

7 August 2014

The history, effectiveness, performance and future of the National Landcare Program Senate Inquiry

WoolProducers Australia Submission

Background: WoolProducers and National Wild Dog Action Plan

WoolProducers Australia is the national voice of Australian wool growers and has a key role in engaging with the companies funded by growers - whether compulsory levies or fees for service - to develop constructive and profitable outcomes for industry.

Our representation covers dedicated positions on the committees and boards of national organisations and grower bodies, including National Farmers' Federation, CRC for Sheep Industry Innovation and Animal Health Australia, Australian Wool Innovation, Australian Wool Testing Authority, Australian Wool Exchange, Federation of Australian Wool Organisations and through to the International Wool and Textile Organisation.

Since February 2013, WoolProducers Australia (WPA) has been working with critical industry stakeholders to develop a National Wild Dog Action Plan (*the Plan*) to combat the economic and personal devastation caused by wild dogs across rural Australia. This development has seen unprecedented collaboration and cooperation across all peak industry bodies and governments, at the federal, state and territory and regional levels. While the development project was funded by Australia Woolgrowers, the cattle and sheep meat sectors are very active partners. Full endorsement of the National Farmers Federation Member's Council has also been received. Indeed, one comment received during *the Plan's* public consultation phase was:

"We commend WoolProducers for undertaking this important piece of work to address the issue of wild dog damage to primary production. The Plan is well considered and well written. The Action Plan provides a framework to bring together all stakeholders, and all jurisdictions, so that we are working on the same page and making best use of always limited resources. The Plan offers the opportunity to reduce duplication and eliminate inefficiencies brought about by uncoordinated efforts."

The Plan is fully supported by AGMIN and was officially endorsed by the Hon. Barnaby Joyce, Minister for Agriculture at an industry launch held on 4 July 2014. It has also been acknowledged by Minister Joyce and others this is a model that could certainly be replicated to tackle other vertebrate pests.

Importantly *the Plan* provides a mechanism for all levels of government and industry to combine resources to deliver effective and coordinated on-the-ground solutions to combat the ever-increasing threat of wild dogs. *The Plan* clearly defines the benefits of wild dog management to both agriculture and the environment through the reduction of impacts on native flora and fauna as well as on farm businesses.

Revision of the architecture for the new National Landcare Program

In the lead up to the 2013 election the Coalition's published policies that included commitment to:

- Expand Caring for our Country (CFoC) to enable greater focus on weed and feral animal control
- Merge CFoC and Landcare to create a single National Landcare Program to reflect local and regional program priorities
- Within six months of forming Government, the Coalition will release guidelines based on consultation with Catchment Management Authorities, Natural Resource Management (NRM) Boards, Local Land Services and Landcare Groups that will give priority to the principles of Local, Simple and Long Term.

WoolProducers acknowledges the need to give priority to the principles of Local, Simple and Long-Term. WoolProducers would suggest the following overarching principals should also be added as part of the merge of the CfOC and Landcare programs: Strategic, Effective and Efficient.

Strategic: Regional / catchment scale planning is important. However, broader scale, more strategic thinking is also required - instead of granting funds to single entity organisations focusing on specific areas or issues or commodity. More consideration MUST be given to nationally focused, cross industry, cross border programs that work together to control a program.

Effective: Investment should be focused on the most effective pathway for driving change and partnering with the most effective party/ies to deliver the required change.

Efficient: . Administrative efficiency in the delivery of investment is critical to maximising funds available to invest in change.

In conclusion, in February 2014, WoolProducers submitted a request to the Department of the Environment asking that consideration for the architecture of the new National Landcare Program encompasses scope for participation by National, State and Territory as well as Regional-scale programs. WoolProducers requested:

- acknowledgement of the vital importance of the National Wild Dog Action Plan as it provides an integrated and collaborative framework, it is an exemplar model that can be applied to tackle other vertebrate pests
- establishment of arrangements under the new National Landcare Program to support better State/Territory and Regional collaboration and dissemination of information via a network of Regional Wild Dog Facilitators at the regional and community level

- opportunities to facilitate work with existing groups to engage more 'holistic' pest control (Integrated Pest Management) and raise awareness of other vertebrate pests, such as wild pigs, foxes and feral cats.

Jane E Brownbill
Chief Executive Officer