

FERAL CATS STRATEGY

Statement by Minister for Environment

MR R.R. WHITBY (Baldivis — Minister for Environment) [9.17 am]: I today update the house on the Cook government's commitment to protecting our native wildlife from the devastating impact of feral cats. In June, I released Western Australia's first feral cat strategy: *Western Australian feral cat strategy 2023–2028*. This is a five-year action plan that aims to bolster our state's fight against the scourge of feral cats. The strategy is the first of its kind to be implemented by a state or territory government. Feral cats are the most destructive single species in Australia costing the economy \$300 million a year in damage and population control measures such as baiting and trapping. Every 24 hours, feral cats across the nation kill an estimated three million mammals, 1.7 million reptiles, one million birds, 2.8 million invertebrates and 337 000 frogs. Research conducted through the Australian government's Threatened Species Recovery Hub estimates that a typical feral cat can kill more than 700 small animals a year with a large proportion of these being native species.

Underpinning this new strategy is an investment of \$7.6 million by the Cook government that will allow for a 45 per cent increase in additional aerial baiting in our national parks. The work does not stop there. We know that feral cats also exist on our farms and in deserts, woodlands and wetlands. That is why funding will also be provided to help traditional owners, community groups and rural property owners in their own important work to curb feral cat numbers. Importantly, the strategy will provide a framework to guide private investment as well as investigate new methods to ensure a consistent and coordinated approach throughout WA. The strategy will encourage the use of newly available technology, such as the Felixer that has received commonwealth approval for widescale rollout. Protection of a number of WA's threatened species will also be targeted to further protect strongholds of western ground parrots, chuditch, numbats and woylies. Ongoing monitoring of feral cats and important native species like the chuditch will continue to ensure that management actions are effective in reducing feral cat predation. Predators will be monitored through aerial tracking, GPS collars and cameras.

I congratulate the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development on the development of the strategy and I look forward to further success in feral cat management across Western Australia.