with such a program, were concerned that an eradication program would not proceed, or were concerned with the costs / implications of not eradicating rodents. Other concerns identified by respondents included: costs to residents / the community of eradication; impacts of eradication relating to human health and general amenity (such as odours); an eradication program may be ineffective. Suggestions made by respondents are included in the table below.

All verbatim comments made by respondents are shown below. Please note, *prioritised* responses are shaded in green and *ranked* responses are shown in orange.

Related rating (from Q4, where 1=greatest concern, 6= least concern)	Verbatim comments
No concerns / Concern that the Eradication Program will not proceed	
1	Eradication program will not go ahead.
1	It should happen sooner
1	I am concerned that if the one off eradication does not go ahead the use of poisons in the future will increase (and costs and by-kill of wildlife)
1	Aerial baiting won't go ahead
1	This is our only chance if blown it will be another two decades before there is another chance
6	Taking so long to do it.
6	Ongoing conflict re: this necessary eradication, act now.
6	My other concern is that the eradication program will not go ahead asap.
6	(re impact on tourism) This will only be short term over the time it will take to do; I have no problem with the one off eradication plan due to its amazing success on the numerous islands already benefitting from.
6	I don't have any other concerns and none of the above concern me at all.
	Tourism box - No concerns
	I have no concerns with the eradication program this is the only way to stop the use of poison on the island for the future.
	My concern is the aerial baiting won't go ahead
	No concerns please proceed with eradication
	Please just do the baiting
	These are of no concern to me
	I am not concerned about any of these
	Nil concerns
	(re impact on human health) it will only be a one off so no long term; (re impact on the natural environment) we poison the island already an eradication will do it once properly; (re by-kill of birds and other wildlife) we know how to captive hold birds rodents already kill birds; eradication will be a plus for tourism no rats; the island will look silly if they don't want to kill rats; resistance of rodent baits; the level of misinformation spread by the anti's; loss of 9 million dollar grant; loss of world heritage

Related rating (from Q4, where 1=greatest concern, 6= least concern)	Verbatim comments
	status; eradicate now.
Eradication Program will / may be ineffective	
1	Failure of program and extinction of wildlife
5	That it does not work
5	Failure
5	Failure; the likelihood of some surviving rats repopulating the island.
6	Is it guaranteed 100% success?
	Policing will not be successful with the amount of boats that visit the island, rats will return.
	I don't believe there will be total eradication; disposal of dead animals? Methods?
Costs to the community	
1	Any costs to community in monetary terms like increased fees
1	Quarantine that is sure to follow eg ensuring ship is rodent free each voyage - cost involved.
2	Community division
5	Huge waste of money already expended and nothing achieved but this very wishy washy survey and short response time. Not anon if you can identify.
Impact on tourism and economy	
2	Impact on tourism due to misinformation
4	Impact on tourism as a result of an eradication program, high risk of failure of eradication program.
	(re impact on the natural environment) - ie the decline and fall of LHI as we know it; approval from APVMA loss of world heritage listing re deliberate kill of endemic species; 4 year loss of tourist dollars; many tourists will not return to the island after aerial baiting, they are saying so.
Impact on natural environment	
4	Killing all other insects/birds/lizards/snails through aerial drop poisoning.
Impact on human health	
1	If successful the hazards of baiting would be short term compared to the longer term uncontrolled/immunity to long term baiting.
1	Disposal of rat baits if found and by who??
1	Disposal and removal of maggot infested rat bodies?
1	Concerned about run off into water tanks.
1	What about the smell of thousands of dead things
3	Dead rats attract flies and flies also spread disease. The horrific smell is a huge concern. Will there be any attempt to remove/bury the dead???
	Risk of disease from decaying corpses will an attempt be made to remove bodies.

Related rating (from Q4, where 1=greatest concern, 6= least concern)	Verbatim comments
All of the response options	
1	All of the above
4	As above
1	All are as serious as the other
1	All of the below are of equal concern to me. Vitamin D3 has distributors in Australia, it was developed by Bell Laboratories in America.
	All are worrying
	All of the above are of concern.
Other issues / suggestions	
1	Killing all non-resistant mice and rats will guarantee that all the remaining ones are resistant and population will then increase rapidly and be very difficult to control. Strike out residual and replace with initial.
1	I do not want this plan to go ahead!!
1	(re impact on the natural environment) 13 years of various proposals have heightened concerns in this community; (re impact on tourism and the economy) attempting aerial eradication; long term effects on community; aerial distribution on total environment. LETTER INCLUDED which has been numbered.
1	I am concerned that we will cut our nose off to spite our face, please do this.
2	Individual residents sabotaging efforts
6	The studies using Brodifacoum on other islands not good.
6	Repeated aerial drops
	(re the Aerial baiting buffer from houses and properties) and from the ocean; the lack of information on the negative side of aerial baiting for the future.
	As above it should also be a signed document.
	(re impact on human health) won't eradication remove the need/impact of long term residual poison; I don't agree with this statement. Kill the rats; don't let the hypocrites make the island miss out on a pristine future; I am concerned the implications of not eradicating rodents hasn't been factored, ongoing decline of species/extinction, reduced agricultural production, dependence on chemicals; 9 million dollar gift plus world heritage status if the local community won't look after the island.
	(re impact on human health) if aerial distribution goes ahead; (re impact on natural environment) using aerial distribution; (re by-kill of birds and other wildlife) using aerial method; All of the risks/ problems etc would be nullified if bait stations only were made of poison pellets distribution.

Resident submission

It is noted that **one submission** was also received from a member of the community. This submission comments that information distributed within the community "really poses and urges the aerial baiting method". The submission comments that on a number of occasions and by various methods strong community objection to the aerial baiting method has been demonstrated. A copy of the submission is attached in Appendix B.

Appendices

A	Survey tool
B	Resident submission

A Survey tool



Lord Howe Island Rodent Consultation Community Survey

Instructions: Please review the Options Paper, complete the questions below, and once complete place in the addressed envelope provided to you, and mail it back to us. The closing date to receive the survey form is 13 May at 11:00am.

Please tell us what you think about this important issue by completing this short 4 question survey.

TACKLING RODENTS ON LORD HOWE ISLAND

- 1 How do you feel about the following statement?
Please tick one option only:**

“The rodent problem on Lord Howe Island needs to be addressed.”

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neither agree nor disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

- 2 How do you think the rodent problem should be addressed? Please read on for information about the risks and benefits associated with each of the following two options. Please tick one option only:**

I prefer...

☐ Option 1

☐ Option 2

Option 1: Retain and expand the current management program

Expanding the current management program would involve increasing the number of bait stations across Lord Howe Island. Studies would also need to be undertaken to assess impacts and health risks of long term presence of poison in the environment. A management plan would need to be developed, and funding determined either through grant funding or revenue raising to fund the expanded program, as well as ongoing costs.

The management plan for ongoing rodent management would be required to address and assess the risks, and undertake any environmental assessments that may be required.

Option 2: Progress to Step 1 of the eradication program, allowing for scientific studies to be undertaken, and for applications to be made for relevant environmental and health approvals.

Agreement to progress to the planning and approvals stage of the rodent eradication program will allow the various rigorous environmental and human health approvals required to proceed to eradication. There will be ongoing community consultation, particularly around access to individual leaseholds, as well as feedback on human and natural environmental health questions. The various approvals required include:

- » Federal environmental approval under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, which includes a requirement for a species impact assessment on all threatened species, as well as other species that may be impacted on by an eradication programme.
- » Species Impact Assessment under Section 91 of the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act.

 **PLEASE TURN OVER**

- » Approval from the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) to use the proposed poison as outlined in the draft eradication strategy. This takes into account human health risks, including referral to the Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer.
- » Approval to aurally bait within 150m of dwellings and public places, required under the NSW Pesticides Act 1999.

3 Please number each of the following factors from 1 to 6, where 1 is of greatest concern to you, and 6 is of least concern to you.

"In relation to a management program, I am concerned about:

- ☐ Rodents developing a resistance to poison
- ☐ Impact on human health due to residual impact of long term poison presence on the Island
- ☐ Impact on the natural environment due to residual impact of long term poison presence on the Island
- ☐ By-kill of birds and other wildlife as a result of existing baiting practices
- ☐ Impact on tourism and the economy as a result of the rodent problem
- ☐ Any other concern/s (Please describe):

4 Please number each of the following factors from 1 to 6, where 1 is of greatest concern to you, and 6 is of least concern to you.

"In relation to an eradication program, I am concerned about:

- ☐ The Aerial baiting buffer from houses and properties
- ☐ Impact on human health due to residual impact of long term poison presence on the Island
- ☐ Impact on the natural environment, including marine, due to residual impact of brodifacoum on the Island
- ☐ By-kill of birds and other wildlife as a result of a one-off eradication
- ☐ Impact on tourism and the economy as a result of the rodent problem
- ☐ Any other concern/s (Please describe):

Thank you for taking the time to share your views.

B Resident submission

These comments accompany to the referendum paper dated May 2015.

To me it is appalling that after 13/14 years have passed since the first public meeting was held to discuss the proposition for the aerial baiting of rodents and subsequent discussions with tens of thousands of dollars spent, we have this document sent to us which really poses and urges the aerial baiting method.

At the very first meeting in 2001 the spokesperson for the proponents unequivocally stated "if this community is not 100% behind this proposition then it cannot go ahead". People present at that meeting accepted that statement as factual and it should be honoured without equivocation.

It has been shown on a number of occasions by various methods that there is a strong community objection to the aerial baiting method.

1. Thirteen years of conflict and confusion in the community over this issue have been the result.
2. Such as statements stating that every night when we go to bed tens of thousands of rodents come out of the forest to ravage our houses, gardens and destroy bird life and plant life as well.
3. Pamphlets released with so-called facts on the rodent problem have carried such exaggerations far wider than this community.
4. So-called scientific studies into the effects of brodifacoum on the Island environment and population have caused further heightening of tension.
5. Questions posed on the actual rodent population have received no response.
6. Statements on mitigation of unintended outcomes ie effects on the ocean creatures etc.
7. Proposed plans for the distribution in 2009 were never put into effect and have caused continuing community angst.
8. Outcomes for the short and long term effects on the Island community have never been clearly addressed.
9. Attempts to silence community views and concerns have proved totally fruitless.



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