### 2023-2033

## South Australian Wild Dog Management Strategy



Government of South Australia





### Message from the Minister

Dingoes have important ecological and cultural roles in South Australia; wild dogs, including dingoes and their hybrids, can also have severe impacts on livestock producers.

The eradication of wild dogs inside the Dog Fence is a priority for the State Government because they threaten the sheep industry, which employs 15,000 South Australians and has a value chain worth \$1.3 billion annually.

The State Government continues to deliver ground and aerial baiting programs as well as a professional trapper program. These programs have successfully reduced the number of wild dogs to a point where their eradication from sheep country inside the Dog Fence is now feasible. In July 2023, over half of the Dog Fence Rebuild Project was complete and, because of the low numbers and the newly fortified fence, producers had restocked over 800,000 hectares with sheep.

Landholders who regularly bait for wild dogs not only have indicated they have no foxes, but they are beginning to see an increase in native animals such as echidnas, lizards and birds.

The SA Wild Dog Management Strategy 2023-2033 prioritises work to achieve a once-in-a-generation opportunity to eradicate wild dogs from inside the Dog Fence. Eradication will only be achieved if everyone works together through a comprehensive and coordinated program, with clear goals and objectives, which are outlined in this Strategy.

Outside of the Dog Fence and its buffer zone, in an area covering around half of South Australia, dingoes will continue to be valued for their important roles. In that vast area, dingoes are only controlled when they threaten the cattle industry or human safety.

Thank you to all the stakeholders who have contributed to bringing this important Strategy together.

#### **Hon Clare Scriven MLC**

Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development Minister for Forest Industries

# Vision

To sustain and grow South Australian livestock industries by protecting them from the impacts of wild dogs, while maintaining dingo populations outside the Dog Fence.

### Goals

#### Goal 1

Eradicate wild dogs inside the Dog Fence.

#### Goal 2

Prevent incursions of wild dogs through the Dog Fence.

#### Goal 3

Protect the cattle industry and the public while maintaining the important cultural and ecological benefits of dingoes outside the Dog Fence.



### **Executive** Summary

The SA Wild Dog Management Strategy 2023-2033 applies to wild dogs, dingoes, and hybrids, which severely impact livestock industries inside the Dog Fence. Outside the Dog Fence, dingoes have important ecological roles and cultural significance.

Management of wild dogs underpins the sustainability of South Australia's extensive livestock industries, particularly the sheep industry inside the Dog Fence. The pastoral cattle industry, inside and outside the Dog Fence, can also be seriously impacted by wild dogs.

This strategy acknowledges that dingoes have significant cultural value to First Nations people and in some regions indigenous people protect the dingo as a part of their culture. It is also acknowledged that outside the Dog Fence, dingoes may help to reduce kangaroo and rabbit populations.

Despite stakeholder efforts to maintain the Dog Fence, together with baiting, shooting, and trapping inside the fence, wild dog numbers increased in South Australian sheep country over the past decade, and their distribution expanded further south. By 2018, their expansion was posing a serious threat to the sheep industry in South Australia.

In response to this threat, the Commonwealth and State governments and industry significantly increased investments into wild dog control, including \$26.6 million to rebuild 1,600 kilometres of the Dog Fence, an intensive program of aerial baiting, and a professional trapping program.

This strategy prioritises work to eradicate wild dogs from inside the Dog Fence, where they are declared for destruction under the Landscape South Australia Act 2019.



### Introduction

In 2018-19, it was estimated that wild dogs injured and killed around 20,000 sheep, costing the industry \$4 million. At that time, more than two thirds of the South Australian Dog Fence was over 100 years old – it was an ineffective barrier to wild dogs.

In response to the severe and ongoing socio-economic impacts from wild dog attacks, investment into wild dog control has significantly increased from the Commonwealth Government and the Government of South Australia; industry groups have been contributing to wild dog control programs since 2009.

Commonwealth Government (\$10 million), State Government (\$11.6 million), and industry (\$5 million) investment will rebuild 1,600 kilometres of Dog Fence by June 2025 – 800 kilometres was rebuilt by June 2023. The rebuild of the Dog Fence will assist with limiting incursions of wild dogs into South Australian sheep country.

Reducing impacts of wild dogs already inside the Dog Fence is a priority of state and Commonwealth governments, landscape boards, and the livestock industry. Since 2018, this focus includes the wild dog trapping program, which has removed more than 780 wild dogs. Intensive programs of ground and aerial baiting have delivered over one million baits. The control programs have significantly reduced wild dog numbers in South Australian sheep country. These gains have restored landholder ambitions, with several properties restocking sheep in areas near the Dog Fence. In 2023, at least seven properties covering almost 800,000 hectares had started restocking; another two cattle properties covering 500,000 hectares have indicated they are working towards restocking with sheep. Confidence is returning to the SA sheep zone inside the Dog Fence, but the current goodwill, optimism, and economic gains will be undermined quickly if the wild dog population is allowed to recover.

The current momentum in wild dog management provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to completely eradicate wild dogs from South Australian sheep country inside the Dog Fence. The new eradication program will commence at a time when wild dog numbers have been reduced, but their severe socio-economic impacts remain fresh in the minds of pastoralists and the communities they support. Without action, the wild dog numbers will rebound, and the severe impacts will return.



This Strategy provides a practical framework for wild dog management in South Australia over the next 10 years to 2033. The focus of wild dog control will be the protection of the livestock industry inside the Dog Fence. The Strategy also outlines the work required to protect the cattle industry, as well as maintain the important cultural and ecological benefits of dingoes outside the Dog Fence.

The management of wild dogs is critical because they:

- · reduce livestock and native animal populations
- spread diseases that affect livestock, pets, native animals, and humans
- threaten humans, particularly in and around mine sites and tourist camping areas
- cause severe emotional stress in livestock producers
- are important predators in some ecological systems outside the Dog Fence
- hold significant cultural value for First Nations people

This strategy will be reviewed after five and ten years to ensure its effectiveness.

Note for the purpose of this document a 'wild dog' is defined as any wild-living dog located inside the Dog Fence where they are declared for destruction, and its 35-km buffer where they are declared for control. 'Dingoes' are wild living dogs located outside the Dog Fence and beyond its 35-km buffer, where they are valued for their ecological and cultural roles.



The SA Wild Dog Advisory Group advises the Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development on all aspects of wild dog management. The group has representation from livestock producers, conservation organisations and First Nations groups, regional landscape boards, the Dog Fence Board, and government departments.

Regional landscape boards and the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water are responsible for ensuring landholders meet their legislative obligations to control wild dogs under the Landscape South Australia Act 2019.

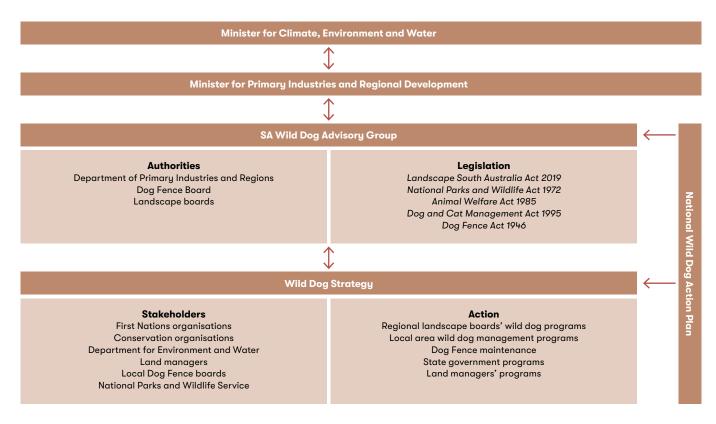
The Biosecurity division within the Department of Primary Industries and Regions provides technical and policy advice, and in close collaboration with the Department for Environment and Water and regional landscape boards, coordinates the implementation of pest plant and animal control programs in accordance with the Landscape South Australia Act 2019.

The Dog Fence Board is responsible for maintaining the Dog Fence under the Dog Fence Act 1946. The Declared Animal Policy on wild dogs falls under the Landscape South Australia Act 2019 and summarises the legislative requirements for wild dog management.



Image courtesy of Stefanie Roeske.

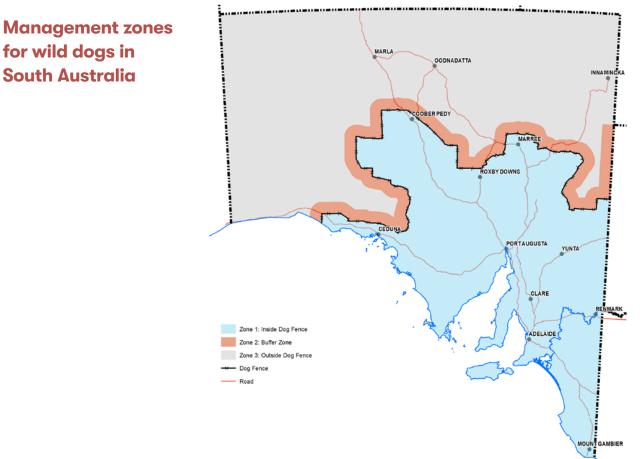
#### Governance of wild dog management



## **Management zones**

South Australia has three zones for the management of wild dogs (including dingoes and dingo hybrids), where different goals are required to protect the livestock industry. The management zones are:

- inside the Dog Fence
- the Dog Fence and the 35 kilometre buffer zone immediately outside of it
- outside the Dog Fence and beyond the buffer.



#### Management and legislation that applies to each zone

	Goal	Management measures	Legislation
Inside the Dog Fence	Eradicate wild dogs	All land managers to destroy all wild dogs on their properties	Landscape South Australia Act 2019
The Dog Fence and the 35-kilometre buffer	Prevent incursions of wild dogs through the Dog Fence	Within 35 kilometres of the Dog Fence, land managers must bait for wild dogs at active man-made water points Dog Fence owners must shoot, trap or lay baits in the vicinity of the Fence	Landscape South Australia Act 2019 Dog Fence Act 1946
Outside the Dog Fence and beyond the buffer	Protect the cattle industry and the public while maintaining the cultural value and ecological benefits of dingoes	Land managers permitted to control wild dogs/dingoes when they are impacting livestock or human safety	National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972



## **Eradicate wild dogs inside the Dog Fence**

Image courtesy of Stefanie Roeske.

The rebuilding of 1,600 kilometres of the ageing Dog Fence provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to eradicate wild dogs inside the Dog Fence. Most critical for the success of the eradication program is the involvement of all land managers inside the Dog Fence. Baiting is the most effective landscapescale method to control wild dogs and trapping is important for targeting wild dogs that do not take baits.

#### Actions and activities required to eradicate wild dogs inside the Dog Fence

Action		Activity	
1.1	Minimum standards for ground baiting (as per baiting zones in Landscape South Australia Regulations 2020)	<ul> <li>Bait twice each year in autumn and spring in the unincorporated pastoral district</li> <li>Quarterly baiting in the Ngarkat area, which borders Victoria's Big Desert Wilderness Area that has a resident population of legally protected dingoes</li> <li>Provide additional bait injection services as required</li> <li>Investigate whether land managers can be licenced to manufacture baits</li> <li>Support landscape boards and authorised officers with the implementation of their legislative responsibilities</li> </ul>	
1.2	Aerial baiting in inaccessible areas	<ul> <li>Conduct aerial baiting programs during summer, when juvenile wild dogs are dispersing, and autumn or winter during breeding season</li> </ul>	
1.3	Trap wild dogs that do not take baits	<ul> <li>Use professional trappers</li> <li>Train land managers</li> </ul>	
1.4	Coordinate wild dog control	<ul> <li>Ensure destruction measures inside the Dog Fence are coordinated</li> <li>Monitor and report on the effectiveness of wild dog management to funding bodies and other stakeholders</li> <li>Support relevant landscape boards to develop wild dog management plans</li> <li>Support staff from landscape boards to work with land managers in the development of wild dog control groups</li> <li>Improve organic producers' understanding of baiting options that do not impact organic accreditation</li> <li>Support de-sexing of domestic dogs in First Nations communities by veterinarians to minimise straying onto agricultural properties</li> <li>Train land managers in best practice baiting, trapping, shooting and use of Wild Dog Scan</li> </ul>	
1.5	Prevent the keeping of dingoes and their hybrids as pets	<ul> <li>Ensure that pet dingoes and their hybrids are removed and relocated to permitted wildlife sanctuaries or re-homed outside the Dog Fence</li> </ul>	
1.6	Bounty on wild dogs	<ul> <li>Provide a bounty to support landholders that humanely destroy wild dogs inside the Dog Fence</li> </ul>	



"There's lots of spots on our place that we can't get baits to from the ground because the terrain is inaccessible; thick timber and lots of creeks."

#### A helping hand from aerial baiting

Until 2018, the aerial baiting of wild dogs in rough and inaccessible terrain and in wild dog safe havens was solely funded by industry and delivered by the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board once a year.

These baits are dropped in areas that land managers cannot readily access. The programs target juvenile wild dogs when they are dispersing in summer, and adult dogs during the March to May breeding season, when they cover vast distances in search of partners.

In collaborations since 2018, PIRSA, the landscape boards of SA Arid Lands and Eyre Peninsula, and National Parks and Wildlife Service have delivered 18 aerial programs and 500,000 baits to inaccessible country inside the SA Dog Fence.

Dennis Hilder, Willippa/Warcowie



Image courtesy of Stefanie Roeske.

"Keep up the 1080 injection services and the Biteback program, you're all doing an excellent job with very useful resources."

Darren Solly, Yednalue

#### Damage caused by wild dogs

Landholders experience severe financial impacts from wild dog attacks. Wild dogs will chase multiple sheep and maim and kill many more sheep than they need to eat. Producers have reported losing 50 sheep in a single night.

Northern Flinders Ranges producer Nathan Redpath, Mt Freeling, knows all too well the damage done by wild dogs.

He recalls putting 2,000 pregnant ewes into a paddock, and eight months later having only 1,500 ewes left and no lambs. Most mauled animals need to be euthanised, a grim task for landholders.

The emotional toll is significant - land managers experience stress, anxiety and sleeplessness when wild dogs are present. Wild dogs remain a significant issue across huge areas of the state.

Located west of Ceduna, sheep producer Ryan Trewartha has had dozens of sheep attacked, and said the damage was horrific.

He said one breeding ewe had its face and neck mauled, tail bitten out, and both hamstrings bitten. The ewe was unable to walk and needed to be euthanised.

### Biteback program provides frontline defence

Inside the South Australian Dog Fence, pastoral landholders in the SA Arid Lands region experience the most severe pressures and impacts from wild dogs. Since 2009 the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board has supported 22 groups of landholders across 189 properties through its Biteback program.

The program includes biannual 1080 bait injection services (making about 100,000 baits per year), aerial baiting programs for remote and inaccessible areas, and information delivery such as workshops on trapping, new technologies and monitoring techniques.

These coordinated wild dog control activities provide a buffer to other areas, limiting southern movements of wild dogs into the agricultural areas of Eyre Peninsula, the Murraylands and Riverland, and Northern and Yorke regions. Landscape boards in these areas also coordinate wild dog control programs, with services that cater to landholder requirements, including skill-development workshops and access to baits and trappers.

#### Controlling wild dogs in the Ngarkat region

Wild dog control programs in the Ngarkat region provide a frontline defence against movements of wild dogs into the broader regions of the Limestone Coast and Murraylands and Riverland.

Quarterly baiting programs have been occurring in the Ngarkat region since 1996. Jointly delivered by the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board and the National Parks and Wildlife Service of SA, over 4,000 baits are delivered annually to the Ngarkat Conservation Park and surrounding properties. Since 2018, professional trappers have also spent over 450 hours in the region tracking and controlling wild dogs and training and supporting landholders.

The park sits on the border adjacent to Victoria's Big Desert Wilderness Area, which has a resident population of legally protected dingoes. Research and monitoring activities of those dingoes is ongoing and may provide insights into dingo-wild dog management in SA.

### Trapping and training, a lethal combination



Trappers are skilled professionals who ply their trade to remove elusive wild dogs that don't take baits. Prior to the introduction of the SA Trapper Program in 2018, more than 4,000 wild dogs roamed freely inside the Dog Fence. Since then, these trappers have removed over 780 wild dogs.

The trappers also provide training to land managers, building capacity for the management of wild dogs. As of June 2023, more than 140 days of training have been provided with most trapping work undertaken in pastoral areas, while also extending into the Upper South East and Far West Coast.

"They have more time, knowledge and skills to get those dogs that won't take baits ... they've destroyed wild dogs we've been chasing for years. We've learnt so much from them in wild dog behaviour and how to trap."

#### Geoff Mengersen, Depot Springs

#### Experts tackle elusive wild dogs

About six months after the South Australian trapper program started, we were sent to three neighbouring properties that were hardly doing any wild dog control at all and hadn't been for years. There were so many dogs and established packs breeding through the sandhill and scrub country, all feeding on a plentiful supply of rabbits and kangaroos. There just wasn't enough room or food for them all.

So, when the younger pups were 'kicked out of home', they were forced onto the neighbouring sheep and cattle properties. This created an untold amount of not only financial loss, but mental stress too. These livestock producers told us they'd tried everything. They were baiting their own places regularly, trapping and shooting too, but couldn't stop the influx of dogs and the livestock damage that came with it.

After 175 trapping days in total, between three of us we removed more than 210 wild dogs from the three properties. The neighbours were so thankful; they even said they wouldn't be there now if the government's trapper program hadn't come along to help.

#### lan (Gonzo) McKenna, Wild dog trapper



## **Prevent incursions** of wild dogs through the Dog Fence

To reduce the risk of wild dog incursions, a baited buffer zone (extending 35 kilometres outside the fence) will reduce wild dog densities through baiting at 'active man-made water points'. These water points include constructed dams, turkey's nests, and bores and associated troughs that are in working order and utilised by livestock or wildlife. The buffer zone extends the entire length of the Dog Fence from the Head of the Great Australian Bight to the New South Wales border, including the section bordering the New South Wales Dog Fence; however, man-made water points are only located in the SA Arid Lands region and baiting is only required at the water points.

### Actions and activities required to prevent incursions of wild dogs through the Dog Fence

Action		Activity	
2.1	Maintain the Dog Fence in a dog-proof condition	<ul> <li>Rebuild 1,600 kilometres of the Dog Fence</li> <li>Inspect and maintain the Dog Fence every 14 days</li> <li>Support the NSW Government to extend its Dog Fence along the SA-NSW border</li> <li>Implement a long term strategy to ensure the Dog Fence is replaced before it reaches the end of its serviceable life</li> </ul>	
2.2	Bait wild dogs within the 35-km buffer zone	<ul> <li>Landowners to bait twice each year in autumn and spring around all active man-made water points</li> <li>Support landscape boards and authorised officers with the implementation of their legislative responsibilities</li> <li>Owners of the Dog Fence to bait, trap and shoot wild dogs in the vicinity of the fence</li> </ul>	
2.3	Control wild dogs when the Dog Fence is damaged	<ul> <li>Aerial bait and trap wild dogs in the vicinity of the damage</li> </ul>	
2.4	Coordinate wild dog control	<ul> <li>Ensure destruction measures are coordinated</li> <li>Monitor and report on the effectiveness of wild dog management to funding bodies and other stakeholders</li> <li>Support relevant landscape boards to develop wild dog management plans</li> <li>Support staff from landscape boards to work with land managers in the development of wild dog control groups</li> <li>Improve organic producers' understanding of baiting options that do not impact organic accreditation</li> <li>Train land managers in best practice baiting, trapping, shooting and use of Wild Dog Scan</li> </ul>	



#### **Tailored training for organic producers**

The National Landcare Program: Smart Farms – an Australian Government initiative – funded workshops to show organicallycertified land managers how to control wild dogs through baiting without compromising their organic status.

Organic guidelines for baiting wild dogs were developed by the National Wild Dog Action Plan and in consultation with the organic industry. The guidelines aim to help producers improve pastoral productivity by reducing attacks on livestock while maintaining access to premium organic markets.

Three workshops were held in South Australia's pastoral country for 38 participants from 18 properties, which cover over 46,000 square kilometres (or 4 million hectares) of the rangelands.

Each workshop had demonstration sites focusing on fencing standards and options, tethering baits, using canid pest ejectors, drying racks that restrict movement of baits, bait monitoring, signage requirements and safe bait transport and storage.

Participants also worked on wild dog management plans for their own properties.

### Rebuilding the Dog Fence and business confidence

## The Dog Fence in SA, was established in 1947 to protect grazing sheep from the perils of wild dogs.

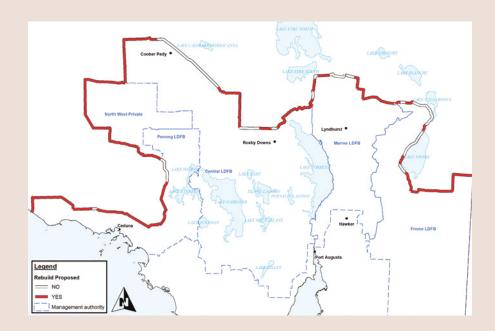
Over time, camels, horses, kangaroos, emus, wombats, wind, fires, and floods degraded two-thirds of the 2,150-kilometre fence, reducing its effectiveness as a barrier and jeopardising the viability of South Australia's \$1.3 billion sheep industry.

The long-awaited rebuild of 1,600 kilometres of the Dog Fence commenced in 2019 and will continue until June 2025. The \$26.6 million project is jointly funded by the State Government (\$11.6 million), Commonwealth Government (\$10 million), and the livestock industry (\$5 million).

Underpinned by a new revenue stream to fund the ongoing replacement of the fence before it becomes unserviceable, this vital asset will again contribute to the long-term sustainability of the sheep industry in South Australia and provide economic benefits of up to \$112 million over the next 20 years. These benefits are being realised, with many properties adjoining the fence already stocking sheep in paddocks immediately inside the Dog Fence.

"The rebuild of the Dog Fence gives positivity to people living in the area and gives faith in being able to build a good business and lifestyle."

**Christobel Treloar, Strathearn** 



### Contractors impressed by equipment

Cutting-edge equipment owned by Australian Wool Innovation Ltd and used to build wild dog exclusion fencing in central Queensland is being used by contractors working on the Dog Fence rebuild in South Australia.

The loan of the Exclusion Fencing Construction Unit, comprising an 8T loader fitted with a hydraulic wire strainer, is a game-changer.

It rolls out prefabricated mesh under tension, making fence installation quicker and cheaper. The machinery is made available to fencing contractors involved in the rebuild project. At least two contractors have liked the machine so much they have bought their own.



#### **Donated drill rod drives progress**

SA resource giants are contributing to the 1,600-kilometre rebuild of the Dog Fence with the donation of drill rod.

Santos and OZ Minerals have donated more than 4,000 lengths of drill rod, which is being cut and used for fence posts. Drill rod is in high demand and often difficult to source.

So far, Santos has committed 3,000 lengths of drill rod to the project and OZ Minerals has donated 1,000 lengths, with more to come.

The donation of drill rod is another example of industry working with government on a project of great benefit to South Australia.



#### **Unprecedented damage to the Dog Fence**

In January 2022 around 1,000 kilometres of the SA Dog Fence, from Coober Pedy to the Flinders Ranges, experienced unprecedented rainfall and damage. Some properties reported single falls of 150 millimetres. The high-intensity rainfall and fastmoving floodwaters destroyed 25 kilometres of Dog Fence.



Under the Dog Fence Act 1946, the 2,150-kilometre fence must be maintained in a dog-proof condition. However, access following the rainfall was limited and saturated soils delayed repair works.

In response to the damage, the Dog Fence Board and PIRSA launched an aerial baiting program within a week of the rainfall, which delivered 35,000 baits to the affected areas; they also increased ground baiting efforts along the fence line.

Repair works were then undertaken by a combination of contract fencers, Local Dog Fence Board members, local landholders, and PIRSA staff – repairs were completed in March 2022.

As part of the multi-pronged approach, PIRSA also deployed professional trappers to the region; they quickly destroyed 12 wild dogs that had likely breached the damaged fence.



## Protect the cattle industry and the public while maintaining the benefits of wild dogs/dingoes outside the Dog Fence

Image courtesy of Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board

Outside the Dog Fence and the buffer zone, dingoes are an unprotected native animal valued for their cultural significance and ecological benefits as apex predators. Conversely, some dingoes outside the Dog Fence threaten human safety and the cattle industry and must be controlled.

### Actions and activities to protect the cattle industry, the public, and the cultural value and ecological benefits of dingoes outside the Dog Fence

on	Activity	
Protect the cattle industry	<ul> <li>Minimising the consequences of dingo predation to cattle and calves should be balanced with the desire to maintain predatory pressure on introduced and native herbivores to assist with maintaining and increasing herbage and grass cover for cattle and native species</li> <li>Landscape boards provide access to baits</li> <li>Train land managers in best practice baiting, shooting and use of Wild Dog Scan</li> <li>Improve organic producers' understanding of baiting options that do not impact organic accreditation</li> <li>Support de-sexing of domestic dogs in First Nations communities by veterinarians to minimise straying onto agricultural properties</li> </ul>	
Protect the public	<ul> <li>Stop people feeding dingoes</li> <li>Exclude dingoes from dumps</li> <li>Remove dingoes that threaten the safety of people</li> </ul>	
Maintain the dingoes in First Nation people's culture	<ul> <li>Consult with landowners before baiting in the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board region or National Parks</li> <li>Cultural values and ecological benefits of dingoes are incorporated in relevant management plans</li> </ul>	
Maintain the ecological role of dingoes	<ul> <li>Management plans of landscape boards and National Parks limit the amount of bait available to land managers so that dingoes are maintained as valuable apex predators outside the Dog Fence</li> </ul>	
	industry Protect the public Maintain the dingoes in First Nation people's culture Maintain the ecological role	



### **Management matters**



South Australian livestock industry

\$4.6 billion

Wild dog control since 2018

760+ wild dogs claimed

through the wild dog bounty

780+

wild dogs controlled by professional trappers

### 500,000+

baits delivered to inaccessible areas by aerial programs SA sheep industry



sheep

\$1.3 billion

iiii Diii

employed in industry

S

\$3 billion

industry's 2030 value target

20,000 sheep killed by wild dogs in 2018 \$4 million

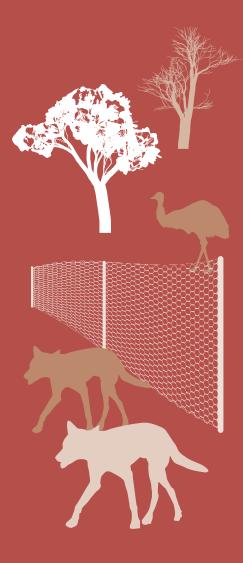
annual cost of lost livestock

60%

Drop in lambing percentages when wild dogs are present, according to pastoralists

**Anxiety, stress, sleeplessness** emotional impacts of wild dog attacks

#### **Dog Fence Rebuild**



**60,000** wooden posts

2,150 kilometres length of Dog Fence in South Australia

1,600 kilometres

100 years old age of fence to be rebuilt

# **\$26.6 million**

funding from state government, Australian Government and industry

**110,000+** steel droppers

**189+** pastoral leases protected

### **\$56.4 - \$112.9 million** estimated net benefit over 20 years





Government of South Australia