

Wild Dog Management South East Local Land Service region Strategy



August 2015

Introduction

In late May 2015 the South East Local Land Services board commissioned a review of wild dog management in the region. This followed concerns that the process of transition to the LLS had led to detrimental changes in the delivery of wild dog control.

During the early stages of the establishment of the LLS there was ongoing discussion with respect to the long term status of employment of Pest Animal Controllers (PAC) within the LLS model.

This paper provides recommendations on this issue and others with a key focus on delivering an effective and sustainable long term wild dog management strategy in the South East Local Land Services region that delivers on community and key stakeholder needs.

Accordingly this review is broad ranging with the Terms of Reference for the review adopted by the Board on 25 June 2015.

This report has been prepared by Derek Larsen General Manager South East Local Land Services, Jake Tanner Senior Biosecurity Officer South East Local Land Services and Tim Shepherd Project Manager Wild Dogs South East Local Land Services.

Key recommendations are provided in the body of the report and more detailed recommendations are provided in Appendix one.

Legal and Policy framework

Local Land Services Act 2013

Responsibilities for pest animal control are detailed in the *Local Land Services Act* 2013. In particular:

- Division 2 provides for the making and enforcement of pest control orders in particular s142 requires private land holders to eradicate any pest on their property for which a pest control order provided a general destruction obligation. LLS have *regulatory* responsibility for this. S144 allows LLS to give an individual or general eradication order for a pest which is subject to a control order. This provision does not apply to public land.
- LLS can *carry out* work to eradicate pests under s151, if a pest control order allows for it, or an occupier of land fails to comply with pest control or eradication order or an occupier consents to work. This is the provision which provides a *mandate* for LLS pest animal controllers to operate on private land

The Wild Dog Pests Control Order¹

Division 2 of The *Local Lands Services Act* 2013 sets out the conditions under which animals, birds and insects can become “declared” pests and provides for the control of such pest species. Gazettal of pest species occurs through Pest Control Orders which allow the Minister for Agriculture to specify which species are pests, either on a state-wide or local basis, and the conditions or factors that apply to the control of each pest. Rabbits, wild dogs and feral pigs have been declared pest animals throughout NSW. The current Pest Control Order for wild dogs, gazetted on 9 September 2014 requires a Wild Dog Control Plan to be prepared for areas listed in Schedule 2 of the Order. The Plan addresses both the conservation and control objectives.

This means that within the extensive areas of Schedule 2 public lands in NSW, managers are required by law to conserve wild dogs (dingoes) at the same time as managers of areas of Schedule 1 lands in NSW are required to eradicate the same dogs as a declared pest.

Approaches to meeting these dual objectives are developed through cooperative wild dog management plans, of which there are 13 within the South East Local Land Services Region. The plans focus on control measures which remove wild dogs on Schedule 1 lands 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.

National Wild Dog Action Plan²

The action plan is an industry driven initiative which promotes and supports community driven action for landscape-scale wild dog management. The plan's four goals are:

1. -Provide leadership and coordination for the management of wild dogs.
2. -Increase awareness, understanding and capacity building with regard to wild dog management.
3. -Mitigate the negative impacts caused by wild dogs
4. -Monitor, evaluate and report to inform and continuously improve wild dog management.

NSW Wild Dog Strategy³

The primary objective of the NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy is to improve the management of wild dogs in NSW. In particular it aims to minimise the negative impacts of wild dogs on primary production, the environment and the wider community by clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of land managers and other community members in managing wild dogs.

The Local Land Services Wild Dog Policy⁴

The Policy commits Local Land Services to the objectives of the NSW Wild Dog Strategy by:

- Clarifying the process for preparing and implementing Wild Dog Management Plans
- Committing to developing Wild Dog Management Plans for all areas of NSW negatively affected by wild dogs
- Providing a mechanism to audit Wild Dog Management Plans; identifying resource requirements and cost sharing agreements with financial and non-financial parties
- Establishing standard measures of effectiveness for all Wild Dog Management Plans and collate centrally
- Establishing a mechanism and timetable for reporting.

This policy will guide Local Land Services regions requiring Regional Boards to place a high priority on wild dog management. The actions and responsibilities outlined in the policy need to be considered with the recommendations of this report. Implementing the policy requires a considerable body of work by the Board of Chairs and LLS regions. In saying this, the recommendations of this report and the actions of the LLS policy are complementary.

1. <http://www.lls.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/strategy-and-policy>

2. http://www.pestsmart.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/NWDAP_FINAL_MAY14.pdf

3. <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/pests-weeds/vertebrate-pests/legislation/state-strategies/management-strategy>

4. - <http://www.lls.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/pest-control/wild-dogs/wild-dog-policy>

Consultation

In preparing the review, the project team consulted with a wide range of stakeholders in Government and the rural community.

The team carried out community workshops in Cooma, Braidwood and Mittagong. The workshops were well attended with 58 rural community and agency representatives at Cooma, 35 at Braidwood and 41 at Mittagong. Informal feedback from participants has been very positive. While there were differences between the three workshops, a number of common themes have emerged:

- The importance of the pest animal controllers to wild dog control and the need to ensure their security of tenure, career paths and training. This is important in developing longer term management options
- Certainty in resourcing wild dog management plans
- The central importance of the wild dog working groups and the associated nil-tenure approach to planning. This includes ongoing commitment by all parties to the implementation of the plans
- The need for enhanced communication within individual plans, between plans and the wider community and government. This includes a desire for improved and transparent reporting arrangements
- Mechanisms are needed to engage with landholders in dog affected areas who are not directly affected. These groups include life stylers, absentee owners and in some cases cattle producers
- The importance of consistent reporting and common data systems for agencies.

The workshops considered the desirability of establishing a Wild Dog Community Advisory Group and appointing a wild dog coordinator. Reactions to these proposals were mixed and in some cases views strongly held, both for and against. This points to the need to consider the proposals carefully which is discussed more fully later in the document.

Current Institutional Arrangements

The institutional arrangements for wild dog control vary considerably across Australia and within NSW. They are described briefly, as arrangements and provide some potential models for consideration by the South East LLS.

Institutional Arrangements across Australia - a snapshot

This review outlines a range of models which are currently used across Australia, which may or may not be applicable in NSW. A more detailed assessment will be undertaken by the Natural Resources Commission as part of the foreshadowed review of pest management in NSW.

Information sources

- Action plan for managing wild dogs in Victoria⁵
- National Wild Dog Action Plan
- Queensland Wild Dog Management Strategy 2011-2016⁶
- Greg Mifsud – National Wild Dog Coordinator
- Vaughn Kingston and Barry Davies – Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

Western Australia

Recognised biosecurity groups have been established comprising leaseholders. The groups are incorporated and can coordinate baiting programs, employ doggers etc.

Leaseholders pay a vermin rate which is supported \$ for \$ by the state government. The groups can work across private and public land. The groups can access funds from other sources ie local government and mining companies.

See National Wild Dog Action Plan pg 28 - Case Study Meekatharra Rangelands Biosecurity Association.

South Australia

Coordinated wild dog control is not well developed across the state. The Biteback program in the northern Flinders Ranges is one example of a developing program. See National Wild Dog Action Plan pg 23 - Case Study – The Bite Back Program. Institutional arrangements are not clear.

Victoria

Wild dog control is delivered by wild dog controllers employed and funded by the Victorian Government and increasingly by coordinated community baiting programs. The WDCs operate across public and private lands as required and work on a 72 hr guarantee of service. The WDC operate under their own industrial instrument – the Wild Dog Controller Agreement.

The works are carried out under an annual Wild Dog Zone work plan. They are drafted with significant input from the wild dog controllers and then refined through community meetings.

Three wild dog coordinators operate across the state supported by Australian Wool Innovation. The wild dog coordinators are seen as neutral by the community and carry liaison works including organising community baiting programs.

5. <http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/agriculture-and-food/pests-diseases-and-weeds/pest-animals/wild-dogs/action-plan-for-managing-wild-dogs-in-victoria>

6. <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/plants/weeds-pest-animals-ants/educational-resources-and-careers/publications/wild-dog-management-strategy>

Queensland

Local Government have a central role in coordinating planning, regulation and enforcement – the role has is similar to that of the LLS role in NSW. Local wild dog committee advise on the preparation of plans and on the expenditure of wild dog control funds.

Institutional arrangements in NSW

There is significant variation in institutional arrangements across NSW as they pertain to the levels of coordination, the degree of involvement of LLS staff and the sharing of resources through for example the pooling of funds for the employment of contract pest animal controllers. In this regard South East Local Land Services is unique in that it is the only region which directly employs specialist pest animal controllers.

The arrangements for the LLS regions in eastern NSW are outlined in Table 1:

Institutional arrangements in the South East LLS region

The thirteen wild dog plan areas all have plans in place and have active wild dog working groups. This is not typical of the situation across NSW and is a testament to the sustained efforts of the wild dog community over the last decade. In saying this it is arguable that these approaches have led to a high reliance on government and ratepayer funding and that future approaches need to complement this by encouraging landholder participation in control efforts. It is also clear that wild dog control is relatively well-funded in South East Local Land Services and this has underpinned our successes.

Participants at the community workshops considered the commitment to nil-tenure plans as particularly important in supporting effective wild dog management.

The implementation arrangements for the 13 plans are shown in Appendix 3 which demonstrates the complexity and variation in approaches, reflecting differences in context, history and agency approaches. In summary, plans vary as follows:

Who implements the plan and the degree of coordination between agencies - variants include:

Table 1 – LLS Regional Approach for Wild Dog Control in Eastern NSW	
Region	Approach
Central Tablelands	There are five wild dog associations of which three have plans which are not particularly active. LLS primarily coordinates and invests very little of its own funds in wild dog management, though it has accessed external funding sources. A district wild dog association has limited funds which supports small scale trapping, including using 'rebate' approach – effectively a bounty. Around 1.5 FTE of staff time allocated to wild dog work
Greater Sydney	Three wild dog groups have active plans. LLS deliver baits and will set traps if problems persist. Landholders are expected to monitor traps. The region does not commit core operating funds to wild dog control but on occasion some specific program funding may be available.
Hunter	A single plan developed by the former LHPA operates across all 11 wild dog associations. The region is planning to develop map-based plans for each association. LLS staff carry out coordination and planning work and very limited on ground work. Total invasive species budget is \$80k per year with an estimated 90% going to wild dogs.
Northern Tablelands	Not all dog affected areas have current plans or active wild dog working groups. The newly appointed AWI funded Wild Dog Coordinator will aim to rectify this. The region provides contract trapping on private land and carries out aerial baiting on private land and Forestry Corporation managed land (at no cost to Forestry Corporation). NPWS funds and manages all control activities on its lands
North Coast	The region has recently completed a regional wild dog plan. There are few formal wild dog groups, rather informal groups of a few to approximately 40 landholders who meet to plan coordinated works. The region intends to develop more local plans with the number and scale yet to be determined. Considerable resources are committed to coordination and support (around 90% of 9 staff, plus operating funds) but there is very little on-ground work done by staff. Agencies do their own work and LLS plays a coordinating role
Murray	Two of three wild dog groups have active plans, the third has a very strong Forestry Corporation involvement. On-ground works are done by contract with LLS and NPWS having separate contracts with the same Pest Animal Controller
Riverina	All dog affected areas have plans with active working groups. Contributes to the Brindabella Wee Jasper Plan managed by SE LLS. Coordinates contracts for PACs in other plans with contributions from NPWS

- Genuine nil-tenure approaches, for example Brindabella-Wee Jasper and Adaminaby Yaouk where two or more agencies commit an agreed proportion of resources and a South East Local Land Services pest animal controller operates across tenures as required.
- Fee for Service approaches for example East Monaro-Central Far South Coast and Bombala - Far South Coast where a South East Local Land Services pest animal controller operates across private land and National Park. The National Park component strictly accounted for and charged at a daily rate.
- Arrangements where agencies employ their own pest animal controllers, ie NPWS employ pest animal controllers on staff for plans such as Dalgety- Paupong and Thredbo-Ingebyra.
- Approaches which are implemented in a range of ways. For example in the Braidwood-South Coast plan, the NPWS South Coast region uses field staff for some work and contracts LLS for specialist trapping skills.

Across all these arrangements Forestry Corporation do their own work on their estate with the exception of Brindabella-Wee Jasper where they contribute financially to the nil-tenure arrangements.

How explicit is the reporting on funding arrangements:

- Financial commitments for each agency are explicitly described in the plan, ie Brindabella – Wee Jasper and Corrowong-Tombong-Merriangaah.
- Financial commitments for some agencies are explicitly described with the plan, ie Dalgety -Paupong
- Financial commitments are not detailed in the plan, ie Southern Highlands.

Future Institutional arrangements for the South East Local Land Services

As can be seen from the analysis of existing arrangements, across Australia, NSW and South East Local Land Services, there is a considerable range of approaches used to coordinate and manage wild dog management activities. In order to put some structure around this complexity we have considered options according to two main variables (Table 2):

- The degree of involvement of South East Local Land Services in delivery of wild dog control
- The degree to which wild dog control is implemented on a nil-tenure and coordinated basis

In determining future arrangements for wild dog control the board needs to consider the following:

- Whether the South East Local Land Services will continue to directly implement on-ground works. The discussion below assumes that this will occur.

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. Job security and recognition of their professional status is very important

- There are now opportunities to achieve operational excellence in wild dog management under the existing management framework. Central to this is:
 - the ability to properly cost staff time to wild dog plans using the SAP and IRIS corporate applications
 - in field data collection by PACs using tablets to streamline reporting and administration
 - the centralised management of PACs in a vertebrate pest management function
 - finding savings through more flexible use of the PACs and streamlined program management
- While wild dog planning is carried out on a nil-tenure basis, wild dog management is not always highly integrated with some PACs operating mostly on their own tenure. This leads to less than optimum coordination and is seen by the wild dog community as inefficient and expensive
- Across the range of options shown in Table 2, three are worthy of further consideration and are highlighted in the table. Options 1 and 2 would require LLS to continue to employ Pest Animal Controllers:

OPTION 1: A Brindabella- Wee Jasper style approach where **LLS Pest Animal Controllers operate across all tenures under an agreed funding model**. Forestry Corporation and NPWS are open to considering this model with Forestry noting that threatened species work would need to continue.

Advantages:

- This option is genuinely nil-tenure in its planning and delivery and can be considered the 'gold standard' in wild dog management. Accordingly it is efficient in its delivery and management.
- Administration between agencies is straightforward as it only requires a single agreed payment per financial year.
- Provides for stability of employment of the PACs and would be viewed positively by the rural community.

Disadvantages:

- It cannot be adopted immediately due in particular to current staffing commitment by agencies.
- It would require the development of an agreed funding model.
- Cost implications are not known at this stage, but will remain high compared to other regions (see section on financial sustainability).
- Issues with the conflict between the need for flexibility by PACs and award conditions remain.

OPTION 2: Broadly **the current arrangements, but improved by adopting other recommendations of this report**, in particular measures to improve financial and program accountability. It should include a review of current arrangements by South East Local Land Services and land management agencies to see if the array of approaches can be simplified and operational efficiencies found.

Advantages:

- Provides for stability of employment of the PACs and would be viewed positively by the rural community.
- Costs can be reduced from current levels by more flexible use of the PACs and streamlined administration.

Disadvantages:

- Continues in the short term with the complex mix of institutional arrangements and in some cases inefficient use of resources.
- Administration between agencies remains complicated.
- Costs will remain high compared to other regions.
- Issues with the conflict between the need for flexibility by PACs and award conditions remain.

OPTION 3: Outsourcing of pest animal control on ground to external contractors

The South East Local Land Services employing contractors which work exclusively for Local Land Services and operate across tenures is not appropriate as there would be significant difficulties with Australian Tax Law.

In effect such contractors would be treated as employees by the Australian Tax Office.

Advantages:

- Moves PACs out of the award structure and hence maximises the ability for PACs to operate flexibly
- Some administration requirements are transferred to the contractor

Disadvantages

- Will not be viewed favourably by PACs and Rural Community
- Coordination between agencies becomes more difficult
- Not necessarily cheaper than employing staff (based on tendered contact rates)
- Needs commitment to longer term contracts to be viable
- Most PACs are permanent staff – transition to contracts would be difficult, expensive and lead to poor morale

Key recommendations:

- 1. Retain the current system of wild dog control using South East Local Land Services staff, agency staff and contractors in the medium term and improved by implementing the recommendations of this report.**
- 2. Work with land management agencies over time to implement a nil-tenure delivery model based on the Brindabella-Wee Jasper Plan, noting a review of fair cost allocation across all stakeholders.**
- 3. Centralise Wild Dog management in South East Local Land Services under a vertebrate pest management function and appoint a suitably graded Local Land Services Manager.**
- 4. Maintain Pest Animal Controllers as permanent staff and not replaced by contractors.**
- 5. Develop a Regional Wild Dog Strategy as required by the Local Land Services Wild Dog Policy**

Table 2 - A Framework for Delivery of Wild Dog Control

LLS involvement	High			SELLS staff deliver control works across one or more plans and tenure, supported by agency specific PACs where appropriate (example Braidwood- South Coast) Option 2	SE LLS staff deliver all non-land holder control. SE LLS Vertebrate Pest Manager coordinates PACs across the region (example Brindabella-Wee Jasper) Option 1, Part Option 2
			Land managers enter into a range of agreements which may include contracting to SELLS Not preferred	SELLS manages contractors for private land works across one or more plans, supported by agency specific PACs (staff or contractors) for public lands. SE LLS vertebrate Pest Manager coordinates between agencies Option 3	SE LLS contractors deliver all non-landholder control. SE LLS wild dog Manager coordinates PACs across the region Not preferred
		Land managers including private land managers deliver all wild dog control on their own tenures. SELLS role focusses on planning coordination and 1080 management. Not preferred	Incorporated entity for each wild dog plan delivers all non-landholder control. SELLS role limited to planning coordination Not preferred	An identified land management agency takes primary responsibility for public land components of individual or groups of plans and contract to other agencies. SELLS role limited to planning and coordination Not preferred	Single incorporated entity or another agency delivers all non-landholder control. LLS role focusses on planning coordination and 1080 management. Not preferred
	Low	Nil –Tenure Delivery			

Financial Analysis of Wild Dog Control in South East Local Land Services Current Situation

New South Wales

Wild dog management is a significant program for South East Local Land Services, its partner land management agencies and rural land holders. While it is difficult to rigorously benchmark expenditure against other regions it can be reasonably concluded that South East Local Land Services and the NPWS regions within the South East Local Land Services commit more resources than other regions.

Table 3: Resource Allocation for Wild Dog Management in LLS regions				
Region		Local Land Services FTE undertaking activities	Local Land Services FTE coordinating activities	Estimated funds spent on activities or supporting groups
Central Tablelands		0	1.3	\$30,000*
Central West		5	1	\$38,000*
Greater Sydney		2	0.5	\$50,000
Hunter		0.71	3.54	\$121,400*
Murray			1	\$200,000
North Coast		0.5	8	\$400,000*
North West		0.2	0.7	\$117,482*
Northern Tablelands		0.2	1.5	\$150,000*
Riverina			1	\$84,000
South East ⁷		7	10	\$600,000 funding and contracts \$240,000 support and coordination
Western		3	4	\$400,000 for education, support and baiting*
Total		10	32.54	\$2.4m

7. This table was taken from an updated brief. The South East Local Land Services has subsequently been refined.

Table 3 gives an approximate resourcing levels, noting that this expenditure includes specific program funding such as Commonwealth drought funding:

South East LLS

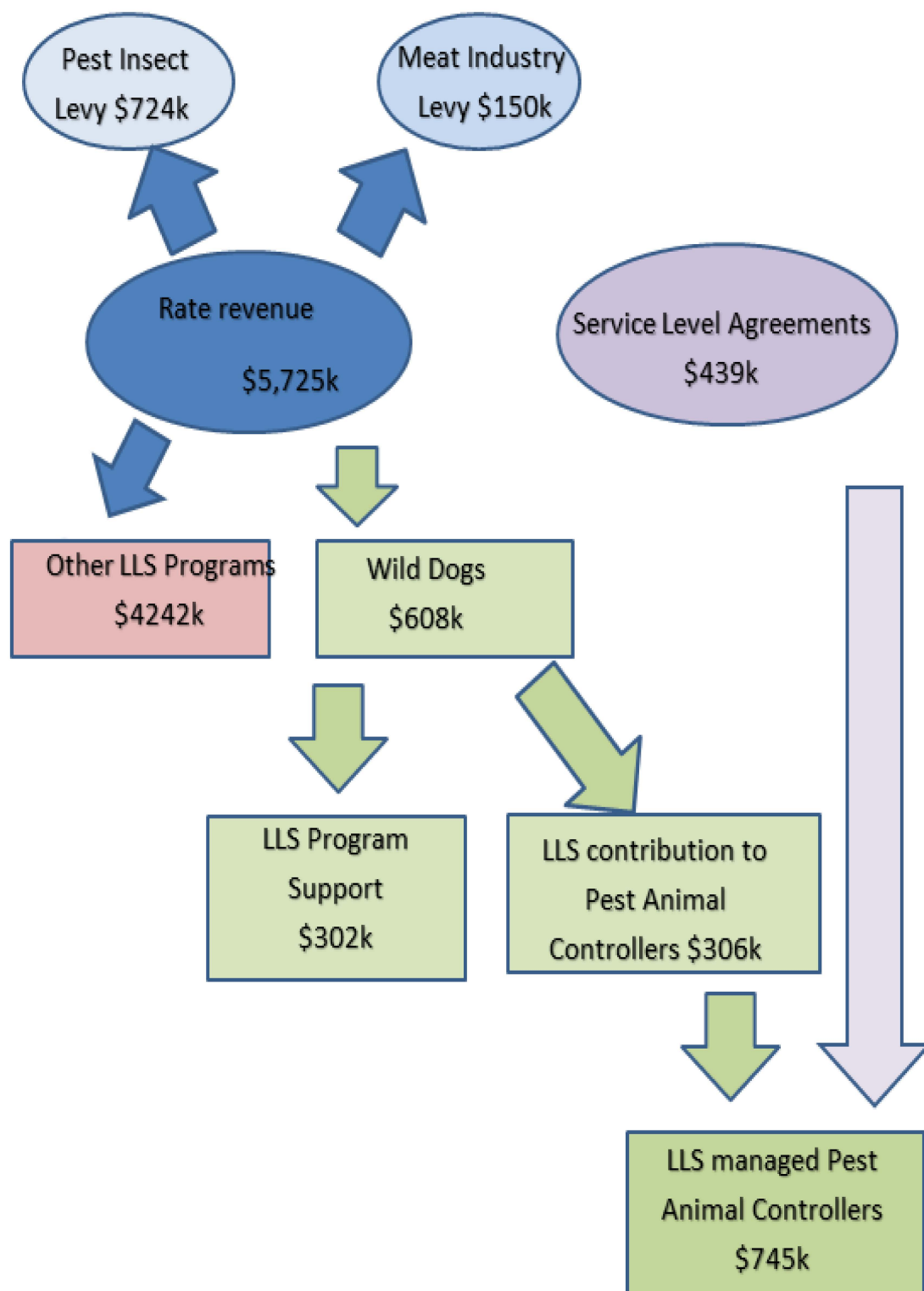
Funding for wild dog management is derived from rate revenue and Service Level Agreements with land management agencies. Funding is allocated to:

- Program management. This includes supervision of PACs, attending meetings, reporting, being a point of contact for the community and coordination of baiting. Managing 1080 and preparing and distributing baits is a time-consuming component of the work.
- On-ground control. The Pest Animal Controllers are costed to on ground control. Across the region this amounts to six FTE.
- South East Local Land Services expenditure and funding sources are shown in figure 1. South East Local Land Services expends \$1.047m on wild dog control of which \$608k is derived from rates and \$439k from Service Level Agreements with Land Management Agencies.

The LLS Rates expenditure on wild dog control represents 2.5% of rates after the Pest Insect and Meat Industry levies are taken into account.

After further analysis there maybe scope to reduce this expenditure without significantly affecting Service Delivery. There maybe potential that this can be achieved by more flexible use of the Pest Animal Controllers and through the efficiencies gained in the centralising vertebrate pest animal control

Figure 1 - SE LLS wild dog funding streams

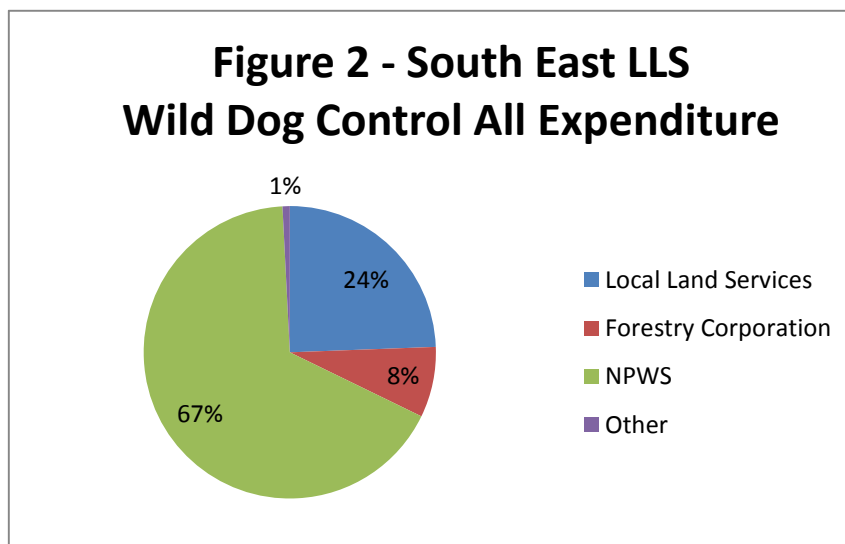


Expenditure by all agencies across South East Local Land Services

Each year approximately \$2.5m year is committed by government agencies to wild dog control in the South East. Commitments by private land holders cannot be estimated at this time. Expenditure by agency is shown in Table 4

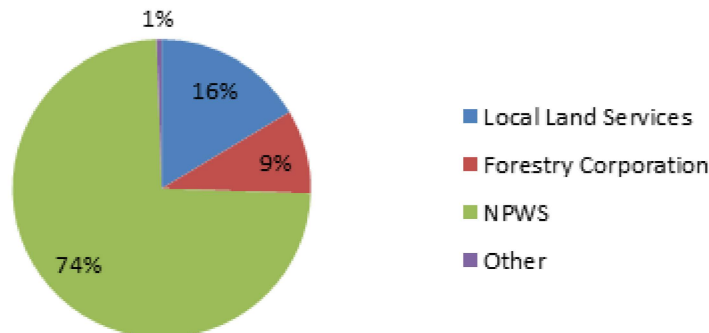
Table 4 – South East LLS Region Wild Dog Control Expenditure by Agency			
Agency totals¹	Program Support	On-ground control works	Total
Local Land Services	\$ 302,123	\$ 306,363	\$ 608,486
Forestry Corporation	\$ 24,000	\$ 170,000	\$ 194,000
NPWS	\$ 290,017	\$ 1,380,513	\$ 1,670,530
Other	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 20,000
Total:	\$ 626,140	\$ 1,839,876	\$ 2,446,016

Figures 2 to 4 show the proportion of total expenditure by each agency. It indicates that South East Local Land Services and NPWS expend similar amounts on program support and NPWS is the dominant contributor to funding on ground works.



**These figures have been compiled from a number of sources and are best regarded as estimates as there is no single defined method of data collection

**Figure 3 - SE LLS Wild Dog Control
- On-Ground Works**

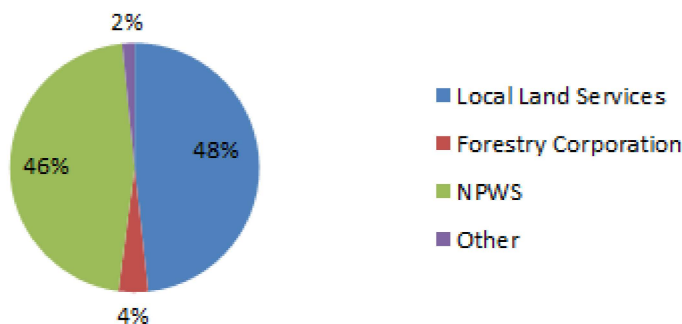


Information Sources for this analysis include:

- SE LLS budget papers
- Wild dog plan commitments
- Information requests to land management agencies
- Service Level agreements.

It includes both dollar amounts and staff time which has been converted to a dollar figure

**Figure 4 - SE LLS Wild Dog Control
Program Support**



Analysis of LLS Costings and charging of Services

There has been some conjecture about the cost of South East Local Land Services PACs and whether this is being properly recovered through Service Level Agreements and other arrangements. The annual cost of a Pest Animal Controller employed as a Biosecurity Support Officer is shown in Table 5.

Broadly there are two ways that LLS charges for pest animal control services:

- Through a *shared responsibility* approach where an agreed percentage of the total cost is paid by each contributor. Brindabella-Wee Jasper and Adaminaby-Yaouk are examples. An analysis of the Brindabella Wee Jasper plan shows that contributions need to be adjusted to take account of CPI changes. Little adjustment is required to the contributions for the Adaminaby Yaouk plan.

Table 5 - Pest Animal Controller Cost Base	
Component	Cost
BSO L2 Salary	\$60,411
Super (9.5%)	\$5,739
Leave loading (17%)	\$813
Payroll tax (5.45%)	\$3,650
workers comp (1.4%)	\$846
Long Service Leave (4.0%)	\$2,416
Working dog allowance	\$1,800
Accommodation (Travel)	\$1,200
Vehicle	\$16,000
Phone	\$1,200
Training	\$1,200
Other (Office, PPE, IT, Corp Services, Incidental)	\$12,000
TOTAL	\$107,275

- Through a Fee for Service approach in which South East Local Land Services charge a negotiated daily fee and services are carefully accounted for and paid on invoice. Braidwood-South Coast, East Monaro-Central Far South Coast and Bombala- Far South Coast are examples. From analysis of these arrangements (Table 6) there is nothing to suggest that South East Local Land Services under charges:

Table 6-Service level Agreement Bombala-Far South Coast	
Work days per year	230
Contract rate/per day	552
Payment per year if 230 days contracted	\$126,960
Ave cost/day based on an annual cost of \$107275	\$466
Notional surplus if 230 days contracted at \$552/day	\$19,685
Bombala NPWS contract	\$83,090
NPWS Days under the contract (includes species other than dogs)	154
LLS days	76
Public holidays	10
Total Days	240

This analysis shows that the daily rate is more than sufficient to meet costs if there is adequate days contracted. In the case of Bombala Far South Coast the full number of contract days were delivered in 2015/16 which was not the case for other plans. Bombala based Biosecurity staff have advised that they have little capacity for additional work due to non-contract wild dog work and other biosecurity work. In this case both the contract rate and the number of contract days is at least adequate.

For other plans there may be spare capacity in the PACs which can be used more effectively and to deliver savings, for example by using a staff PAC to undertake work which was previously done by contract. The recent deployment of a staff PAC to Shannon's Flat is one example.

One of the challenges with this analysis is the difficulty in accurately apportioning LLS costs to individual wild dog plans. There is now the opportunity using the Department of Industry's corporate systems to accurately track staff time and hence costs. This will contribute to improving the management of the wild dog program to a new and highly professional level, not often seen in the public sector.

The perception that South East Local Land Services significantly undercharges for Pest Animal Control services is not supported by analysis. Undercharging for the *shared responsibility* plans can be rectified by negotiation. The daily rate for *fee for service* plans is more than adequate, providing PACs are used efficiently

Towards a model for cost allocation

The current approaches to funding wild dog plans have developed over time and reflect previous government funding initiatives, the degree of engagement by stakeholders and the attitudes and priorities within and between government agencies and LHPAs.

At this point it is very difficult to determine if resources are distributed appropriately between plans as the specificity of reporting commitments in dog plans vary substantially. Some plans report a dollar figure for each agency, others make no specific commitments and there are a range of approaches between these extremes.

There is little consistency in describing and reporting financial commitments between plans. This should be rectified by developing a rigorous financial reporting framework.

A second question is whether the individual contributions of stakeholders to the wild dog plans are appropriate. Potentially there are many ways to approach this. One approach is to carry out a preliminary assessment using forested land as a surrogate for wild dog habitat and compared agency expenditure against area of habitat by land tenure. This is important work.

This is one of many possible approaches to determining appropriate resourcing levels for each agency. In regard to the private lands component the analysis does not include private landholder contributions which could be added to the LLS contribution.

Financial sustainability

A recurring theme at the workshops was the need to ensure that there is adequate and sustained financing of wild dog control works. This will be a challenge as public sector organisations are under increasing budget pressure. At this point the NPWS is maintaining its commitment to wild dog control at the expense of other programs. NPWS managers are unsure of how long this can continue. Forestry Corporation will maintain their current level of expenditure.

A number of participants at the workshops suggested that a pest animal levy be implemented similar to, or as an extension of the pest insect levy. This is worth considering.

Representations to government for additional funding need to be evidence-based. The reporting recommendations of this report will enable South East Local Land Services to build a robust picture of its achievements and future resource requirements.

Key Recommendations:

- 6. Implement a system for accurately recording and allocating Local Land Services labour and operating costs to wild dog plans**
- 7. Look to optimise the allocation of PACs to wild dog plans in order to maximise effectiveness and find savings**
- 8. Develop a rigorous financial reporting framework for wild dog plans**
- 9. Implement measures to estimate private landholders contributions to wild dog plans**
- 10. Recommend that work begin on cost allocation models for wild dog control**
- 11. Investigate the extension of the Local Land Services Pest Insect levy to include vertebrate pests**
- 12. Systematically look for alternative funding sources**
- 13. Actively support five year wild dog plans**

Measures to improve the Communication of Wild Dog Control in South East LLS

Effective communication is a challenge in any organisation which deals with the public and this is certainly the case in wild dog management. Underpinning this is the need to properly and transparently communicate what is taking place in wild dog management; the issues, challenges and successes.

Communication was one of the major themes of the community consultations and the outcomes of the workshops underpin this discussion.

The successes of wild dog control programs are not being communicated. This tends to focus media comment and community discussion on shortcomings

Issues which were noted in workshops and in other discussions include:

- The need for regular communication from South East Local Land Services. The idea of a newsletter to accompany rates notices was raised at a number of meetings. The mails outs could encourage participation in coordinated baiting programs, discuss wild dog control outcomes, and include the outcomes of meetings. Other modes of communication such as on-line discussion groups may be appropriate
- The need to engage with non-resident land owners to inform them of issues and to encourage participation in group baiting
- Information on wild dog impacts and costs, sightings and control efforts needs to be systematically collected and disseminated. Feral Scan may be the vehicle for this
- Successes need to be documented and disseminated
- South East LLS and other agencies need to be transparent in reporting
- Communication needs to emphasise the benefits of wild dog control which are broader than reducing sheep losses, ie biodiversity and biosecurity benefits.
- Communication approaches should be developed within and between groups, between agencies and between agencies and the wild dog community.

Key Recommendations:

- 14. Develop and implement an effective communication strategy for wild dog control in the South East Local Land Services.**
- 15. Provide clear feedback to participants at the wild dog workshops of how their input has been used to guide the South East Local Land Services Board's decisions**

Measures to retain or improve operational effectiveness

Wild Dog Working Groups and Plans

Workshops participants see the wild dog working groups as being a critical part of wild dog management in which a nil-tenure approach is fundamental. In the South East Local Land Services all dog affected areas have active plans and working groups – this has not been achieved across all of NSW. In fact the South East Local Land Services region and surrounding areas have led the state in cooperative nil-tenure wild dog planning. In some plan areas within the South East Local Land Services it appears that groups are becoming less active. This can be rectified with more input from the South East Local Land Services Vertebrate Pest Manager and improved reporting and communication. This should include developing a strategy to engage more land holders in working groups.

Data Systems and Reporting

The consistent and timely collection of information on wild dog sightings, impacts, and wild dog control activities and outcomes is critical to ongoing successes. The Feral Scan application should be implemented to achieve this. Produced by the Feral Animal CRC the application comprises modules for a number of pest species including wild dogs. The information can be easily entered by anyone in the wild dog community with computer or tablet access. The developers are willing to consider improvements to the system to meet specific needs, of which two are important; providing an interface for past animal controllers to enable them to enter data in the field and ensuring that outputs from Feralscan are compatible with agency databases.

Feral-scan also has the potential to improve reporting by landholders and encouraging the uptake of this should form part of the communication strategy.

More broadly there is a need to develop a coordinated state-wide data collection and dissemination system which can be used by all agencies.

Pest Animal Controllers (maximising their effectiveness)

Measures to improve the effectiveness of the PACS include properly using the flexibility provisions of the LLS award and tailoring job descriptions and Work and Development plans to the specific work of the PACs.

New award provisions specifically for PACs need to be negotiated as part of the renewal of the award due by the end of 2016. These conditions need to be aimed at sensibly increasing flexibility to meet job requirements. For example the ability to work longer days and some weekends could be achieved through payment of an allowance, similar to the NPWS Field Officer approach.

The LLS award is seen as unsuitable for PACs due to the need for PACs to work flexible hours in response to wild dog attacks and broader operational needs. Workable award condition can be negotiated which meet the operation needs of PACs and LLS management needs for budget control and operational discipline

At present PACs have administrative requirements which are at times cumbersome and require time in the office. As well as the normal requirements for electronic timesheets and the like, some PACs need detailed reporting for Service Level Agreements. The ability to use tablet based technology in the field is critical.

At present PACs need to check traps every 24 hours compared with Victoria where there is a 72 hour limit. Changes to the NSW limit require the approval of the State-wide Animal Ethics Committee.

This should be pursued, noting that 48 hour limit would provide significant benefits

PACs are employed as either Biosecurity Officers or Biosecurity Support Officers depending on their grade in the LHPA. This is unreasonable and needs to be rectified

Co-ordinated Community Baiting Programs

At present coordinated baiting by landholders takes place across a number of plans but is poorly reported and recorded. The uptake of coordinated programs can be substantially increased.

The difficulties in engaging with absentee landholders, lifestyle landholders and to some degree cattle producers is a significant limitation which needs to be overcome. Nonetheless increasing community baiting efforts is critical to improving wild dog control outcomes.

Key Recommendations:

16. Support and where necessary reinvigorate wild dog working groups as the cornerstone of effective wild dog management.

17. Implement Feral Scan as the primary method of reporting and disseminating wild dog impact and control information

- 18. Implement Tablet based approaches for field data entry by PACs**
- 19. Develop award condition for PACs as part of the 2016 review of the Local Land Service Award**
- 20. Seek to have the maximum time for checking traps extended to 48 hours**
- 21. Increase the number and extent of community coordinated baiting programs through improved coordination, communication and / or regulation especially the need to include absentee landholders who are not engaged in wild dog control**

Wild Dog Community Advisory Group and a Wild Dog Coordinator Position

A workshop session was devoted to the role, functions and desirability of the Wild Dog Community Advisory group and the employment of a wild dog coordinator. In both cases reactions were mixed and no clear consensus emerged – see the concise summary of the major points below:

Wild Dog Community Advisory Group

Those in support considered that the group could:

- Help with awareness raising of the issue
- Be a conduit to the South East Local Land Services Board
- Use its clout to seek resources
- Improve communication about wild dog issues generally
- Improve effectiveness of operations across agencies

Those concerned considered that:

- The objectives and composition of the group were not clear
- It would add another layer of bureaucracy
- It would lead to a loss of local control and take away from local plans
- There would be resource costs
- There are uncertainties about the role if any of agency representative
- It is too big an area for one group
- It would require a further commitment of time from the community.
- It is unnecessary if the working groups are operating well

Given these uncertainties, it may be desirable to delay the consideration of the establishment of the group until the revised management arrangements within South East Local Land Services have become established and a more concrete proposal can be considered by the wild dog community. However there is a need for region – or at least subregional discussion on key coordination issues such as broader scale aerial baiting. These might be considered through joint meetings of wild dog working groups.

Regional Wild Dog Coordinator

Those in support considered that the advantages included:

- The establishment of a forward looking role which would help raise wild dog management to a new level
- Better funding and a coordinated voice for the region
- Improved collection and management of data
- Support for Working Groups needing assistance
- Dissemination of best practice initiatives
- Improved coordination of programs and greater efficiencies
- Improved communication, including media
- It could be a conduit to the Board
- Increased consistency between plans

Those concerned considered that:

- It may take resources from on-ground works – need PACs on the ground first
- South East LLS should already be undertaking the role
- It may lack independence
- It is a large area for one person
- The job may be only short term

The concern that South East Local Land Services should be undertaking the role is significant. In the two other locations where wild dog coordinators have been appointed using AWI funding the coordinators are not employed by LLS, though they may be housed by LLS. This has the potential to lead to confused accountabilities. Accordingly this was not a desirable model when presented in the Wild Dog Workshops.

If the South East Local Board accepts the main recommendations of this report, there is a significant body of work to be completed by the Vertebrate Pest Manager. A two year Project Officer position should be created with possible external funding similar to the other two co-ordinating roles.

Key Recommendations:

- 22. Delay consideration of the Wild Dog Community Advisory Groups until the Vertebrate Pest management role is well established and a more firm proposal can be considered by the wild dog community**
- 23. Seek to establish a two year Project Officer position to support the Vertebrate Pest Manager**
- 24. Seek to have Pest Animal Controllers award grading's aligned**

Summary of recommendations:

1. Retain the current system of wild dog control using South East Local Land Services staff, agency staff and contractors in the medium term and improved by implementing the recommendations of this report.
2. Work with land management agencies over time to implement a nil-tenure delivery model based on the Brindabella-Wee Jasper Plan, noting a review of fair cost allocation across all stakeholders.
3. Centralise Wild Dog management in the South East under a vertebrate pest management function and appoint a suitably graded Local Land Services Manager.
4. Maintain Pest Animal Controllers as permanent staff and not replaced by contractors.
5. Develop a Regional Wild Dog Strategy as required by the Local Land Services Wild Dog Policy
6. Implement a system for accurately recording and allocating Local Land Services labour and operating costs to wild dog plans
7. Look to optimise the allocation of PACs to wild dog plans in order to maximise effectiveness and find savings
8. Develop a rigorous financial reporting framework for wild dog plans
9. Implement measures to estimate private landholders' contributions to wild dog plans
10. Recommend that work begin on cost allocation models for wild dog control
11. Investigate the extension of the Local Land Services Pest Insect levy to include vertebrate pests
12. Systematically look for alternative funding sources
13. Actively support five year wild dog plans
14. Develop and implement an effective communication strategy for wild dog control in the South East Local Land Services.
15. Provide clear feedback to participants at the wild dog workshops of how their input has been used to guide the South East Local Land Services Board's decisions
16. Support and where necessary reinvestigate Wild Dog working groups as the cornerstone of effective wild dog management.
17. Implement Feral Scan as the primary method of reporting and disseminating wild dog impact and control information
18. Implement Tablet based approaches for field data entry by PACs
19. Develop award condition for PACs as part of the 2016 review of the Local Land Services Award
20. Seek to have the maximum time for checking traps extended to 48 hours
21. Increase the number and extent of locally coordinated baiting programs through improved coordination, communication and / or regulation especially the need to include absentee landholders who are not engaged in wild dog control
22. Delay consideration of the Wild Dog Community Advisory Groups until the Vertebrate Pest management role is well established and a more firm proposal can be considered by the wild dog community
23. Seek to establish a two year Project Officer position to support the Vertebrate Pest Manager.
24. Seek to have Pest Animal Controllers award grading's align