



# WAFCWG

WA Feral Cat Working Group

*Protecting WA's Biodiversity*

## Meeting 13 Communiqué

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

This communiqué highlights key discussions and considerations from the Working Group's meeting as well as other important information.

**Date:** Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2024

**Location:** WABSI, WA Trustees Building, Level 2, 133 St George's Tce, Perth

**Organisations represented:** WAFCWG, Natural Resource Management WA, National Feral Cat Taskforce, CSIRO, Australian Wildlife Conservancy, Bush Heritage Australia, Indigenous Desert Alliance, Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) and Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD). Invited guests from Bush Heritage Australia, Centre for Invasive Species Solutions, and DBCA.

The September WA Feral Cat Working Group Meeting (#13) received information from our Executive Officer on her activities and future work. There was an update on present funding applications and the grant programs, research activities underway, and there were guest presentations from Bush Heritage Australia on its work in the Great Southern and Kiwirrkurra Indigenous Rangers in the Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA). There were also updates from Working Group members on feral cat programs and pet-cat containment.

### Summary of Matters for Decision:

**Action:** The Working Group's interactive website map will be more prominently displayed on our webpage and will highlight new projects underway on feral cat management as well as related research projects. It was confirmed that this activity did not overlap with any other work underway by other stakeholders and remained an important resource in understanding feral cat management and research in WA.

**Action:** The bibliography section of the website will be updated. Members and stakeholders are strongly encouraged to send the Executive Officer any relevant research papers or articles for inclusion. This will mean that the website remains the predominant source for researchers and people who work on the ground in feral cat management.

**Action:** The meeting considered its draft position statement on defining what is a feral cat. For some, this remains a contested and at times contentious issue. The input on the document received from the meeting will be incorporated into a final position statement that particularly clarifies the use of 'stray', 'feral', 'owned' and 'unowned'. The position statement is being forwarded to the Australia wide National Feral Cat Task Force.

## Summary of Matters for Discussion:

1. There was discussion around cat definitions (particularly in relation to the DPIRD policy document “Feral cat declared pest – minimize risk to domestic cats”) and how it appears to be limiting the possible active management of cats and their threat to native wildlife. This has resulted in a position statement (see above) that can be applied in many contexts and with many stakeholders.
2. There are several local governments that have expressed a commitment to better manage cats in their jurisdictions. Working Group members continue to provide advice and to deliver presentations to local government and to stakeholders responsible in this area.
3. A summary of the Working Group’s recent research sub-committee meeting was delivered. Priorities were identified and confirmed. The next steps include identifying specific interested funding partners for projects. This is progressing.
4. There were two presentations on projects occurring on the ground that are at the forefront of feral cat management. Details of these projects will be highlighted on the website and promoted in the social media of the Working Group.
5. Funding for the Working Group Executive Officer and project funding will cease in December 2024. It remains a priority to source longer term funding to enable the coordination of information, research and feral cat program activity in WA.

## Summary of Matters for Noting:

- With support from Responsible Cat Ownership and members of the Working Group, the City of Stirling has sent a survey of 10 questions to all of WA’s 139 local governments authorities about pet-cat containment and local government interest in cat-containment legislation. The results of the Survey are being finalised.
- Bush Heritage Australia, Jeff Pinder gave a presentation on their project under their Round 1, State Feral Cat Management Grant. The project will install [Celium trap](#) alerts and soft-jaw leg hold traps in the Fitz-Stirling and in the Mid-west in 2024/2025 period.
- Dr Rachel Paltridge, on behalf of the Kiwirrkurra Indigenous rangers, gave an update on the work undertaken in the IPA for Bilby conservation under the Round 1 State Feral Cat Management Grants. The rangers are trialing feral cat-baiting in an area where the Bilby population remains low and few dingoes are present due to the lack of permanent water. Predator camera monitoring has been undertaken pre and post Eradicat® baiting which was delivered aerially from a helicopter. Extent of Bilby activity was also monitored from the helicopter. A scat survey and DNA analysis have also been undertaken to monitor Bilby abundance. Rangers have high engagement in the project. A second round of Eradicat® baiting will occur in 2025.
- We welcomed our new DBCA representative on our working group, Kellie Passeretto (Acting Manager, Ecosystem Health Branch) and we will extend the invitation to the new DBCA Feral Cat Strategy Coordinator, Rowan Hegglun to our advisory panel.

## Highlights of working group activities:

### **WAFCWG**

- Numerous media (13 news articles) and (four) political engagements around responsible cat containment and funding for feral cat management and research.
- We have had over 4300 new visitors to our website this year.

### **Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions**

- Rowan Hegglin has started as the new state Feral Cat Coordinator.
- Deployed 25 satellite collared male cats within Stirling National Park which will be tracked/monitored for up to 12 months. The data collected will provide DBCA with more detailed information on movements of cats in the area and will allow a more targeted baiting regime.
- As part of Western Shield, 7 locations were baited this year with Eradicat.
- Round 3 of the Feral Cat grants will likely be open for submission in December 2024.

### **Australian Wildlife Conservancy**

- Trialling fence/gate monitoring (with internet connection) and smart gate developments.

### **Indigenous Desert Alliance**

- Felixer has been deployed around a known night parrot site.

### **Bush Heritage Australia**

- Felixers have been deployed in targeted locations.

## Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held Wednesday 11 December 2024 (online).

## Note

This communiqué presents a synthesis of the meeting and should not be taken to represent the position of any individual Feral Cat Working Group member.

Susan Hunt AM PSM

Chair, WAFCWG

