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Off the Back of a Truck ...

Lindsay Tuffin* First published Oct 1
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25 comments

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Tasmanian Times every now and again receives tip-offs and rumours and documents anonymously. The latest came from 'Public Interest' ... TT offers it to its readers ...

Editor, the attached documents (obtained under FOI request) are provided to you in the public interest. The following summary of the significance of these reports is also offered. Thank you.

Summary

Current and former DPIPWE staff have identified significant inaccuracies in the acquittal reporting provided by DPIPWE to the Australian Government and in the reasons provided by DPIPWE for its failure to meet funding obligations.

Information in these three reports directly contradicts media statements by DPIPWE and the Tasmanian Government that fox sighting reports from the public are being treated in good faith and investigated.

The three fox funding acquittal reports provide evidence that:

- DPIPWE has failed to meet its obligations under the Australian Government Funding Agreement to undertake the agreed fox incursion response activities.
- DPIPWE has not investigated a large number of the fox sighting reports received in 2014 and 2015 even though the Australian Government funding was chiefly provided to maintain the resources to do so.
- DPIPWE has not achieved the public information activities or import risk assessment required under Australian Government Funding Agreement.
- DPIPWE has been redirecting the funding provided by the Australian Government for fox incursion response activities into other unidentified areas.

Report – Stage 2

Report shows 36 public sighting reports were received during the period with 31 investigated for corroborative evidence.

Report covers the period in which there was a change of government in Tasmania with the subsequent announcement that the Fox Eradication Program would be abolished as part of a pre-election commitment by the Tasmanian Liberal Party to save \$1.5 million per year.

Report – Stage 3

Report does not show the number of public sighting reports received during the period or if any were investigated for corroborative evidence (report states "Details of these are found elsewhere in this report" but fails to provide this detail).

Report essentially lists fox-related landscape monitoring and research activities undertaken by DPIPWE, neither of which was being funded under the Australian Government Funding Agreement.



Report shows 27 public sighting reports were received during the period with 6 investigated for corroborative evidence (including Minister Rockliff's fox sighting report).

Download, read for yourself ...

FEP_FOI_Document_2_-_Stage_3.pdf

FEP_FOI_Document_3_-_Stage_4.pdf

**Lindsay Tuffin has been a journo for nearly five decades ... in Oz and Pomland.*

- **Mercury today ...**



EXCHANGE
OR MORE STOREWIDE &
5 GAS EXCHANGE FOR \$15
OFF


• O'Brien in Comments: ... Perhaps we could all simply telephone our elected representatives and cozy public servants in say National Parks & Wildlife (Southern & Northern District Rangers). Failing that pop into State Development and ask for the gang from DPIIWE. If your tastes run to the more upmarket hop on a first class flight

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to the UN in New York and chat to our Senators conveniently away for three months on urgent cafe/art research. Maybe the CPSU. Any sitting State Labor or Green member. Any Tassie Senator. Yep just walk right up and ask the following; "When and where were you first approached by serving DPIPWE officer(s) concerned about irregularities with the Fox programme and DPIPWE more broadly? Did you do your duty as a well paid elected representative/public service officer/public service executive/union official/Police Officer/Minister, or, did you do absolutely nothing, or worse? Why have you not submitted your immediate letter of resignation? ...

Writers | Clive Marks | David Obendorf | Politics | National | State | Economy | Environment | Opinion | History | Legal | Society

Comments (25)

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1. The only signifier apparent is as follows:

"Summary generated by Wendy Draper

Position/Role: MERIT project administrator and authorised representative of DPIWE"

No doubt Minister(s) responsible for this rotten state of affairs have been roused from the publicly funded luxury of fresh white Belgian linen, swan down pillows & doonas the minute this story hit the wires at 04:09 am ...

It remains to be seen if (those) responsible for this will be brought to account ...? Considering the implications for other proposals DPIPWE is directly involved with, such as selling off our National Parks to friends and relatives, questionable tremendously profitable white shoe marinas and the countless scams schemes and rip-offs from the past 30 years, all on the back of "Conservation Science".

Who will be answerable? The half smart ones jumped ship like flea bitten rats into publicly funded retirement over the past few years. Some are to be found flogging off public assets like the cheap suit spruikers they are.

Minister(s) responsible seem disinterested in governance of their own departments. Our commission for corruption aren't worth a cup of cold water. Then there's the ongoing Tas-Pol "investigation" which is rumoured as being held on ice until the eve of the next state election (no later than Saturday 26 May 2018). Sitting members are tainted with cowardice/self interest/inaction over Tassie's Reynard, then there's the newly convened Commonwealth Senate...

(edited)

Posted by O'Brien on 30/09/16 at 07:47 AM

2. I'm amazed, not because of DPIPWE's admissions of redirecting tied federal funds to other areas, and of other irregularities, but because they didn't simply refuse or ignore the FOI request.

They must have realised that official Tassie chicanery has no real consequences.

John Hayward

Posted by john hayward on 30/09/16 at 08:58 AM

3. I have suspected for a long time that the Fox Task Force money was being siphoned off into other areas. It seems that the government of the day, under a minister who managed to get himself re elected after losing his seat, and no qualms about deceiving the people of Tasmania and the Federal Government. The same minister for "Threatening Species" was also responsible for an own goal in selling the old Royal Derwent Hospital off for a song. A mistake he later mentioned that he thought was a bad decision. So why is he still warming a seat in parliament?

Posted by Pete Godfrey on 30/09/16 at 09:48 AM

4. A previous comment modified and also appropriate on this thread.

Yes David (Professor) Peacock has a lot of explaining to do... early 2001 when Peacock, Linton Staples (owner of Animal Control Technologies manufacturer of 1080 fox baits) and others came down to Tasmania and said "we hear you have fox problem, we are here to help".

Yeah here to help ourselves.

This visit was before the public expose of 'The Examiner' fox photo 29th July 2001 and the claimed Symmons plains fox shooting September 13th 2001 which were both well after the "WE HEAR YOU HAVE A FOX PROBLEM". How did they know we had a "fox problem"? Previous media was 1998 with the alleged fox escape in Burnie from the container ship 'City of Port Melbourne' May 1998. Had there been collusion between Hobart and Canberra ? In my opinion there had been.

Over the years millions of taxpayers dollars have been wasted on scat testing Institute of Applied Ecology' Canberra (\$522,000.00 one year alone Refer Hansard) 1080 baits, attractant lures etc etc.

However (Professor) Peacock stated in sworn evidence at the 2009 PAC Inquiry 14th August 2009 where Peacock said to Ruth Forest MLC that there was about six dollars in Royalty involved:

From the PAC official Hansard

Prof. PEACOCK -

"The other commercial offshoot is Animal Control Technologies and again that is completely wrong. Animal Control Technologies is a company in Melbourne owned by Dr Linton Staples and his family. They are an important member of this CRC but I have no ownership, nor does the CRC. We have a single licence with them on a product called

PIGOUT. If you were baiting for pigs in Tasmania, I would get a very small royalty to this CRC that I then pass on to the owners of the previous CRC. Last year I wrote a cheque for \$6 for the University of Adelaide.”

Ms FORREST - “They would have welcomed that.”

Prof. PEACOCK - “I think it’s important to the University of Adelaide these days.”
Laughter.

Prof. PEACOCK - “So I read these claims and I think, ‘What is this person smoking?’”
End Hansard.

While a Police Investigation is welcomed a Royal Commission would also be appropriate.

The thuggery and deceit by all involved who obviously never calculated on the knowledge, perseverance and computer stored records...did they?

Posted by Ian Rist on 30/09/16 at 10:54 AM

5. Re: comment 4 - a correction - the Invasive Animal CRC CEO that is referred to as giving evidence to the Parliamentary Accounts Committee in 2009 was Dr (Professor) Tony Peacock (not David Peacock).

Posted by David Obendorf on 30/09/16 at 12:28 PM

6. Re correction # 5 I was agreeing with you on the other fox thread David. The sentence is “Yes David, (Professor) Peacock has a lot of explaining to do.”
In my haste I omitted a comma, therefor I did not use the correct punctuation for indicating a division in the sentence.

I did, however, stipulate at the beginning of comment # 4 this thread.
“A previous comment modified and also appropriate on this thread.”

Posted by Ian Rist on 30/09/16 at 03:29 PM

7. #5 Do you mean the ‘Pest Professor’ who is frequently cited in media? Is he the ‘certified Pest Professor’.

<http://thecertifiedpestprofessor.com>

Is that him?

Posted by Jack Jolly on 30/09/16 at 04:00 PM

8. The released documents show DPIPWE did not meet some of the pledges made in its reporting obligations to Commonwealth Environment Department in 2013.

Their failure to investigate several reported sightings is a breach of the fox program plan for which they obtained ~\$500,000 p.a. from the Commonwealth from 1 July 2013 onwards (for 4 years).

The ‘Funding Agreement’ between the Commonwealth and Tasmania on this program would likely specify any obligations (and penalties for breaches) attached to the funding.

Has that ‘Funding Agreement’ been obtained?

NOTE: This funding was announced during the tenure of the State Labor Government and was first publicised 10 days out from the federal election on 7 September 2013. A \$2 million funding allocation to DPIPWE. Within months the incoming Liberal Government had disbanded the fox program as an election promise made prior to the March 2014 State election.

Posted by David Obendorf on 30/09/16 at 04:42 PM

9. “A man should be upright, not be kept upright.” - Marcus Aurelius Antoninus

Hold on to your hats folks. Here comes a scat blizzard a literal s... storm. It remains to be seen where this will end up, who or what will be sacrificed, placed in stocks, flogged or worse. Or maybe not, perhaps golden parachutes are in order. Whatever inquiry eventuates, if any, will it touch upon the costs of this 15 year \$70,000,000 saga? Don’t expect a peep from the Minister(s) for DPIPWE, so-called public servants, the Police Chief, fat slow union(s), the Dalai Lama or Kim Jong-Un, even God is taking a sickie today.

Perhaps we could all simply telephone our elected representatives and cozy public servants in say National Parks & Wildlife (Southern & Northern District Rangers). Failing that pop into State Development and ask for the gang from DPIPWE. If your tastes run to the more upmarket hop on a first class flight to the UN in New York and chat to our Senators conveniently away for three months on urgent cafe/art research. Maybe the CPSU. Any sitting State Labor or Green member. Any Tassie Senator. Yep just walk right up and ask the following;

“When and where were you first approached by serving DPIPWE officer(s) concerned about irregularities with the Fox programme and DPIPWE more broadly? Did you do your duty as a well paid elected representative/public service officer/public service executive/union official/Police Officer/Minister, or, did you do absolutely nothing, or worse? Why have you not submitted your immediate letter of resignation?

Then we can move onto evidence manipulation, false testimony, broken lives and careers, bent public servants, vicious serving and ex-police officers, gutless public servants, bullies, bastards, liars, pyromaniac wildlife incinerators, serial wildlife poisoners, profiteers, cozy relationships, juicy contracts, nepotism, over

\$600,000,000 unaccounted for over thirty years, etc. etc.

You can betcha bottom dollar even the witches, satanists, atheists and agnostics in State development/DPIPWE are down on their knees praying for their Bush-Fire Season construct to kick off asap. Nothing else will save them except perhaps declaring a tax free zone on the east coast incorporating a vast diesel powered Russ Hinze model Gold Coast style Huon Council/Swansea concrete, combination petroleum fracking, wood-chip, salmon fuelled, 2000 berth golf/yacht club marina, bordello, retirement home/crematorium, quoll-burger drive through cafe, laundry bank, sewerage treatment works/vinyard, thylacine genetic research lab/satellite UTAS campus/1080 research facility. Built by and staffed with Indians on 457 visas, and whores for the fat ones. Funded by the Abbott/Hockey HECS Centrelink debt recovery sustainable organic human kidney export scheme to Red Communist China.

There remain 24 to 168 hours to confess or otherwise. Or maybe not, perhaps events will overtake us all.

Nothing to see here, go about your business, move along, or else. Is that right Minister(s)?

Posted by O'Brien on 01/10/16 at 03:34 AM

10. No wonder Chris Clarke from The Examiner is having difficulty with the Federal Environment Department:

<http://www.examiner.com.au/story/4199477/office-weighs-in-on-fox-fraud/?cs=5312>

<http://www.zoominfo.com/p/Charlie-Zammit/474810729>

Charlie Zammit had some severe altercations with myself and Eric Abetz in the Senate over foxes...he is one of the foxes are here, foxes are everywhere brigade.

He was and I believe still is on the Tasmanian FFTF, FEP Steering committee.

Glad I also kept some correspondence addressed to myself on Federal Environment letterheads from Mr Charlie Zammit.

Some Federal Senate Hansard makes interesting reading also.

Posted by Ian Rist on 01/10/16 at 09:06 AM

11. Well done O'Brien at comment # 9, very clever.

I have said for quite some time that the 'clean skins' should cut the fraudsters loose, let the cards fall where they may.

Do it while you can or risk your own careers, don't get caught in the scat stain.

This is bigger than Ben Hur and everyone knows that.

It will not go away, you can count on that.

Posted by Ian Rist on 01/10/16 at 09:27 AM

12. The Australian Crime Commission (ACC) and the Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC) have far reaching powers to summons people to give evidence. A right of silence does not apply within those commissions.

132 hours tic toc.

Posted by O'Brien on 02/10/16 at 04:35 AM

13. I can understand the incredulity of O'Brien and Ian Rist that the Tassie Fox caper hasn't roused the ire of the country's courts and relevant regulatory bodies.

I felt the same, until my application for leave to appeal to the High Court against a Tas SC AC judgment on a forestry issue was astonishingly refused by Justices Gummow and Kiefel without any reference to any of the grounds of appeal or to any legal authorities aside from Tas SC comments in the judgment being appealed.

We are now familiar with entities too big to fail. In the same family are those too embarrassing to fail.

John Hayward

Posted by john hayward on 02/10/16 at 08:41 AM

14. Hopefully sometime this coming week Tasmanians will find out whether the formal complaint lodged by MLC Ivan Dean will be progressed by the State.

Documents internal to the workings of the Fox Eradication Program and its funding agreements with the Commonwealth are understood to be part of the complaint.

Unless there is an independent investigation of the numerous anomalies in the use of physical evidence, the broader community will never know what occurred.

It is acknowledged that incoming governments inherit a public service established under previous governments. And it is noteworthy that the publicly-funded fox program emerged during the 16 year period of Labor rule (1998 to 2014) in Tasmania. Issues of Ministerial governance, the conduct of the program's operation [DPIPWE], its scientific oversight [the Technical Advisory Panel to the Fox Eradication Program] and agreements with the Invasive Animals CRC are all likely to be matters of particular interest to any

ongoing investigation. Thank you.

Posted by David Obendorf on 02/10/16 at 10:15 AM

15. Usually the department Secretary or a delegate would sign funding agreements to accept Commonwealth monies provided to a State Department. This is the usual convention for Commonwealth grants to State Departments.

So, why did the Tasmanian Minister for Environment **Brian Wightman** sign the 2013 Fox Program *funding agreement* for \$2 million from the Commonwealth over the financial years 2013 to 2017 and not a Department official?

Posted by David Obendorf on 02/10/16 at 11:38 PM

16. Camera traps, being relatively inexpensive and simple to manage, would produce a wealth of information about wildlife activity, especially if integrated into wider research and management activities. Too much time spent writing flowcharts and not enough actual conversation and field work perhaps?

Posted by Mick Kenny on 03/10/16 at 12:40 AM

17. Mick, [comment 16] the Tasmanian Land Conservancy as well as the Save the Devil program and numerous NRM projects have used cameras around the State to monitor wildlife. Even the Fox Eradication Program is on the record as using over one hundred cameras over many years deploying them at their so-called 'hot spot' locations.

Posted by David Obendorf on 03/10/16 at 08:37 AM

18. During Ministerial appointment circa 2013 Mr Whiteman was presented with concerns of programme irregularities, threats of violent assault within DPIPW, management/executive inaction, the usual things in his Hobart office with DPIPW HR officer present. No response was apparent apart from blank stare. DPIPW HR officer now retired refused to respond despite repeated requests. Further enquiries were directed to the member's northern office. No response was forthcoming. Most working men would expect more from the Australian Labour Party ... lightweight pansies.

Posted by O'Brien on 03/10/16 at 10:18 AM

19. Thanks for that clarification David. I had read of camera traps being used with the Devil work.

Posted by Mick Kenny on 03/10/16 at 11:43 AM

20. #16/#17

Gents, I think that you are both forgetting that Tasmanian foxes, according to our local experts, live at such a low density and are so crafty that they can't be detected by technology that routinely works on the mainland.

The only way to detect a Tasmanian fox is by the mono-crap calling cards. But only one crap can be found at a time. Like quantum mechanical particles they turn up in unexpected places too, like Bruny Island.

The quantum logic of the eradication program was also built one crap at a time.

You see, quantum foxes can be here and not here at the same time. A fox in a box can be both alive or dead in the quantum funding world. The only way to work this out for certain is to find out how much money the Commonwealth is willing to pay in order for a state government employee to lift the lid and take a look. If the Commonwealth has paid lots of money the fox is alive. If Commonwealth money runs out, the fox is dead.

This is a bit like the 'double slit experiment' (let's call it the 'double shit' experiment in the case of Tasmanian foxes). If you try to observe a Tasmanian fox this causes the funding wave function to collapse. Because of the well known 'Tasmanian fox uncertainty principle' the position of an actual fox cannot be known once you have determined the amount of money the Commonwealth has given you.

In short, you can't know the quantum of funding that the Commonwealth will give you and the position of a fox at the same time.

I hope this helps.

Posted by Jack on 03/10/16 at 12:30 PM

21. "It is the invariable habit of bureaucracies, at all times and everywhere, to assume...that every citizen is a criminal. Their one apparent purpose, pursued with a relentless and furious diligence, is to convert the assumption into a fact. They hunt endlessly for proofs, and, when proofs are lacking, for mere suspicions. The moment they become aware of a definite citizen, Reynard O'Brien, seeking what is his right under the law, they begin searching feverishly for an excuse for withholding it from him."
—H. L. Mencken

Posted by O'Brien on 03/10/16 at 06:00 PM

22. Where are the defenders of the fox realm? The ones that had so much to say when they were claiming foxy was here there and everywhere?
You know the ones that were claiming foxy was going to murder all those lambs, chooks and little children. Now there was Squirrel fish, Paulie, Black dog and his brother Black bob, Black rat, Rat is back, Wood duck, Real deal, John Connor, Geoff. Rollins, Rasberry, Mulder, Henry the plumber, Bob Holderness-Roddam, Jon

Sumby, Garry Stannus, Kevin Bonham, Nick Mooney, Margie Raynor, Tony Peacock, Steve.....

But how many of these were the same person?

I reckon one day soon we may find out?

For those that had so much to say they are strangely quiet. Why is that Julius Sumner Miller?

Posted by Ian Rist on 03/10/16 at 07:36 PM

23. Sorry Ian (#22), I'm just me, never been anyone else and always been as honest as I can be, to myself and to others. I remember Bob Hawke, being interviewed, before becoming Leader of the Opposition and thus before becoming PM, saying on radio how he had never told 'a public lie'. Back in the 'good old days', when Kevin B. fought back against all and sundry, he would have called your comment obvious 'trolling'. And just in passing, I'm on the mainland at the moment and my internet access is limited. Of course I do want to make some comment on this fox article, but you know me, I prefer to inform myself first, and secondly I like to reference whatever I do write.

So I've been taking what few free moments I have to go back over Simon Fearn's draft report, you know, the one which mentioned 5 scats, two of which "*resemble bird pellets more than they do typical carnivore scats.*" It's an interesting report (see RTI 063) but it's disappointing to see how virtually all the sceptics (if you don't mind me using that term, Ian) who comment on the fox issue from time to time, in my opinion manage to see only what will serve their 'Corrupt Tasmania' standpoint and leave aside anything to the contrary. Just from memory, Simon Fearn seemed to think that use of imported scats was unlikely ... he said ... hang on I'll look it up ... ah, here it is ...

Accusations of hoaxing of scat evidence in Tasmania are persistent from some vocal critics of the FEB. To bring scats in from the mainland and plant them in the Tasmanian landscape would entail taking the enormous risk that such scats contained easily identifiable remains of insect taxa that do not occur in Tasmania.

and concluded...

the author has found no evidence of hoaxing of scats in this study.

Apart from being time poor just at this moment, Ian, I have also hesitated to comment on this thread for a number of other reasons. Just look at the personal attacks that I received for examining the claims of scientific weakness which Prof. Sarre made against the so called 'independent scientists' group. You were one of them, Ian, and it reached the point on that 'both sides stumped' thread where the Editor contacted me privately and asked me not to make any further comments and I believe he did so not because I was out of line with anything that I'd written, but that the reactions that were coming from 'your side' were.

Then there were the article threads where I went away and researched stuff, prepared a comprehensive comment, only to see the Editor close the thread down because of the poor online behaviour of some of the commenters. And in my opinion, those poor behaviours came mainly from 'your side' and not from me.

So have we are in another 'on-again, off-again' cycle where the Editor one moment says he'll never post another fox article, next moment says he'll not allow comments on any fox article, and now strangely, in my opinion, has let 'your side' make a mess of the thread on that "*Was NZ's OSPRI the successful business model for the Tasmanian false-fox program ... ? - See more at:*

<http://www.tasmaniantimes.com/index.php/article-index/P21#sthash.snEu3RQL.dpuf>". I think that an impartial look at the comments so far on our present thread would speak for itself.

When I get back to Tas, and resume my normal daily routine, I'll be able (I presume) to make an informed comment on the necessary TT article that will come when the Police announce whether or not they will formally investigate the allegations of fraud that have come from your side and which have been brought to TasPol's attention by Ivan Dean. My own guess is that there will be no formal investigation. I base this on initial police reluctance to respond to the initial receipt of the dossier, and also on their decision, only-under-pressure to 'review' the dossier and Ivan Dean's request for an investigation. Of course, I could well be wrong, and the announcement might be that a formal investigation will occur. 'Fraud' does seem possible, and you would be aware that Simon's draft report did point the finger at specific FEP officers. In the few opportunities presently available to me, Ian, I have been analysing those officers' use of the imported scats (in that Rockliff FOI release which you kindly made available to me those few years ago. So far, I've not found anything which I can use as an 'Ah ha!' moment. In saying so, I have found evidence of 'backfilling' in one or two of my namesake's records. As to his occasional workplace partner, who I knew personally in the 90s, I would hate to think that person capable of deliberate falsification. I shall just have to wait for the police announcement and for subsequent events to unfold.

/...

Posted by garrystannus@hotmail.com on 04/10/16 at 10:13 AM

24. .../

Lastly—and briefly—I'm puzzled by the headline 'Off the back of a truck'. What material presented in this article was off the back of a truck? I'm on the run, at the moment, but it can't be those 3 RTI releases themselves (which are in the public domain), can it?

Postscript: Lindsay, if some of my comment is legally sensitive and if you need to 'edit' it, could you include an 'edited for legal considerations' note? and allow my postscript to remain?

Posted by garrystannus@hotmail.com on 04/10/16 at 10:14 AM

25. Can I please seek O'Brien's indulgence [comment 18]? He writes as only an DPIPWE employee could precisely know:

'During Ministerial appointment circa 2013 Mr Whiteman [sic] was presented with concerns of

programme irregularities, threats of violent assault within DPIPWE, management/executive inaction, the usual things in his Hobart office with DPIPWE HR officer present.'

Now, that is new information and I hope the Tasmania police inspector interviewed you Mr O'Brien. Your comment relates to a public servant bringing a legitimate OH&S issue to the attention of Minister Wightman in the presence of a DPIPWE human resources official [unnamed]. I trust you have kept records of that significant interaction.

'No response was apparent apart from blank stare. DPIPWE HR officer now retired refused to respond despite repeated requests. Further enquiries were directed to the member's northern office [i.e. Mr Wightman]. No response was forthcoming. Most working men would expect more from the Australian Labour Party ... lightweight pansies.'

Brian Wightman no longer sits in the State Parliament after losing his seat in the March 2014 State election.

And regarding your comment #21 - Franz Kafka made the same deduction in his novel 'The Trial'. Thank you for commenting Mr O'Brien.

Posted by David Obendorf on 04/10/16 at 10:27 AM

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Penelope Marshall

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