

Nick Gascoigne's (DEH) response to Letter to the Editor from J. Bennett, published in the February 2007 edition of Talking Birds.

The Department facilitated the establishment of the Exotic Birdkeepers Advisory Group (EBAG) based on representation suggested at a workshop hosted by the Department in December 2005.

The idea of establishing a group to advise the Department on the lack of record keeping by people who have purchased exotic birds, and acceptable standards for record keeping was suggested by birdkeepers at the December 2005 workshop.

Twenty one nominations were received from the birdkeeping sector.

The Department selected five members from those nominated. Nominations included people who had not attended the 2005 workshop.

The Department decided on the initial membership taking account of representation that would most likely be successful in enhancing the development of the exotic bird sector.

Recent active involvement of associations and individual nominees in relevant issues was a major factor in deciding the membership. At the time it was clear that the advisory group would be dealing with the specific issues identified and all exotic bird species.

The Department has supported the five EBAG meetings by chairing EBAG and providing secretariat support, and securing Natural Heritage Trust funding for this financial year.

This has enabled EBAG to identify and develop options and seek comment on proposals from across the exotic birdkeeping sector.

All EBAG members have put in considerable time and effort to help develop options.

A major aspect of EBAG's work has been providing opportunities for public comment, for example, through invitation to comment on proposals, and through public meetings hosted by different birdkeeping associations and societies.

These opportunities have helped clarify the EBAG proposal for standard record keeping and how species could be classified for record keeping purposes.

The revised EBAG record keeping proposal is available for comment until 2 February 2007 on the Department's website at:

<http://www.deh.gov.au/biodiversity/trade-use/exoticbirds/have-your-say.html>