



Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

**in response to the impact of feral deer, pigs and
goats in Australia and national priorities to
prevent the problems worsening for the natural
environment, community and farmers**

1 November 2018

1. INTRODUCTION

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) appreciates the opportunity to make a submission in response to the Senate's inquiry into the impact of feral deer, pigs and goats in Australia and national priorities to prevent the problems worsening for the natural environment, community and farmers.

The information contained in this submission reflects consultation with State and Territory Local Government Associations. It does not, however, replace the individual views of those bodies, some of which may have made separate submissions during the public consultation process. As such, the information contained below should be considered as supplementary information.

ALGA is the national voice of local government in Australia, representing 537 councils across the country.

In structure, ALGA is a federation of state and territory local government associations. ALGA was established in 1947 and throughout its history has been closely involved in issues of national significance affecting the local government sector as a whole.

ALGA liaises with the numerous Australian Government Departments, including the Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Energy, as well as industry peak bodies and community interest groups on an ongoing basis to ensure local governments are well informed and their interests considered in policy and program development.

2. COMMENTS IN RELATION TO POINTS OF INQUIRY

The current and potential occurrence of feral deer, pigs and goats across Australia

Our consultation with ALGA's State and Territory Member Associations reveals that there is a varying degree of concern regarding feral deer, pigs and goats across Australia, with the following summary:

- Victoria – deer are an increasing concern in peri-urban areas with key risks identified as vehicular accidents, damage to native vegetation and agricultural areas. Pigs and goats are also a problem in this state, but these species are not receiving as much attention/management at present.
- New South Wales – all three species are an issue and much effort has been made on pest animal management plans and changes to planning and strategic frameworks for pest animals management. Local government involvement is generally limited to Council land and on roads. Councils do not have as broad a regulatory role for feral animals as they do for pest plants or companion animal management.
- Western Australia – Pigs present major issues in the south-west of the state, and goats can be problematic. There are management plans in place. Deer are not a known concern.

- South Australia – currently there is a state inquiry underway relating to native and feral animals
- Queensland - Feral pigs are a major pest animal. In the Wet Tropics area of far north Queensland, pigs damage the natural environment and pose a major threat to the conservation values of the Wet Tropics World Heritage area, causing significant losses to agricultural enterprises in the region, and harbor and spread diseases affecting native animals, stock and humans.
- Northern Territory – these species are not causing as much concern as camels and donkeys, although feral animals in general do create issues for public health and infrastructure damage, especially in remote areas
- Tasmania – not an identified problem

The likely and potential biosecurity risk and impacts of feral deer, pigs and goats on the environment, agriculture, community safety and other values

Uncontrolled feral animals pose a biosecurity risk and have other impacts through the risk of spreading disease, impacting on agricultural productivity, human health risks, environmental damage (both vegetative and to native animals) and well as damage to infrastructure and amenity values.

Risks to residents travelling on local government-controlled roads are an identified problem in numerous local government areas. There are also financial costs related to repairing/remediating damaged infrastructure and natural areas as a result of damage from feral animals.

As populations increase in urban and peri-urban areas, and impacts of drought and vegetative loss from various causes are experienced, there is an increasing risk of feral animals and human interactions in populated areas, as well as on rural lands under local government control. As such, a national approach to assist Australia's 537 local governments respond in a consistent, timely and effective manner is welcome.

The effectiveness of current state and national laws, policies and practices in limiting spread and mitigating impacts of feral deer, pigs and goats

There is variation across the nation in the responsibilities of local governments to respond to matters relating to feral animals and biosecurity issues. For example, in Queensland, the *Biosecurity Act 2014* requires local government to develop, adopt, and implement local pest management plans as part of an integrated planning framework for managing pest plants and animals across the state.

Meanwhile, in Western Australia the State Government and Recognised Biosecurity Groups (BSGs) have key responsibilities under the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007*. The Western Australian Local Government Association has flagged concerns at the inadequacy of commitment and resourcing by the Western Australian State Government to manage pests in State Government managed conservation estates and national parks. This has flow on effects on local government managed public lands, with cost shifting implications as well as environmental and public health risks.

The efficacy and welfare implications of currently available control and containment tool and methods, and the potential for new control and containment tools and methods.

Many local government staff are active in the control of pest plants and animals throughout the local government-managed areas of Australia, but recognise that improved coordination of effort is necessary by community, government and industry in order to further reduce the impacts.

Sharing resources across regions, as well as information/data/reporting are potential ways to improve efficacy and efficiencies. State and Territory Local Government Associations provide a key pathway for communicating information to each of their member local governments, as well as providing guidance for policy and plan development. As such, national approaches should ensure adequate consultation and partnership with the various State and Territory Local Government Associations.

3. CONCLUSION

The management of impacts relating to feral animals for local governments is an important issue in terms of public safety, health, environmental management, biosecurity and cost of infrastructure and staffing.

There are benefits to addressing these concerns at a national level, particularly in the context of climate change, increasing risks of drought and population growth in peri-urban areas.

ALGA thanks the Senate Committee for the opportunity to provide its views on these matters and welcomes future opportunities to be involved.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Beresford-Wylie
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Local Government Association