

Review of bridled naitail wallaby recovery program: Implementation plan

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Introduction

This draft implementation plan is developed as part of the Review of the bridled nailtail wallaby program. It considers the actions, timeframes and responsibilities required to implement the recommendations of the

review. The responsibility for the finalisation of this implementation plan is with the Department of Environment and Science (DES), and the bridled nailtail wallaby recovery group.

Recommendation one: Protection in the wild

Continue to support survival of the species in the wild, as per the requirements of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and the Nature Conservation (Wildlife Management) Regulation 2006. Allocate ongoing and reliable funding for key actions in threat management to support, at a minimum, the populations at Taunton and Avocet.

Continue as a matter of priority to protect wild populations of bridled nailtail wallabies, especially through controlling cats and foxes, and where necessary dingoes and wild dogs. Respond rapidly to emerging threats.

	Action or recommendation	Tasks	Timeframe	Responsibility	Comments
1a	Continue to support survival of bridled nailtail wallabies in the wild	<p>Develop annual work plans for Taunton NP(S) and Avocet NR that include actions to conserve the species, including monitoring and species management (such as local translocations) as well as management of key threats.</p> <p>Implement rapid responses to any emerging events that could threaten the populations.</p> <p>Continue to support programs and initiatives that enable survival of bridled nailtail wallabies in surrounding properties and movement of the wallabies in the area. For example, actively seek funding opportunities to continue the work led by FBA with surrounding landholders.</p>	Ongoing	DES FBA	Work plans should be devised and approved jointly by QPWS, Nature Refuge Branch and Threatened Species Program in conjunction with the recovery team. Cooperative work is essential.

	Action or recommendation	Tasks	Timeframe	Responsibility	Comments
1b	Allocate on-going and reliable funding for key actions in threat management to support, at a minimum, the populations at Taunton and Avocet. Continue as a matter of priority to protect wild populations of bridled nailtail populations, especially through controlling cats and foxes, and where necessary dingoes and wild dogs.	Allocate permanent funding for key actions including predator control, monitoring and drought supplementary feeding and watering.	Ongoing	DES	It would be very unfortunate if gains from the intensive efforts of recent years were lost through discontinuation of better support.

Recommendation two: Staffing

Ensure sufficient capable and qualified staff are allocated to these tasks and that positions are always backfilled. Empower local staff to make decisions and have financial responsibility as appropriate to their level of

competence. Provide local contingency funds to cover urgent on-ground needs as they arise in line with recovery objectives.

2a	Ensure sufficient capable and qualified staff are allocated to these tasks and that positions are always backfilled.	Work towards having a number of staff skilled and familiar with all aspects of the recovery program. Develop a roster of back-filling and emergency relief staff to avoid unexpected vacuums of expertise and human resources.	Year One Ongoing	DES	In DES many staff positions at lower levels are not filled when the incumbent is on leave or filling in other positions. However, experience has shown that leaving key positions vacant has very negative consequences, and should be avoided.
2b	Empower local staff to make decisions and have financial responsibility as appropriate to their level of competence. Provide local contingency funds to cover urgent on-ground needs as they arise in line with recovery objectives.	Work with finance section to find ways to make it easier for local staff to have discretion to make essential purchases, for example through provision of a corporate card with allocated annual budget.	Year One	DES	Efficiency could be gained by more local delegation of funds, especially for essential purchases over short periods.

Recommendation three: Recovery group

Re-invigorate a strong, diverse and balanced **recovery group**, using the Australian Government guidelines (Commonwealth of Australia, 2017). The group must meet regularly and have a clear understanding of the objectives and actions for the recovery of the species. Consider appointing an independent chair of the recovery group, elected by members (as specified in the guidelines), rather than relying on the Queensland Government staff to undertake this role. Ensure this group is able to make decisions and is able to effect outcomes in a timely manner when issues arise, including through out-of-session discussions. An

important role of this group is to update the recovery plan as outlined below. Members should be supported to attend meetings, depending on their institutional resources. Another important role of the group is the open sharing of information, including problems and solutions: cross-visits by land managers to other sites could be supported. An annual report of the species' status at all sites should be prepared and this should be publicly available on websites of all the organisations concerned.

	Action	Tasks	Timeframe	Responsibility	Comments
3a	Re-invigorate a strong, diverse and balanced recovery group.	Convene a meeting of the recovery group to review the implications of this assessment and to comment on the implementation plan. Include as an agenda item the composition of the group and its functions.	By February 2019	DES to convene	The recovery group has been reformed and meeting since 2012, but its composition could be broadened and its role increased.
3b	Consider appointing an independent chair of the recovery group, elected by members.	Include the election of the Chair in the agenda of the next meeting or the following meeting.	By February 2019	Recovery group	This is one of the recommendations of the Australian Government guidelines for recovery groups.
3c	Ensure this group is able to make decisions and is able to effect outcomes in a timely manner when issues arise, including through out-of-session discussions.	Include as an agenda item which issues should be considered out of session, and how to best involve appropriate people in discussions and formulating responses to critical issues.	By February 2019	DES	The recovery group has expertise to assist in dealing with both longer-term issues and immediate crises, and could be called upon more by DES.
3d	Support member of the recovery group to attend meetings, depending on their institutional resources.	Develop and allocate a budget to support members without institutional backing to attend meetings.	By February 2019	DES	Some members of the recovery group do not have institutional resources, and DES should continue to support these individuals to attend meetings. Over time, the NSW Government might be asked to share these costs.

	Action	Tasks	Timeframe	Responsibility	Comments
3e	Openly share information within the recovery group, including problems and solutions: cross-visits by land managers to other sites could be supported.	Include as an agenda item the topic of information sharing: consider the best ways to support people to learn from each other.	Ongoing	Recovery group	
3f	Prepare an annual report of the species' status at all sites make publicly available on websites of all the organisations concerned.	Use information in this report to develop the first 'State of the Species' report, and revise this annually with up-to-date data. Provide the report to the public on the DES website and make available to other agencies to do the same.	Ongoing	Recovery group; DES to lead	

Recommendation four: Recovery plan

Urgently update the **recovery plan** to outline objectives, key actions and strategies over the next 10-20 years. Ensure that information about the proposed populations in NSW is included, and that the recovery plan incorporates principles and actions for adaptive management. Identify

key risks that may impede achieving the outcomes and undertaking the actions. Develop risk management strategies to deal with such issues in the plan.

	Action	Tasks	Timeframe	Responsibility	Comments
4a	Update the recovery plan to outline objectives, key actions and strategies over the next 10-20 years.	Allocate responsibilities to update the recovery plan with the support of the recovery group.	December 2018 – December 2019	Recovery group; Chair to coordinate. DES to lead writing and approval process	Plan costs to be shared amongst represented institutions
4b	Ensure that information about the proposed populations in NSW is included.	Work with NSW Government to incorporate their plans for translocations into the new recovery plan.	December 2018 – December 2019	Recovery group, NSW DEH, AWC	

	Action	Tasks	Timeframe	Responsibility	Comments
4c	Incorporate principles and actions for adaptive management	Encourage all partners to monitor, evaluate and openly report on the results of actions, and to adjust actions accordingly. Work towards having rapid response protocols and times to emergent issues and changes in circumstances.	December 2018 – December 2019	All partners	
4d	Identify key risks and develop risk management strategies.	Hold workshop with the recovery group and key stakeholders to identify key risks. Develop and implement a risk management strategy .	December 2018 – December 2019	Recovery group, DES for its own areas of operations	In the past, DES has been slow to react to emergent crises such as severe drought, population declines, and partners pulling out of captive breeding , even when these crises could have been predicted.

Recommendation five: Partnerships

Develop **strong partnerships**, in particular with people and organisations with a long-term commitment to involvement and protection of the species. Ensure these partners understand their responsibilities and agree on the outcomes to be achieved. Develop memorandums of understanding or similar documents with partners. Treat all partners with

respect and consider that some who make very valuable contributions may have limited time and financial resources. Ensure contributors are acknowledged frequently for their efforts. Support the work of non-government organisations and conservancies to protect the species and actively seek opportunities for cooperation and sharing of information.

	Action	Tasks	Timeframe	Responsibility	Comments
5a	Develop strong partnerships	Form DES working group to involve all people working with bridled nailtail wallabies including local staff (park managers) and regional staff. Convene an internal meeting to discuss how to improve internal working relationships and partnerships with external groups.	2018 -2019	DES and all partners	Poor relationships have been a significant contributor to inefficiencies and project failures, so more emphasis could be given to partnerships.

	Action	Tasks	Timeframe	Responsibility	Comments
		Recovery group to reach out to organisations that are willing and interested in partnering with activities.		Recovery group	
5b	Develop MOU with partners	Identify clear roles, responsibilities and financial contributions (if any), and document this through MOUs	Mid 2019	DES and partners	
5c	Regular contact and reporting	Ensure that all partners are aware of activities, and that the recovery group is aware of partner activities. Allocate recovery group members to liaise with relevant partners.	Mid 2019	Recovery group	

Recommendation six and seven: Captive breeding

6. Develop a very clear strategy for any **captive breeding**, including the purpose and time frame of the captive breeding, the genetics and source of founders for the captive breeding, the number of individuals required, and the locations to which the progeny will be sent. A risk management strategy should be developed for captive breeding addressing issues such as failure to breed, successful breeding leading to excess progeny, and disease.

in the genetic management plan. A modern and appropriate captive breeding agreement must be made available to partners willing and able to undertake captive breeding according to the requirements for the translocation of bridled naitail wallabies. The agreements need to have flexibility to cope with changed circumstances, and support needs to be provided where necessary in a short timeframe. Consider actions in the case of organisations withdrawing from captive breeding at short notice.

7. Secure facilities suitable for captive breeding to enable successful reintroduction of the species to suitable locations as outlined below and

	Action	Tasks	Timeframe	Responsibility	Comments
6a	Develop a strategy for any captive breeding	Consider carefully the requirements for captive breeding including for an insurance population, for increasing genetic diversity and for proving stock for future translocations. Set objectives and tasks to achieve a sustainable captive breeding program that is clearly	2019	Recovery group	AWC will be undertaking captive breeding as part of the program to translocate wallabies to Pilliga and Mallee Cliffs, and to improve genetic diversity at Scotia. Consider if a second breeding facility should be established in Queensland.

	Action	Tasks	Timeframe	Responsibility	Comments
		meeting current and future needs, while minimising risks.			
6b	Include a risk management strategy for captive breeding	Develop a risk management strategy (might be part of the overall captive breeding strategy) to clearly address mitigation and responses to risks and other issues including disease and other health issues), predation, where to send excess animals if breeding is very successful , and sudden changes of circumstance.	2019		In the past there has not always been a rapid and adequate response to issues including sudden withdrawal of partners from the captive breeding program, resulting in serious animal welfare issues and inefficiencies. Responses and protocols with allocated responsibilities need to be clear in advance.
7	Secure breeding facilities as necessary over time for translocations	When planning any new translocations, ensure breeding facilities are of adequate standard and that protocols for all aspects of transport to the site and management are clearly defined and followed.		Recovery group to oversee	Experience shows that the most successful translocations are with wallabies bred onsite.

Recommendation eight: Translocation

Secure **additional translocation sites** within Queensland, where possible using existing protected areas (managed by QPWS or conservancies) where there are suitable facilities and pest control programs. Engage with Bush Heritage Australia to determine the appropriateness of Goonderoo as a translocation site. Review information about other protected areas within the bridled nailtail range that have suitable habitat and already have strong predator control. Consider properties that have different

climatic conditions to that of Taunton, to take the best advantage of variable seasons. Consider additional acquisitions where appropriate, and work with local landholders to secure corridors for safe dispersal of animals. Follow the most up-to-date advice for translocation, and ensure that releases occur in good conditions and with extensive predator control.

	Action	Tasks	Timeframe	Responsibility	Comments
8a	Identify and secure additional translocation sites.	Review previous work on additional translocation sites in Queensland. Identify suitable sites, with particular emphasis on existing national parks, and protected areas managed by conservancies. Investigate what additional actions (such as feral predator control) would be required. Secure site through acquisition if necessary and legislation (if not already protected).	2019-2025	DES with partners	Recovery group should be involved in decision-making and planning for all translocations.
8b	Plan and implement translocation to additional sites.	Develop a translocation plan, outlining the timing, the requirements and support needed, and implement translocation. Develop and implement a management strategy for the long-term management of each bridled nailtail wallabies at the site, including how to manage variable weather, and predators.	2019-2025, ongoing	DES and partners, recovery group	

Recommendation nine: Public education and communication

Boost **public education** and communication about bridled naitail wallabies, to raise awareness and encourage support for the species. This may include supporting some animals to be displays in captivity (ambassador species), and this may include those from poorer genetic

stock, that have been deemed to be unsuitable for future wild release. Continue to cooperate with programs involving volunteers, including those working through other agencies.

	Action	Tasks	Timeframe	Responsibility	Comments
9a	Boost public education	Implement a proactive communication program targeting the general public for broad support, and local communities in the areas of wallaby populations. Include a range of techniques including social media, site visits, media, websites and local events .	Mid 2019, following development of recovery plan, ongoing activities	Recovery group, DEH	
9b	Consider ambassador display animals at zoos and facilities.	Work with reputable zoos/ sanctuaries to determine interest in displaying bridled naitail wallabies.	End 2019		Zoos may be in Australia or potentially overseas as long as there is an education focus and a clear benefit to the recovery program.
9c	Continue to cooperate with programs involving volunteers, including those working through other agencies.	<p>Include a volunteer strategy in the recovery plan.</p> <p>Work with organisations such as AWC, BHA, Wildmob to coordinate volunteer actions to support the management of bridled naitail wallaby populations in line with the recovery plan .</p>	<p>2019</p> <p>On-going</p>		

Recommendation ten: Funding and support

In recognition of the need for additional **funding**, develop a prospectus for how philanthropic organisations, industry and the public can contribute to recovery of the species through programs prioritised by the

recovery group. Develop a range of projects for university students to undertake that support the recovery objectives.

	Action	Tasks	Timeframe	Responsibility	Comments
10a	Develop prospectus for investment in the bridled nailtail wallaby program and approach potential donors and supporters.	Review examples of successful prospectus and sponsorship arrangements for threatened species. Identify and work with organisations or companies that may be interested in supporting bridled nailtail wallaby recovery projects.	First draft mid 2019, following development of recovery plan	DES, recovery group	
10 b	Develop and support projects for researchers including university students.	Work with universities to gauge interest in projects. Develop small number of projects in line with recovery plan objectives and recommendations. Provide students undertaking such projects with logistical assistance.	ongoing	Recovery group	Student and research organisations have had extensive association with the recovery program and this should continue with cooperation from all partners.

Recommendation eleven: Species listing

Retain the **listing** of bridled naitail wallabies as Endangered in Queensland until additional wild populations are established and fully stabilised through a range of seasons.

	Action	Tasks	Timeframe	Responsibility	Comments
11a	Retain the listing of bridled naitail wallabies.	Document for each sub-population, on an annual basis changes in population sizes, locations, extent of population ranges to assess the listing of the species against the IUCN criteria.	Annually	Recovery team	

Recommendation twelve: Research

Continue to support research and to apply new information and innovative ideas in bridled naitail wallaby management and recovery, especially relating to threat mitigation techniques. Fully engage with research relating to feral predators and about the ecology of dingo populations, and incorporate this into approaches for new and existing

populations of bridled naitail wallabies. Also research methods to encourage or facilitate animals to disperse to areas of suitable habitat (for example at Taunton and Avocet/ Goonderoo, where this does not appear to occur as much as expected).

	Action	Tasks	Timeframe	Responsibility	Comments
12a	Support research in bridled naitail wallabies	<i>See also Action 10b</i>	Ongoing		
12b	Continue to seek knowledge about predator ecology and management	Allocate person to monitor, collate and summarise relevant research papers , and provide to recovery group on a regular basis .	Commence immediately		
12c	Seek better understanding of natural and assisted dispersal	Include as potential research project. Encourage local DES and AWC staff to actively monitor and write up dispersal attempts.	Commence immediately	Recovery group	Dispersal in the local scale appears to be an important issue at least at Taunton and Avocet. Cross-learning with AWC could be beneficial

Recommendation thirteen: Genetic management plan

Implement the **genetic management plan**, including the establishment of populations in Pilliga and Mallee Cliffs that are from genetic stock with higher allelic diversity. Consider removal of some animals from the wild at Taunton during conditions where populations appear to be exceeding the

local carrying capacity. Continue to monitor genetic make-up of populations, and immediately obtain necessary information for the optimal management of the animals recently removed from Safe Haven.

	Action	Tasks	Timeframe	Responsibility	Comments
13a	Implement the genetic management plan.	Use recommended stocks for translocations to Pilliga and Mallee Cliffs; improve genetic makeup of Scotia population over time. Introduce new founders to Avocet (see 13c) Follow genetic management plan guidelines for any new translocation and captive breeding projects.	2018-2028	AWC to implement for Scotia, Pilliga and Mallee cliffs. DES for Taunton and Avocet	Six recommendations from the genetic management plan are fully supported by this assessment and the suggested approaches should be followed.
13b	Consider removal of some animals from the wild at Taunton at most suitable times.	Monitor the population and the state of food and habitat resources, and act rapidly at appropriate times provided the facilities are ready to receive them.		DES/AWC	Removal of new founders at times when the population is placing pressure on resources seems most appropriate.
13c	Review genetic diversity at Avocet	Assess genetic makeup of new animals introduced to Avocet. Follow genetic management plan and seek further advice where needed to maximise the improved genetic potential.	Immediately	DES	Introduction of new founders from Safe Haven into Avocet has changed the genetic potential – this needs to be researched and findings applied appropriately

Recommendation fourteen: Guidelines for managers

Document all learning relating to captive breeding, translocation and management of wild populations in a succinct set of **guidelines** for future managers.

	Action	Tasks	Timeframe	Responsibility	Comments
14 a	Develop a set of guidelines for future managers	On an annual basis, collate actions and information on captive breeding, translocation and management of the wild population	Mid 2019 for first edition, up-date annually	Recovery group	