



Indigenous Engagement Strategy 2014 – 2018 Channel Country Feral Pig Program



Introduction

Desert Channels Queensland (DCQ) is a community organisation working to improve the management of natural resources in its region - the Queensland section of the Lake Eyre Basin.

Since its formation in 2002 DCQ has developed strong and enduring relationships with indigenous groups and individuals across the region, in particular by supporting the development of the Georgina Diamantina Coopers Aboriginal Group (GDCAG) which represents the major language groups of the region.

The DCQ program of work as approved by the Federal Government in the environmental stream for the next five years will largely be focussed on reducing threats to the environment through weed and feral animal control works.

This indigenous engagement strategy outlines the principles which DCQ will adopt to promote indigenous engagement throughout the region with the aim of increasing indigenous grass roots and volunteer participation in natural resource management activities.

Desert Channels Queensland will continue to work with the Traditional Owners and the indigenous community of our region for successful outcomes in natural resource management within the new funding models offered by current governments.

This strategy links to DCQ's strategic plan, NRM plan and our current contract and work plan for the Channel Country Feral Pig program with the Australian government.

Channel Country Feral Pig Program 2013 - 2018

The Channel Country Feral Pig program has been developed to build on previous feral pig control programs undertaken by DCQ and landholders. The key aim of this program is to reduce the migration of feral pigs into high value wetlands such as the Ramsar listed Coongie Lakes in South Australia. Feral pigs are a major concern for the Coongie Lakes Ramsar site, causing degradation to the water quality, competition with native animals for food, fouling of watercourses and swamps and destruction of vegetation which can lead to weed spread. In addition, feral pigs predate on species and disrupt the integrity of the system. A major population source continues to be the migration of animals from Queensland down the river systems and this project aims to stop this process.

To achieve the key aim this program will implement a number of measures to stop the spread and migration of feral pigs down the Queensland river systems, particularly the Georgina, Diamantina and the Cooper Creek systems whilst also providing education and tools to landholders and community.

This program is funded by the Australian Government. The on ground activities being rolled out under the current funding rounds are priorities from previous plans and are fixed, subject to contracts with the Federal Government. On ground investment focus is aimed at reducing the key threatening processes of weed and pest animals, with the dual aim of building of the major ecological transport zone, the riparian habitat. Channel Country Feral Pigs is one of three projects within the environment stream being implemented to tackle serious issues in the region. The other two program's DCQ is rolling out under the environment stream are a High-value area targeted investment program and a woody WoNS control program. All three projects are required to have strong links.

The Current Program

Sub-program 1 - Monitoring and control works

This project will integrate monitoring and control programs over a five year period and in that time it is expected that 65,700 hectares of channel country wetland in Queensland will be surveyed with control works undertaken across approximately 22,300 hectares.

Monitoring will occur through aerial and ground surveys and via monitoring cameras. The information gathered through the monitoring will be used to understand the population dynamics of feral pigs in the region and will inform how and when control works need to occur. This will ensure that the most cost effective control methods are being applied.

Through this process permanent ground based control sites will be established. The project will also build a community feral pig plan to ensure ongoing control but it will also begin the transition from externally funded control to land manager based control as the feral pig population numbers are reduced and permanent baiting sites are established at congregation waterholes.

Sub-program 2 - Community skills, knowledge and engagement

DCQ and landholders will work together to understand and map key hot spots for feral pig activity. Relevant experts will be engaged to deliver workshops to the community covering both theory and practical in field exercises relating to the management and control of feral pigs. Communication and awareness raising activities will occur through a number of forums including field days, media releases and electronic publications. These

awareness raising activities will improve land managers knowledge and skills of feral pig management control practices. The project will highlight to the local community the importance of eradicating feral pig populations, identify the best methodologies to protect the Coongie Lake area and highlight the additional benefits such as habitat improvement for threatened bird species including the Australian Painted Snipe (*Rostrallata australis*) (Vulnerable under the EPBC Act 1999) the Grey Grasswren (*Amytornis barbatus*) that is vulnerable under the EPBC, by 2018.

Sub-program 3 - Enhancing Indigenous peoples capacity for natural resource management

A number of feral pig control educative and on ground activities will occur in which the Indigenous community will be encouraged to attend and contribute to. These will include field days, workshops, newsletters, electronic media publications and strategy development. Workshops and field days will bring relevant experts in habitat identification, identification of EPBC species and knowledge of and access to recovery plans, plus experts in planning, management and on ground activities together.

Strategies for engagement

Through the Channel Country Feral Pig program and following consultation with Georgina Diamantina Coopers Aboriginal Group (GDCAG), the following three strategies will be implemented:

- Support for landcare groups which, through their activities, increase indigenous participation in high value NRM projects
- Tailored communication products outlining upcoming community activities
- Skills development for participants engaged in high value NRM projects

DCQ, through the strategy, has committed to ongoing communication with the indigenous community and has developed goals aimed at strengthening indigenous engagement and participation in high value NRM activities at the voluntary and grass roots level.

Monitoring of engagement activities

The workshops and training days will be monitored through event survey and feedback forms to determine the effectiveness of the events.

Distribution of newsletters and other information will be monitored through the DCQ mailing list and general post to indigenous community members. Feedback on communication products will be encouraged.

Future engagement opportunities

There may be opportunity to undertake further indigenous project works and activities if additional funding streams and resources can be sourced. Desert Channels Queensland will continue to work with the Traditional Owners and the indigenous community in the region to pursue these opportunities.