

# Standing up for nature

A bold strategy to keep Australia safe from invasive species

FUNDING PROPOSAL MARCH 2026



Tarkine Coast, Sarah Anne Rocks, Tasmania. Photo: Wirestock.

## Our challenge

*Australia is facing a defining test for nature. Invasive species are the leading driver of animal extinction in this country – reshaping landscapes, overwhelming recovery efforts and pushing threatened wildlife closer to the brink. Yet despite being one of the most practical and high-impact areas for action, the response is too often fragmented across borders and portfolios – without the national focus it needs.*

*Nature needs the Invasive Species Council to thrive. We are the only national environmental organisation dedicated to advocating on this mega-threat. If we don't stand up for nature against the single biggest driver of animal extinction, no one will.*

*That is both our mandate and our responsibility. And it's why your support is so important.*

*Invasive species don't respect borders or portfolios. They cut across agriculture, environment, trade, treasury and emergency management. For many governments and environmental organisations, that complexity lands them in the too-hard basket – despite overwhelming evidence that managing invasive species is the highest-impact conservation action available to us.*



Photo: John Schilling.

*And so, we lean into the complexity.*

*To lead nationally on invasive species reform, we must be strong, strategic and effective. This work demands more than good intentions. It requires deep technical expertise, cross-jurisdictional access and the ability to build social and political licence across traditional divides. It means maintaining influence with decision-makers while driving urgency through the media and the broader community. It means translating complex biosecurity failures into clear political priorities that governments cannot ignore.*

*It requires activating networks of community and political champions who care and driving a new narrative about the nature crisis to inspire action for change.*

*And it works.*

*Almost every week there is a new shift in policy, a new funding commitment, or a new high-profile story shaping public opinion for invasive species action. We are turning some of the biggest threats facing nature into the biggest opportunities for cultural and systemic transformation.*

*But the scale of the challenge is growing. The threats are accelerating. And the opportunities to act are real – and time-sensitive.*

*We are determined to make this issue bigger than us. To harness the spirit of Australians who care deeply about the land and awaken a sleeping giant for conservation advocacy.*

*Our challenge is one of scale and momentum. With sustained backing from philanthropic partners, like you, we can secure the political, cultural and financial shifts needed to change the trajectory of extinction in this country.*

*We can build an Australia anchored in a bold vision for nature. And if we stand up together, we can deliver a genuine wildlife revival.*

**Jack Gough, CEO**



# Our vision

Our vision is to make the momentum for critical action on invasive species bigger than us. We can't do this alone, but we can be the catalyst that drives lasting shifts in government, communities and culture to save wildlife, stop extinctions and protect Australia's forests and rivers.

Invasive species are a major driver of the extinction crisis. Yet the response remains fragmented, politicised, and too often reactive.

By 2030, we aim to create the conditions for a stronger, more mature national approach. Our critical advocacy, policy and communications will:

- pull at least part of the nature conversation out of the culture wars
- shift the strategic intention around invasive species across the jurisdictions
- transform environmental biosecurity to be a powerful safety net for nature
- become a successful conduit for the strategic philanthropic leverage of government funding, instead of philanthropy paying for work that governments should do
- embed invasive species action as a priority for political parties across the Coalition, Labor, Greens and independents.

With greater scale and capability, we can turn today's political access, expertise and track record into long-term cultural and funding shifts. Our profile, reputation and access is already embedded in New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia. That's why we're building in capacity in Victoria this election cycle and other jurisdictions to ensure we become truly national.

If we succeed, we won't just win campaigns. We will reshape how Australia responds to the extinction crisis – and stand up for nature at the scale this moment demands.

## CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

**Goal:** Build a truly national organisation with the scale, reach and influence to drive systemic reform on invasive species across Australia.

**Strategy:** Strengthen every lever of influence – lobbying, policy, organising and communications – while building the organisational backbone required to sustain impact at scale.

### Tactics:

- Activate networks of community and political champions – people ready to stand up for nature in their electorates and regions.
- Expand our policy team to develop the most credible, costed and ready-to-implement invasive species solutions in the country.
- Strengthen our communications capacity to drive a new national narrative about the nature crisis – building social licence, improving media literacy and inspiring action.
- Upgrade our internal systems – including our website and CRM – to support a larger, more sophisticated organisation.
- Develop confident, well-connected advocates, building profile and relationships.



Some of the Invasive Species Council team in South Australia.

# Fixing the system to avert extinctions

## THREATS TO NATURE PROJECT

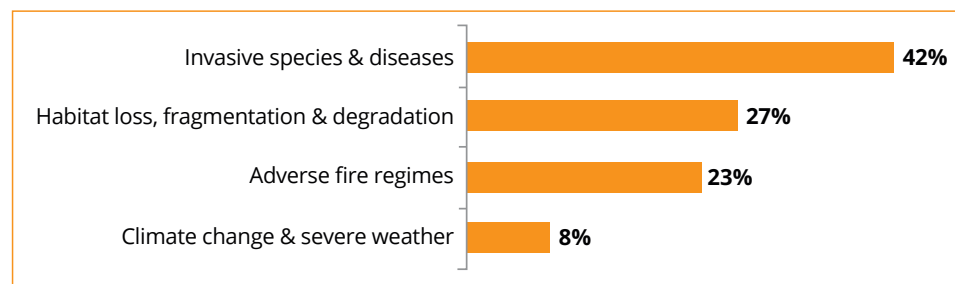
Australia's extinction record is among the worst globally, and invasive species remain the primary cause. Seven animal species have already been lost this century, 6 due to invasive species, and more than 100 plants and animals are assessed as more likely than not to be extinct by 2040.

The federal government committed in 2022 to 'no new extinctions'. Meeting this challenge requires more than promises – it demands systems that tackle extinction drivers at scale.

Tackling invasive species is essential to protect wildlife from extinction. And yet, important extinction-prevention programs face funding cliffs while pressure intensifies.

The Invasive Species Council is focused on securing the national settings needed to avert extinctions – protecting cornerstone programs like the Saving Native Species fund, strengthening threat abatement for major invasive pressures, and accelerating the research and innovation required to deliver practical solutions on the ground.

This work is about building a durable national framework that allows Australia to act early, prioritise effectively and arrest declines before they become irreversible.



*High-impact and medium-impact threats to nationally listed threatened taxa (expert assessments).*

## CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

**Goal:** Stop extinctions by securing strong, long-term national programs that address invasive species and other major extinction drivers.

**Strategy:** Lock in sustained funding, improved threat abatement and innovation pathways that enable Australia to prevent extinctions.

### Tactics:

- Use direct advocacy to secure the continuation and expansion of the Saving Native Species program beyond 2026 to avoid a funding cliff for high-impact eradication and control projects.
- Advocate for a Nature Resilience and Threat Abatement Fund to coordinate national action on priority mega-threats.
- Continue our work to strengthen implementation of the EPBC Act through national environmental standards, more comprehensive threat abatement planning and action for priority threats, and earlier action on emerging threats.
- Secure high-profile media and mobilise Australians to demand investment in research and innovation through the National Environmental Science Program.

View our  
Gone report here.



# Preventing Australia's next rabbit plague

For most Australians, the great rabbit plagues feel like something of the past.

But that distance is a privilege – created by one of Australia's greatest conservation success stories: rabbit biocontrol.

For decades, myxoma virus and calicivirus have kept rabbit numbers in check. The science is clear that to stay ahead of rabbits, Australia needs a new biocontrol roughly every 10 years. Without it, resistance builds and numbers rebound.

That warning is being ignored and we need to urgently change this.

The last national release of a new strain of calicivirus was 8 years ago. As predicted, rabbit numbers are climbing again nationwide. And this time, there is no new biocontrol agent in the pipeline.

A nationally endorsed plan was finalised in 2024, backed by the CSIRO and leading experts. But since 2022, the federal program responsible for delivering the next rabbit biocontrol has been unfunded.

Australia already has more than 200 million rabbits. They threaten over 320 native species, undermine land restoration, damage cultural heritage sites, and cost agriculture more than \$200 million every year. History shows what comes next when numbers surge – stripped ground cover, increased fox populations, erosion and extinction.

The CSIRO know this funding failure is dangerous – but they cannot publicly advocate for the money they need.

It will still take 8–10 years to develop the next biocontrol once the funding is committed. The longer it takes, the higher populations will grow and the more damage we will see.

We are stepping in and speaking up because the consequences of silence are too great.

Read our recent opinion piece, which featured in the Daily Telegraph.



## CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

**Goal:** Secure \$3.6 million in the 2026–27 federal budget for Stage 1 of CSIRO's proposed National Rabbit Biocontrol Accelerator program.

**Strategy:** Secure cross-party commitment to ongoing support for rabbit biocontrol development in the lead-up to the 2027 federal election.

### Tactics:

- Build public and political awareness of the environmental and economic impact of rabbits and the need for ongoing effective biocontrol.
- Complete a 20-year Productivity Analysis and Biodiversity Impact Report comparing the economic impact of a new biocontrol versus no biocontrol.
- Mobilise a network of concerned stakeholder groups, including farming, environmental and community organisations.



Rabbits around a waterhole at the myxomatosis trial enclosure on Wardang Island in 1938. Photo: National Archives of Australia.

## Preventing wildlife diseases

New pathogens are among the most serious risks facing Australia. COVID-19 showed how quickly a novel disease can spread through unexposed populations, evolve, and cause devastation. For Australia's wildlife – shaped by long isolation – the risks are even greater.

Introduced diseases have already driven multiple extinctions. Chytrid fungus has wiped out 6 frog species and threatens dozens more. Introduced parasites caused the extinction of native rats on Christmas Island. Phytophthora species and myrtle rust are pushing dozens of native plants towards collapse. New diseases continue to arrive, often undetected, with imported plants, animals and goods or via ballast water.

Globally, H5 bird flu has infected hundreds of bird and mammal species. Novel fungi, viruses, bacteria and parasites are spreading fast, with the potential to cause catastrophic losses before governments can respond.

In 2024, the Invasive Species Council helped drive a major shift in Australia's preparedness for H5 bird flu, with a \$100 million boost in federal funding. Our focus now is on ensuring this level of foresight becomes the norm – not the exception – across wildlife disease prevention, preparedness and response.



Myrtle rust on scrub myrtle. Photo: Tim Low.

### CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

**Goal:** Prevent extinctions caused by introduced diseases by strengthening Australia's prevention, preparedness and early-response systems.

**Strategy:** Shift Australia from a reactive disease response to a precautionary, risk-based approach that reduces the likelihood of new pathogens arriving and improves readiness when they do.

#### Tactics:

- Advocate for stronger biosecurity, comprehensive disease risk identification, tighter live-import controls and improved surveillance.
- Continue to promote national preparedness for H5 bird flu and ensure lessons from this response are embedded across biosecurity policy.
- Publish a public-facing report to lift awareness of emerging wildlife disease risks and build pressure for preventative action.
- Seek funding for collaborative research with disease experts to identify high-priority fungal and disease threats using the world's best-practice methods.



H5 bird flu testing. Photo: Rob Oo.

# Protecting native parrots

Australia's biosecurity agency is proposing to open up imports of parrots and cockatoos – currently permitted only from New Zealand, which itself bans parrot imports – despite the serious risk of introducing catastrophic diseases.

Australia is the evolutionary heartland of parrots. We are home to more than 50 species found nowhere else on Earth. Yet 22 of our parrots are already listed as nationally threatened, with some on the brink of extinction. Exposing them to a novel disease – one against which they have little or no immunity – has the potential to push critically endangered species over the edge.

One known threat, avian paraavulavirus 3, could devastate the fewer than 100 wild orange-bellied parrots left in the wild. And this proposal comes at a time when the global spread of highly pathogenic bird flu is already placing unprecedented pressure on wild bird populations.

For Australia – an island continent with wildlife found nowhere else on Earth – the stakes are high. Introduced pathogens are already driving extinctions in this country, from chytrid fungus wiping out frogs to myrtle rust pushing native plants towards collapse.

When Australia last allowed parrot imports between 1990 and 1995, two serious new diseases entered the country. Once a novel virus or parasite is established, it cannot simply be recalled.

The Invasive Species Council strongly opposes this reckless proposal and is determined to ensure Australia does not sleepwalk into the next wildlife disease crisis.

**Imports of ornamental fish are also high risk, with 10–15 million entering each year and more than 1,000 freshwater species permitted. At least 20 species – some permitted, some not – have already established in Australia's rivers, and serious pathogens have been introduced. We are advocating for the development of national environmental standards for live imports and improved assessments.**

## CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

**Goal:** Stop high-risk live bird imports and secure stronger, precautionary biosecurity safeguards to protect Australia's native parrots and other wildlife from catastrophic disease.

**Strategy:** Apply coordinated political, scientific and public pressure to prevent approval of high-risk parrot imports, while advancing broader reforms to Australia's disease risk assessment, live import rules, and wildlife disease preparedness.

### Tactics:

- Engage directly with ministers, departmental decision-makers and biosecurity officials to advocate for a precautionary approach to wildlife disease risk.
- Mobilise scientific experts to publicly outline the risks of avian paraavulavirus, avian bornavirus and other emerging threats.
- Build media coverage to ensure the public understands what is at stake for species like the orange-bellied parrot.



Orange-bellied parrot. Photo: Ron Knight.

## A fire ant-free future

Last year, we secured \$24 million from the Queensland government for enhanced aerial fire ant suppression – a critical boost at a moment when eradication efforts were at risk of failing. The latest annual report from the fire ant program shows that investment is making a tangible difference on the ground. In fact, thousands of hectares are now in post-eradication clearance surveillance and nest densities have been brought under control.

This is what success looks like. But only if momentum is maintained.

Fire ants are one of the very few invasive species in Australia that can still be completely eradicated. What remains uncertain is whether governments will see the task through.

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

Years of underfunding and delayed decisions allowed fire ants to spread through south-east Queensland and into northern New South Wales. Nest densities in suppression zones reached unprecedented levels, increasing the risk of new outbreaks as ants are moved through soil, turf, mulch and hay. The next federal government should commit to fully fund fire ant eradication and suppression in 2027 and avoiding any funding cliffs that could unravel years of hard-earned work on the front lines.



Fire ants form rafts to float across water allowing them to survive floods and continue their spread.  
Photo: George Grall.



Fire ant colonies can range from a few hundred thousand to millions of ants.  
Photo: Clarence Holmes.

### CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

**Goal:** Secure full, sustained funding to complete the eradication of fire ants in Australia.

**Strategy:** Maintain relentless public, political and industry pressure to ensure fire ant eradication remains a national priority, using election cycles and budget decisions as leverage points to lock in long-term funding.

#### Tactics:

- Advocate to Australian governments for immediate suppression funding of \$24 million over 2 years to tackle high-density infestation sites in the suppression zone and for \$378.56 million over 6 years (from 2027–28 to 2032–33) to keep the eradication program on track.
- Work through government departments to bring community experience into the next phase of the fire ant eradication plan and remove bureaucratic barriers to eradication.
- Use targeted media to counter misinformation, maintain public confidence in baiting programs, and highlight the consequences of failure.
- Mobilise supporters, industry leaders and affected communities to reinforce the case for decisive federal leadership.

# Queensland: From hotspot to stronghold

Queensland is a biodiversity jewel – and an invasion hotspot. Home to 85% of our native mammals, 72% of native birds and more than 11,000 plant species, the state carries a national responsibility. Yet it is also ground zero for some of Australia's most destructive invasive species – from fire ants and yellow crazy ants to feral pigs and rapidly increasing deer numbers on the urban fringe. Queensland's biosecurity system has been criticised in 2 separate state auditor-general reviews, highlighting resourcing, data collection and regulatory issues.

In recent years, we have secured significant new investments, including over \$1 billion for fire ant eradication, \$48.8 million to protect key habitat from yellow crazy ants around Cairns and Townsville, 250 additional staff for national parks, and \$50 million and 100 additional staff for Biosecurity Queensland.

These wins are good news for Queensland, but the work is far from over. Yellow crazy ants continue to threaten the World Heritage Wet Tropics. Feral pigs are destroying ancient trees in places like the Bunya Mountains. And rapidly expanding deer populations in south-east Queensland's peri-urban areas are causing ecological and agricultural damage and road accidents.

Our work now is focused on driving coordinated, long-term responses to these threats – ensuring yellow crazy ant eradication remains on track, securing a comprehensive and well-funded rollout of the statewide Feral Pig Management Plan, and pushing for a funded south-east Queensland deer strategy to avert a worsening crisis.



Barron Gorge National Park, Queensland. Photo: Dennis MacDonald.

## CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

**Goal:** Secure coordinated, long-term action that reduces the impact of damaging invasive species and strengthens the state's biosecurity system.

**Strategy:** Sustain political and public momentum, build strong alliances – including with Traditional Owners and regional partners – and translate commitments into durable systems reform and on-ground outcomes.

### Tactics:

- Update our Queensland policy priorities document to report progress and secure the next reform phase.
- Advocate for full implementation of the Queensland Feral Pig Management Plan.
- Push for a south-east Queensland deer management plan with state funding.
- Advocate for the next phase of yellow crazy ant eradication funding in the Wet Tropics and Townsville.
- Use the media and mobilise our network to monitor policy implementation and highlight gaps.

Yellow Crazy Ants. Photo: Abdul Latif.



## Runway to the next federal election

What happens this year will determine whether nature wins or loses at the next election. Most decisions aren't made in the heat of a campaign. They're made now – when policy agendas are set, budget baselines are locked in and political priorities are shaped.

We are entering this phase from a position of strength. Since the last election, the Invasive Species Council has deepened its influence across federal departments, built trusted relationships with ministers, advisers and agencies, and established itself as the leading voice on invasive species and environmental biosecurity. Our expertise is sought, our evidence is relied upon, and our proposals are shaping how governments think about extinction risk, biosecurity and national resilience.

Our focus this year is laying the foundations for what the next Australian Government should deliver: serious, long-term investment in invasive species action and environmental biosecurity. Without early decisions and long term commitments, our nation faces funding cliffs that stall programs, a broken innovation pipeline and a deficit in the skilled personnel needed to address the accelerating threats to nature.

Our message to government is consistent and unequivocal. Preventing and eliminating invasive species should not be treated as an optional nice-to-have – it is an essential investment for national productivity, resilience and the Australian lifestyle.

### CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

**Goal:** Secure significant, long-term increases in federal investment in invasive species action and environmental biosecurity – ensuring the next Australian Government is positioned to deliver decisive action on extinction-driving threats.

**Strategy:** Create cross-party confidence and competition around invasive species opportunities, embedding practical environmental action in narrative identities that the parties are reaching for.

#### Tactics:

- Engage directly with party policy-makers and influencers' and ensure election preparation processes elevate priorities.
- Build momentum for practical environmental action and investment in prevention and preparedness in the media and among political champions.
- Develop systemic solutions that parties can adopt – such as national threat abatement, protected area invasive species funding, and a large-scale island eradication and recovery program.
- Launch our State of Invaders Report.
- Advocate for early funding to avoid funding cliffs for fire ants, Saving Native Species Fund, National Environmental Science Program and the National Heritage Trust.

Endangered numbat. Photo: Simon Taylor.



# Seizing state elections – South Australia

What happens in South Australia over the next year will determine whether some of the nation's most promising invasive species gains are secured or squandered.

With a state election approaching, South Australia is entering the decisive phase when priorities harden, funding envelopes are set, and unfinished programs get the momentum to cross the line or stall.

South Australia is one of the few jurisdictions where invasive species eradication is not theoretical. On Kangaroo Island, feral cats are close to being eliminated from the Dudley Peninsula, bringing the island within reach of becoming a world-leading, island-wide wildlife haven. On the mainland, South Australia's feral deer program is more ambitious and successful than that of any other state, and success would be a world-leading demonstration of what is possible with the right settings.

We have been deeply engaged in shaping what comes next, working closely with decision-makers, departments, stakeholders and the media, to secure the policy and funding settings that turn progress into permanent feral freedom.

## CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

**Goal:** Secure firm policy commitments and sustained investment from the next South Australian government that lock in invasive species eradication and prevention outcomes – delivering a lasting legacy for wildlife.

**Strategy:** Use the state election as a leverage point to translate on-ground success into political commitments.

### Tactics:

- Promote *A living legacy: Invasive species actions for South Australia* as a comprehensive, solutions-focused blueprint for the next government, to persuade the next government to tackle feral cats, deer, buffel grass and other invasive threats.
- Use targeted media to elevate priority issues and build social license in communities for key projects, including feral deer and cat eradication.
- Use the upcoming term of government to seize opportunities for reform.



**View, A living legacy: Invasive species actions for South Australia, here.**

The Kangaroo Island dunnart has almost been saved from feral cats.  
Photo: Kangaroo Island Landscape Board.

## Seizing state elections – Victoria

Victoria is now an outlier. While other states have begun to treat invasive animals like deer and horses as the serious environmental threats they are, Victoria continues to send mixed signals – protecting feral deer under wildlife laws, cutting frontline pest management capacity, and leaving successful control programs exposed to political pressure. That's why the upcoming November election is so important.

Feral deer are trashing and trampling national parks, polluting waterways, damaging farms, spreading weeds, and increasingly appearing on the edges of suburbs. At the same time, entrenched opposition to effective feral horse control threatens to undo years of hard-won progress in sensitive alpine and wetland areas. These pressures are colliding with a retreat in public land management capacity.

The Invasive Species Council is stepping in at a critical moment – establishing a strong on-ground presence in Victoria and using the election as a lever to put invasive species back onto the political agenda.



Feral red deer in the Grampians, Victoria. Photo: Steve Morvell.

### CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

**Goal:** Secure election commitments in Victoria that deliver stronger, properly resourced invasive species control – particularly for feral deer – and rebuild the state's biosecurity and public land management capacity.

**Strategy:** Use the 2026 Victorian election as a focal point to elevate invasive species from a technical issue to a political priority, linking on-ground impact to government policy and presenting clear, credible solutions.

#### Tactics:

- Establish a high-profile ISC campaign presence in Victoria, embedded within a broad alliance of conservation, farming, land management and community voices.
- Use targeted media, public advocacy and community engagement to build social licence for professional, humane and systematic control of feral deer and horses.
- Build non-partisan support among elected leaders for funding and regulations that enable strong action on invasive species.
- Align Victoria's campaign with national invasive species priorities, ensuring state decisions support – rather than undermine – progress elsewhere.
- Work alongside Traditional Owner organisations, regional communities and land managers to elevate lived experience and practical solutions, strengthening the case for action.

**We're proud to lead the Victorian Deer Control Community Network, a partnership between organisations, institutions, businesses, groups and individuals that are actively involved in feral deer control, research, and campaigning.**



# Kosciuszko: The next chapter

Australia's most iconic protected places – from the Australian Alps to World Heritage national parks – should be sanctuaries for wildlife, not sacrifice zones for invasive species. For decades, feral horses have trampled, trashed and polluted the fragile alpine landscapes of Kosciuszko National Park, pushing endangered species like the southern corroboree frog and broad-toothed rat toward extinction.

That chapter is finally closing.

After years of our sustained advocacy, Kosciuszko reached a historic turning point last year when the NSW government repealed the law that protected feral horses over native species in a national park.

Feral horses have now been almost eradicated from two-thirds of the park, with only around 3,000–5,000 remaining in the retention areas where they were previously protected by law. Ecological recovery is already visible in newly horse-free areas.

Many told us these achievements were impossible. But this campaign is proof that with relentless advocacy, high-profile media and dedicated community mobilisation, we can shift public sentiment and achieve cross-party support.

Now the work enters its most important phase.

Repealing the law was essential – but it was only the beginning. We now have a clear mandate for action to drive horse numbers down to zero in the remaining retention areas of Kosciuszko National Park. Completing this task is critical to lock in recovery, prevent backsliding and ensure that this once-damaged landscape can fully heal.

The success of Reclaim Kosci has also sparked wider change. Our work has helped protect World Heritage areas in the Blue Mountains and Gondwana Rainforests from feral horses, and opened the door to stronger action in northern New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. With a Victorian election approaching in 2026, the opportunity has never been stronger.

This is the moment to finish the job – and to ensure that Kosciuszko becomes a global example of how determined advocacy can turn environmental damage into recovery.



Kosciuszko National Park. Photo: Steven Lacy.

## CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

**Goal:** Drive feral horse numbers down to zero in the remaining retention areas of Kosciuszko National Park and secure long-term protection for Australia's protected areas.

**Strategy:** Use the repeal victory to maintain public confidence and political momentum, while holding governments accountable for completing eradication and funding effective management, including removing the 4 remaining retention areas ahead of the 2027 election.

### Tactics:

- Expose ongoing damage in retention areas through targeted media.
- Secure sustained, strategic funding to complete eradication and prevent reinvasion.
- Use the Victorian election to broaden reforms.
- Work with local MPs and mobilise supporters to build the mandate for removing retention areas.

## Our islands of hope

Australia's islands are sanctuaries for life found nowhere else on Earth. They are the last refuge for several species already lost from the mainland and support an extraordinary share of our threatened wildlife. But that same isolation also makes island species perilously naive – and devastatingly vulnerable to invasive predators.

The cost has been severe. Of the 7 native animals driven to extinction in Australia this century, 6 were island species – and 5 of those extinctions were caused by invasive animals. From invasive rats on Norfolk Island to wolf snakes on Christmas Island, islands continue to be frontline battlegrounds in Australia's extinction crisis.

Yet islands are also where hope is strongest.

We've had some recent breakthroughs. We secured \$16 million in federal funding as part of the national bird flu preparedness package to support eradications on high-priority islands.

Other priority projects have moved forward, including expanded access to AI-powered Felixer traps on French Island, deployment of cutting-edge cat control tools on Bruny Island, and support for Indigenous-led eradication on Lungtalanana (Clarke Island).

On Kangaroo Island, our media and advocacy work helped secure critical legal reforms and funding that had been holding progress back. This has cleared the way for what could become the largest eradication of feral cats on an inhabited island anywhere in the world.

Successful eradications deliver rapid recovery – seabirds reclaiming burrows, native mammal populations rebounding and landscapes regenerating.



CEO Jack Gough with Kangaroo Island Landscape Board on Kangaroo Island, South Australia.

But progress is fragile. Without long-term investment, eradications can stall and reinvasion can undo years of work.

That's why our island work is so important. And through this we envision a future where Australia can move from isolated wins to a coordinated and accelerated national effort that stops extinctions and creates havens for wildlife threatened elsewhere.

### CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

**Goal:** Secure a National Island Eradication and Recovery Fund of \$200–400 million over 10 years to prevent extinctions and restore island ecosystems.

**Strategy:** Inspire and persuade Australia's governments to expand and accelerate this successful, cost-effective and well-proven conservation strategy.

#### Tactics:

- Build awareness of the proven benefits of island eradications.
- Launch our *Islands of Hope: An investment case for a program to accelerate the eradication of invasive species from Australian islands* report.
- Pressure governments to maintain priority island projects funding, to enable successful programs on Kangaroo Island, French Island, Bruny Island, Minjerribah and Lungtalanana.
- Showcase recovery success to build momentum and ambition.
- Mobilise supporters and empower local champions to drive political pressure.



Tankerton Creek, French Island, Victoria. Photo: Owen Pawsey.

# Protecting Tasmania's wild heart

Tasmania is one of the last places on Earth with a genuine chance to stay ahead of the invasive species curve. As an island state, it remains free of many of the worst invaders that plague the mainland. But that natural advantage is slipping – and without decisive action, it will be lost.

Feral deer are now one of Tasmania's fastest-growing threats. It is estimated they could be costing the state upwards of \$100 million every year, damaging agriculture, tourism and some of Australia's most iconic landscapes. Despite government commitments to reduce the deer population, it has increased dramatically by 33% in the past 5 years and spread westward. Deer are established in some of Tasmania's most precious conservation areas.

We have created a rare political opening. Our work to capitalise off last year's snap election saw the Tasmanian Liberal Party commit to a suite of reforms – including a 100-day Invasive Species Action Plan, stronger action on feral deer, continued weed funding, improved biosecurity compliance and a new cat management plan.

These commitments are not guarantees. But they are leverage – and they exist because sustained advocacy made invasive species impossible to ignore.

Alongside this work, we've continued to push for action where it matters most. Cats remain one of the most pervasive threats to Tasmanian wildlife, and we've championed stronger containment rules and eradication projects on offshore islands such as Lungtalanana (Clarke Island). On Flinders Island, feral pigs are actively destroying habitat and threatening Ramsar-listed wetlands – a threat that is still containable if action comes soon.

The hunting lobby remains powerful and has now secured a seat in parliament. Without continued pressure, progress could stall.

This is the moment to back ambition – while ambition can still win.



Cradle Mountain, Tasmania. Photo: Christian J Kober.

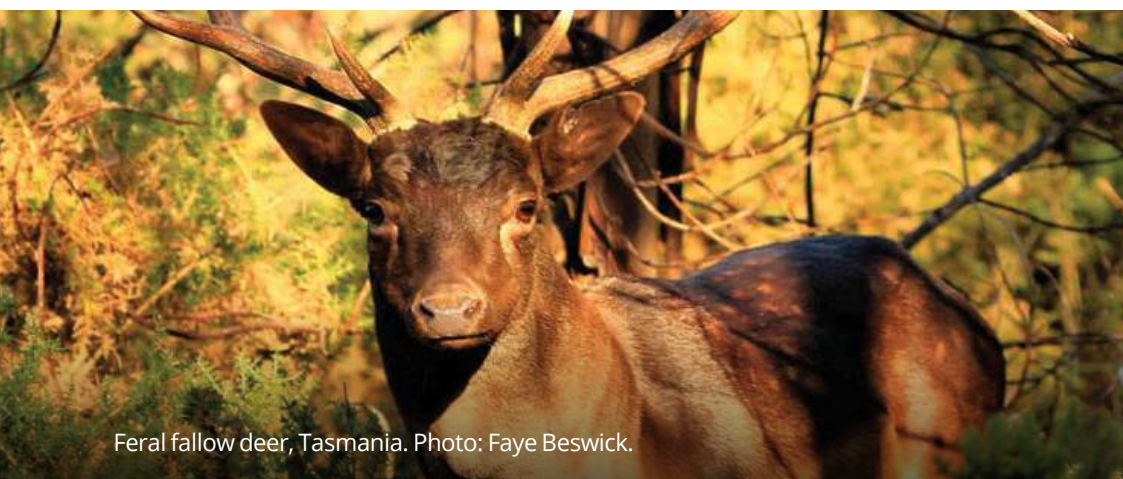
## CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

**Goal:** Protect Tasmania's natural advantage by stopping the expansion of invasive species and driving eradication where it is still possible.

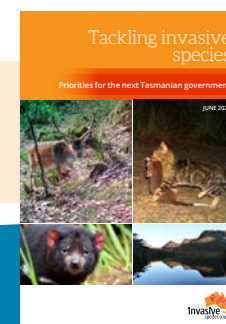
**Strategy:** Build broad public and political support around a bold vision to reverse major threats, using scientific evidence, community leadership and sustained pressure to overcome opposition.

### Tactics:

- Advocacy to secure long-term funding for expanded feral deer control and for the removal of its protection status.
- Build stakeholder and broad public support for local action on cats and island eradication projects.
- Publish an expert economic report on the cost of feral deer.
- Maintain media and community pressure to hold the government to their commitments.



Feral fallow deer, Tasmania. Photo: Faye Beswick.



View our solutions  
for Tasmania here.



## Stopping the cat-astrophe

Extinction is not inevitable. But stopping extinction requires more than just recovery efforts for species about to go over the edge – it requires a focus on the threats driving broad-scale decline. Few threats demonstrate this more clearly than cats.

Feral cats, along with foxes, are the most devastating predators on the continent. They have driven at least 25 native species to extinction and kill billions of animals each year. Roaming pet cats add to the toll, emptying suburban bushland of birds, reptiles and small mammals. Tackling this threat is complex, politically sensitive and long-term – but it is also one of the most consequential opportunities we have to slow extinction.

We are moving cat management from political deadlock to coordinated action. In 2024, we helped secure a landmark national threat abatement plan for feral cats – a foundation for scaled-up control, new safe havens and targeted research. Every state and territory signed on except Queensland.



Feral cat with possum. Photo: Kangaroo Island Landscape Board.

This momentum is now translating into real-world progress. In South Australia, our advocacy helped remove legal barriers and unlock investment for the Kangaroo Island cat eradication. On the Dudley Peninsula, only around 150 cats remain. Completing this work would mark the largest successful eradication of feral cats ever achieved on a populated island anywhere in the world – and demonstrate what sustained commitment can achieve.

Elsewhere, progress is accelerating. In Tasmania, we secured a 100-day election commitment for a statewide cat plan. In Victoria, our campaign helped secure the approval of Felixer grooming traps for feral cat control – finally unlocking a long-blocked, science-backed tool that will ensure projects like French Island eradication can get back on track. And in Western Australia, we ensured the government committed to change the law preventing local cat containment rules.

But we are not finished. In New South Wales, meaningful reform is still needed to give councils the power and resources to act. Nationally, the feral cat threat abatement plan remains underfunded, with a significant gap still standing between commitment and delivery.

With elections looming in Victoria, New South Wales and federally, this year is critical. With continued pressure, we can turn hard-won policy progress into real, on-ground protection for wildlife against the cat catastrophe.

### CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

**Goal:** Reduce the impact of feral and roaming pet cats at a scale that delivers real, measurable gains for wildlife.

**Strategy:** Increase social license by leveraging growing concern about the impact of feral cats, creating the political will to act.

#### Tactics:

- Use direct advocacy to secure federal funding for the national feral cat plan, ensuring that cat containment laws and ambitious, well-funded statewide cat management strategies are adopted in every state, and secure the full funding for cat eradication on Kangaroo Island.
- Use the media to build social licence for effective control tools and statewide strategies nationwide.
- Educate the public on little-known native animals endangered by cats.

# Rewilding Australia

Australia once supported thriving populations of quolls, bandicoots, potoroos, bettongs, and other unique mammals, but today, many survive only on islands and behind predator-proof fences.

Fences can buy us time, but cannot be our future. Without addressing invasive predators at a truly landscape-scale, rewilding will remain limited, expensive and fragile. By tackling the root cause of wildlife loss, we are creating the conditions for nature to recover in places where it once thrived.



Rewilding Australia Senior Ecologist Francesca Roncolato at an eastern quoll release in Tasmania.

By welcoming Rewilding Australia into the Invasive Species Council family, we've united 2 powerful forces to tackle the missing piece of the rewilding puzzle. The Invasive Species Council's Rewilding Australia program now aims to build the foundations for a wildlife revival beyond the fence.

## CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

**Goal:** To shift rewilding from isolated projects to a national, coordinated, scalable movement in which species such as quolls, potoroos, bandicoots, and bettongs can return, persist, and disperse across the landscape.

**Strategy:** By integrating on-ground rewilding expertise with national policy influence, media pressure, government advocacy, funding, research and experimentation, we are building the conditions for a large-scale wildlife revival beyond the fence.

### Tactics:

- Integrate Rewilding Australia's on-ground expertise with the Invasive Species Council's policy, advocacy and media strength.
- Elevate flagship species like quolls and bettongs to tell hopeful, solutions-focused stories in the media.
- Drive policy reform and funding commitments to tackle feral predators across whole landscapes.
- Build partnerships with land managers, Traditional Owners and conservation leaders to expand rewilding beyond fenced sanctuaries.

**Our Bug Hunt project, in partnership with the Australian Government, Invertebrates Australia and Australian Geographic, is inspiring 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.**



# Defusing Australia's weedy timebomb

Escaped garden plants are the biggest source of environmental weeds in Australia. They are also by far the most expensive conservation and land management issue, spreading quietly and relentlessly – smothering native vegetation, fuelling hotter fires and destroying habitat for wildlife. What makes this crisis especially confronting is that much of it is preventable. Many of the most damaging plants, including familiar species like English ivy and gazanias, are still legally sold across most of the country.

After years of advocacy, a major breakthrough was achieved in 2024: a national commitment, supported by all state and territory governments, to develop a threat abatement plan for escaped garden plants and aquatic weeds. This was a pivotal moment. Done well, this plan has the potential to slow the rate of new invasions, drive early eradication and finally address one of Australia's most entrenched environmental failures.

But progress of this scale is never guaranteed.

Since securing the commitment, we've worked to ensure it doesn't stall or weaken under pressure. With your support, we've begun mobilising a broad and unexpected coalition – Landcare groups, Country Women's Associations, Traditional Owners, scientists, influencers and everyday gardeners – united by a shared concern for the places they care about.

We've also done some intensive policy work on a proposal for an effective prevention-focused scheme to regulate plant sales. And we've used the media to ensure our message travels widely, pushing weeds higher on the national agenda and making it harder for decision-makers to look away.

We know from experience that resistance will come. Industry lobby groups have blocked similar reforms in the past, delaying action for years while weeds continue to escape from gardens. Ensuring governments hold firm will be one of the defining challenges of the next phase.

The new federal environment minister now has a real opportunity to deliver a smart, ambitious plan to stop the sale of high-risk weeds and take action to stop new and emerging invaders, including 'sleeper species'.

## CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

**Goal:** Deliver a nationally coordinated approach to invasive weeds that prevents new invasions and drives early eradication.

**Strategy:** Sustain pressure on governments and industry and develop policy proposals for prevention, while building visible, community-backed support for decisive action.

### Tactics:

- Mobilise a diverse coalition of community advocates to demand reform.
- Use media to hold suppliers and decision-makers accountable.
- Push for responsibility to sit with the government, not consumers.
- Ensure the national threat abatement plan is strong, ambitious and delivered.



English ivy sold at Bunnings.



English ivy established in bushland.



We can't have a healthy culture without a healthy Country – and we can't have a healthy Country while invasive species continue to damage lands, waters and wildlife. From feral cats driving culturally significant species toward extinction, to buffel and gamba grass fuelling destructive fires that scar Country, invasive species are not just an environmental threat. They harm sacred sites, sever cultural relationships, and erode the living knowledge that connects people to place.

Voice of Country exists to help restore that balance. The campaign recognises that Country once held voice and agency – and that healing begins by rebuilding respectful relationships between all Australians, land and water, led by Indigenous knowledge systems and custodianship.

Last year marked a significant step forward. After sustained advocacy, the NSW government established an Aboriginal Assistant Commissioner for Healthy Country within the Natural Resources Commission. This was a powerful acknowledgement that Country needs a dedicated voice when decisions are made about land, wildlife and invasive species.

We have also worked to make Voice of Country bigger than us. By strengthening alliances and elevating Indigenous leadership nationally, the campaign is helping shift how care for Country is understood and valued. We are now working alongside Indigenous leaders and organisations, including WWF, the Australian Conservation Foundation, Biodiversity Council and the Indigenous Desert Alliance.

But this is only the beginning. Invasive species continue to degrade Country across Australia, and Indigenous leadership remains too often kept out of the systems that govern land and nature. Our focus now is on embedding Indigenous leadership across more jurisdictions and building the momentum needed for national reform.

Through Voice of Country, we are working toward a future where Country is healthy and respected – where sacred sites are protected, totem plants and animals are able to recover, and all Australians share a living culture of care for the land we depend on.

## CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

**Goal:** Embed First Nations leadership in invasive species decision-making and remove invasive species as a threat to culturally significant species and Country.

**Strategy:** Elevate Indigenous voices, knowledge and leadership nationally, and build momentum for a national Caring for Country Commissioner who can advise governments and act as a strong public advocate.

### Tactics:

- Use the Victorian and South Australian elections to drive campaigns to appoint more Commissioners for Country and build the case for national reform.
- Elevate Indigenous voices through media, storytelling and national forums.
- Continue to build and strengthen a national alliance of Indigenous leaders and organisations.
- Map totem species under threat from invasive species across Australia.
- Host on-Country and online consultations with Indigenous communities, including developing advocacy training for rangers.
- Direct advocacy to decision-makers to progress a national Caring for Country Commissioner.

Invasive Species Council's Indigenous Ambassador and Voice of Country lead, Associate Professor Richard Swain at Watarrka in a creek bed with spinifex regrowth after buffel control work.



# Culture shifts to transform conservation

To protect Australia's wildlife from the mega-threat of invasive species, funding and policy reform are essential – but they are not enough on their own. What ultimately determines whether change sticks is culture: what the public understands, what governments feel confident doing, and whether bold action is seen as necessary rather than risky.

The Invasive Species Council is focused on shifting those deeper settings. With your support, we are helping create the social and political conditions that allow decisive, science-based action to happen – and endure. These cultural shifts are what turn funding into outcomes and policy into protection.

## Culture shifts in the public

When Australians understand what's at stake, they back strong action for native species. When solutions are explained clearly and responsibly, support for measures like aerial culling, fire ant baiting, and cat containment rises sharply – giving governments the confidence to act.

One of the greatest threats to progress is misinformation. Simplistic narratives and fear-based campaigns can stall action at critical moments. Your support allows us to intervene early – ensuring evidence, lived experience and trusted voices shape the conversation before misinformation takes hold.

By lifting public understanding, we help build the social licence that makes bold decisions politically possible.

## Culture shifts in governments

For decades, the environmental impact of invasive species has been neglected. Agriculture departments prioritised industry, while environment agencies were reluctant to lead. That culture is now beginning to change.



Bird flu and fire ants have emerged as some of the biggest environmental threats Australia has faced. While our work has already helped governments act, our ambition extends beyond individual responses. We have used these threats as opportunities to drive stronger collaboration across state and federal governments and between portfolios.

This cultural transformation is a prerequisite for the systemic change needed to save nature.

## Media as a driver of change

Traditional and social media play a decisive role in cultural change. We invest in it not simply to raise awareness, but to shape the narrative, influence decision-makers and secure social licence for action.

By consistently promoting science-led solutions in the public arena – and countering misinformation before it hardens – we help redefine what is seen as reasonable, necessary and expected in environmental decision-making. Over time, this shifts the baseline – making bold action on invasive species the norm, not the exception.

## CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

**Goal:** Create lasting cultural conditions that enable decisive, coordinated and science-based action on invasive species across Australia.

**Strategy:** Shift public understanding, strengthen political confidence and embed whole-of-government responsibility for invasive species management.

### Tactics:

- Shape the national conversation through strategic media and narrative leadership.
- Counter misinformation early and decisively to protect social licence for action.
- Elevate credible voices, including scientists, Traditional Owners and land managers.
- Drive stronger collaboration between the environment and agriculture agencies.
- Advocate for leadership reforms, including a strengthened Environmental Biosecurity Office.



Allies and stakeholders gathered for a BBQ event hosted by the Invasive Species Council in Adelaide, South Australia.

## Making it bigger than us

Nature needs more than individual effort – it needs collective action at scale. That is why we are focused on making invasive species action and advocacy bigger than us.

We've stepped into a national leadership role on invasive species communication – not just advocating for change, but helping others carry the message. Through workshops with government agencies and conservation allies, and by sharing insights at major national forums including NRM and Landcare conferences, the Pest and Weeds Symposium and the Species Survival Symposium, we've strengthened how invasive species are understood and discussed across the country.

But making it bigger than us also means sharing power and backing others to lead.

Alongside our national advocacy, we support place-based campaigns led by small community groups, landcarers and local champions who need targeted support to protect the places they care for. By providing strategic advice, communications support, media amplification and political pathways, we help local efforts achieve big results – turning isolated concerns into credible, influential campaigns.

This year, we will continue to deepen Awakening the Sleeping Giants, the grassroots program connecting landcarers, farmers and nature champions into a growing network. Thousands of Australians are already tackling weeds and feral animals on the ground. By continuing to train, connect and amplify these champions, we're transforming local action into political pressure.

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

Next, we'll grow this work into a national force – embedding champions in regional communities, expanding training and continuing to support place-based campaigns where targeted help can unlock outsized impact.

### CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

**Goal:** Achieve sustained, dedicated funding for invasive species management to open doors for critical, long-term systems change.

**Strategy:** Establish a powerful, unified force of local advocates who are already taking action on invasive species to build political pressure.

**Tactics:**

- Awaken the invasive species champions within existing groups.
- Build a presence within the landcarer community at regional events.
- Train and organise regional political champions in direct advocacy.
- Engage strategic regional media for public awareness campaigns.

## A crucial investment

As Australia's only national advocacy organisation dedicated to stopping the invasive species mega-threat, the Invasive Species Council is a crucial investment in nature at a decisive moment.

Over the past year, support from philanthropic partners like you has helped turn advocacy into impact – unlocking hundreds of millions of dollars in government investment, changing laws, reshaping public debate and delivering real protection for Australia's precious places and the wildlife that depends on them.

Our list of wins is a testament to what your investment can achieve. These are some of our successes in the last financial year alone:

- In 2025, our relentless advocacy and 11,000+ signature petition led to a repeal bill in NSW Parliament to overturn the protection of feral horses, complementing earlier reforms that lifted the ban on aerial culling and reduced feral horse numbers in Kosciuszko National Park.

- In 2025, we secured a \$28 million fire ant funding boost for urgent suppression, including a winter blitz and a shift to year-round treatment, bringing our total fire ant funding wins to over \$1 billion. We also secured an independent review of the fire ant program.
- In 2025, we won \$6 million worth of new funding for the South Australia deer eradication program – an ambitious blueprint for the rest of the country.
- In 2025, our advocacy changed an outdated law that undermined effective cat management, enabling the progress of Kangaroo Island's feral cat eradication program. We then secured \$1.6 million in federal funding for the eradication program.
- In 2025, we secured an extension of funding for critical national invasive species coordinator roles for feral deer, cats, foxes and pigs off the back of the federal election.
- In 2025, our advocacy, alongside local groups, drove the WA government to commit to changing the law to allow local councils to bring in cat containment laws to protect wildlife.
- In 2025, our work in NSW led to the government committing to root and branch reform of biosecurity and invasive species management, including a shift to a 4-year funding structure for the NSW Weeds Action Plan. We also secured a dedicated NSW Aboriginal Healthy Country Assistant Commissioner position in the Natural Resources Commission.
- In 2025, we advocated for increased resources in the Australian Capital Territory, resulting in a 33% boost in national park rangers dedicated to environmental conservation and invasive species management.
- In 2024, won \$95 million for bird flu preparedness, including over \$50 million dedicated to preparing for impacts to wildlife.
- In 2024, we secured \$700,000 for 15 trout-free havens in Victoria for 5 critically endangered native fish.
- In 2024, we secured the Australian national feral cat plan, for the first time signed on by all states and territories, except Queensland.
- In 2024, our campaigning around the Queensland election helped secure 150 new national park rangers; a \$117.84 million boost to natural resource management (NRM); 100 additional Biosecurity Officers and a \$50 million increase to Biosecurity Queensland funding.
- In 2024, we protected Tasmania's Walls of Jerusalem National Park in the Wilderness World Heritage Area from feral deer.



Reclaim Kosci petitions presented in NSW parliament.

# Funding needed

Invasive species are driving Australia's extinction crisis. Without urgent action, more species will be lost forever, and the landscapes we love will be irreversibly changed.

The Invasive Species Council's science-driven strategy delivers both immediate on-ground interventions and the lasting systems change needed to turn Australia's biggest environmental threats into our greatest opportunities for recovery. To do this, we rely on renewed and increased support from our existing philanthropic community, alongside new, visionary partners who share our commitment to protecting nature.

Your investment will play a leading role in stopping invasive species-led extinctions and safeguarding Australia's wildlife.

Together, we must stand up for nature – and lead a wildlife revival to protect what makes this country so special.

Please contact CEO Jack Gough on 0427 713 101 or email [jackg@invasives.org.au](mailto:jackg@invasives.org.au).



*For more than 2 decades, the Invasive Species Council has stood up for nature when few others would. We remain the only national organisation solely dedicated to tackling invasive species – the single greatest driver of species extinctions in Australia.*

*Today, under renewed leadership and with a strengthened team, our impact has never been greater. Governments are listening. Funding is shifting. Policies are changing.*

*Our work is science-led, strategic and relentlessly focused on results. We know that prevention is far more cost-effective than repair, and we strive to ensure donor support is used to leverage lasting government commitment and on-ground action.*

*Standing up for nature requires courage, persistence and scientific expertise. The Invasive Species Council brings all three. I encourage all who care about Australia's remarkable flora and fauna to join us because effective action makes a difference and we are proving that determined advocacy can change the future of our precious, but challenged, natural heritage.*

**Chris Grubb,**  
Funder and Treasurer of Invasive Species Council



Long-nosed potoroo. Photo: Blickwinkel.



The Invasive Species Council is a registered charity with DGR 1 status.

**Visit [www.invasives.org.au/donate](http://www.invasives.org.au/donate)** Via EFT: Account: Invasive Species Council Inc.  
Bank: Bendigo and Adelaide Bank Limited BSB: 633000 Account: 117645358

## Our vision

By 2050, invasive species are no longer a major driver of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation in Australia.

## Our mission

We catalyse strong, collaborative biosecurity to protect and restore Australia's extraordinary wildlife and ecosystems.

## We value being



Advocates  
for nature



Collaborative  
with First  
Australians



Committed  
to science



Bold  
and persistent

**Our 2030 goal is for Australia to have a strong environmental biosecurity system, enabling effective action across the invasion curve.**

**Prevention:** the establishment of new invasive species in Australia has substantially slowed, and no new very-high-risk species have permanently established.

**Eradications:** priority invasive species are being systematically eliminated from the Australian mainland and islands.

**Containment and control:** invasive species have not caused any more extinctions, high priority invasive species are being effectively contained or controlled, and priority biodiversity sites are being protected.

March 2026



**invasive**  
species council

*Thank you for your support*



ANNUAL REPORT



STRATEGIC PLAN



Short-beaked echidna. Photo: Albert Wright.