

WA FERAL CAT WORKING GROUP

A Working Group to improve native fauna conservation trajectories with a focus on effective and humane management of feral cats.

MINUTES – MEETING #6

Held on Thursday 21 April 2022

commencing at 12.05 pm (3 pm finish), all via Zoom

In attendance:

Dr Tom Hatton	Chair WAF CWG
Dr Dave Algar	Member National Feral Cat Taskforce
Prof Simon McKirdy	Chairman, WA Biosecurity Council
Elisabeth McLellan	Manager, Bush Heritage Australia
Jane O'Malley	CEO, PHCC, for NRM WA
Ron Shepherd	Director of Invasive Species, DPIRD (on behalf of Victoria Aitken)
Dr Fran Stanley	Executive Director, Ecosystem Health Branch, DBCA
Dr Bruce Webber	Program Director, WABSI
Dr Judy Dunlop	Executive Officer, WAF CWG
Naomi Briggs	Volunteer Minute Taker

Guest attendees:

Corrin Everett	Invasive Animals Program Leader, DBCA
Assoc. Prof. Guy	Research Leader, Predator Management, NSW Dept Primary Industries/UNE
Carly Ebenestelli	UWA Intern, McCusker Centre for Citizenship

Apologies:

Tim Allard	CEO, Australian Wildlife Conservancy
Dr Rachel Paltridge	Member, Indigenous Desert Alliance

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY (CHAIR)

The Chair provided an acknowledgement of Country.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following are noted as standing declarations of interest (unless otherwise advised):

- **Tim Allard** noted he is a member of the Steering Committee for the National Science Program and a Director with the Land Conservation Alliance.
- **Simon McKirdy** noted he represents various researchers at Murdoch University; and
- **Bruce Webber** noted he is a research scientist with CSIRO with the potential to represent others.



Protecting WA's Biodiversity

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING - 29TH NOVEMBER 2021

The Chair confirmed with all members that the previous minutes had been read and that no amendment was necessary.

The Chair confirmed the Minutes of the Previous Meeting as a true and accurate record of that meeting.

GENERAL BUSINESS

The Executive Officer gave an overview of activities since the last meeting.

WORKING GROUP PLAN OF ACTION – STRATEGIC PLANNING

Next steps for identified priority strategies and objectives for Action, under each of the key pillars:

a. Accessible Information

The Feral Cat Working Group will make available and act as a conduit for information and experience on feral cat management solutions.

- i) *Website Progress.* Judy Dunlop provided an overview of the website.
- ii) *BAM Act Review submission.* DPIRD is undertaking this review which Victoria Aitken is leading. Agreed that the Working Group needs to wait for further iterations of the review before discussing details of the best descriptor of feral cats in the context of being an invasive species.

b. Research Program

https://wabsi.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/WABSI_Mitigating-cat-impacts_FINAL.pdf

- i) *Guy Ballard* joined the meeting at 12.19 pm to provide a presentation on NESP2 and feral cat research opportunities. Guy is a member of the Research Executive Committee for NESP, an extensive Commonwealth Program currently in its fourth iteration.

<https://nesplandscapes.edu.au/>

One current project under the resilient landscapes' hub is on invasive species, which includes the development of a decision tool for cat management across the country. This project will bring together experts from across the country through facilitated workshops to develop the framework. The central question of the framework is "How Do I Control Cats?". Many members of the WAFCWG will be invited to the stakeholder workshop/s.

Guy noted that there is a lot of demand for work to help manage feral cats. NESP is closely bound to the Threatened Species Strategy

<https://www.awe.gov.au/environment/biodiversity/threatened/publications/threatened-species-strategy-2021-2031> and is looking for opportunities in the future to make strategic funding

decisions to promote the survival of threatened species. The Research Committee has signed off on three projects.

- ii) Update on Research Committee activity from Bruce Webber. The Research Committee has signed off on several projects and has more coming in.
 - SouthWest Biodiversity Project.
 - Camera Array Project.
- ii) Emerging Projects.
 - Carbon Monoxide Euthanasia Humaneness Trial. NSW DPI can match dollar for dollar up to \$100,000. Jab Stick and Capture Bolt are also considerations on Humaneness Index.
 - Regional workshops for rangers.
 - Feral cat control on agricultural land. Interest in the Boddington area, similar to work being done at Dryandra.
 - Sponsorship for the symposium
 - Landscape-scalable fire and predator management projects in the Pilbara.
 - Felixer projects

c. Co-ordinated Management

- i) Access to Eradicat as a feral cat management tool.

Fran Stanley and Corrin Everett (DBCA) provided information to the group on the current policies and regulations on accessing Eradicat, noting some information on the DBCA website. Fran and Corinne will send detailed notes for dissemination to WG members.
- ii) Update on proposal for WA Feral Cat Action Plan.

In March, a meeting was held between the Ministers for Environment and Agriculture and Food. This meeting resulted in a request to DBCA to develop a “Feral Cat Strategy”. This document would be similar to the cane toad strategy. A stakeholder reference group is required to prepare an engagement and plan, and it was proposed that the WG (via the EO) coordinate this. WG members will fulfil the stakeholder reference group role and lead the stakeholder elements of developing the strategy. There was broad support for this from WG members, and it was agreed that the EO would assist with engagement between DBCA and Working Group and Advisory Group.
- iii) Feral Cat listing as a key threatening process on the *Biodiversity and Conservation Act*.

While the option is provided for in the legislation, the Department does not have a process to do this. It was agreed that the EO would draft a letter to be sent from the Chair to the Minister and circulate it to WG members for comment. The view is that even without regulatory consequence, the listing of feral cats as a KTP will assist with grant applications, provide links to strategy and provide gravitas to other work.

WA FERAL CAT SYMPOSIUM #2

The symposium is now scheduled for February 2023 at the UWA Club.

GENERAL BUSINESS

- DPIRD representative.

Victoria Aitken has changed roles for the foreseeable future. All WG members agreed that the WG should have a DPIRD representative. Given his feral cat strategy development role, Ron Shepherd would be a suitable replacement for Victoria Aitken. Ron Shepherd agreed to join the WG as a DPIRD representative in place of Victoria Aitken.

- Chair and Deputy Chair.

Tom Hatton announced that he would be resigning as Chair effective immediately. The Terms of Reference allow for the nomination of a Deputy Chair. Judy Dunlop nominated Lis McLellan as Deputy Chair, which she accepted, and all WG members seconded the nomination. It was agreed that Lis would act as Chair until a suitable replacement for Chair can be recruited.

TERMS OF REFERENCE UPDATE

As there is a broader interest in general cat management, Bruce Weber suggested reconsidering the term “feral” in the WG name. Bruce will prepare a paper for consideration at the next meeting.

NEXT MEETING DATE: Aug/Sep 2022.