



KEEPING NATURE SAFE FROM INVASIVE SPECIES

Our strategy to 2030

Welcome

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

I've thought about that teaching a lot. Real custodianship is never about holding power, knowledge or credit. It is about passing it on, making space for others to lead and ensuring the work can continue long after any one person or organisation steps away.

Healing Country has to be bigger than us. And that idea sits at the heart of this strategy.

We are living at a time when the battle lines can feel more drawn than ever. Protecting nature is too often treated as a political position rather than a responsibility we all share. People retreat to their corners and misinformation travels quickly.

But Country does not belong to one side. It belongs to all of us – and all of us belong to it. For First Nations people, that understanding goes back thousands of generations. Country is not something separate from us. It is family. It is culture, language, story and responsibility. We care for Country because Country cares for us.

Invasive species do not recognise the divisions we create. Feral animals, weeds and diseases cross property boundaries, state borders and political divides. They threaten wildlife, landscapes, culture and communities across Australia. And that's why protecting Country can bring us together.

Over the coming years, the Invasive Species Council has an important role to play – but we cannot achieve the change Australia needs alone. Lasting change happens when communities, Traditional Owners, scientists, farmers, conservationists, governments and people from across the country have the knowledge, confidence and opportunity to act.

Our job is to create the conditions for others to lead, to share knowledge, to build alliances, to elevate voices and to help turn an idea that once seemed impossible into something governments and communities are ready to act on.

At a time when so much is pulling people apart, nature can be common ground. We might disagree about plenty, but surely we can agree that our children should inherit a country where native animals still live in the wild, rivers are healthy and ancient landscapes remain alive.

This strategy is our commitment to helping make that future possible.

Richard Swain
Indigenous Ambassador



The Invasive Species Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, rivers and wildlife. We pay our respects 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 culture, cultural landscapes and totem species.

Blue Mountains, Australia. Photo: Wikiverse.

About us

The Invasive Species Council is an independent, donor-funded, not-for-profit organisation that advocates for policies, programs and ambition to safeguard Australian wildlife, landscapes and waters from invasive animals, plants and diseases.

In 2002, inspired by *Feral Future*, a revelatory book authored by our co-founder Tim Low, a small group of people formed the Council to fill a gap in conservation advocacy in Australia. Since then, we have grown into Australia's leading advocacy organisation on invasive species.

Our remit is broad and includes all categories of invasive species – plants, animals, fungi and microbes – across terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems. Our primary focus is Australia and its territories, but where opportunities arise, we support international efforts that benefit Australia, our region and the world.

We create change through analysis, advocacy, alliances and action – developing credible solutions, making invasive species impossible to ignore, building powerful, diverse coalitions and stepping in to demonstrate what is possible.

For more than 2 decades, we have helped turn issues once considered too difficult, controversial or unglamorous into priorities for governments and communities.

Everything we do is driven by a simple purpose: saving wildlife, stopping extinctions and protecting the nature that makes Australia extraordinary.

Our achievements include:

- **Secured more than \$1 billion for fire ant eradication:** Keeping one of Australia's worst invasive species threats contained and on track for eradication.
- **Established Australia's Chief Environmental Biosecurity Officer:** Elevating environmental threats within a biosecurity system historically dominated by industry priorities.
- **Drove the National Feral Deer Action Plan:** Securing coordinated national action and ambition on a rapidly growing threat.
- **Advanced effective feral horse control in Kosciuszko National Park:** Building social licence in the face of fierce opposition and securing repeal of the law protecting feral horses in the national park.
- **Secured more than \$200 million for H5 bird flu preparation and response:** Putting the threat to Australian wildlife on the national agenda to protect vulnerable species.
- **Mobilised citizen science through Bug Hunt:** Engaging everyday Australians as a frontline biosecurity defence.
- **Unlocked hundreds of millions of dollars in funding:** Driving critical support for ambitious island eradications, increased national parks staff, improved biosecurity responses and critical on-ground programs across the country.



Australia's small mammals, like this rufous bettong, are the perfect snack size for introduced predators like cats and foxes – the number one reason our mammals have suffered such devastating losses.

Our challenge

Australia is in the grip of an extinction crisis. The wildlife that defines this country – the mammals, frogs, birds, insects and plants found nowhere else on Earth – has been vanishing faster than almost anywhere else. And while climate change and land clearing dominate the national conversation, another catastrophe is unfolding – quieter, but far deadlier.

It surprises many people to find out that invasive species have actually been the number one driver of animal extinctions in Australia and are predicted to continue to be the highest-impact driver of the next wave. Cats, foxes, chytrid fungus, wolf snakes, black rats – these are names etched into the obituary of species after species. Of the next 100 extinctions likely to occur in coming decades, invasive species are expected to be a major cause of 70.

There is a cruel paradox at the heart of this problem. Australia's long isolation has given us extraordinary and unique species, but that same isolation has also made them vulnerable to introduced predators, competitors and diseases that they did not evolve with.

Invasive species are also transforming entire ecosystems – degrading our landscapes, displacing wildlife, fuelling more destructive bushfires and preventing regeneration.

Yet despite the scale of this threat, there is genuine opportunity for change. New invaders can be stopped before they establish. Some can be eradicated before they spread. And where invasive species are already entrenched, their impacts can be controlled.

What is too often missing is the ambition, investment and political will to act at the scale nature needs. That is why a strong Invasive Species Council matters.

As Australia's only national environmental organisation dedicated solely to advocacy on invasive species, we have an important role as catalysts, bringing together the evidence, people, public support, funding and political will needed to turn good ideas into lasting change. This approach has already helped unlock major investment for nature, change laws, strengthen Australia's biosecurity system and shift issues once considered too difficult or politically impossible.

By 2030, we want Australia to shift from a short-term, reactive and narrow approach to invasive species towards a proactive, ambitious and well-funded safety net for nature.

That is how we give native plants and animals the chance to return to places where they have disappeared and allow damaged ecosystems to recover. It is an ambitious strategy because the challenge demands ambition.

We know there will be setbacks. We will take on difficult issues and entrenched interests. We will not win every fight. But we will be bold, evidence-led, collaborative and persistent. We will step up when others cannot or will not. And above all, we will keep asking ourselves not simply what we can achieve, but what we can help make possible for nature.

Jack Gough
CEO, Invasive Species Council



Critically endangered species like the orange-bellied parrot cannot afford another invasive threat – strong biosecurity is their first line of defence. Photo: David Cook.



Tackling the invasive species mega-threat

Because of invasive species, Australia is one of the world's extinction hotspots. We have suffered by far the greatest loss of mammals. We host many of the globe's largest feral animal populations and the second-highest number of established weed species. The enormous damage caused by invasive species since European colonisation is not just due to the follies of earlier colonists.

Australia still allows the import of thousands of high-risk species, particularly plants and ornamental fish. New hitchhiking invaders often slip through inadequate border controls. Responses to new environmental invaders are frequently too late, and the spread of most established invaders continues unimpeded.

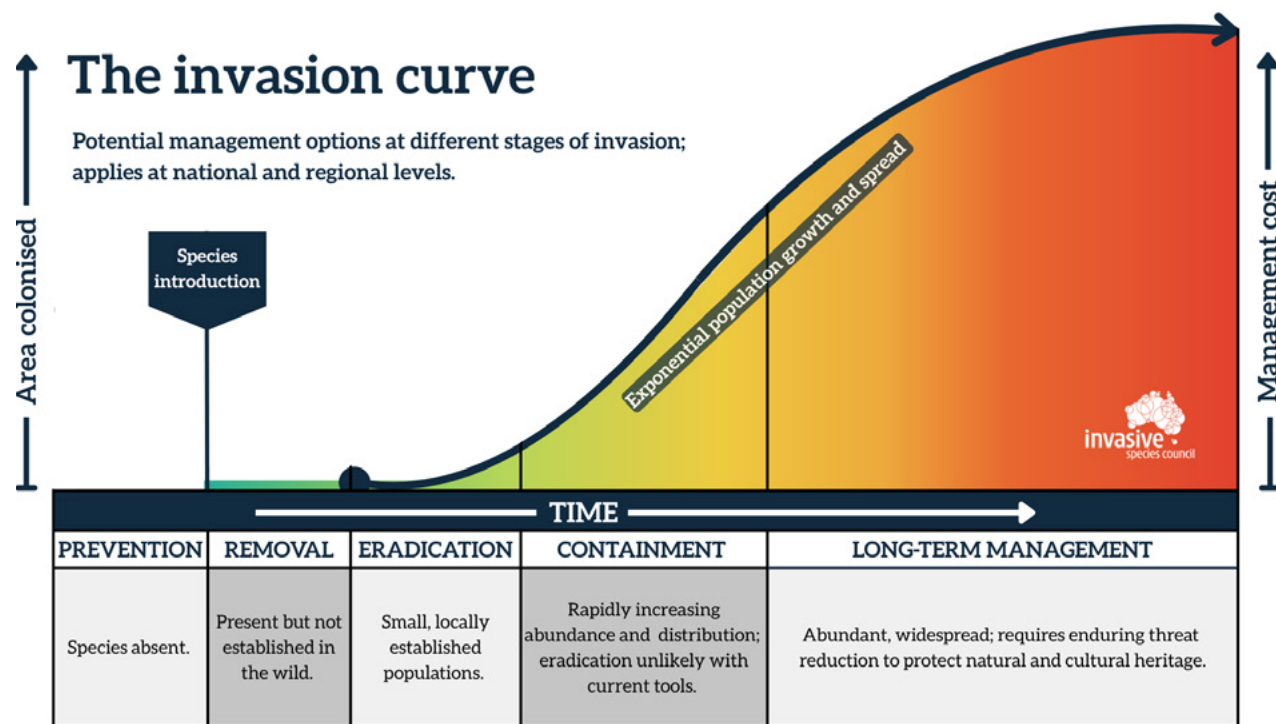
But Australia has also shown what is possible when we match the scale of the invasive threat with ambition, sustained investment and collective action. From controlling prickly pear and rabbits to eliminating invasive species from dozens of islands, we have achieved world-leading results for nature.

Such successes should not be the exception.

We need concerted action at every stage of the invasion curve. Prevention is the strongest defence – ensuring only low-risk imports, strengthening border defences, acting early to eradicate new invaders and removing high-risk species from cultivation and keeping.

For established invaders, we need enduring large-scale programs to contain their spread, eliminate satellite populations and mitigate threats.

We need investment in more effective control technologies, from biological controls to new genetic and detection tools, to transform what is possible and allow us to tackle threats currently considered too difficult.



The scale of the threat

- At least 60 Australian extinctions caused mainly by invasive species.
- 20 animal extinctions since 1960 caused mainly by invasive species.
- 34,000+ exotic plant species are present in Australia.
- 1 in 9 plant species growing in the wild in Australia is exotic.
- Australia has the world's largest feral populations of horses, sambar deer, water buffalo, camels, goats, banteng and foxes.

Our vision, mission and 2030 goal

Our vision

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

Our mission

Catalyse shifts in governments, communities and culture to improve action on invasive species, saving wildlife, stopping extinctions and protecting Australian landscapes and waters.

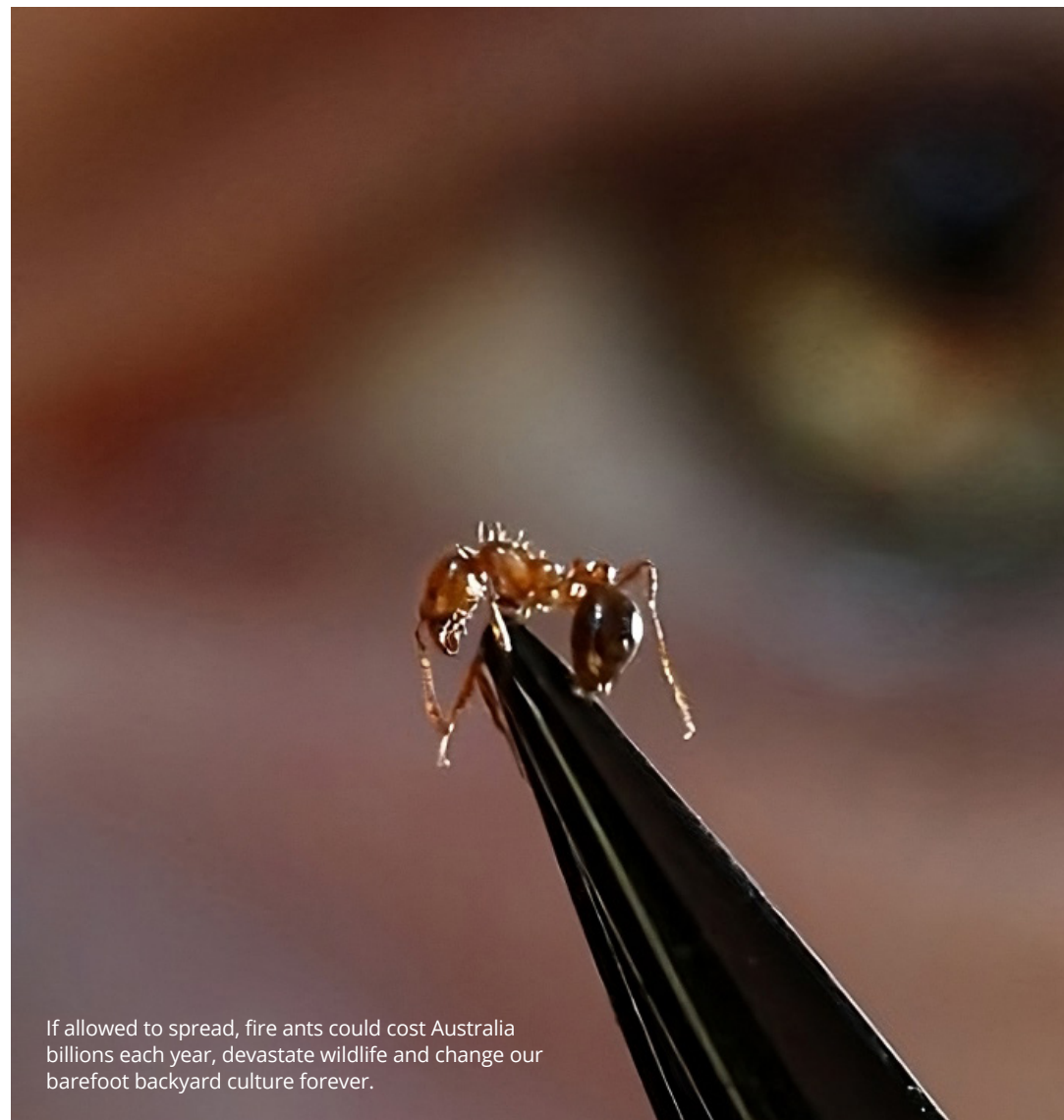
Our 2030 goal

By 2030, Australia is shifting from a short-term, reactive and narrow approach to invasive species towards a proactive, ambitious and well-funded safety net for nature.

As a powerful national advocate, the Invasive Species Council will help create the public, political and policy conditions needed to drive this systemic change.

We will measure progress through 3 critical pillars:

- **Prevention:** The establishment of new invasive species in Australia has substantially slowed, and no new very-high-risk species have permanently established.
- **Eradication:** Priority invasive species are being systematically eliminated from the Australian mainland and islands.
- **Containment and control:** High-priority invasive species are effectively managed, and priority biodiversity sites are actively protected.



If allowed to spread, fire ants could cost Australia billions each year, devastate wildlife and change our barefoot backyard culture forever.

Our why: nature needs the Invasive Species Council to thrive

Having caused the majority of extinctions in Australia since 1788, invasive species continue to threaten wildlife, transform and degrade ecosystems and prevent regeneration.

As Australia's only national environmental organisation dedicated solely to advocacy on invasive species, the Invasive Species Council fills a critical gap in the movement for nature.

We focus on creating and maintaining the cultural and political conditions for change, turning advocacy into practical and enduring outcomes for nature.

A strong and thriving Invasive Species Council is how we:

- **create political pressure** and develop credible solutions on complex and often neglected environmental problems
- **serve as a force multiplier** for nature by platforming, amplifying and supporting mission-aligned partners and local advocates
- **secure significant funding** for critical on-ground programs that benefit nature
- **cut across political and social divides** to build social licence and drive urgency
- **prevent new threats** before they take hold
- **intervene directly** to protect vulnerable species from extinction and ecosystems at risk
- **drive cultural and systemic changes** across all levels of government (local, state, federal) and relevant portfolios (environment, agriculture, treasury), as well as within communities and industry
- **empower and collaborate** with First Nations communities to protect Country.

We are catalysts for change, guided by a simple principle:
Make it bigger than us.



Feral cats and foxes are leading drivers of animal extinction in Australia, responsible for the loss of at least 25 species.
Photo: Kangaroo Island Landscape Board.

Next steps: a truly national organisation

To respond at the scale the nature crisis demands, we will become a **truly national organisation by 2030**, capable of creating coordinated political and community pressure in every jurisdiction.

We will build:

- **confident, well-connected advocates** in every state and territory, building profile and relationships
- a **leading policy capability**, developing practical, ambitious and credible solutions
- **powerful communications capacity** that can shift the national narrative, build social licence and inspire action
- **activated networks** of community partners and political champions who care
- the **organisational strength and financial resilience** needed to sustain our impact.



Buffel grass (pictured) is fuelling hotter fires and damaging Country.



Invasive Species Council team. Photo: Heidi Fin.

How we make decisions and run campaigns

Our campaign strategy and day-to-day decision-making are guided by a clear framework that turns our expertise into high-impact actions that maximise outcomes for nature.

We prioritise opportunities where:

- the threat or opportunity for nature is significant
- the Invasive Species Council can make a distinctive contribution
- there is a credible pathway to change
- advocacy can unlock action, investment or systemic reform
- our involvement can amplify others, build a coalition or fill a gap others cannot.

In pursuing those opportunities, we:

- work across the invasion curve, from prevention to management
- take a credible, solutions-based approach
- undertake both strategic impact and place-based advocacy campaigns
- maintain a high-profile, broad media presence
- are nimble and opportunistic
- identify and nurture strong partnerships and community champions
- step in when others won't step up.



The Invasive Species Council and a delegation of allies meeting at Parliament House to advocate for action on buffel grass.



Feral horses trample and pollute fragile alpine environments – protecting nature means building the public support governments need to tackle difficult and divisive threats.

How we win: catalysing the conditions for change

True impact requires more than short-term wins – it demands changing the environment in which decisions are made.

By 2030, we will have helped drive the following foundational shifts across policy, politics and culture to achieve our mission:

- **Greater ambition and strategic intent** across governments, shifting how invasive species threats are understood, prioritised and acted upon.
- A **stronger environmental biosecurity system** that provides a powerful safety net for nature.
- **Greater public and political awareness of invasive species**, building urgency, support and social licence for action.
- **Broader support for practical action for nature** across political and cultural divides, making invasive species management an issue that unites rather than divides.
- **More strategic use of philanthropy** to unlock government investment at a far greater scale, rather than relying on philanthropy to fund work governments should deliver.
- A **commitment to practical environmental action** and invasive species management across the political spectrum.



Lasting change depends on building support for nature across political divides and beyond any one government.

How we show up: culture and values

Our mission focuses us, passion fuels us and humility grounds us. Our values guide how we live our principle to 'make it bigger than us'.

Our organisational values



Advocates for nature: Nature is our constituency. We speak up for wildlife and ecosystems, particularly where others cannot or will not.



Collaborative with First Nations: We respect the enduring relationship of First Nations peoples to land and sea and commit to working in collaboration to remediate the harm done to Country, culture and people, and prevent further damage.



Committed to science: Our commitment to science and evidence-based advocacy is our bedrock. This enables us to speak and act with knowledge and authority.



Bold and persistent: We are prepared to take on difficult issues, challenge entrenched interests and keep pushing until change happens.

We know that culture drives success in advocacy, and our experienced, connected and knowledgeable staff are our principal organisational asset.

We are committed to building an internal culture that empowers, supports and sets clear expectations for our staff and volunteers:

- We are **relentless** in pursuing outcomes and having impact.
- We are **not scared to fail** and learn from the experience.
- We are **collaborative**, resourceful and take initiative.
- We are all **responsible** for a healthy team culture.
- We are **connected** to and speak up for nature.
- **Integrity** is not negotiable.



Making it bigger than us means bringing together people who might not otherwise be in the same room. We build relationships across traditional divides and create the trust and collaboration needed to deliver lasting change for nature.

Nature needs the Invasive Species Council to thrive

As Australia's only national environmental organisation dedicated solely to advocacy on invasive species, we have a critical role to play in tackling one of the greatest threats to our unique wildlife and wild places.

Join us in making this strategy – and the detailed plans that sit underneath it – a reality. Together, we can build the momentum for change at the scale Australia needs.

WEBSITE



DONATE



invasives.org.au



[@invasivespeciescouncil](https://www.facebook.com/invasivespeciescouncil)



[@invasive_species_council](https://www.instagram.com/invasive_species_council)



[@invasive-species-council](https://www.linkedin.com/company/invasive-species-council)



Publication date: September 2026

ABN: 27 101 522 829



Numbat. Photo: Phototrip.