

# Greater Port Hedland Vertebrate Pest Management Program

Port Hedland Industries Council (PHIC) plays a key role in facilitating industry partnerships and provides a platform for relevant parties to engage meaningfully through information and resource sharing.



Flatback Turtle

The Greater Port Hedland Vertebrate Pest Management Program (VPMP) is an example of PHIC collaboration, enabling a more holistic approach to broad scale feral animal control in Port Hedland.

PHIC members have been involved in efforts to manage vertebrate pests in Port Hedland since 2009 when individual members started coordinating their programs to support work undertaken by Care for Hedland. This evolved into the Vertebrate Pest Management Program (VPMP) in 2017, which aims to control foxes and feral cats across multiple land tenures in Port Hedland. Stakeholders including Care for Hedland, Pilbara Ports, Roy Hill, Fortescue, BHP, Dampier Salt and Town of Port Hedland have been involved in various coordinated programs since its implementation. PHIC commenced coordination of the VPMP in 2022, with the aim of regular industry involvement in the program.

## GREATER PORT HEDLAND VERTEBRATE PEST MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The Greater Port Hedland Vertebrate Pest Management Program (VPMP) is a coordinated feral animal program targeted at managing environmental impacts caused by the Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) and feral cats (*Felis catus*).

While coordination of individual feral animal control programs within the Port Hedland region has been conducted as early as 2009 (Animal Pest Management Services, 2009), it was recognised



NORTHERN QUOLL

that outcomes could be improved by conducting the program as a whole of Port Hedland collaborative approach. Land managers recognised that, to effectively control the need to address the feral animals and the effectiveness of feral animal control on a broader scale, the VPMP program was needed. This included the timing of control efforts across multiple tenures which is critical to avoiding refuges from which feral animal populations could recover.

Prior to the implementation of a coordinated VPMP, in the Town of Port Hedland high levels of predation by foxes of turtle nests was occurring. Reports from Care For Hedland's turtle monitoring program indicate that up to 88% of nests are destroyed at some beaches within a single nesting season. The VPMP has seen a total drop in nest disturbance at Pretty Pool and turtles



BRUSH-TAILED MULGARA



have been observed successfully nesting in areas where they had been previously unknown to nest (Downes Island). The VPMP also reduces pressure on populations of other native fauna such as Quolls, birds and lizards and these animals have now been observed where previously there were heavy fox populations.

### How is Port Hedland Protected?

The VPMP includes bi-annual treatment, with on ground treatment focusing on the red fox and feral cats.

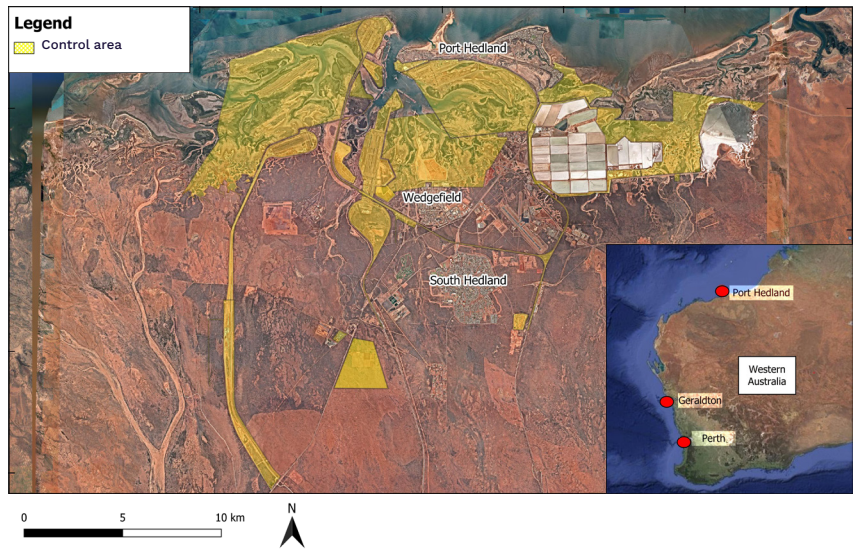
The VPMP covers an area of approximately 10,371ha across multiple land tenements within the Port Hedland district. The program works to increase awareness of the damage that can be caused to native fauna and ecosystems by foxes and feral cats and works to reduce the impact on susceptible native fauna species and the environment. By covering a broad area around Port Hedland's turtle nesting beaches, the program reduces the opportunity for reestablishment of fox populations close to these beaches. This is achieved by:

- Implementing effective controls according to leading practice guidelines.
- Promoting collaboration and information and resource sharing to ensure a holistic, broadscale approach across multiple land tenures.

### Declared Pests

Under the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007*, management of declared pests, to limit their distribution and alleviate harmful impacts, is a requirement of landowners and managers. Within Western Australia, foxes are listed as a declared pest and assigned management control.

Similar to the red fox, predation of native species by feral cats is identified as a threatening process under the EPBC Act and a Threat Abatement Plan provides a framework to guide a national response to the effects of feral cats on native biodiversity.



THE VPMP COVERS AN AREA OF APPROXIMATELY 10,371.22HA ACROSS MULTIPLE LAND TENEMENTS WITHIN THE PORT HEDLAND DISTRICT IN THE PILBARA REGION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

The APA Group feral cat and fox monitoring program, at the Port Hedland Power Station in Boodarie, is now also collaborating with PHIC's program, increasing the total area under pest control and providing a more holistic approach throughout the greater Port Hedland area.

### Red Fox (*vulpes vulpes*)

Red foxes were introduced to Australia in the 1860s and are currently widely distributed throughout Australia in a range of habitats, including the urban environment.

Poison baiting, using 1080, is the most effective broadscale control strategy to manage fox and wild dog populations, however it is only used in areas where there is no public access or risk to pets. Soft foothold trapping is the other strategy.

Native fauna that may be at risk from fox predation include:

- Brush-tailed Mulgara (Priority 4)
- Crest-tailed Mulgara (Priority 4)
- Northern Quoll (Endangered)
- Bilby (Vulnerable).

### Feral Cats (*felis catus*)

Cats were introduced to Australia with the First Fleet, with numerous subsequent introductions around the mainland and offshore islands. Feral cats now occupy almost all habitat types over 92% of Australia.

Similar to fox abatement, the most effective control techniques used for feral cats include trapping and baiting euthanasia.



FERAL ANIMAL TRAP

### PHIC Members



Port Hedland Industries Council  
**Kirsty Danby**, CEO | E [ceo@phic-hedland.com.au](mailto:ceo@phic-hedland.com.au)

[phic-hedland.com.au](http://phic-hedland.com.au)