



THE FINCH SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA INC

(Incorporated under the *Associations Incorporation Act 2009*)

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27/04/2016

RE: Tasmanian Biosecurity Legislation Review

This submission is presented on behalf of the Finch Society of Australia (FSA) and the Canary and Cage Bird Federation of Australia (CCBFA). The FSA represents finch aviculturists specifically and is affiliated with the CCBFA. The CCBFA directly represents more than 240 avicultural clubs nationally, including 8 Tasmanian affiliate clubs. Our combined membership supports, encourages and is actively involved in the conservation of avian species nationally and internationally. Movements of finches and other avian species regularly occurs between Tasmanian and mainland aviculturists.

We support the trade of captive bred birds nationally and internationally – particularly with regard to achieving outcomes related to securing critically endangered and endangered species. To achieve such outcomes requires efficient processes that are affordable, manageable and realistically accessible. We acknowledge and support efforts to reduce risk involved in the movement of birds between states, however such risks must be realistically assessed using the totality of accumulated knowledge and experiences in the field.

Attempts to assess the probability of feral avian populations establishing in the wild must include all parameters of significance. Currently the Tasmanian system for assessing establishment risk is based on the model developed by Mary Bomford – known as “The Bomford Model”. This model was never intended to assess establishment probability for escaped captive bred domestic species populations. This issue is specifically acknowledged by Bomford based on the work of Carrete and Tella (2008).

“Carrete and Tella (2008) found that for pet bird species in Spain, wild-caught birds were highly significantly ($p < 0.0001$) more likely to establish wild breeding populations than captive-reared birds, even though captive-reared birds are kept in far higher numbers.” Bomford (2008)

“The Bomford Model” was developed based on statistically extrapolating from available data recording historical release events. This source data was largely collected by acclimatisation societies operating within Australia and New Zealand and subsequently detailed in Long (1981).

The introduction to Long (1981) describes the enormous number of wild caught birds moved internationally as part of the massive caged bird industry operating prior to the 1970s. Long (1981) makes the point that the number of avicultural escapees is unknown but was no doubt significant. The evidence in Long (1981) shows acclimatisation societies released large numbers of wild caught birds in multiple locations over many years. In addition, the wild birds were protected and provided with feed to encourage establishment. In Australia, species released by acclimatisation societies did in many cases establish, whilst avicultural species failed conclusively to establish. This despite Long’s reasonable presumption of significant avicultural escapes. Perhaps this apparent anomaly is in part explained by the relatively early (by international standards) 1949 cessation of exotic avian imports into Australia. That is, avicultural escapees in Australia post-1949 are entirely limited to captive bred individuals unable to survive wild conditions.

Scientific evidence supporting the low establishment risk of escaped captive bred birds in Australia is somewhat paradoxically present in the majority of threatened species recovery efforts detailing attempts to reintroduce captive bred species back into their native habitat. The extreme difficulties encountered during such captive breeding recovery and release efforts provides ample scientific evidence as to the low risk of captive birds establishing sustainable populations.

The continuing misuse of “The Bomford Model” to assess captive bred birds has led to and continues to lead to conclusions that unreasonably restrict the movement of avicultural species into and within Tasmania. All captive populations present in Australia are numerous generations distant from their wild cousins and should be considered domesticated.

We make the following recommendations for legislative inclusion.

1. By default, all avicultural species to be classified as domestic stock (may be imported, bought, sold or held without permit) for the purpose of importation into Tasmania unless otherwise categorised via the statutory consultative committee (2).
2. Form a statutory consultative committee of avicultural, veterinarian and scientific experts with responsibility to:
 - a. Collaborate and develop a robust import risk assessment process for avicultural species.
 - b. Provide expert recommendations on the rejection or approval for importation of new species.
 - c. Provide an appeals function should import of a species be rejected.
3. Acknowledge the scientific, conservation, economic and social value of aviculture in terms of positive outcomes for Tasmanians.
4. Acknowledge the fact that no captive avian species has established a sustainable viable feral population in Australia.

We welcome and look forward to further consultation.

Kind regards,



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References

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