

**IMPACT
REPORT**
2024-2025



Welcome

An elder once said to me, 'You've got to give it away to keep it.'

That teaching has been on my mind this year. It reminds me that real custodianship is never about holding power or credit – it's about passing it on, making space and ensuring others can carry the work forward. Healing Country has to be bigger than any one person or organisation.

That's what the Invasive Species Council has been doing. Much of what we've achieved won't be written down in this report under our name – and that's the point. We've empowered others to take up the fight against invasive species. Communities are now hosting their own gatherings centred on invasive species. Governments are creating new leadership roles, like the Aboriginal Assistant Commissioner for Healthy Country in NSW, and commissioning

reports that call for a Voice for Country. Big reforms are on the table that only a few years ago weren't even being spoken about.

These shifts don't happen by accident. They happen because we, our allies, our supporters, and our donors stand shoulder to shoulder. Together, we've made it possible for others to speak, to lead and to act – that ripple effect is how we'll win.

This report shares some of the highlights from the year, but the truth is our work goes far beyond these pages. Every step forward is proof that when we give it away, we keep it alive – and Country has a greater chance to heal.

Let's keep giving, keep listening and keep making it bigger than us.

Richard Swain

The Invasive Species Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians throughout Australia and their connections to land and sea. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today. We recognise the devastating impact that invasive species brought by colonists have had and continue to have on Indigenous cultural landscapes and totem species.

Message from our new CEO



As you look through the pages of this report, you will see a collection of vital campaign wins for nature. But I also want you to look deeper and see the bigger picture: as we face down a defining battle for nature in Australia, our advocacy is delivering systemic change that is shifting politics, breaking down barriers and empowering communities to help spark a wildlife revival.

Invasive species, still the overwhelming driver of Australia's shameful animal extinction rate, continue to trash, trample, choke and pollute our rivers and landscapes. Every day, we lose a little more of what makes our country special.

In the face of this, the Invasive Species Council is not simply fighting one threat after the next – we are actively changing the culture that allows these threats to take hold, making our advocacy bigger than us. We work across the political spectrum – building coalitions and empowering decision makers to act. And the good news is, research tells us tackling invasives is the highest impact conservation intervention to save our wildlife¹. When we get it right, it makes a big difference.

When bird flu loomed as a catastrophic threat, we didn't just secure over \$100 million in funding – we helped rewrite how governments collaborate across agriculture and environment, setting a new standard for emergency biosecurity. When a NSW Shooters Party Bill tried to turn public lands into game parks, we turned it into a national conversation about effective feral animal control – exposing the influence

of the hunting lobby and winning back ground for science and good management. And in Kosciuszko, we've shown that people power can move mountains – and governments.

This is the essence of transformational advocacy. It's about building strong relationships and being nimble and brave for when opportunity cracks open.

With your support, those cracks have widened into breakthroughs – unlocking more than \$200 million this year in new government investment for nature, changing laws and proving that coordinated, courageous advocacy can deliver change at every level.

We've gone from strength to strength, driving impactful change that ensures our wildlife finally gets the protection it deserves. These wins weren't inevitable. But they happened because you backed us.

I also want to celebrate the legacy of my predecessor, Andrew Cox. His vision and dedication over the last decade led the Council to grow into the formidable force it is today. I am thrilled he will continue with us as an Ambassador, lending his expertise, particularly to international biosecurity efforts.

Thank you for standing with us – for giving us the power to shift governments, shape policy and seize the moments that matter most for wildlife.

Jack Gough

CEO, Invasive Species Council

¹ www.ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:c8a8a07a-8a40-47bc-a434-1aa40db46ae3/files/s0r9675717

Kosciuszko Landscape. Photo: TimDonnelly.

Advocacy in action

This year we've shown up, stood firm and turned public pressure into political action – making headlines, triggering debates, shifting culture, changing laws and securing vital funding to tackle the invasive species crisis. These are the ingredients for a wildlife revival.

National

- Won \$102 million for bird flu preparedness, including over \$50 million dedicated to prepare for impacts to wildlife.
- Secured the Australian national feral cat plan, for the first time signed on by all states and territories, except Queensland.
- Secured an extension of funding for critical national invasive species coordinator roles for feral deer, cats, foxes and pigs.
- Secured an independent review of the National Fire Eradication Ant Program.

Queensland

- Won a \$28 million fire ant funding boost for urgent suppression work, plus a winter blitz and an important shift to all-year-round treatment.
- Won election commitments for 150 national park rangers, 100 biosecurity officers.
- Helped protect the critically endangered Kroombit Tinker Frog from feral horses in the Kroombit Tops National Park.
- The funding we secured protected the Nerimba frog conservation area – home to the threatened wallum sedge frog, with only a few thousand left in the wild – from a devastating fire ant outbreak.

New South Wales

- Our 11,000+ strong petition triggered a repeal bill in NSW Parliament to remove the laws that protect feral horses in Kosciuszko National Park.
- Protected NSW's Kosciuszko National Park from feral horses, with the population now down to 3000-5000.
- Stopped a Shooters Party Bill from passing in NSW which would have set a dangerous precedent for the mismanagement of feral animals in state forests.
- Protected Blue Mountains and Barrington Tops World Heritage from feral horses.

- The NSW government committed to root and branch reform of biosecurity and invasive species management in response to our advocacy.
- Won a dedicated NSW Aboriginal Healthy Country Assistant Commissioner position in the Natural Resources Commission.
- Secured a shift to a 4-year funding structure for the NSW Weeds Action Plan.

South Australia

- We secured \$6 million worth of new funding for the SA deer eradication program.
- Our advocacy changed an outdated law that undermined effective cat management, enabling the progress of Kangaroo Island's feral cat eradication program.

Tasmania

- Secured election commitments from the new Liberal Government to develop an Invasive Species Action Plan within 100 days, develop new deer and cat management plans, and make Zone 3 a complete eradication zone for feral deer.
- Protected Tasmania's Walls of Jerusalem National Park from feral deer.

Victoria

- Secured \$700,000 for 15 trout-free havens in Victoria for 5 critically endangered native fish.

Western Australia and Australian Capital Territory

- Our advocacy, alongside local groups, drove the WA government to commit to change the law to allow local councils to bring in cat containment laws to protect wildlife.
- Secured an increase of 33% for ACT rangers tackling invasive species.

What's next?

Our next challenge is ensuring these gains become lasting change – embedding invasive species action into Australia's laws, budgets and national priorities.

Our **Impact** Snapshot



We've featured in

6,300+

media stories worth an advertising equivalent of over

\$64 million.



This year we secured

\$200 million+

in funding to protect nature from invasive species.



Our campaigns were seen

11.2 million+

times on social media, sparking more than

298,000



We've reached Australians almost

72,000,000



We've had

600,000+

website visits this year, a

25%



We've secured

4

parliament and government inquiries into cat management, fire ants and feral animal



To date, we've secured

\$1.5 billion+

in funding to protect nature from invasive species.



To date,

116,000+

people have signed our petition to call on the federal government to take urgent action on invasive species.

THANK YOU

General donations allow us to tackle the big threats like cats and pivot to emerging emergencies like fire ants and bird flu. A huge thank you for your generosity: **Illawong Fund, Geoffrey and Geraldine Harris, Ethinvest Foundation,**

Message from our President

Australia's national identity is tied to our love of Country and unique wildlife. That's why it's so important that the Invasive Species Council has become a strong organisation, successfully defending what makes Australia so special. It's been our biggest year yet: strong, clever advocacy and increased public understanding of the critical role invasive species play in Australian ecosystems.



Following a nationwide search, Jack Gough was appointed CEO in May. The Board recognised his strong leadership and deep commitment to tackling invasive species. As a driving force behind major policy shifts and critical funding wins, Jack brings the necessary ambition and strategic focus to confront one of Australia's most urgent environmental threats. With his energy, vision and respected relationships across government, agriculture, and environment sectors, the board is confident he will lead the organisation's next chapter with purpose, building greater momentum for nature.

We are fortunate to have such a well-respected and impactful team. Our deepest thanks go to all our hardworking and passionate staff. Jack is ably supported by a leadership team that includes Dr Carol Booth, who continues to lead policy reform; Amber Sprunt, who ensured another year of successful fundraising that met targets and expanded our programs; Ainslie Fisher, who stepped up to support our growing, remote team; and new Engagement Director, Imogen Ebsworth, who is directing expanded programs to build community engagement.

Our impact has been matched by strong performance this year. Income held steady at **\$3.2 million**, supporter recruitment grew by **24%**, our active supporter base grew by **15%**, and our team expanded to 18 staff and over 70 volunteers – reflecting the trust, reach and influence the Council continues to build. With deeper partnerships with Traditional Owners and on-the-ground organisations like Landcare, an expanding national media footprint, and a new citizen science partnership with Invertebrates Australia and Australian Geographic, we'll engage more Australians than ever to be part of the solution.

I want to give special thanks to The Ian Potter Foundation for the multi-year grant that provided the initial security for the Council to grow. Importantly, our leading partners have provided further financial stability to fuel a year of impact and investment into new ways to build our advocacy power. Thank you for the significant support provided by the Illawong Fund, Purves Environmental Fund, Chris and Gina Grub, Beetle Bones Fund, Curlew Fund, and Peter and Judy Howarth.

Lastly – though far from least – our former CEO, Andrew Cox, stepped down in March after a decade of visionary leadership that placed the Council on a strong and sustainable path. His contribution has transformed the organisation and will leave a lasting mark on nature.

Together, our resolve to protect the wildlife and landscapes that give us our national identity is emboldened.

David Rickards, President



Naivety

Tim Low, Invasive Species Council co-founder, ecologist and author

Australia's animals are experiencing an extinction crisis from the devastating toll of invasive species.

At the core of this is naivety. Mammals went extinct because they were naïve about foxes and cats, Christmas Island lizards were naïve about Asian wolf snakes, and the immune systems of frogs had no evolutionary past with a pathogen like chytrid fungus.

Scientists learned recently that Australia's black swans are immunologically naïve to the H5N1 bird flu sweeping the world and expected in Australia soon. Our swans fared much worse than other waterbirds the scientists observed, dying soon after infection.

A naïve human is someone who lacks the knowledge, judgment or life experience to respond properly to problems. The great challenge for the Invasive Species Council is to protect naïve wildlife from human naivety about invasive species.

The next extinctions in Australia could come from a pathogen not in Australia yet that might not even have been discovered.

We do what we can to monitor overseas research about emerging invaders, and ask, 'Is Australia ready for these – with surveillance in place and plans for eliminating them if possible?' The answer is often 'no'.

In 2024, the Invasive Species Council persuaded the federal government to develop a contingency plan for Australia's birds and mammals for the expected arrival of H5N1 bird flu. Until then, the government's only plan was for poultry. It was naïve for the government to think it was acceptable to exclude nature.

The government must do better with future deadly pathogens, or we will lose even more of our precious wildlife to extinction. Stony coral tissue loss disease, white-nose syndrome of bats and other emerging pathogens are taking over parts of the world. The risks they pose to Australia are very real.

No other conservation group is talking about these threats. It's up to you and the Invasive Species Council to help us banish naivety about the threats our wildlife faces.

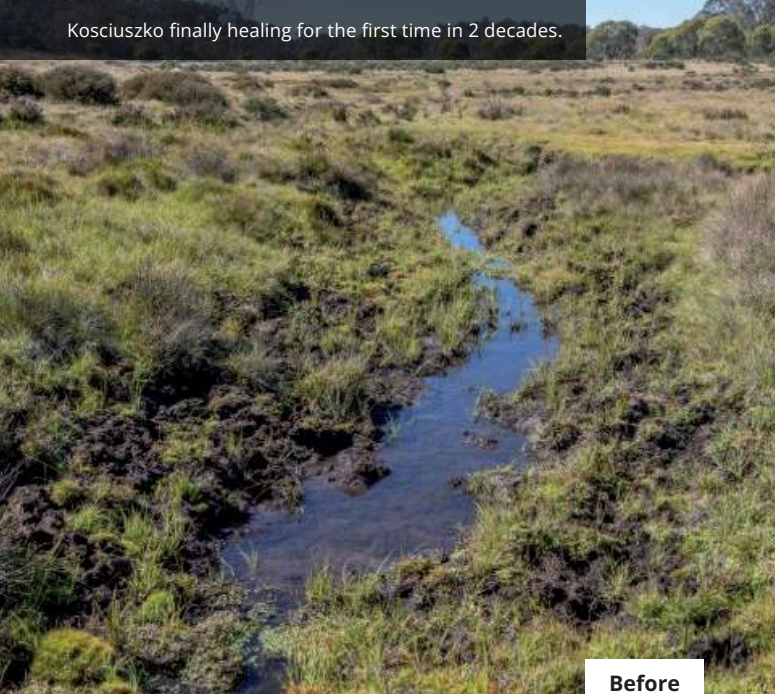
THANK YOU

We are immensely grateful for the donors who choose annual pledged giving. Your ongoing support provides security from which we can build ambitious goals for nature and wildlife.

Thank you for your trust and commitment

- **Beetle Bones Fund**
- **Brennan Family Foundation**
- **Curlew Fund**
- **Garry White Foundation**
- **Ian Potter Foundation**
- **Jamie Pittock**
- **Melliodora Fund**
- **Naylor Stewart Foundation**
- **Purves Environment Fund**
- **The Coalition (Solutions)**
- **Water Dragon Fund**

We are also grateful for the support



Before



After

People power reclaims Kosci

For 2 decades, feral horses have trampled, trashed and polluted the fragile alpine country of Kosciuszko National Park. Thanks to our work, this iconic place is finally beginning to heal, and our campaign to end the protection of feral horses has reached a powerful new milestone.

Feral horses have now been almost eradicated from two-thirds of the park, with about 3000–5000 left in the retention areas where horses continue to be protected by law. This is an incredible turnaround in just 2 years, with strong cross-party support for the park service's ongoing culling efforts. The dramatic decline in horses has already led to visible ecological recovery in newly horse-free areas of the park.

Our work to shift the political and public support for feral horse control, including reversing the ban on aerial culling, has enabled this historical shift. And it means critically endangered species, like the southern corroboree frog and alpine she-oak skink, now have a fighting chance at survival. This is a historical moment!

In September 2025, Independent MP Dr. Joe McGirr introduced a Bill to parliament to repeal the Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act, which protects the remaining 3000 feral horses in one-third of the national park. At the time of writing, we have finally secured the numbers in parliament to repeal the law, with Labor, Liberals, Greens and Independents all committing to vote for Dr McGirr's Bill – a great example of our capacity to work across party lines to get outcomes.

This was made possible because of the regular high-

profile media we secured, our direct engagement with MPs and the enormous community petition, coordinated by Linda Groom and her team of 75 volunteers, which received over 11,000 signatures from 50 locations. The petition triggered a parliamentary debate in May 2025, where not a single MP spoke in defence of the existing law. Almost 100 supporters travelled to witness that debate – a striking show of people power.

This milestone caps off years of our advocacy – McGirr credited the Invasive Species Council, Linda Groom and our volunteer network as key drivers of reform, alongside scientists, Indigenous voices such as our t.

Since 2018, I have been working as one of many volunteers on the Reclaim Kosci campaign. The success of this campaign has been due, in my view, to the combination of the Invasive Species Council's professionalism and the volunteers' patient work.

While staff were speaking to politicians and the media, we volunteers, were speaking to ordinary people at petition tables, as well as through phone calls and social media comments. It has been a very effective partnership. Volunteers have many claims on their time, and the fact that so many of us – hundreds since Reclaim Kosci was launched in 2018 – have chosen to work with the Invasive Species Council reflects our view of the Council as an excellent investment.



Linda Groom, Invasive Species Council Volunteer Coordinator

Fringe voices remain

While opposition remains, its influence is waning. Vocal minority groups continue to push misinformation and attempt to derail feral horse control. But their efforts are falling flat.

This year, the pro-brumby group launched a rival petition in defence of the *Wild Horse Heritage Act* – and failed to meet the threshold for debate. It was a clear sign that public sentiment has shifted and a testament to the years of work we've done to build social licence for effective action.

We also saw an alarming push by influential elements of the governing Liberal National Party in Queensland for a similar law to protect feral horses in that state. It was narrowly voted down at their party conference, but we must remain vigilant.

We've also helped lift the quality of media coverage on this issue, challenging misinformation and championing accurate, fair reporting. Thanks to these efforts, the space for fringe views is shrinking – and the path to finally get horse numbers as close to zero as possible is more open than ever before.

Defending our World Heritage Areas

The success of the Reclaim Kosci campaign is now sparking action beyond the Snowy Mountains.

In 2024, this work helped protect World Heritage areas in the Blue Mountains and Gondwana Rainforests, including Barrington Tops National Park, from feral horses. This followed aerial control operations in several national parks.

These outcomes were achieved by raising public awareness through the media, building social licence for proven control methods, and supporting political leaders to make evidence-based decisions.

What's next?

We will continue momentum to ensure all feral horses are removed from Kosciuszko National Park, and broaden our efforts to eradicate feral horses in national parks in northern NSW, parts of Queensland and in Victoria. The Victorian election in 2026 is an opportunity to ensure cross-party support for feral horse control.



Dr Joe McGirr and CEO Jack Gough speaking to media.



Reclaim Kosci supporters at the NSW Parliament repeal Bill debate.

THANK YOU

A huge shout out to our dedicated volunteers led by the extraordinary **Linda Groom**. Thank you as well to our many funders who have backed our efforts, including the **CAGES Foundation**, the **Paddy Pallin Foundation**, the **Purves Environmental Fund** and



Making elections count for nature

Queensland

Queensland is Australia's biodiversity jewel and an invasive species hotspot.

Home to 85% of our native mammals, 72% of native birds and over 11,000 plant species, many are threatened by invasive species – from fire ants and yellow crazy ants, to feral deer, weeds and cats.

This is made worse by Queensland's slow biosecurity system, overstretched agencies and ad hoc feral animal control.

In 2024/25, we started strong with the Queensland election – our policy document, shocking new research with The Australia Institute, a high-impact media campaign and 5,000 supporters emailing their local candidates combined to trigger a breakthrough: both major parties committed to making fire ants a top priority, no matter who formed government.

The election results brought real outcomes addressing long-standing issues that had previously restricted invasive species eradication and management. Many are already being delivered, including:

- \$24 million fire ant suppression boost
- 150 new parks and wildlife service rangers
- 100 new biosecurity officers
- \$50 million boost to Biosecurity Queensland; and
- \$6 million to continue yellow crazy ant eradication in the Wet Tropics.

Since the election, our focus has been on ensuring these commitments translate into real outcomes. Our advocacy also helped to see a horse and pig control program delivered at Kroombit Tops in mid-2025, providing a reprieve for the critically endangered Kroombit Tinker Frog.

However, the government has yet to act on the escalating deer problem. We are filling this gap by participating in the cross-border feral deer management group, working with the new national deer coordinator, and advocating for a south-east Queensland deer management plan, backed by state funding. We are also engaging with the government on a statewide Feral Pig Management Plan, which would make Queensland the first state with a comprehensive strategy for pigs.

What's next?

We'll release a public mid-term report card tracking progress on these commitments and setting the next steps. We'll continue our push for a coordinated response to growing feral deer populations, action on invasive freshwater fish and long-overdue reforms to weed laws and biosecurity funding.



Tasmania

Tasmania has a natural advantage – an island state still free of many of the worst invaders that plague the mainland – but the window is closing. Feral deer now cost the state up to \$100 million each year, threatening agriculture, tourism and world-famous landscapes. With numbers growing by 11.5 % annually, feral deer could top 1 million by 2055 without urgent action.

The March 2025 snap election gave us a powerful opportunity. We relaunched our *Tackling Invasive Species* policy plan and convened 2 packed public forums in Hobart and Launceston, drawing over 130 people and 10 candidates. As a result, the Liberal Party pledged to:

- Deliver an Invasive Species Action Plan within 100 days
- ‘Double down’ on action on feral deer, including making Zone 3 a complete eradication zone, increasing control on Crown land and peri-urban areas and developing the next deer plan
- Develop a new cat management plan and promote responsible cat ownership
- Continue the Weeds Action Fund; and
- Strengthen compliance with the Biosecurity Act.

Cats remain one of the most pervasive threats to Tasmanian wildlife, so we’ve championed stronger containment rules and support for eradication projects on islands such as Lungtalanana/Clarke. On Flinders Island, feral pigs are destroying habitat and threatening Ramsar-listed wetlands – we’ve urged the government to seize the chance to eradicate them before it’s too late.

We kept invasive species on the public agenda through high-profile media coverage and face-to-face community events, which included hosting a deer forum alongside government and important stakeholders. However, the hunting lobby remains vocal and powerful, recently securing a seat in parliament. Our work is more important than ever before as farmers, conservationists and local councils unite behind a science-based path forward.

What’s next?

We’ll work to remove the protected status of feral deer and secure long-term funding for deer control, and advance bold initiatives like an Island Eradication Fund and stronger cat management to cement Tasmania as a global leader in eradication.



Federal election

Invasive species are Australia’s leading extinction driver – costing billions in lost productivity and wildlife decline – yet the federal election delivered little for nature. While cost of living dominated, invasives were sidelined. We launched a national blueprint and mobilised 5,000 Australians, but major parties failed to commit to real action.

Still, we secured funding extensions for invasive species coordinators, shaped debate through national media and are maintaining regular high-level engagement with departments. Thanks to a generous donation from Julie Taylor Mills, we also secured a private dinner with Treasurer Jim Chalmers and Finance Minister Katy Gallagher – a rare chance to put invasives directly on the national agenda.

What’s next?

We’ll push for an Island Eradication Fund, long-term fire ant funding, stronger biosecurity reform and delivery of threat abatement plans. eradication.





An echidna was found dead on top of a fire ant nest. Photo: National Fire Ant Eradication Program.

Fire ants on the march – and on the agenda

Fire ant eradication is on a knife-edge. If we lose, it will devastate ground-dwelling wildlife populations, cost the economy \$2 billion a year, kill people and pets, and change our Aussie barefoot backyard culture forever.

Our campaign has never been more urgent

In November, our pressure led the Queensland Liberal Government to pledge more funding for suppression. After Cyclone Alfred tore through south-east Queensland in March 2025, we shared the now viral video of fire ants rafting floodwaters and amplified stories of stings, hospitalisations and a mother's account of her son's terrifying anaphylactic reaction. Those stories shocked the nation – and within weeks \$24 million in Queensland funding for

emergency suppression was confirmed.

When nest densities surged heading into winter, we called for a blitz to smash ant numbers before the next breeding season. The government listened: for the first time, treatment became year-round.

Increased audits are driving stronger compliance and containment, and more land has been treated for fire ants than ever before. Infestations have been cleared from Murwillumbah, Wardell, Minjerribah, Oakey and Toowoomba – major wins backed by ongoing surveillance. For the first time, the program is now fully staffed.

In some other good news, the Nerimba frog conservation area – home to the threatened wallum sedge frog, with only a few thousand left in the wild – was saved from a devastating outbreak.

Crashing through delay and inaction

October 2023- February 2024

Led a coalition to secure \$593 million in funding from federal, state, and territory governments, guaranteeing fire ant eradication funding until 2027.

June 2024

Boosted on-ground treatments, materials and public outreach with new funding, reaching 98.5% community support and surrounding the infestation with systematic eradication efforts.

August 2024

Kicked off the 'Last Chance Tour' with Texas fire ant expert Dr. Robert Puckett, holding public meetings and meeting ministers across 4 states.

July-Sep 2024

Campaigned ahead of the Queensland election, prompting a day-one commitment from both the Premier and Leader of the Opposition to continue eradication efforts.



And just this September, we secured another breakthrough. As a result of last year's Senate inquiry – and our continued engagement – the government commenced an independent rapid review of the entire fire ant program. A critical moment to ensure the program is funded and on track for success.

But even as progress was won, cracks widened. Outbreaks were detected south of the NSW border, on the Sunshine Coast and at a central Queensland mine, where containment breaches let ants spread. A fresh interception in Western Australia drove home the national stakes.

Despite all this, the federal government has yet to match Queensland's \$24 million boost or commit to full eradication funding beyond 2027. Without a final funding push, our window to win the war is closing. Our work continues to hold that window open. The next 12 months will decide whether we win the fire ant fight or face a life sentence with these tiny, backyard killers.

Truth louder than disinformation

Despite overwhelming public support and scientific evidence, a small but vocal fringe continues to undermine Australia's fire ant fight – spreading conspiracy theories, attacking experts online and fuelling public confusion.

We pushed back hard – using national and local media to bust myths, correct misinformation and keep the science front and centre.

We've also stepped in to support the National Fire Ant Eradication Program with strategic communications

What's next?

We'll keep the pressure on the federal government to match Queensland's investment and commit to full eradication funding beyond 2027.

We thank the Invasive Species Council for their unwavering support – not just in our mission to eradicate fire ants by 2032, but also in calling out dangerous misinformation and disinformation that threatens our progress. Their advocacy is invaluable in protecting Australia from this invasive pest.

National Fire Ant Eradication Program



As a Landcare founder, I see firsthand the devastation fire ants are causing in my community and across our landscapes. It's not just an environmental crisis – it's deeply personal, because I know what we stand to lose if fire ants spread further. The Invasive Species Council gave us something we desperately needed: a voice. They shone a powerful light on this crisis, making sure the community, the media and politicians understood the urgency. For me, their work has been a turning point. I'm proud to stand with the Invasive Species Council in this mission – because protecting our environment is not optional, it's everything.

Rachel Hughes, Cedar Grove Landcare

THANK YOU

We are extremely grateful for the generosity of **Ray and Pam Ison** who fund our fire ant work. A big thank you to **Rob and Nancy Pallin**, who started a matching gift challenge with fellow seed funders **Vicki Olsson, Anne Reeves** and **Diversicon Environmental Foundation** via the AEGN. Thank you also to **Chris and Gina Grubb**, the **Brennan Family Foundation**, the **Leith Hope Memorial Foundation**, **Rose Gilder, Debbie Dadon** and **Vicki Olsson**.

March 2025

\$24 million in funding delivered by the Queensland government for emergency suppression.

July 2025

Secured commitment for winter blitz and government announces treatment will now be year-round.

September 2025

Independent review into the fire ant program's performance and funding kicks off, which we called for during Senate inquiry.

2026

We need a federal government committed to funding eradication beyond 2027.



The looming catastrophe of H5N1 bird flu

As happens every spring, millions of shorebirds are currently winging their way to Australia after breeding in the northern hemisphere. This is one of the world's great wildlife migrations. Something to celebrate – but now also a time of trepidation. If even just one bird carries the H5N1 bird flu virus and passes it on to others, it could bring catastrophic disease outbreaks in native birds and mammals such as black swans, Australian sea lions and Tasmanian devils.

The virus could also arrive from the south. The risk of this has recently escalated with a 6,000 km jump by the virus to subantarctic islands only 400 km from Australia's Heard and McDonald islands.

Following relentless media, meetings with ministers and over 1,000 letters from supporters to the Prime Minister, Australia is now much better prepared for an H5 bird flu outbreak than it was a year ago, to save threatened species.

In October 2024, the Australian Government committed an additional \$100 million for surveillance and preparedness. It included, for the first time, funding specifically for wildlife preparedness.

This funding is enabling the development of plans for highly susceptible species and wildlife sites, equipment purchase, trials for vaccinating captive breeding populations of threatened species, and programs to eradicate invasive predators from islands with susceptible species, to give them a better chance of surviving a bird flu outbreak.

The preparations for bird flu have set important new precedents for Australia – as the first nationally coordinated effort to prepare for a wildlife disease and the establishment of new collaborations between environmental and biosecurity agencies.

Protecting native parrots from new diseases

Australia's biosecurity agency is considering allowing imports of parrots and cockatoos, despite the risk of introducing catastrophic diseases. One known threat, avian paramyxovirus 3, could devastate the fewer than 100 wild orange-bellied parrots left. The Invasive Species Council strongly opposes this reckless proposal.



The Invasive Species Council plays a vital role in protecting Australia's unique wildlife and landscapes. Its science-based advocacy, collaboration with governments and commitment to community engagement are helping drive real progress in invasive species prevention and control in Australia. The Council's constructive collaboration with all levels of government ensures that decision-makers are informed, accountable and ambitious in safeguarding our native wildlife. I commend the Invasive Species Council for its leadership and dedication to this important national challenge.

Susan Close, Deputy Premier of South Australia and Minister for Climate, Environment and Water

Preventing and eliminating other deadly invaders

While Australia's distance from other continents has helped us avoid bird flu so far, many other invaders have been able to cover the vast distance to Australia by ship or plane.

Just this century, >500 species from elsewhere have been found for the first time established in the Australian environment. This includes super-invaders like fire ants, electric ants, myrtle rust, polyphagous shot-hole borer, abalone herpesvirus, freshwater gold clam, king devil hawkweed and Amazon frogbit – species that could transform Australian ecosystems forever.

With trade and travel both escalating, bringing ever more species into Australia, we're working hard to persuade our governments to strengthen our defences against new invaders – stronger pathway regulation, more precautionary import decisions, sustainable funding for biosecurity, and greater readiness to detect and eliminate new incursions.

While we have succeeded in gaining more attention and resources for environmental prevention priorities, much more is needed. Australia already has far too many invasive species, so prevention is foundational.

We also continue to push for reforms of Australia's national environmental law, the EPBC Act, to better regulate the importation of live animals, particularly aquarium fish. Most of the more-than-1,000 freshwater species permitted as imports have never been assessed for their invasive risk. Aquarium fish keep establishing and spreading in our waterways.

While Australia is still striving to eradicate electric and fire ants, the attempt to eliminate the polyphagous shot-hole borer from Perth was abandoned this year. This tiny, fungus-farming beetle could now spread to kill millions of trees in our native forests, towns and cities.

We have called for an independent inquiry to learn from this eradication attempt and improve our approach to future incursions. We're also urging every state and territory to step up surveillance and be ready to act quickly if the beetle arrives.

What's next?

Australia has committed to halving new invasive species arrivals by 2030. We'll push governments to meet this target and improve preparedness for wildlife diseases.

Invasive species represent one of the most insidious and pervasive threats to Australian ecosystems and agriculture. As both a conservation ecologist and developer of conservation innovations, I applaud the pivotal role the Invasive Species Council plays in the awareness, resourcing, and advocacy for credible measures for early detection and eradication or pragmatic control of invasive species.

Dr John Read, Chair Warru Recovery team, founder of 4 applied conservation projects and CEO at Thylation



THANK YOU

Thank you to **The Coalition (Solutions)** for supporting our urgent work on Australia's feral cat problem.



Feral cat sits among its native dinner in Outback Queensland. Photo: Nicholas Snell.

Stopping the cat-astrophe

Feral Cats

Feral cats are the most devastating predator in Australia – responsible for driving at least 25 native species to extinction and killing billions of animals every year.

In 2024, we secured a landmark win with the national threat abatement plan for feral cats. Since then, every state and territory signed on – except Queensland – committing to a coordinated roadmap to reduce the feral cat toll. We were instrumental in shaping and securing this plan, maintaining pressure through advocacy and national media campaigns. We mobilised allies across conservation, agriculture and local communities to ensure decision-makers understood this is a national priority. 7800 of our supporters signed our cat pledge to call for action!

The plan lays the foundation for scaled-up control, more safe havens and research to give native animals, from bilbies to night parrots, a fighting chance. Whilst Queensland has committed to its own state plan, its refusal to endorse the national plan undermines the unity essential to tackling a mega threat that knows no borders, and we will need to keep up pressure to ensure it makes good on its separate commitment.

At the time of writing, we're close to success after working all year to win greater federal investment

into South Australia's bold feral cat eradication efforts on Kangaroo Island. We also helped secure a critical law change that had been holding back progress. On the Dudley Peninsula, only around 150 cats remain. If completed, this will be the largest successful eradication of feral cats ever achieved on a populated island anywhere in the world. In Tasmania, we secured a 100-day election commitment for a statewide cat plan, while supporting the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre to deploy Felixer traps on Lungtalanana (Clarke Island) and are pushing for federal funding to back the program.

In Victoria, we are working to secure the social licence for control tools needed to complete the French Island eradication – including restrictions on 1080 and Felixer units.

Nationally, part of the \$100 million committed for wildlife bird flu preparedness will see feral cat control on islands with high conservation value.

This year we funded and expanded our fleet of 10 AI-powered Felixer smart traps across Indigenous Protected Areas, national parks and reserves in WA, SA and Tasmania – defending some of Australia's rarest wildlife, from night parrots and western ground parrots to long-nosed potoroos and Kimberley rock rats.

Domestic cats

Roaming pet cats are devastating suburban nature refuges. Every year, they kill an estimated 323 million native animals – wiping out birds, reptiles and small mammals. Roaming pet cats are more likely to be hit by cars, attacked by dogs, or infected with deadly diseases. Cats kept inside can live up to 10 years longer!

After years of advocacy, we are on the cusp of reform as support for cat containment gains momentum around the country – even in NSW and WA!

In 2025, the NSW government announced a long-overdue review of the Companion Animals Act – laws that currently prevent councils from introducing cat containment rules. In WA, our advocacy helped to shift the debate from ‘if’ to ‘how and when’, with the state government signalling in September 2025 that it would amend its Cat Act to give councils the power to enforce cat containment in 2026. Finally!

We have built powerful alliances with BirdLife Australia, WIRES, the Nature Conservation Council of NSW and the Biodiversity Council to lobby for change, coordinated expert evidence for parliamentary inquiries and secured national media coverage to highlight the staggering toll roaming cats take. We have also reframed the debate, showing Australians

that keeping cats safe at home is an act of love, not restriction.

Despite the evidence, some decision makers continue to drag their feet. The NSW parliamentary inquiry into cat management, led by the Animal Justice Party, failed to endorse mandatory containment, claiming the state was ‘not ready’ – despite strong public support, expert testimony and evidence from other jurisdictions.

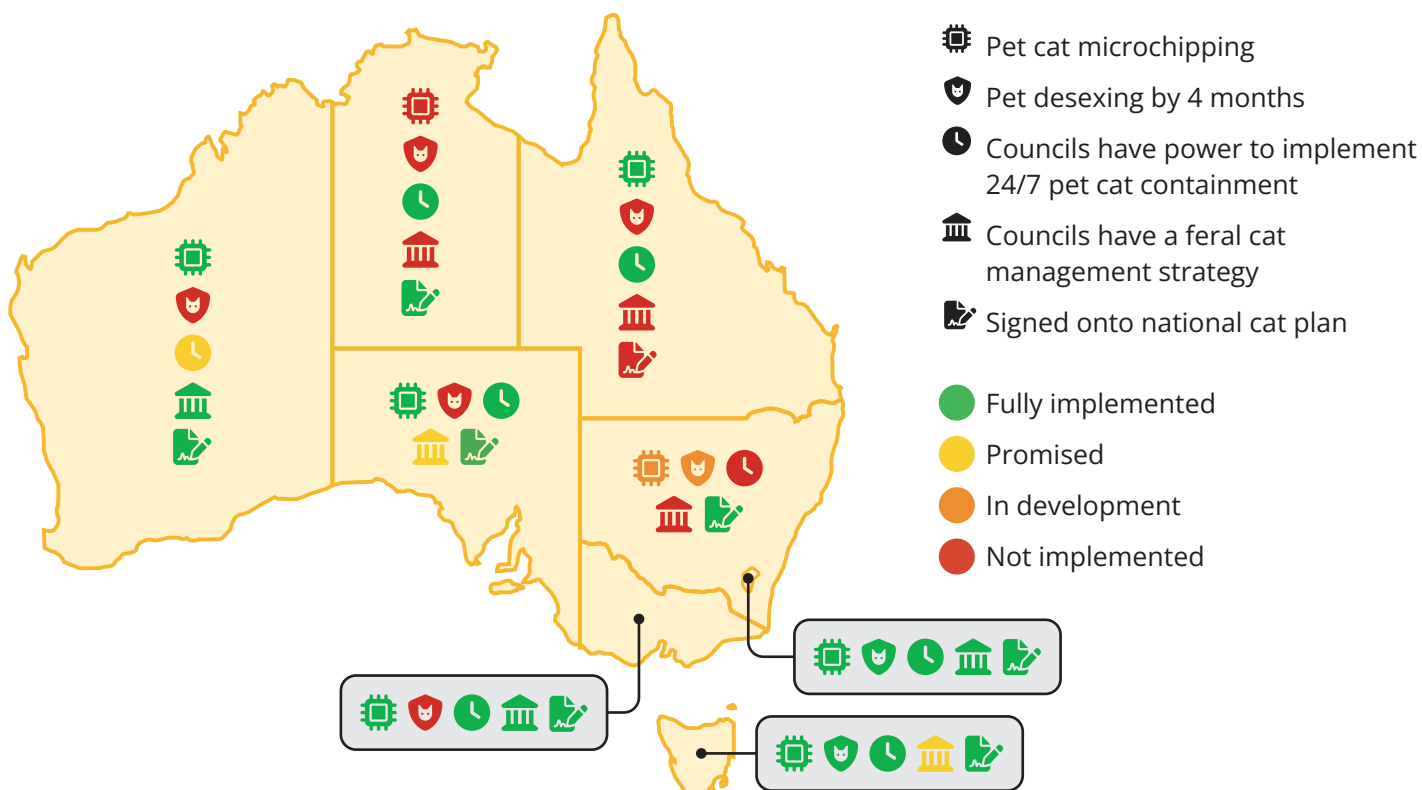
In Victoria, more than half of councils now have containment rules. We’re building social licence and community support to accelerate reform and expand cat containment. The ACT has also mandated cat containment territory-wide.

What’s next?

We’ll ensure NSW updates laws for pet cat containment, that NSW and WA dedicate funding for compliance, education and desexing and ensure the new Tasmanian government follows through on their pet cat commitment.

We’ll lobby the federal government to deliver \$60 million to implement the national feral cat plan and funding to complete Kangaroo Island’s eradication, and ensure the Qld delivers a strong plan.

Pet and feral cat management legislation by state and territory





Amazon frogbit. Photo: Paul Fisk.

The Invasive Species Council has been an invaluable partner to Burnett Mary Regional Group in addressing one of our region's most pressing environmental threats – invasive tilapia. Their advocacy has shone a national spotlight on this issue, amplifying the importance of practical, community-led solutions. Together, we've demonstrated how pest removal can be transformed into opportunities for ecological restoration, cultural leadership and regional jobs. The Council's dedication and influence ensure that our shared vision – healthy rivers, resilient ecosystems, and empowered Traditional Owners – is recognised and supported. We are proud to stand alongside them in this critical work.

Tom Espinoza, CEO Burnett Mary Regional Group

Freshwater under siege

Australia's freshwater systems are in crisis. Beneath the surface of our rivers, streams and wetlands, some of our rarest native animals are being pushed to extinction by invasive fish and weeds.

This year, we helped change that. From Victoria to Queensland, we've secured major funding, empowered local communities and driven practical projects to defend our freshwater wildlife and environments.

Lifelines for forgotten fish

Nowhere is the crisis clearer than in Victoria's high country, where 5 critically endangered galaxias species were almost wiped out under the pressure of introduced predatory trout.

The Yalmy galaxias – down to just 20 fish in 2023 – is one of 15 galaxiids assessed under the National Environmental Science Program as having a >50 % probability of extinction by 2040 due mainly to predation by invasive trout.

Thanks to our advocacy, the Australian Government committed \$700,000 to establish 15 trout-free sanctuaries – lifelines for species that exist nowhere else on Earth.

These havens, protected by natural barriers such as waterfalls, will be stocked with captive-bred galaxiids, giving populations like the Yalmy galaxias a real shot at survival. The sanctuaries won't impact existing recreational fishing areas, but they will prevent extinction!

Fighting tilapia in the Moonaboola River

In Queensland, the Moonaboola River (Mary River) has become a battleground of a different kind.

Mozambique tilapia – a feral fish species introduced through the aquarium trade – are now invading the river, degrading water quality and destroying habitat for endangered native species of enormous ecological and cultural value: the Mary River cod, the Mary River

turtle (the bum-breathing turtle) and the 150-million-year-old lungfish.

After tilapia spread rapidly during the 2022 floods, the Burnett Mary Regional Group and Kabi Kabi People's Aboriginal Corporation approached us with a bold solution. Together, we're working to remove and use pest fish to fertilise revegetated riverbank habitats.

Crucially, this work will help recover habitat for the endangered Mary River cod – a natural predator of tilapia – offering long-term hope for tipping the system back in favour of native species. Locally, this concept has been proven over many years and with a funding commitment of \$4.35 million, it will be ready to grow into one of the most innovative invasive species projects in Australia!

A choking threat in the north

Amazon frogbit, a floating aquarium plant, has spread rapidly through the Barron River catchment in Far North Queensland. It forms thick mats that block light, suffocate fish and make water toxic for aquatic life. Birds lose feeding habitat, and the risk of spread to the nearby Mitchell River system – which feeds into World Heritage areas – is growing by the day.

Yet despite clear scientific warnings, Amazon frogbit *is still being sold legally* in Queensland.

We're leading the charge to fix that. In partnership with local environment groups, Traditional Owners and community leaders, we've launched a campaign and put pressure on through the media to call on the Queensland government to ban the sale

What's next?

This year we'll push for a national Invasive Fish Action Plan to drive consistent, coordinated action across jurisdictions, ramp up work to ban Amazon frogbit and build on momentum to deliver funding for the Mary River project.



The Resilient Landscapes Hub's research team with an Australian lungfish.



Tom Espinoza and Reece Pianta from the Invasive Species Council took Queensland's Primary Industries Minister Tony Perrett to see the Moonaboola



Gazanias choking a dune system on NSW South Coast. Photo: Jack Gough.



We have supported the Invasive Species Council for many years. Their work in tackling major threats to Australia's unique biodiversity is very effective, using scientific, evidence-based approaches, clear communications, collaborations and persistent advocacy for systems change. Excellent examples of this work are the Council's current campaigns to stop the sale of destructive weeds as garden plants, and to amplify and empower local and First Nations advocates to call for action on the landscape-scale threats of gamba grass and buffel grass.

Ann and Bruce McGregor, Melliodora Fund.

Garden time bomb

Escaped garden plants are the number one source of new environmental weeds. They smother native vegetation, fuel hotter fires and destroy habitat for native animals.

Many – like English ivy and gazanias – are still legally sold, fuelling one of Australia's most preventable environmental crises.

The critical national commitment to develop a Threat Abatement Plan (TAP) for escaped garden plants, which we helped secure in 2024, was such a game-changer.

Since then, we've kept the pressure on. We're mobilising a powerful army of weed warriors – from Landcare groups, Country Women's Associations, Traditional Owners, scientists, influencers and everyday gardeners – to raise the alarm and drive the urgent changes needed to save nature.

We ramped up media pressure on nurseries selling harmful species and called for stronger government action to shift responsibility off consumers and onto industry and government. And our stories went viral!

But the battle's just beginning. Industry lobby groups have blocked reforms like this before. Bringing them to the table – and ensuring they're part of the solution, not the problem – is our next big challenge.

In NSW, we welcomed a major win: 4 years of locked-in, increased funding for a much more strategic Weeds Action Program. This is the kind of structural reform we've long fought for – and a sign that governments are finally taking weed control seriously.



I'm deeply grateful to be appointed as an ambassador, allowing me to continue to advance the important work of

the Invasive Species Council

at the global level after leaving the CEO role in February 2025. Australia is at the mercy of the international trade system and I'm now devoting my time to being a strong environmental voice within this system, seeking to benefit all countries, particularly those in the Pacific. I'm proud the Council's influence is greater than ever and I'm confident it's in strong hands to carry its work forward.

Andrew Cox, Invasive Species Council Ambassador and former CEO

What's next?

With a new federal Environment Minister, we'll ensure Murray Watt follows through on his predecessor's promise to deliver a nationally coordinated plan for weeds, and ensure it stops the sale of high-risk weeds and prioritises the eradication of 'sleepers' before they become the next lantana.



Invasive species are a significant threat to Australian biodiversity and ecosystems, and a major driver of extinction risk. Nearly all of our nationally listed threatened species are affected by invasives to some degree, and in many cases these impacts are increasing in extent and severity.



The Invasive Species Council plays a crucial leadership role in raising the profile of these threats with governments and the community, helping to build support to tackle key threats to biodiversity and promoting best practice. While our priorities do not always align, my colleagues and I greatly value the contribution of the Invasive Species Council to tackling the national challenges that invasive species present to our threatened plants and animals.

Fiona Fraser, Threatened Species Commissioner.

Our Islands of Hope

Australia's islands are sanctuaries for life found nowhere else – but that uniqueness also makes them dangerously naïve and especially vulnerable to invasive threats.

From wolf snakes on Christmas Island to invasive rats on Norfolk, invasive species have turned islands into extinction hotspots. Of the 7 native animals sent extinct this century, 6 have been on islands and 5 of these were due to invasives.

But this year, we achieved a breakthrough. We secured \$16 million in federal funding, as part of our bird flu preparedness win for eradications on high-priority islands. This is a first step toward a national island eradication fund, one of the most effective conservation interventions available to Australia today.

We've ensured priority projects moved forward, including greater access to Felixers on French Island, the rollout of cutting-edge cat control tools on Bruny Island and support for Indigenous-led eradication on Lungtalanana/Clarke Island.

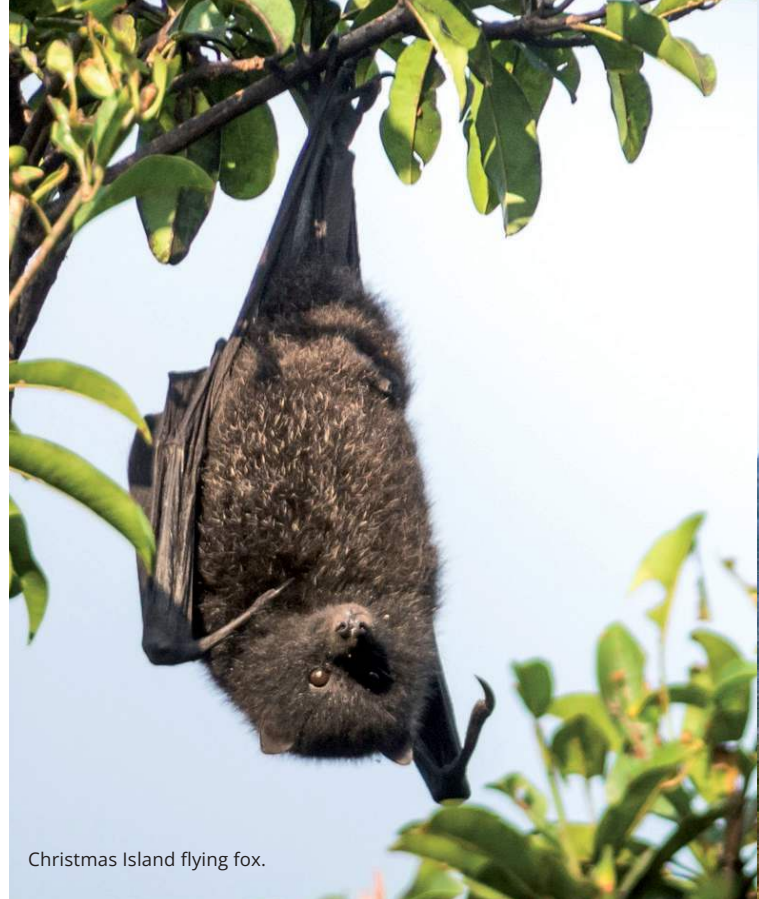
On Minjerribah (North Stradbroke), fire ants have almost been eradicated. And on Kangaroo Island, our media campaign helped secure legal reforms to remove barriers to eradication, clearing the way for the largest attempt in the world to eradicate cats from an inhabited island. With strong biosecurity and more than 50 offshore islands, Tasmania also has a natural advantage and could become a global model for island revival. Our success in protecting its World Heritage wilderness from feral deer shows what's possible.

Every successful eradication delivers a wave of recovery – seabirds reclaiming their burrows, mammals rebounding and landscapes regenerating. The Kangaroo Island program alone could safeguard the dunnart, southern brown bandicoot, little penguin and Australian sea lion!

But progress is fragile. Eradication risks stalling without the long-term investment needed for the

What's next?

We'll push to secure a permanent National Island Eradication and Recovery Fund.



Christmas Island flying fox.



Having spent 40 years in various parts of Australia as a farmer, I am passionate about the environment. I am also intimately aware of the scourge of invasive species, both flora and fauna, and have often felt overwhelmed and fighting a losing battle.

Now retired and living on Kangaroo Island, I only recently became aware of the excellent work of the Invasive Species Council in lobbying government and raising media interest.

My wife and I have been pleased to support the work of the council, initially with feral deer on the mainland and now in supporting a cat eradication program on the Island.

The Council secured a commitment by government to ongoing financial support and legislative change to allow cats to be trapped within a kilometre of houses.

Islands can be essential proving grounds for invasive species control and programs developed there can be extrapolated to the mainland.

Roger Salkeld, FWH Foundation



THANK YOU

We are grateful to the many supporters that have made our Islands of Hope campaign possible, including the **Green Eyes Foundation**, Lucia Bylhouwer, Brett Ditchfield, Chris and Gina



Feral deer damaging native trees in the Gold Coast Hinterland. Photo: City of Gold Coast.



I hold responsibility for South Australia's feral deer eradication program – one of the most significant pest control efforts in Australia, aiming to eliminate deer by 2032. Achieving this requires strong policy, sustained resourcing and public support. The advocacy of the Invasive Species Council has been a significant influence, helping secure vital funding and creating the awareness that underpins our success.

Brad Page, Principal Biosecurity Officer at Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries

Feral deer

Feral deer are one of Australia's fastest-growing invasive threats – trashing landscapes, polluting waterways and driving wildlife decline. The fight to eradicate them has never been more urgent.

The national deer action plan we helped secure has finally created real momentum. But 2 threats remain: a powerful hunting lobby pushing to block aerial control and preserve deer as 'game', and governments still too reactive to commit the resources needed.

Through our advocacy and media, we are building the social licence and government confidence to back science-led eradication.

South Australia

Our advocacy secured \$6 million in new funding for the state's ambitious plan to eradicate feral deer within a decade – a world-first if achieved. We've been working closely with government to ensure that funding is secured and that the social licence for strong control measures is maintained.

New South Wales

We held the line against the hunting lobby, stopping a NSW bill that threatened years of progress, despite everyone telling us the deal was done. We also secured \$1 million for the Blue Mountains and ensured deer were included in the \$14 million feral pig program extension.

Tasmania

We secured an election commitment from the Liberal Government to 'double down' on feral deer – creating a Zone 3 eradication zone, boosting control on Crown

land and peri-urban areas, and developing the next deer plan. We also defended aerial control in the Walls of Jerusalem National Park.

Victoria

Victoria remains a major challenge. We continued running the Deer Control Network with VNPA, published our paper challenging deer's game status, and pushed for Wildlife Act reform to remove their legal protection.

Queensland

The Queensland government has yet to act, so we're stepping in – joining the cross-border deer group, working with the national coordinator and pushing for a funded south-east Queensland plan.

National

We helped to secure an extension of funding for critical national invasive species coordinator roles for

What's next?

We will work to secure federal backing for South Australia's eradication plan, lock in funding for the Victorian Deer Control Network and push to end deer's game status in Vic and Tas.

THANK YOU

Thank you to the **Letcombe Trust**, the **FWH Foundation** and **Anne Reeves** for backing our deer campaign in South Australia. Thank you to the **PurryBurry Trust** for making our work in Tasmania possible.

Where there's a Will, there's a way

A gift in your Will is a powerful way to create a future where Australia's wildlife is safe from invasive-led extinction and our natural places can thrive. Through our Good Will for Nature bequest program, generous supporters are turning this vision into their lasting legacy.

If you leave a gift in your Will to the Invasive Species Council, and tell us about your decision, you'll secure our financial future so we can commit to bold, strategic campaigns that can create lasting results for Australia's wildlife and protected areas.

As a smaller but mighty organisation with a mandate to grow our impact to match the scale of the invasive species mega threat, the Invasive Species Council increasingly depends on people's Good Will for Nature to finance our critical work to future-proof wildlife.

We thank those who have already made this extraordinary commitment. Their Good Will for Nature is helping lead a wildlife revival – a promise



I decided to leave a gift in my Will to the Invasive Species Council because I love Australia and its unique landscapes and wildlife. Being a keen bushwalker and birdwatcher, I have seen a lot of these special places, birds, animals and plants, and would like to see them conserved rather than be replaced by ferals.

I like the work the Invasive Species Council is doing to achieve this and therefore think it is a worthwhile organisation to support. I hope my contribution will help keep Australia natural for future generations to enjoy as I have.

Karen Davis



Voice of Country

We can't have a healthy culture without a healthy Country – and we can't have a healthy Country while invasive species run rampant. Right now, feral cats are pushing species like night parrots to the brink. Buffel and gamba grass are fuelling destructive fires on Country.

This year, our Voice of Country campaign took a powerful step forward. The NSW government responded to our call to establish an Aboriginal Assistant Commissioner for Healthy Country within the Natural Resources Commission. It's recognition that First Nations people, who have cared for Country for millennia, must have a seat at the table.

This is just the beginning. We're building a national movement with Indigenous leaders and organisations like WWF, Australian Conservation Foundation and the Indigenous Desert Alliance. In March, the NSW State of Environment Report included a major section called Voice of Country, spearheaded by the Aboriginal Peoples Knowledge Group.

This work isn't about politics – it's about responsibility. If you live on this land, you're a custodian too. We need a cultural shift where all Australians understand that healing Country isn't someone else's job. It's everyone's.

The last federal election was tough. Despite years of advocacy, key commitments didn't land. In response, we brought together allies, strategists and cultural leaders and employed a new staff member to map the next phase of the campaign.

Through this work, we envisage a healthy, respected Country, with a flourishing abundance of the plants and animals that evolved here – and a proud, shared culture of caring for them, together.

Richard Swain,
Indigenous Ambassador



What's next?

We'll elevate more Indigenous voices, map totem species under threat, host on-Country and online consultations, and take the case for a national Caring for Country Commissioner directly to decision-makers.



We support Richard's work because he is such an inspiring leader, who speaks from the heart and asks us to 'commit to the responsibility of custodianship' of this land.

Richard's call for a Voice of Country reminds us that Country is crying out for us to open our eyes and ears, and most especially our hearts, and listen to what Country is calling us to do.

He puts invasive species at the centre of the conversation we have to have about our shared future. Invasive species are not only a symbol of ongoing colonial destruction, but also the core of vital political and practical work that we must do together.

Linda Parlane and John Stone, Running Waters Fund

THANK YOU

A very special thank you to **David Rickards** of the **Carrawa Foundation** and the **Running Waters Fund**, who helped this program to get off the ground and continue to see it through. Big thanks also to the **Madden Sainsbury Foundation** and the **William Buckland Foundation**.

Momentum builds against buffel grass

Buffel grass is fuelling hotter, more destructive fires across inland Australia – killing old river red gums, threatening more than 30 nationally listed species and devastating cultural sites. Unbelievably, buffel grass seeds continue to be spread deliberately in some parts of the country.

Finally, this year, buffel grass is now undergoing assessment to be listed as a Weed of National Significance (WoNS) – a crucial step. Led by the Indigenous Desert Alliance, with our support, a WoNS listing would lock governments into a science-based process to deliver a nationally coordinated plan that would include protections for threatened species and communities at risk from buffel-fuelled wildfires.

We led a high-profile media campaign that amplified First Nations leadership and scientific voices, countering misinformation in national and rural press from vocal opponents.



What's next?

We'll push for the final listing and will co-lead a national campaign for a well-funded plan to tackle buffel grass. We'll also support its listing as a key threatening process.

Rewilding Australia

We recently welcomed Rewilding Australia into the Invasive Species Council family – joining forces to bring back missing wildlife like quolls and bettongs. Putting the bounce back in our bush – like Australia used to be – is the vision that drives us. Together, we'll take Rewilding Australia into a powerful new phase: thinking big about how to make whole landscapes safe again for a wildlife revival beyond the fence.

Bug hunt is back!

After a successful pilot in 2024, Bug Hunt is back – bigger, bolder and buzzing with new energy. This year, we're teaming up with Invertebrates Australia to inspire Australians everywhere to become biosecurity heroes. Armed with just a phone and the iNaturalist app, anyone can snap a bug and help scientists spot new threats before they spread. Watch this video to learn more about the Bug Hunt.

We chose Bug Hunt for our highest award of \$50,000 because it tackles one of the most urgent yet almost invisible threats to Australia's native biodiversity: the silent spread of invasive invertebrates. By empowering everyday Australians to be frontline biosecurity detectors, Bug Hunt is rewriting the rules of surveillance and giving us a fighting chance to stop pests before they take hold. It's bold, innovative and deeply collaborative, and we believe it has the potential to shift the way the nation responds to invasive species..

Chrissie Goldrick, Chair, Australian Geographic Society



THANK YOU

A special thanks to **Australian Geographic Society** for backing Bug Hunt and our new Bugs in My Backyard week.





Invasive Species Council staff at the Invasive Fauna Roundtable, with former CEO of Atlassian and Co-founder of the Skip Foundation, Scott Farquhar and ACT

Creating a culture shift to transform conservation

To tackle the invasive species mega threat, we need more than funding and policies – we need a cultural shift. This year, we’ve seen that shift take root in the public, the media and politics.

Shifting culture in the public

When the stakes are clear and the message is right, Australians back bold action. Once-contentious issues like aerial culling, fire ant baiting and cat containment are now finding broad public support. By confronting myths – from ‘eating the problem’ to doubts about eradication methods – we’re helping to build a national mindset that puts native species first.

Shifting culture in politics

For decades, invasive species were neglected – agriculture departments prioritised industry, while environment agencies were reluctant to lead. That culture is now changing. Bird flu and fire ants are some of the biggest environmental threats we’ve faced. And whilst our work has already made governments act, our ambition extends beyond this. We’ve used these threats as opportunities to drive stronger collaboration across state and federal governments and between portfolios. This cultural transformation is a prerequisite to the systemic change we also need to save nature. Our advocacy for national coordination on cats and deer has also triggered collaboration. Strengthening the Chief Environmental Biosecurity Office will be the next step in embedding whole-of-government action.

Media as a driver of change

We invest in media for 3 reasons: to raise public awareness of the invasive species mega threat, build influence in discussions with decision-makers and secure social licence for control tools. That deliberate strategy has made us one of the nation’s leading environmental voices.

In 2025 alone, we featured in over 6300 stories reaching more than 72 million Australians and generating over \$63 million in earned media. This coverage gives decision-makers the confidence to act boldly – our messaging is cited in parliament, repeated in ministerial pressers and used to justify major funding decisions.

Media highlights this year included:

- A Courier-Mail fire ant attack story that went viral, helping to unlock \$23 million in new Queensland funding.
- Bird flu coverage that prompted an emergency meeting of environment ministers that led to \$100 million in funding.
- Media pressure in South Australia helped overturn cat control restrictions on Kangaroo Island.
- A Daily Telegraph campaign that contributed to a NSW review of pet laws.

What’s next?

We’ll deepen this cultural shift – uniting communities, amplifying trusted voices, mythbusting disinformation and driving systemic political change to make invasive species action a national priority.



Awakening the sleeping giants

We can't do this alone. That's why this year we launched Awakening the Sleeping Giants – a campaign to unite landcarers, farmers and nature champions into a powerful grassroots network, turning local passion into political pressure.

Nature needs more funding, focus and action. Our secret weapon will be galvanising the thousands of Australians already tackling weeds and feral animals. By connecting, training and amplifying these champions, we're transforming community action into political power.

Already we've built a presence at regional landcare events, trained our first cohort of local invasive species champions, and backed community voices who secured stronger biosecurity commitments in Queensland and New South Wales.

Next, we'll grow this network into a national force – expanding training, embedding champions in regional communities and equipping them with the tools to influence politics and media. Together, we'll fast-track systemic change and make invasive species action a national priority.

Educating a nation

We've become national leaders on invasive species communications – driving the conversation and helping others shape it too. This year we delivered workshops for government agencies and allies including Forest and Bird NZ, building stronger messaging on complex and controversial topics. We also shared insights at national events, including NRM and Landcare conferences, the Pest and Weeds Symposium and the Species Survival Symposium.

With support from the Kirby Foundation, we launched Meet the Invaders – Australia's first national education project on invasive species blending science, storytelling and lived experience to tell the full story of invasive species in an engaging, accessible way.

The Kirby Foundation is proud to support the Invasive Species Council's Meet the Invaders project – the first of its kind in Australia. By shining a spotlight on the damage caused by invasive species, this initiative is educating the community and helping safeguard our most vulnerable wildlife.

James Kirby, Kirby Foundation



Our Board

The Invasive Species Council's volunteer board continues to provide invaluable experience and dedication to our governance. This year we were especially pleased to welcome new members, including Katherine Lake, Gayle Austen and Guy Fitzhardinge, whose fresh ideas and perspectives have strengthened our work even further.

We thank every board member – past and present – for their passion, commitment and countless hours of service, which help keep the Council a formidable force for nature.

THANK YOU

David Rickards (President),
Fiona Sutton (Vice President),
Chris Grubb (Treasurer),
Sara Phillips (Secretary),
Sandy Lolicato, Katherine Lake, Gayle Austen and
Guy Fitzhardinge.

Our Conservation and Science Committee

With Australia invaded by hundreds of species of plants, animals and pathogens, no other environmental issue is as ecologically or socially complex. The Invasive Species Council, therefore, relies on the work and advice of many different experts in invasion biology and policy. In particular, we are grateful to our Conservation and Science Committee, whose guidance has shaped our work on issues as varied as buffel grass, escaped garden plants, social science research priorities and effective invasive animal control.

THANK YOU

Ian Thompson (Chair), **April Reside, Chris Dickman, Sarah Legge, Mark Lonsdale, Sue McIntyre** and, until recently, **Lynette McLeod**. We thank **Lynette** for her contribution over many years.



Mother and baby koala. Credit: Ccdoh1.



I have worked for many years developing and implementing government policies for natural resources management. I appreciate the opportunity my role in the Conservation and Science Committee of the Invasive Species Council provides to promote sound management of our environment. I respect and admire the Council's commitment to pushing the margins for better policy and practice based on good evidence. Doing this while maintaining sound relationships with government and the community. The Council's work is effective and needed.

Ian Thompson, Invasive Species Council Chair and former Chief Environmental Biosecurity Officer

A message from our ambassador

The Invasive Species Council continues to thrive and grow as a leading eNGO in Australia. The seamless handing of the baton from former CEO Andrew Cox, a highly knowledgeable and respected leader to Jack Gough, a passionate campaigner, environmentalist and policy analyst, is a testament to the professionalism of the organisation in managing succession, growth and change. Congratulations. Our supporters can rest assured that the organisation is in good hands.



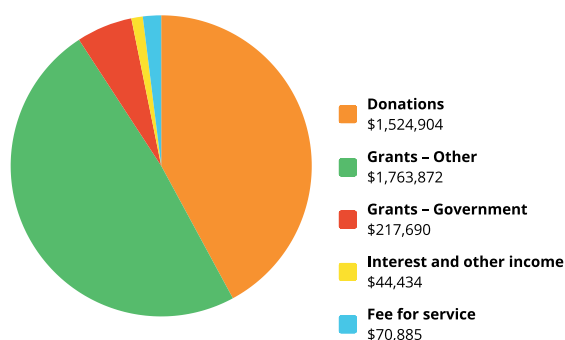
As rafts of invasive fire ants were swept down swollen Queensland rivers following Cyclone Alfred in early 2025, the risk posed to Australia's ecosystems and communities by the combination of invasive species and global heating was clear.

Thanks to the Council's ongoing focus and science-based research, and advocacy, both governments and NGOs have recognised that invasive species are right up there with habitat loss and global heating as the major drivers of extinction in Australia. Recognition is one thing, funding is another. All Australians can be reassured that The Council will maintain the pressure.

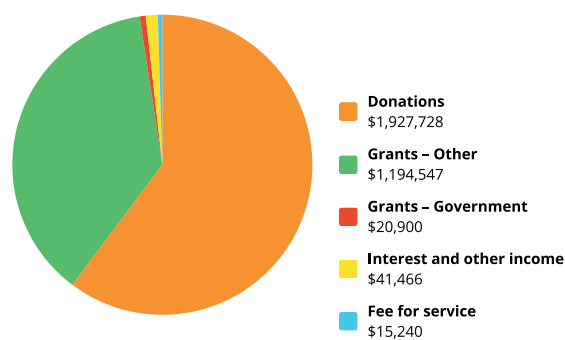
Christine Milne AO

Yearly income and expenditure

Income

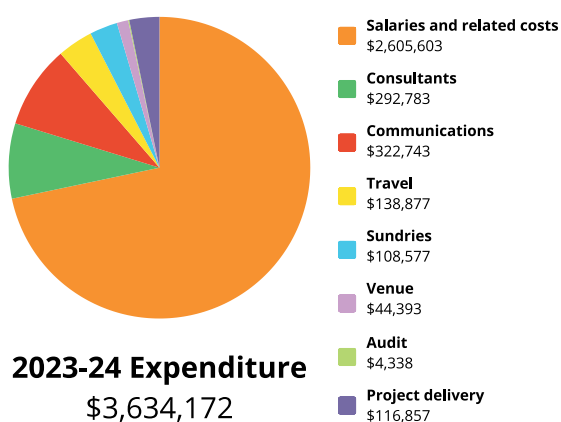


2023-24 Income
\$3,621,785

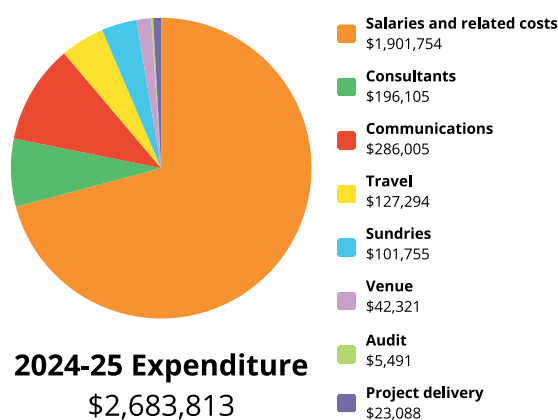


2024-25 Income
\$3,199,881

Expenditure



2023-24 Expenditure
\$3,634,172



2024-25 Expenditure
\$2,683,813

- Notes:**
1. 2024-25 figures are for 12 months, whereas 2023-24 was for 15 months due to ISC changing its financial year to begin on 1 October.
 2. 2024-25 numbers are subject to audit and AGM approval and may change.
 3. 2024-25 'Grants - government' includes carried forward income from the prior year of \$20,900.
 4. 2023-24 'Grants - other' includes carried forward income from the prior year of \$189,622.
 5. 2023-24 'Grants - government' includes carried forward income from the prior year of \$102,590.



Our 2050 vision is for an Australia where wildlife and ecosystems are safe from invasive species which are no longer a major driver of extinction or environmental degradation.

We catalyse strong, collaborative biosecurity to protect and restore what makes Australia extraordinary – our unique animals, plants and landscapes. As the only national advocacy organisation dedicated to the growing threat of invasive species, we must leap into the future with a bold plan that is powerful enough to alter the dire trajectory for nature and save our species. This is only possible with the funding from you. Investments today will scale our impact to keep nature safe from invasive species.

Please donate what you can today.
invasives.org.au/donate

Thank you.

For us, supporting the work of the Invasive Species Council is an important piece in the broader commitment to build the capacity of regenerative agriculture in Australia. Invasive animals and plants remain a wicked problem with implications for the entire ecosystem. It is wonderful to have the energy of the Council's team working with such passion on solutions that take many forms, from political engagement to grass roots community action. They are certainly seeing compounding successes with their strategy.

Rebecca Gorman, Illawong Fund