

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice
Environment and Energy portfolio

Question No: 43
Hearing: Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1
Program: Biodiversity Conservation Division (BCD)
Topic: World's biggest predator proof fenced area – feral cats
Hansard Page: 61
Question Date: 22 May 2017
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Reynolds asked:

Mr Andrews: In addition to Kangaroo Island, at Newhaven sanctuary run by Australian Wildlife Conservancy, which already has dozens of species and 27 mammals, we will be building the world's biggest predator proof fenced area. So the strategy is not only establishing the largest ever island eradication of feral cats but also the largest ever fenced area in the world to protect species from feral cats. I can table this document. It has my scribbles on it, but my team will give me a fresh copy.

CHAIR: I am happy for you to table a fresh copy when one is available. Thank you.

Answer:

See attached fact sheet on feral cats.

Threatened Species Strategy – Feral Cats

Facts

- The science shows feral cats are the highest threat to Australia's mammals. Their threat factor is almost 3 times higher than habitat loss and 32 times higher than wood harvesting.
- Feral cats have directly driven 22 native Australian species to extinction including the smaller of our two bilbies, the desert bandicoot and the rusty numbat. They have contributed to a further six of our total 30 mammal extinctions since European settlement.
- Millions of feral cats have spread across 99.8% of Australia, from our highest mountains in Kosciuszko National Park to the middle of the Gibson Desert. They put extinction pressure on 124 unique Australian threatened species - like Mala wallaby, the Night parrot, the Golden bandicoot, the Kangaroo Island dunnart and the Hooded plover.
- On average, each feral cat kills at least 1000 Australian animals per annum – from small insects to mid-sized wallabies. A conservative estimate of their national damage is 6 million Australian animal deaths per day. This translates to an astounding 2.1 billion deaths per annum.
- The Threatened Species Strategy and feral cat targets are supported by the RSPCA which is also a member of the Feral Cat Taskforce chaired by the Threatened Species Commissioner.

Targets

- The Threatened Species Strategy includes ambitious and measurable targets to tackle feral cats.
 - 2 million feral cats culled humanely, effectively and justifiably by 2020
 - Establishing five islands free of feral cats by 2020.
 - : Dirk Hartog Island, Christmas Island, Kangaroo Island, Bruny Island and French Island (KI will be the biggest in the world).
 - Construction of 10 feral predator proof fenced areas by 2020 (including Newhaven in the Northern Territory which will be the biggest in the world).
 - Best practice feral cat control across 12 million hectares in open landscapes – equivalent to the area of 6.7 million Melbourne Cricket Grounds. This includes Indigenous hunting, shooting, baiting and trapping.

Feral cats - action

- Since 2014 the Australian Government has mobilised more than \$30 million to support implementation of the targets. Examples include:
 - \$1.7 million is delivering feral cat baiting across 850,000 ha in Western Australia and protecting Gilbert's potoroo, the Western ground parrot, the Numbat, Woylie and Warru (black-footed rock-wallaby).
 - The largest fenced predator proof area in the world is under construction at Newhaven Sanctuary in the Northern Territory with a \$750,000 grant supporting Australian Wildlife Conservancy's construction. This will protect at least 12 threatened species including Bilbies, Night parrots, Golden bandicoots, and Mala hare wallabies
 - \$500 000 for Island-wide eradication of feral cats on Christmas Island, supporting the endangered Christmas Island frigate bird and Abbotts Booby.
 - \$500,000 for Bruny Island has kick started its feral cat eradication program and is supporting eastern quolls, swift parrots and spotted pardalotes.
 - \$500,000 has kick-started feral cat eradication on Kangaroo Island, including trial of innovative techniques like cat grooming traps. Once completed Kangaroo Island will be the largest feral cat island eradication in the world.
 - \$250,000 is supporting development of the Hisstory® bait which will be deployed broad-scale in Northern Australia throughout the Kimberley.

\$100,000 has supported development of the first feral cat grooming traps which use paint-ball technology and algorithms, sensors and software to distinguish between native species and feral cats and spray poison on the cats which licks it off and die.
 - \$140,000 has deployed specialist detector dogs in Kosciusko National Park to sniff out cats and protecting mountain pygmy-possums, Koonooms and Koalas.
 - \$120,000 with Zoos Victoria who are deploying guardian dogs to protect the eastern-barred bandicoot which was once thought to be extinct on the mainland.
- In addition, the Australian Government has invested more than \$4 million in the development of the new Curiosity® feral cat bait.
- The \$50 million Threatened Species Prospectus launched by Minister Josh Frydenberg in February 2016 has 24 projects worth \$27 million which tackle feral cats.
- The \$5 million Threatened Species Recovery Fund has already supported three projects worth \$900,000 tackling feral cats and Minister Josh Frydenberg announced an open round of the fund worth \$4.1 million on 5 May. Projects tackling feral cats will be eligible and are highly encouraged in this funding round.

Links

- Threatened Species Commissioner video on why Australia is controlling feral cats
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUjli3P42xl&feature=youtu.be>
- The Threatened Species Strategy, including targets for feral cats, mammals, birds, plants and recovery practices: www.environment.gov.au/ts-strategy
- The Threatened Species Prospectus, which is mobilising private sector investment in threatened species, is at
<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/publications/threatened-species-prospectus>
- Threatened Species Commissioner's 2016 report:
<http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/dc0680d1-c280-4500-8cc3-b071fda69d34/files/threatened-species-strategy-year-one-report.pdf>
- FAQ about feral cat control, why we need to do it, and why trap, neuter, release does not work, is at <http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/bb591b82-1699-4660-8e75-6f5612b21d5f/files/factsheet-tackling-feral-cats-and-their-impacts-faqs.pdf>
- Threatened Species Commissioner video on why so-called Trap Neuter Release (TNR) would be inhumane to the feral cats and our wildlife.
<https://www.facebook.com/TSCCommissioner/videos/1653152638308769/>
- Threatened Species Commissioner Facebook post on why TNR is inhumane, ineffective and unjustifiable
<https://www.facebook.com/TSCCommissioner/photos/a.1391479064476129.1073741828.1385221958435173/1575925576031476/?type=3&theater>