

SUBMISSION INTO PEST ANIMAL REVIEW

This submission is both to the Pest Animal Review and comment on the present and future conduct of Local Land Services as they are intrinsically linked.

A number of pertinent issues need to be dealt with to achieve successful wild dog control. They are –

1. The fragmented approach to wild dog control and the negative influence of Government bureaucracy.
2. The lack of strong government legislation to enforce lifestyle, hobby farmers and some larger landowners to participate in worthwhile pest animal control programs.
3. A strong stance by Government to dictate to the LLS system to be a driving force in pest animal control across all tenures.

Probably the biggest battle I had was protecting the use of 1080. If farmers lost the use of 1080 it would be a disaster in the battle to control wild dogs, wild pigs, foxes and rabbits. The Humanness Model which was designed to destroy the use of 1080 and trapping was a deliberate move by bureaucracy and certain animal liberation groups to ban the use of 1080 and trapping.

There is a swathe of scientists and agency bureaucrats who depend on the presence of the wild dog on Schedule 1 land, both public and private for the continuation of their well-financed careers. Many of these positions depend on the continuing flow of producer levy funds from AWI and MLA plus the government equaliser.

Various wild dog control groups have scrambled together various funding streams in an attempt to achieve some form of pest animal control, wild dogs in particular.

AWI has supported many projects. Wild dog proof fencing in Queensland is possibly one of its more effective projects, by financing cluster fencing of a number of properties. Not only is this enhancing wild dog eradication within the fenced area, it also allows kangaroo control which has become a widespread problem due to pasture improvement, woody weed control and provision of reticulated water supplies.

Other areas in NSW have been partially successful with funding from various agencies, mining companies etc to finance part time trappers.

Aerial baiting programs have been a major weapon in wild dog control, but is not always backed up by trapping as well. The integrated system is required.

A major failing point in all the above is the lack of strong government legislation to enforce all land owners and managers to participate in pest animal control. Many beef producers refuse to be part of coordinated baiting programs. Some are concerned their cattle dogs will pick up a bait. Some don't mind a few wild dogs to keep the roo numbers in check. Many young calves are lost as a result.

The growth of land purchase for lifestyle entertainment is a major problem in both pest animal and weed control. Areas of land are purchased entirely for trail bike riding, shooters blocks or simply weekender camping. The owners of these blocks appreciate the joys of living in the bush, but are unaware or ignore the responsibilities of land ownership. The above remarks exemplify the current fragmented approach to pest animal management especially wild dog control.

It is absolutely crucial that the State Government by hard legislation convert the LLS system into the major driver of pest animal control. To quote from the Central West Draft Local Strategic Plan it says in part "our strategic goals do not relate to achieving functional excellence in biosecurity and emergency management".

This is most unsatisfactory. To give examples currently we are seeing widespread hatchings of grasshoppers. While ever they band on arable land farmers can spray them with ground rigs of various size and capability. However if they hatch out on steep non arable country farmers cannot afford aircraft to spray the bands. This is where LLS needs to have the authority and financial flexibility to step in and act.

In the Central West the odd wild dog attack is occurring and it is obvious there is a light infestation in areas of public land which is Schedule 1 land and therefore should be eradicated. LLS needs to be given the authority to compel NPWS or Forestry to eliminate these pests and ensure neighbouring landowners cooperate with the agencies. This is where the lifestylers, absentee landowners etc have to be compelled to be part of the control program.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this submission I spent time researching various systems of wild dog control. The most effective I observed was in the south east of NSW. The system there was gradually developed over several decades with cooperation and coordination between the wild dog affected farmers, NPWS, Forestry and the LHPA.

The LHPA played a major role by administering the full time employment of Pest Animal Controllers (PAC's) financed under contract 80% by NPWS and 20% by LHPA through the ratepayers. The crucial part of the overall scheme has been the local wild dog control plans which have evolved from the installation of Schedule 2 land for the protection of the dingo.

In the south east area during transition from LHPA to LLS (2014-15) detrimental changes in the delivery of wild dog control occurred. As a result of that concerned wild dog affected farmers lobbied the DPI Minister with their issues. A number of changes occurred within the South East LLS. The regional manager of NPWS who had played one of the key roles in the development of the successful wild dog control system was seconded to South East LLS. As a result the successful system of full time pest animal controllers has survived and is now once more working.

The other major outcome was the development of a report labelled "Wild Dog Management South East LLS Region Strategy". The report explains how the LLS Act and the Wild Dog Pests Control Order is meant to work and the importance of the NSW Wild Dog Strategy and the LLS Wild Dog Policy. The report goes on to state that the recommendations of this report and the actions of the LLS policy are complementary. The very reason why I stated at the start of this submission that pest animal control and the future conduct of LLS are intrinsically linked.

The report goes on to explain the importance of the pest animal controllers the wild dog work groups, the nil tenure approach etc.

The continuing process of the community wild dog control plans is absolutely essential. I quote from the LLS region strategy "The plans focus on control measures which remove wild dogs on Schedule 1 land and Schedule 2 lands where wild dogs may impact on private lands, while maintaining a core population of wild dogs within Schedule 2 lands. LLS must agree to a wild dog management plan as it pertains to Schedule 2 lands." end of quote. The plans have an "open door policy" whereby if a farmer has a problem with wild dog control in his area he can attend the meeting and air his problem. I have witnessed a number of these meetings while the LHPA was still

operating. I cannot stress enough the importance of LLS taking up the previous role of LPHA as it did in the south east of NSW.

I attach a map of Schedule 2 land. Note how the Monaro and south coast grazing areas are sandwiched in between the Kosciuszko range and the Great Dividing Range. What is not shown on the map is Namadgi National park which takes up about two thirds of the ACT and has no wild dog control. The Monaro South Coast areas where these wild dog control plans were fine tuned are more than 50% public land.

I did attend many other wild dog meetings throughout NSW and witnessed very mediocre outcomes for a variety of reasons. In many cases the directors or staff of LPHA were not interested in carrying out their duties under the Pest Control Order. Often NPWS and sometimes Forestry were not prepared to fulfil their obligation. In other cases the local wild dog affected farmers were browbeaten by agency staff for the above reasons. **This is why the legislation needs to be more rigidly enforced to eliminate self-interpretation by staff and bureaucracy.**

A case exemplifying this situation was the Taralga area north of Goulburn. Note the Sydney Catchment Authority Special Areas on the Schedule 2 map. There is no wild dog control allowed in these areas. That situation plus what I have just said is causing major destocking of sheep and sale of properties east of Taralga.

At one stage I was given the opportunity by AWI to organise a national meeting of wild dog affected farmers. The South East Report gives a snapshot of Institutional Arrangements across Australia. I can vouch that the arrangements in the south east of NSW are more effective than anywhere else in our nation as well as the rest of NSW.

To quote from the south east LLS report **“the community workshops confirmed that the pest Animal Controllers are highly respected by the rural community and seen as central to effective wild dog management”**.

The report continues with an in depth explanation and discussion of various aspects of the south east wild dog control system. This report needs to be carefully studied by anyone interested in overcoming wild dog predation.

It amounts to this. Fencing and guardian animals do not kill dogs. Major aerial and ground baiting programs are the first step followed up by the pest animal controllers organised as they are in the south east. Queensland is a basket case of wild dog predation and if we don't turn NSW around it will be as bad as Queensland inside of 10 years. Queensland ran 23 million sheep prior to the collapse of the Reserve Price Scheme which drove a decline in sheep numbers. However wild dog predation has been a significant factor and now the State is down to between 2 and 3 million sheep. The latest figures from the Australian Wool production Forecasting Committee verify the situation. Their forecast for NSW in 2014-15 was 129.8 million kgs and Queensland was 9.1 million kgs.

The implementation of a Vertebrate Pest Manager within the south east LLS rather than outside coordinators will be closely watched by those seeking an improvement in wild dog control. This may be very applicable to other areas of NSW particularly the Western Division where wild dog predation is becoming a major issue.

Note key recommendations on page 12 of the LLS region strategy.

I recommend the south east report to anyone suffering wild dog predation or involved in the issue. It is a prime explanation of selfless cooperation between wild dog affected farmers and the various

agencies and an example of how the LHPA system should have worked. Government and politicians need to take direction from it as to how our LLS system now needs to be overhauled and revitalised.

Schedule 2 land enhances the funding system developed in the south east as it is designated for protection of the wild dog “the top order predator” proclaimed by NPWS and as the taxpayer wants the dingo protected the taxpayer can pay for the cost of containing wild dogs in core areas of Schedule 2 land.

The number of wild dogs in Schedule 2 has to be kept to a sustainable level in that the wild dog population has to live off its natural food chain. Without reduction of wild dog numbers by aerial baiting etc into Schedule 2 the numbers will overflow onto private land and predation of domestic livestock quickly becomes economically and personally unbearable by the farmer.

Wild pig numbers are exploding and spreading. There is a dire need for research to curtail their breeding by maybe some form of growth or development retardant or genetic modification. The commercial pork industry would need some form of vaccination for protection. Wild pigs can devastate a potential high lambing percentage, destroy crops and pastures and damage the natural environment. They also are responsible for spreading diseases that can spread to humans.

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