

Inquiry into the problem of feral and domestic cats in Australia
Submission 58 - Supplementary Submission
Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy
Answers to questions on notice
Agriculture, Water and the Environment Portfolio

Committee: Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy
Inquiry: Inquiry into the problem of feral and domestic cat
Question No: 1
Hearing Date: 26 August 2020
Division/Agency: Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
Topic: Funding for wild dog control and feral cat control
Question Date: 14 September 2020
Question Type: Written

The Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy asked:

1. Some submissions have pointed to a disparity in funding for wild dog control and feral cat control. Can you supply the Committee with the details and quantum of Commonwealth funding for the control of each feral species.

Answer:

Feral cats

The Australian Government has committed at least \$22 million towards projects that have a primary focus on addressing the problem of predation by feral cats since 2014.

There are additional projects that have been funded since 2014 that include a component of feral cat management. These are not included in this total commitment as the dollar value of the feral cat component has not been separately identified in those projects. More information on feral cat projects funded by the Australian Government can be found in the Department's submission to this inquiry.

Wild dogs

The Australian Government has invested \$57.5 million in wild dog management since 2014, with \$39.1 million of this funding allocated to assist state and local governments, industry and landholders with the construction of wild dog fences to protect livestock from wild dog predation. Other departmental wild dog management funded activities include national coordination, capacity building and research, development and extension (RD&E) projects, noting some of the below activities are multi species focussed i.e. wild dogs, feral cats, foxes. As noted above some projects have multiple goals where the funding for each project is not broken down into each component so the funding should not be interpreted as entirely for wild dog management activities.

Projects and funding are summarised below with further detail on the projects at Table A.

Implementation of the National Wild Dog Action Plan (NWDAP)	\$2.2 million
○ \$1.6 million for Stage 1 and 2	
○ \$0.6 million for Stage 3	
Wild dog fencing – including the SA wild dog fence	\$39.1 million
○ \$10 million for SA wild dog exclusion fencing	
○ \$1 million for WA wild dog exclusion fencing	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>\$12.1 million for wild dog exclusion fencing (White paper Drought pest and weed program)</i> ○ <i>\$5 million for wild dog exclusion fencing (MDB Economic Development program)</i> ○ <i>\$8.3 million for wild dog exclusion fencing (Communities Drought Round 1)</i> ○ <i>\$1.7 million for wild dog exclusion fencing (Communities Drought Round 2)</i> ○ <i>\$1 million for WA wild dog exclusion fencing</i> 	
Other wild dog management investment (Including best practice workshops, coordination, guidelines and manuals, baiting)	\$10.4 million
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>\$3.5 million (White paper Drought pest and weed program)</i> ○ <i>\$5.6 million (White paper established pest and weeds measure)</i> ○ <i>\$1.3 million (Communities Drought Round 2)</i> 	
Management tools and innovations, including through the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions	\$4.9 million
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>\$1 million for wild dog alert</i> ○ <i>\$1.6 million for control tool grants</i> ○ <i>\$2.3 million to the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions</i> 	
Wild dog management in WA (non-fencing)	\$0.4 million
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>\$0.1 million for implementation of the WA Wild Dog Action Plan</i> ○ <i>\$0.3 million for WA Indigenous ranger pest management training pilot</i> 	
Support to Regional Landcare Program Service Providers for Emergency Pest Mitigation and Habitat Protection (Phase One and Phase 2)	Up to \$0.45 million

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Committee: Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy
Inquiry: Inquiry into the problem of feral and domestic cat
Question No: 2
Hearing Date: 26 August 2020
Division/Agency: Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
Topic: What are the aspects of the current Threatened Species Strategy that specifically go to the issue of habitat loss/restoration
Question Date: 14 September 2020
Question Type: Written

The Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy asked:

2. In a research paper provided to the inquiry by Dr Tim Doherty, Euan Ritchie, et al, it is observed that the Threatened Species Strategy mentions feral cats 70 times, but only mentions habitat loss twice, and does not mention land clearing. The paper states: "It is possible that a focus on feral cats serves as a high profile target that distracts attention away from more politically sensitive issues (e.g. climate change and habitat loss)." What are the aspects of the current Threatened Species Strategy that specifically go to the issue of habitat loss/restoration?

Please refer to section 4 in this [published article](#) regarding the points made above.

Answer:

The Australian Government's Threatened Species Strategy recognises that habitat loss is a key threat to threatened species. For example, page 13 of the Strategy states: 'The key threats are well known and include: pressures from invasive species such as feral cats and weeds, inappropriate fire regimes, loss of habitat and a changing climate' To address this, improving habitat is one of the four Key Action Areas in the Threatened Species Strategy, alongside tackling feral cats, safe havens for species most at risk and emergency intervention to avert extinctions.

Through the implementation of the Threatened Species Strategy, many projects are focused on connecting habitat and improving the quality of habitat used by threatened species. Projects that support habitat restoration activities and benefit threatened species have been undertaken through programs such as 20 Million Trees, Regional Land Partnerships program and the Environment Restoration Fund. Examples of these projects are in Threatened Species Strategy reports that are published on the website at:
www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/publications/strategy-home

There are also targets under the Strategy that contribute towards improving habitat such as recovery actions underway for Threatened Ecological Communities.

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Committee: Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy
Inquiry: Inquiry into the problem of feral and domestic cat
Question No: 3
Hearing Date: 26 August 2020
Division/Agency: Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
Topic: How many of the 41 mammal and bird species now have conservation advice or a recovery plan in place
Question Date: 14 September 2020
Question Type: Written

The Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy asked:

3. The Threatened Species Strategy Year 3 report notes that of the 41 target mammal and bird species, there were recovery plans or conservation advices in place for only 33 species. Can we have an update on how many of the 41 mammal and bird species now have conservation advice or a recovery plan in place?

Answer:

1. All EPBC Act listed priority mammal and bird species identified in the Threatened Species Strategy have either a recovery plan or a conservation advice in place guiding recovery action. The Department is currently assessing progress towards the year five target to have up-to-date conservation advices or recovery plans in place for all high priority species and ecological communities.

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Committee: Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy
Inquiry: Inquiry into the problem of feral and domestic cat
Question No: 4
Hearing Date: 26 August 2020
Division/Agency: Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
Topic: How many of the 30 plant species now have a conservation advice or recovery plan in place
Question Date: 14 September 2020
Question Type: Written

The Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy asked:

4. The Threatened Species Strategy Year 3 report notes that of the 30 target plants species, there were recovery plans or conservation advice in place for only 13 species. Can we have an update on how many of the 30 plant species now have a conservation advice or recovery plan in place?

Answer:

1. All EPBC Act listed priority plant species identified in the Threatened Species Strategy have either a recovery plan or a conservation advice in place guiding recovery action. The Department is currently assessing progress towards the year five target to have up-to-date conservation advices or recovery plans in place for all high priority species and ecological communities.