



14th February 2017

NSW Koala Strategy Consultation

By email: koala.strategy@environment.nsw.gov.au

To whom it may concern

Re: Submission to the NSW Koala Strategy

On behalf of the Implementation Steering Committee (ISC) for the National Wild Dog Action Plan (NWDAP), please accept this submission for actions to be undertaken within a NSW Koala Strategy.

The premise of making a submission is that dog attack (domestic and wild) is a recognized threat to koalas, threatened native species and livestock. The NWDAP focuses on wild dogs which it defines as any wild living dog including dingoes, feral dogs and their hybrids. Koala threat abatement may therefore be in some part addressed under the NWDAP. The NSW Koala Strategy may consider adopting appropriate elements from the NWDAP or may work to enhance the NWDAP to further enhance its strategies for wildlife outcomes. The ISC is happy to take such discussions further.

The aim to create a coordinated strategy for koalas in NSW is one that has been achieved for wild dogs nationally by those involved in wild dog management. Prior to 2014, wild dog management within and between states and territories was done with some linkages through an advisory committee inspired by the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre (IACRC). As this committee membership expanded with increasing numbers of sectors wanting to share information to better implement wild dog control, it was realized that a national strategy could firstly document what all sectors were doing on the ground or in policy or research, secondly would coordinate common goals and actions required to fill gaps and thirdly, to implement a structure for ongoing coordination and consultation amongst the sectors to keep the strategy current and wild dog management effective.

The principles of NWDAP are to promote best practice community driven landscape scale wild dog management. The NWDAP supports leadership and coordination of wild dog management, promotion of awareness, understanding and capacity building in dog management, reducing the impacts of wild dog predation across agriculture, environment and social assets and monitoring, evaluating and reporting of impacts and activities to enable continuous improvements to pest management. In particular, the NWDAP profiles the importance of coordinators, metrics, best practice pest animal controllers and R&D.

The action plan can be found at <http://www.pestsmart.org.au/national-wild-dog-action-plan/>. It is an example of a successful strategy supported by agriculture, natural resource management, animal welfare and government sectors. Recommendation 1 of the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer is to adopt a whole of government strategy for koalas. The NWDAP has shown that including non government, agricultural industry and community sectors is possible. Furthermore, across border cooperation and coordination can be achieved. Thus for a koala strategy, such links between sectors may be facilitated by sharing existing mechanisms such as within the NWDAP.

Recommendation 2 of the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer is to improve koala data. This will likely include threat mapping but also existing threat abatement mapping. The NWDAP has as one of its participants, the Local Land Services (LLS) which all have strategic plans for wild dog management where relevant. Most of these plans are likely to include independent local wild dog groups and

Landcare groups which also manage wild dogs. Some of these plans will have the intensity of control monitored and the estimation of wild dog predation activity over time. There is additional data held within NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI), on dog presence and movements, some of which is related to research within the IACRC. This expanse of data may prove useful in planning priority koala populations – either those where large numbers exist but little threat abatement occurs or small populations where a lot of threat abatement occurs.

WildDogScan <https://www.feralscan.org.au/wilddogscan/> is a web program and phone application for community and individual mapping of wild dog sightings, impacts and activity. It has been developed under the IACRC program by the NSW DPI. It is a voluntary and passive reporting system which has its inaccuracies, however, thought could be put to opportunities under a Koala Strategy.

Recommendation 6 by the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer refers to models for guiding and incentivizing collaborative best practice for land use. The IACRC and its member organizations have invested in research to support best practice for wild dog control across multiple landscape types (rural, forested, urban and peri-urban). There is a wealth of extension material explaining best practice under www.pestsmart.org which is available for use within a Koala Strategy or could be adapted to better target koalas. This may assist the Koala Strategy when addressing Recommendation 10 from the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer to facilitate information exchange. Best practice wild dog control is commonly integrated with other feral species control (pigs, cats, foxes) giving biodiversity benefits to many threatened species. Wild dog control is known to reduce predation on other threatened species such as the spotted tailed quoll, southern brown bandicoot, long-footed potoroo and smoky mouse which all share habitats with the Koala.

There is a tailored wild dog control program for every situation:

- Baiting can be aerial and broad scale with 1080 poison formulated for wild dogs that does not affect native animal populations and has no residues in soil or water. It is commonly backed up by professional wild dog controllers skilled in the use of soft jaw foothold traps to capture wild dogs that evade control.
- Baiting with 1080 can be at a targeted scale through the use of buried ground baiting or within canid pest ejectors.
- Baiting with PAPP can be used in areas where pet dogs or working dogs are within ready access a vet administered antidote
- Professional wild dog controllers are used in peri-urban and urban areas where baits cannot be used.

Recommendation 6 also recognizes the essential requirement for action across tenure and the involvement of multiple stakeholder sectors. These are principles of the NWDAP and there may already be landscapes and communities currently practicing wild dog and other predator management planned on a nil tenure foundation with broad community and sector involvement both at a local level and coordinated regionally. Liaison with Landcare, the LLS and the NSW DPI will help identify existing community groups. Of note, there are many groups that include wild dog control as just one of their activities. They may tackle a range of natural resource management or other issues and thus be interested in participating in the implementation of the Koala Strategy. It is also known that single issue wild dog groups may be looking for opportunities to refresh community interest levels and participation rates.

It is important that wild dog control include both private and public lands as wild dogs and koalas move freely between the two. Community groups that include wild dog management in their operations have participation from mining, forestry, national parks, livestock enterprises (sheep, goats, cattle, horses, poultry), Landcare and peri-urban dwellers. The incentives driving participation are broad and include animal welfare, wildlife preservation, dingo preservation, business economics, protection of community recreational assets, protection of pets, protection of staff and the appreciation that dogs don't respect tenure boundaries. Wild dogs are a shared problem so the solution needs to be shared. There may be some dove tailing of these interests within pre-existing community groups with those of the Koala Strategy.

The IACRC has also invested in best practice community engagement for community involvement across a range of pest species control. This may assist the Koala Strategy when addressing Recommendation 11 from the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer. Community engagement is implemented by the IACRC team of national facilitators (wild dog, rabbit and NRM), by the team of Australian Wool Innovation wild dog coordinators (2 in NSW) and by some Biosecurity Officers within the LLS, Landcare Coordinators and NSW DPI staff. These existing structures, human resources and skills may either be a model for community engagement and information sharing under the Koala Strategy or be tapped into to avoid duplication where relevant.

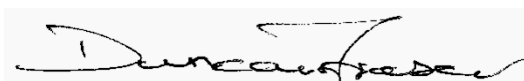
Recommendation 7 by the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer refers to identifying priority areas for koala management. It will be important to review any wild dog management programs overlaid on a koala area for size of the wild dog program (does it stop wild dog migration in?) and the intensity of the program (does it stop individuals evading control?). Evasion, migration and dispersal are signs of inadequate control (area, density and frequency of control). Opportunities may exist for koala populations if control is increased in scale. Liaison with the NSW DPI wild dog management specialists will be an important part of identifying priority koala management areas.

It is important to remember that reducing wild dog numbers has an immediate effect on predation which may buy time for mitigation strategies for other koala threats to take effect. The challenge is aligning the timing of control for maximum efficiency on the predator numbers with maximum risk to koalas and sustaining the low wild dog numbers over that time. This requires strategic planning with best practice control tool use.

In conclusion, there may be opportunities for those in the NWDAP to work with a NSW Koala Strategy, sharing ideas and resources for the better control of wild dogs and survival of koala populations.

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Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Duncan Fraser".

Duncan Fraser

Chairman Implementation Steering Committee
National Wild Dog Action Plan