



## tasmanian conservation trust inc

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The Editor  
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### **Fox Eradication Program**

The FEP gets criticised for spending \$3.1 million of state government funds per year, but this is less than 0.1%, or one one-thousandth, of the entire state budget (\$4,334,000,000 in 2010-11). When will the media start to give attention to where the other 99.9% of the state budget gets spent and how much of it is wasted?

While it easy to criticise the 45 FEP staff for chasing a prey which it does not find (but may be killing), how many hundreds of public servants are just chasing paper?

Perhaps the FEP is just an easy target because it is a highly active and visible program of the state government and is tackling an allusive animal and does not produce tangible results.

The general public has a poor understanding of the science behind the FEP strategies and the nature of foxes and I challenge journalists to explain these better. When the science is explained, I believe more people will understand why foxes are not commonly seen and why the FEP chooses a broadscale poisoning strategy which doesn't rely on catching individual foxes.

For instance, the cameras set up to detect foxes are triggered by movement close to them. Foxes are renowned for noticing new things in their environment and avoiding them. They will avoid anything they associate with humans unless they become desperate for food, which is unlikely in rural Tasmania. It is easy to imagine they could see a camera before getting close enough to trigger. They may trigger the camera but get alarmed by the infra-red light trigger or the sound of the camera as it warms-up, in preparation for a photo, and not be photographed.

We must eradicate foxes from Tasmania to prevent an ecological and agricultural catastrophe and eradication will only be possible when they are low in numbers. If we wait until they are high in number and commonly seen then eradication will be impossible.

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