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'There needs to be close scrutiny' Fox 'farce' findings prompt review call

HELEN KEMPTON

THE scientists who this year labelled the state's expensive fox eradication effort a farce have asked the University of Canberra to conduct an independent review into the work it did at the request of Tasmania's fox hunters.

Clive Marks, speaking on behalf of the Review Panel for an Independent Review of the Tasmanian Fox Eradication Program, also asked the university to give him access to publicly funded data from its Institute of Applied Ecology.

Dr Marks said the review should be done by a panel of independent academics from



ELUSIVE: Fox questions remain.

other universities headed by an impartial chair.

Canberra University says it will commission a former deputy vice-chancellor of research in a Group of Eight university to advise it on the basis of the evidence.

Dr Marks said a molecular

assay and ecological model from the institute was used to conclude that foxes were or are widespread in Tasmania.

"This appeared to be the best empirical justification for a large and controversial fox eradication program that has been estimated to involve public funds in the vicinity of \$50 million," Dr Marks said in his letter.

"However, we could find no review of the precision and quality of these molecular data, especially by suitably qualified and independent molecular biologists."

Dr Marks said it was a sensible time to seek a re-evaluation of the past conclusions

through independent review.

On June 24, Tasmanian Upper House member Ivan Dean will table a motion asking the State Government to conduct an inquiry into the state's 13-year fox eradication effort.

Mr Dean, a former police officer and a long-time fox sceptic, said evidence continued to mount that many of the activities undertaken by those in control of the fox eradication taskforce were "unreasonable".

"Someone has to be responsible for that activity and there needs to be close scrutiny of what exactly has been going on," Mr Dean said.