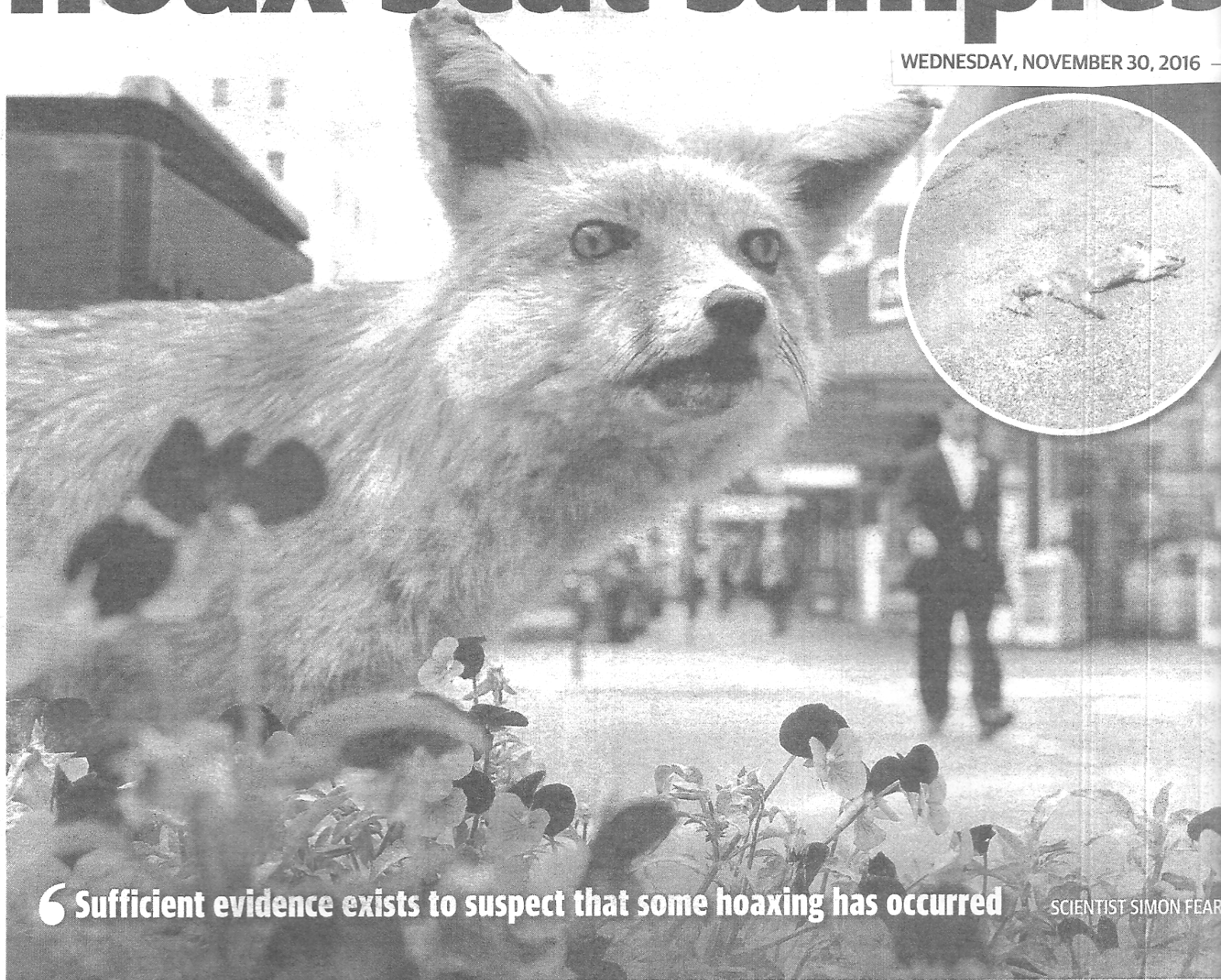


# Scientist tells of hoax scat samples

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2016



6 Sufficient evidence exists to suspect that some hoaxing has occurred

SCIENTIST SIMON FEAR

ELUSIVE: Doubts have been cast over validity of fox scats collected by Tasmania's Fox Eradication Program; and the fox carcass found last month, inset.

## PATRICK BILLINGS Police Reporter

FOX sceptic Ivan Dean has launched another investigation into what he alleges was a futile multi-million dollar program to eradicate the red pest.

The Legislative Councillor claims he has proof a "very critical piece of evidence" used to justify the Fox Eradication Program was falsified.

It follows a report on 7.30 on the ABC last night that cast further doubt over the physical evidence collected by the Fox Taskforce that ran from 2001-14.

In 2009 former Parks, Water and Environment Department scientist Simon Fearn produced a report showing five purported fox scats, used as evidence by the Taskforce, were in fact from other animals.

In 2011 he wrote another report, leaked to 7.30, which was reportedly more critical of the evidence.

"Sufficient evidence exists to suspect that some hoaxing has occurred via mainland fox scats being placed in the landscape," he is said to have written.

The program said the report found 26 of the 57 scats were possible hoaxes and another 11 were most likely from other animals.

The eradication program, which received tens of millions of dollars from state and commonwealth governments, is one of Tasmania's most controversial public policies.

It was prosecuted on a basis Tasmania had to do everything possible to prevent a fox invasion and the ecological disaster that would follow.

But the failure to capture or record a single live fox led to

deep scepticism and from there allegations of fraud. Intensifying the controversy was the discovery a fox carcass found on a remote highway in the North last month was a hoax.

A joint department and police investigation found it was brought in from Victoria.

A man has been interviewed but the department is refusing to say whether he has been charged. It said the man was not a former Taskforce member.

Last month a police review of documents submitted by Mr Dean alleging fox evidence

was doctored found no criminal offences by the taskforce or its members.

But Mr Dean said he would continue to investigate the program and has handed over his latest information to the Integrity Commission.

"It's very good information and it clearly has to be right because he was able to tell things about the evidence that we couldn't get an answer for," he said.

Deputy Premier Jere Rockliff said the department was reviewing the police report into Mr Dean's allegations.