



# INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

Annual Report 2014-15



# President's report

We've enjoyed a good year watching our capacity and influence grow. Central to this success has been a committed board and expert staff working together.

## Staff

On behalf of the board, I would like to extend thanks to the personnel whose incredible skills and professional approach have been instrumental to our performance in the past year. We are extremely fortunate to have Andrew Cox leading the organisation and providing the advocacy essential for our success. Carol Booth's expertise and energy was especially valued during the Senate inquiry into environmental biosecurity and the development of the federal Biosecurity Bill. John Sampson's communications expertise has ensured we present a professional face to the Australian community and educate a growing number of people through the Feral Herald blog, our website and other communications. Tim Low's support as a project officer has also been enormously valuable.

## Capacity

As a board, our role is to ensure good governance in the present, while progressing the priorities that will strengthen our organisation for the future. Our challenge has always been to have sufficient resources to tackle the enormous problem of invasive species. This year we have seen a level of growth in our fundraising that enabled us to play a leadership role in responding to the Senate inquiry into environmental biosecurity. Significantly, our fundraising efforts have provided greater capacity for the next financial year, which will be reflected in expanded activities. This includes the ability to extend the CEO's role from a part-time to full-time position and the creation of a new Outreach Program.

## Communications

Growth in capacity cannot be achieved without building community awareness of our organisation and invasive species issues. We have enjoyed much success in this area with a growing social media presence. Indeed one Facebook post about the Sydney incursion of red imported fire ants reached 94,000 people! Our high quality Feral Herald ebulletin now reaches 1400 subscribers. We have also been very grateful for the support of the Paddy Pallin Foundation for providing our 'Keep your gear clean' educational brochure in all Paddy Pallin stores and donations through its 'Don't bag the environment' promotion.

## Fundraising

As mentioned, this year has been successful on the fundraising front and we are very fortunate to have a number of committed funders behind this success. As a donor-funded organisation we thank all our contributors and supporters, without whom we would not be in this position.

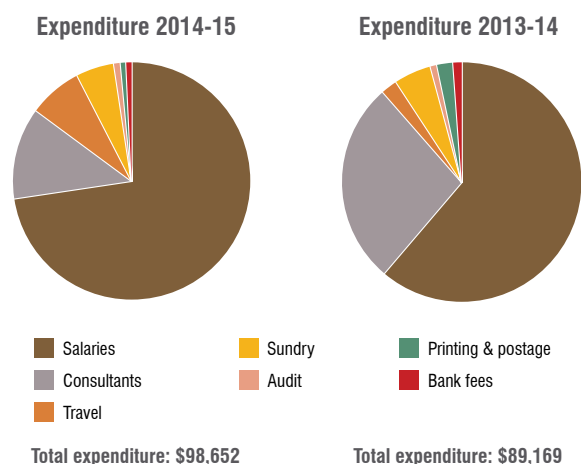
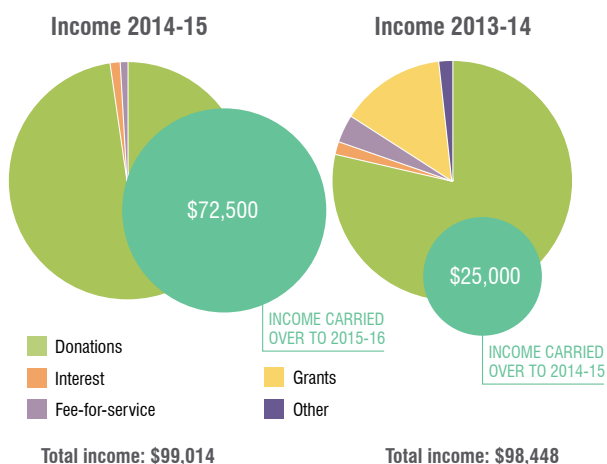
I would particularly like to acknowledge the support of the Limb Family Foundation, Mullum Trust, McKinnon Family Foundation, Curlew Fund of the Australian Communities Foundation, Tracker Foundation, Garry White Foundation and the Lane Cove Bush Regeneration Cooperative. We are also very grateful for in kind support from Ecology Australia and the Victorian National Parks Association, and assistance from national and state-based environmental groups.

Finally, thank you to fellow board members who invest their personal time and expertise, to ensure thoughtful leadership and good governance for the organisation.

Esther Abram, President



## Yearly income and expenditure





Andrew Cox (left) and Carol Booth with Australia's Threatened Species Commissioner, Gregory Andrews.

## CEO's report



Our major achievement was the Senate inquiry by the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee, which shone a spotlight on Australia's poor state of readiness for new invasive species.

The inquiry was instigated due to our advocacy, and we succeeded in encouraging more than 90 submissions. The extensive evidence in our written submission and in person to the committee was heavily utilised. The final consensus report endorsed many of our recommendations and the minority report supported our proposal for creating Environment Health Australia. Over coming months we will be working to have these recommendations implemented. Our work on this inquiry has provided a strong foundation for much of our advocacy and awareness raising for the next two to three years.

Also on the federal legislative front, the Biosecurity Act was passed, coincidentally on the same day the Senate inquiry report was tabled. We played a key role in an amendment that created an independent Inspector-General of Biosecurity. Other amendments for the environment were ignored by both the Liberal/National government and Labor. While the Senate inquiry flagged cross-party support for major improvements in environmental biosecurity, the two major parties are yet to see these problems resulting from institutional failure.

Feral cats jumped to the top of the federal government's environmental agenda under the energetic leadership of the Threatened Species Commissioner. This is welcome attention to a widespread and destructive environmental pest. Missing from its approach to threatened species is a strategic and pro-active response to other invasive species threats. We contributed to an updated feral cat threat abatement plan and the national threatened species summit.

At the state level, we continued to be involved in the development of new biosecurity legislation, most recently in NSW and Victoria. We praised the NSW government's decision to adopt elements of Queensland's biosecurity approach: a general biosecurity duty and an independently

chaired biosecurity committee advising the minister. Additional reforms, such as the permitted list approach to plant introductions, were supported by Labor and the Greens but opposed by the NSW Liberal/National government. We also contributed to Queensland's biosecurity capability review.

We continued our advocacy aimed at halting the spread of pest animals such as deer and feral horses and highly invasive tramp ants, such as yellow crazy ants and red imported fire ants.

In December 2014, one of our worst invasive species, the red imported fire ant, was detected at Port Botany in Sydney. Queensland has been trying to eradicate the dangerous ant from southeast Queensland since 2001 and is finding the job extremely difficult and costly. The NSW government responded swiftly, destroying the only nest detected. We worked closely with the NSW government and were able to rapidly raise the profile of the threat and encourage community surveillance.

We have continued to develop international links. The Invasive Species Council teamed up with Island Conservation, an international group specialising in eradicating pest animals such as rats and rabbits from ocean islands. Through an MOU with Island Conservation, we will work to facilitate feral animal eradications from selected Australian islands. We also participated in the 2014 World Parks Congress in Sydney.

With expert volunteer help we began to systematically identify weed seeds illegally sold online in Australia, working with the Department of Agriculture and retailers such as ebay. Our publicity about the issue and careful research has delivered a great result: many illegal items were removed from sale and several online sellers were delisted.

Andrew Cox, CEO



## Contact

- **web** [www.invasives.org.au](http://www.invasives.org.au)
- **email** [isc@invasives.org.au](mailto:isc@invasives.org.au)
- **facebook.com** [invasivespeciescouncil](https://www.facebook.com/invasivespeciescouncil)
- **twitter** [@ISCAustralia](https://twitter.com/ISCAustralia)

