

DRAFT OF 8:53 AM, 27/02/95  
MONTEBELLO ISLANDS RAT AND CAT ERADICATION

**SUBMISSION TO CALM FROM PILBARA REGION AND WATSCU FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDS**

The eradication of feral animals (cats and black rats) from the Montebello Islands is a major project that will attract considerable attention, both from within Australia and internationally. Once rats and cats are eradicated, two species of locally extinct mammals and two species of locally extinct birds can be re-introduced. As well, some islands, particularly Trimouille, can be used for 'marooning'; the introduction of species threatened with extinction on mainland Australia. The Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory has already asked CALM to nominate an island for the marooning of the mainland subspecies of the Mala (or Rufous Hare-wallaby), which is critically endangered and is subject to predation by feral cats. The Montebello Island project has very high nature conservation value.

CALM has accepted Commonwealth funds to eradicate feral animals from the Montebello Islands (about 80 islands, totalling about 2 300 ha) and to re-introduce locally extinct native mammals from Barrow. Of the total Commonwealth grant of \$310,000, \$60,000 was allocated for a terrestrial biological survey and feral animal eradication. Much of this money has already been spent on the survey, rodent bait and cat traps. Of the \$60,000 only around \$23,600 remains. A total of about \$75,000 now remains in the Montebellos account; however, some of this was for other expenditure, including the purchase of a boat and equipment (allocation \$80,000). If the cost of a new boat for the Pilbara region can be found elsewhere, the total amount remaining in the Montebello account can be allocated to this project. The budget is based on the assumption that mammal and bird re-introduction costs will be met by a sponsor.

The attached budget shows that the total cost of the operation will be \$150 000. The budget assumes that most of the labour will be provided by volunteers and that there will be significant assistance from WAPET and Apache Energy in transporting materials, staff and volunteers to and from the islands; if full transport costs had to be met the budget would be of the order of \$40,000 higher.

The cost could be reduced by \$20,000 by seconding a CALM staff member to the project as coordinator. We understand that Steve Grenfell may be available for secondment and have sought agreement to his secondment from John Byrne. .

This operation was programmed to commence in late-May 1995 and continue until early August 1995. It has now been postponed for one year. Until recently, there had been very little rain in the Montebellos for two years; this had reduced rat and cat numbers making their eradication easier and cheaper. The heavy rain in mid-and late-February 1995 will cause germination and seeding from native and introduced grasses. With the amount of rain, seed production will probably continue well into the winter providing abundant food for the rats, reducing the chance of them entering bait stations. As well, David Algar has recommended that the project be postponed one year, by which time he expects that his new cat bait will be ready for use. The postponement will also allow field testing of the rat bait stations with the cheaper and better rat bait now available.

Of the additional cost of \$75 000, \$29 000 could be allocated in the 1995/96 financial year, and \$46 000 in the 1996/97 financial year. \$5 000 of the \$46 000 could be postponed until the 1997/98 financial year if the clean up trip was carried out in July or August 1997.



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**MONTEBELLO ISLANDS RAT AND CAT ERADICATION - DRAFT BUDGET February 1995.**

rat bait stations (12 000 @ \$0.40)	4800
transport costs - Perth to Onslow	2000
volunteer costs, food 7 people @ \$12/day) for 90 days	7500
hats, block-out, T-shirts (\$20/person, 30 people)	600
4 two-person dome nylon tents	600
helicopter (Bell Jet Ranger) charter (five weeks, 54 hrs @ \$640/hr)	34560
? ferry from Perth (14 hrs @ \$530)	7420
fuel for helicopter (29 drums) (price at Onslow)	6550
additional rodent bait (960 Kg of Talon G)	7100
cat baits and helicopter time	2500
RFDS First Aid Kit (\$850) and first aid consumables	1000
CALM boat - running costs (av. 2.5 hrs/day, 42 days)	6350
travelling allowance, boat driver (50 days @ \$33.10)	1650
project coordinator (March 1995 to October 1995)	20000
CALM staff travelling allowances (average of 1.5 staff for 120 days @ \$33.10) plus flying allowances (60 hrs @ \$13.70)	6700
CALM staff commuted overtime allowances	1000
Reverse osmosis or solar distillation plant	10000
equipment and consumables for CALM accommodation unit at Montebellos (includes generator fuel)	3000
general consumables and miscellaneous extras	5000
Trip August 1995 - cat survey and poison bait testing; rat bait station testing	4000
monitoring and clean up trip 1997	5000
10% contingency for increased costs	12670
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>150000</b>

**NOTES**

1. Budget assumes that WAPET will transport all Perth CALM staff and volunteers to and from Barrow. WAPET will also (tentatively) deliver heavy supplies with their barge. Needs confirmation by letter.
2. Budget assumes that Apache Energy will transport CALM staff and Karratha volunteers to and from Varanus Island, and will transport all staff and volunteers to and from Barrow and Varanus. We are trying to work out a deal with Apache for shared helicopter use at the Montes. If successful, this may involve a saving in helicopter costs.
3. If project commences June 1996 and continues until September 1996, most expenditure will be in the 1996/97 financial year. Costs in the 1995/96 financial year include purchase of rat bait stations (\$4,800), rodent bait (\$7,100), helicopter fuel (\$6,100), dry and tinned food (about \$4,000) and miscellaneous equipment (\$3,000), plus the August 1995 visit, totalling about \$29 000.