

## **Shared Problem, Shared Solutions, Pest Animal Management Review (Draft Report March 2016)**

Due to lack of notice of this report's existence and therefore time to respond, I am not writing a formulated response – instead I have noted down bullet-points in no order for your consideration. Many points raised are ways to support re “P5, iv. people are .....need to be supported to ensure they are fully engaged...”.

- I found out less than a week before the scheduled meeting was to be held at Grafton. I hope that communication channels will be greatly improved for this project otherwise failure of engaging all on-ground community groups is certain and overall outcomes of pest animal management will not be achieved.
- Relying on existing channels of knowledge needs to be reviewed and strengthened. This can be done by initially having a team of co-ordinators to locate and talk with all community groups to determine their extent of involvement and knowledge of key people and/or groups in each LGA area. Then a comprehensive picture of community resources available, successes, views, tools required, etc can be gained. The LGA Co-ordinator must go to the groups and not rely on a response from a newspaper ad, and this must include Shire Councils thoughts and problems. The Co-ordinator can find out all LGA projects and give best results as case studies for other areas to review and perhaps adopt. This Draft Report has received information from some groups but comprehensive information gathering in each LGA will provide a basis for solid decisions. These individual LGA reports could also be a useful tool kit for citizens, community groups etc to utilise for support and assistance.
- “Non-indigenous” example P7, pt 5 or P11 pt 23i. There is no definition of what this refers to. Many of our wildlife migrate from overseas to Australia so technically they are “Non-indigenous”. Why cannot the word “introduced” be used?
- Mandatory information from real estate agents to be given to prospective home buyers or renters to educate people of their obligations as a landowner before they buy “a piece of Australia on which they expect to do as they please”. Landholders/renters requirements outlined in regard to pest animals, weeds, and pet control including desexing etc. Tree-changers need to be made aware of their responsibilities and also what agencies can provide assistance.
- Education in schools of pest animals versus native animals.
- P2 “making all stakeholders more accountable.....”. Ideally – yes, but don't wave a stick otherwise communication lines can close. State government should offer assistance and not seem to always threaten fines.
- Mitigation teams (perhaps work for dole) made available for landowners who are able to manage pests – free to disabled, a reasonable fee to absentee owners. An elderly person still living on property will seek help if they know it is available and without penalty if they cannot control a pest eg rabbits. However if they think that a fine and large costs are to occur, then the pest problem is ignored and continues to go unchecked, fester and grow.
- Give Shire Councils free legal and expert assistance if they wish to introduce strategies towards managing pests. Eg Clarence Valley (CV) Council in 2014/15 wrote a Draft Keeping Animals policy. It

certainly would have complemented your draft to make pet owners more responsible and reinforced micro-chipping, desexing and the need to keep pets within the confines of the pet owner's property. It was then deemed an illegal document and nothing come of it. If implementation assistance was available from the State and also a State document/ruling was in place for councils to shield behind, then more could be achieved toward pest management.

- Provide euthanasing alternatives. People may be willing to trap but cannot euthanase so the opportunity and resource is lost. Many people may understand the necessity of trapping to protect the environment (or whatever else they hold dear) but do not have access to humane euthanasing – need to provide euthanasing centres.
- I know of and have participated in trapping cats – Hornsby shire 1980's and Bathurst 2013. CV Council do not want to have a cat trapping program as it causes stress on the rangers at time of euthanasing and so rangers are on stress leave.
- There does not seem to be a program/system for rangers to remove stray cats – eg at a shopping centre, a stray cat is fed by locals as they feel sorry for it as it cannot be housed and it just roams! Someone would like to give it a home but cannot coax it to safety so it still just roams!
- LGA councils must have a management plan for trapping cats. It is then the rangers who determine and arrange: the cat is a pet, so it may be returned to its owner (following desexing and micro-chipping); stray cats may find homes; and most importantly, unwanted cats can be euthanased humanely.  
Currently, citizens can have access to cat traps; neighbour hostilities can occur; drowning cats in the trap is usually the only option – not a satisfactory program.
- Target the cause then the symptoms - Feral cats and dogs, start with the pet owners. Fix the cause, then the consequences will reduce. Need education that there are strict and enforceable laws including confinement of pets in yards and that their pets can become pests. I agree that all cats and dogs must be desexed unless there is a reasonable submission for exception.
- P 14, pt 1.2 welcomed inclusion but probably will need funding and staff to police. Perhaps also make selling pet animals at markets illegal unless the seller is licensed. Tighten pet shop and cat/dog breeders' responsibilities. Set up ratio numbers - Re-home a percentage of unwanted cats, dogs, etc before the pet shop can qualify to sell a smaller percentage of bred animals. Recording animal details on a mandatory registration data system for each animal purchased.  
Need to have a system/centre whereby unwanted pet births can be taken care of (rehoming, euthanasing, etc) without fear of retribution, otherwise increased dumping and cruel disposal will occur.
- State needs an Ombudsman for pest management (similar to EPA for environmental concerns), so a citizen can have an avenue for assistance when there is no action from agencies such as councils regarding a pest issue.
- Enforce a “no-pet policy” in housing estates that are environmentally sensitive. Again, supply a law that councils can shield behind so they cannot yield to pressure to change original development application rulings. No one seems to question or rescind “no-children policy in housing estates” so it should be the same for no-pets policies.
- Make companies aware of obligations to pests control eg Energy companies to ensure hollow cross-beams on power poles are capped – this will prevent Indian Mynas from nesting inside. Have Environmental officers who can remove Indian Mynas from such nests and euthanase humanely.

Also encourage staff to report sightings of pests eg council workers out and about so they have the opportunity for sightings. Council workers at various work sites can also have great potential for trapping (mynas, cats, toads, etc) – need to include pests management in council work protocols to ensure an integrated program.

- New funding system – it should be for all ratepayers. Urban areas/cities are also breeding spots for foxes, rabbits, cats, dogs, mynas and cane toads. Except for cane toads, the suburbs of Sydney are examples of the above pest animals in high numbers. People need to start to understand that our wildlife is important and that it is not people's right to have a pet without taking into consideration impacts on the surrounding wildlife and co-existing with a pet.  
The mentality of some Sydney residents to encourage the decline in bandicoot numbers by assisting the survival of foxes because the ticks from bandicoots may kill their pet is ludicrous.  
In high population density, it is time to start educating people on co-existing and respecting each others' space and the environment of our wildlife. Cats, dogs, etc not roaming day or night, defecating, killing and making undue noise. This stems back to enforcing and tightening Animals Companion Act.
- Need to establish night rangers.
- Biosecurity Advisory Committee should also have an Ombudsman type role for management of problems/conflicts between agencies such as LLS, NPWS, State Forests and councils, etc. eg Rabbits are usually a rural problem so LLS is the dealing agency. However LLS cannot act in urban locations so when rabbits are a problem in urban areas, the problem is left unresolved as Council says that rabbits are not in their field so talk to LLS, and LLS say they only deal in rural areas so talk to council.  
Roles need to be defined and if possible consistency of roles per agency throughout NSW. Currently throughout the State there are many different agencies that deal with pest management differently so it can be a frustrating and time consuming event to seek help. For example under LLS direction, a lot of Landcare offices are involved in pest management such as rabbits and Indian Mynas by Granite Borders and other Northern Tableland Landcare groups. LLS can be, and certainly many NSW councils are, unaware of Myna trapping programs. Landcare does not have the staff to support such services to be effective or able to report on outcomes. Many staff already volunteer their own time to work demands.
- LLS seems to be the agency to encourage and enforce compliance (eg P40). There does not seem to be mention of how LLS will interact with other agencies regarding compliance.
- Also on P40, there is a hard-line to be applied to landholders – this hard-line should also be applied to pet owners and related industries. Without additional staff, can compliance be enforced?
- P44 pt ix – should include in LLS protocol/procedure of standards development etc that they must include to assist and oversee Council strategies.
- Need more on-ground staff across all agencies – LLS, Landcare, NPWS, State Forests.
- NSW Biosecurity Act 2015 should specify included species – pets, roosters, toads, ferrets, aquarium fish etc.

- **Hunting:**  
P11, pt 23, i. - the removal of hunters to be licensed is very dangerous. I do not want to know that I have a gun-enthusiast (red-neck) neighbour who will have shooting parties because “red tape has been removed”. The red tape is necessary and should not be removed. **HUNTERS MUST BE LICENSED.** It protects human life and also reinforces to the hunters that only introduced species are to be targeted.
- P11, pt 23, I – linking landholders to hunters or hunting organisations is a great idea. I could have used this service over the years. However without full promotion the idea will not be used eg need articles in rural newspapers, LLS newsletters, etc.  
P97 – Farmer Assist – never heard of it, another example of lack of communication/education.
- Hunters’ dogs must be desexed with an exception but with a limit of a maximum of two hunting dogs used for breeding.  
Hunters’ dogs must be registered and large penalties for not complying and also fined for leaving hunting dogs behind on properties.
- P95 – professional marksmen or registered hunting clubs can provide pest management outcomes in a humane manner and should be used in National Parks, etc. However they should work very closely with guidance or supervision from the NPWS or LLS rangers.
- P11, pt26, vi – perhaps conduct a survey initially after the first 3 years. This enables tweaking etc to be done without wasting another 2 years before the 5<sup>th</sup> year is reached. Then perhaps conduct 5 yearly surveys.
- “Impacts on threatened species” – I would like to see a break-up of fauna and flora species to compare apples with apples eg rabbits threatening 304 listed species is it mainly flora and if so how many flora species does the feral cat threaten.
- P50 – Risk of Impact: no new imports allowed; education a must for responsibilities; and assistance for agencies to implement regulations.  
Also “low –regulation optional”. Would prefer “regulation preferred”.
- P56 & 57 – one-stop-shop for notification of new sightings or something unusual.  
Education that there is an easy to use app available for sightings, detections. Need to convince people as to the reason for them to respond and what will be the result of them participating. Letting people know of immediate responses and outcomes (current and in the future) can create involvement and part ownership of results. It can decrease a perception of complacency and apathy to the public particularly when dealing with government agencies. Many people quietly do their own thing and others who participate in trapping programs are slack in reporting figures unless followed up. Individuals participate due to money, noise, destruction of garden, animals or environment, destruction of property so to engage the public, key people need to be located and supported by a LGA Co-ordinator to drive on-ground pest/weed management.
- P 69 Education: a lot of misconception of 1080 baits. If someone has cause to blame baiting which killed a non-target species then government should fund testing for the cause of death and be transparent in reporting the results. Proof to win over a victim of possible poisoning incident and this can result in positive feedback rather than possible

false and negative perceptions.

- P 71- 6.6 I would like to see “one-kill baits” stop being used for mice/rats or at least a warning given to advise the dangers to other non-target wildlife. Racumen mice/rat baits are less likely to kill snake, birds etc that eat a poisoned dead rodent.
- Exclusion fencing, whether to protect from cats P78 or other pest animals, is only a band-aid solution for the symptoms and not solving the cause. Controlling pets and pet industries, compulsory desexing etc as mentioned above should be a key objective whilst eradicating the existing feral population. Exclusion fencing is prohibitive to our native wildlife and probably can only be maintained for a short period of time as it restricts natural nomadic or territorial behaviour for survival and selective breeding. Wildlife sanctuaries or farmers who individually or collectively build exclusion fences are only supporting a short term solution. They should be encouraged to participate and involve neighbours on the other side of their own boundaries.
- A biological control would be sterilisation of pest animals. For domestic cat populations (and other domestic pets or farm animals), the only potential impact would be breeders so an inoculation to protect breeding stock would have to be available. This is probably years (or never) in the making and of course vigorous testing to ensure the safety of other wildlife and humans would not make this a quick solution but I have to mention it otherwise the future for our wildlife are zoos.
- P 79 – as previously mentioned LGAs need legislation laws to support the councils introduction of Regulation and planning for non-feral cats. Have a State Advisor Co-ordinator to assist LGAs in developing, implementing such measures together with funding and compliance/enforcement of legislation.
- P81 – Feral Cat Threat Abatement Plan: providing a system to report stray and feral cats is a great idea particularly if the data provided is acted on and results reported back to the initial ‘sightee’. Sending a CD full of numerous night cam shots of 20+ different straying cats in ones backyard or nearby reserve during a one night period to CV council is a waste of time!
- P82 Cat Confinement, as mentioned above, I strongly agree with P82, keeping in mind that there is a need for free of \$charge and a lawful change to surrender cats/kittens for humane euthanasing or rehoming without penalties. (This should also apply to other pets.)  
Education is important to change people’s perception that a roaming pet is a happy pet, whereas the opposite applies to desexed cats who are far healthier, content, less prone to fights and diseases by living inside under the right conditions.
- P88 – feral horses. Education to involve people who have feral horses visit their yards and consider it to be ok. This is an opportunity to receive sightings and to make residents understand that they may protect the environment and save the horses by providing access to the horses to be easily captured and relocated. This is not an ideal situation but it is motivation for citizens to get involved.
- P91 – totally agree with the last paragraph.
- P92-94, Indian Myna trapping programs: as a volunteer who is the co-ordinator of the CV Indian Myna trapping program for over 5 years, I am disappointed with the lack of knowledge that seems to be known of your review panel regarding other organisations and programs in NSW. This only highlights my previous points of the need for LGA co-

ordinators to document all known resources and thereby pooling information for other LGA's to learn from and instigate management programs without wasting time and resources in starting from scratch or trying to reinvent the wheel.

We have supplied traps to Byron, Tweed and Bathurst Shires including Landcare at Granite Borders, Armidale, Northern Services (Kyogle), Glenn Innes, Pittwater, Bulimba Qld. Apart from Clarence Valley, we have held workshops in Tenterfield, Drake, Stanthorpe Qld, Armidale, Glenn Innes, Bulimba Qld, Bathurst and Kyogle.

All LGAs operate differently and there is no current up-to-date register for help. I am often giving advice to groups or individuals who wish to do something about controlling mynas not only in NSW but Victoria and Queensland. Great potential to implement controls but lack of a co-ordinated approach from all agencies. Education is again a big factor. Some councils do not know what an Indian (Common) Myna is and then some agencies do not understand the need to educate the public not only as to the threat that mynas pose but how to identify the bird correctly.

- P98 – 7.6, I assume deer, feral pig and horse can also be used for bait?
- P104 – to compliment FeralScan which is for sightings there should be a trapping/euthanasing tallies register.  
As mentioned, Mouse Alert and other registers need to be promoted.
- P105 – 8.5 Standardising data protocols. Agree, as mentioned above should include outdoor workers such as Councils, State Forest, Energy companies, tourist guides to provide pest information. Also include in Health Inspectors' protocols to look at outside hygiene practices of restaurants and shops such as closing skip bins with food scraps, preventing food scraps to be accessed by rodents, cats, dogs, foxes and mynas. Educating State schools and including in protocols for garbage bins to have lids and children to dispose of food into bins.
- Recommendation 27. Be careful when using "mandatory". Data collection is a very time consuming job so salaried organisations will increase funding requests to cover such tasks. 'Mandatory' may not represent all data given so the reporting system needs to be flexible to allow for the organisation to clearly state its accuracy of information provided.

I do not enjoy life living in fear for my cattle or sheep or wildlife falling prey to pest animals.

I am sceptical that further analysis of feedback such as above will be done. A time-frame of feedback deadline of 18<sup>th</sup> May to June 2016 for consideration does not seem fair-dinkum. It gives the impression that the review has already been finalised. Hopefully I am wrong.

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