‘Playing for Sheep Stations: 
A Discourse Analysis of Wild Dog 
Management and Control Policy in 
New South Wales, Australia.’

Penelope Margaret Marshall 

22nd May 2013

A thesis submitted for the degree of 
Doctor of Philosophy of 
the Australian National University
Statement of Authenticity

This thesis is my own original work and has not previously been submitted for assessment at either the Australian National University or any other institution. All sources have been acknowledged.

Signature

Date: 23/5/2013
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To: Ian, Vanessa, Sam, Felicity, Isaac

and

Ellen
Abstract

Key words: wild dogs, New South Wales, administrative rationalism, discourse analysis, Australia, storylines

This thesis challenges the constitutive and taken-for-granted assumptions of the current dominant administrative rationalist discourse of wild dog management and control (WMDC) in New South Wales (NSW), Australia. It asks: To what extent can conflicts over WDMC in NSW be understood in terms of contending discourses and what does that imply for policy legitimacy? It isolates the storylines that emerged from substantial empirical research and examines, if and how, these storylines contributed to the dominant discourse of administrative rationalism.

From the beginning of white settlement of NSW, the State and farm families worked in concert to achieve the eradication of wild dogs and dingoes. From the 1960s, however, a significant discursive turn occurred in WDMC. This occurred as a result of the contending discourses of environmentalism, ecological science, animal welfare and biosecurity. These discourses collectively afforded new meanings to dingoes, wild dogs and WDMC. Concurrently, the State drove this discursive turn through a discourse of administrative rationalism.

From 1995 until 2011, a period of successive NSW Labor Governments, the State further consolidated this discursive approach. It reified ‘experts’ and legislatively empowered public land managers to inform, shape and promulgate the dominant discourse of WDMC through the promotion of a ‘best practice’ model. Within this model the individual knowledges and experiences of farm families of WDMC were subject to empirical measurement, the interpretations of public land managers and the corroboration of continuing ecological studies. The entry of new social actors closely linked to Government who actively promoted ‘new’ innovations and technologies in WDMC further distilled the dominance of the administrative rationalist discourse.

However, the legitimacy of this approach was forcefully challenged by a growing sense of crisis in the ‘Bush.’ This was driven by farm families who were directly affected by the lack of WDMC on public lands, the increasing numbers of wild dogs and the devastating effect this was having on the lives of farm families. This reality was
exploited mercilessly for its political capital by all political parties. Successive NSW Labor Governments consistently reiterated in storylines its financial largesse in WDMC to give legitimacy to its discursive approach. These storylines of financial expenditures in real terms however are difficult to substantiate.

Ironically, the success of the administrative rationalist discourse was dependent on the continued involvement of farm families in a public planning process which pivoted on their acquiescence to a discourse that subordinated their concerns and, at the same time, relied on the widespread adoption of this model by farm families across NSW. This has proved deeply problematic. Overwhelmingly, at public WDMC meetings farm families rejected the State's reliance on administrative rationalism and a chorus of voices reflected the significant gap that existed between the political and policy rhetoric of WDMC and the lived reality. Nevertheless, successive attempts by farm families have so far failed to dislodge the dominant discourse of WDMC.
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'It all went to hell in a hand basket'

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABARES</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences</td>
</tr>
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<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACT Parks</td>
<td>Australian Capital Territory Parks Service</td>
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<td>AIACRC</td>
<td>Australasian Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Australian Labor Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANU</td>
<td>Australian National University</td>
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<tr>
<td>APAS</td>
<td>Australian Pest Animal Strategy</td>
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<td>ARARP</td>
<td>Australian Pest Animal Research Program</td>
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<td>BRS</td>
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<td>CEO</td>
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<td>COAG</td>
<td>Coalition of Australian Governments</td>
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<td>COPs</td>
<td>Codes of Practice</td>
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<td>CSIRO</td>
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<td>CWA</td>
<td>Country Women’s Association</td>
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<td>DAFF</td>
<td>Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</td>
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<td>DECC</td>
<td>Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
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<tr>
<td>DECCW</td>
<td>Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water</td>
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<td>EPA</td>
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<td>Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</td>
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<td>GIS</td>
<td>Geographic Information System</td>
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<td>GPS</td>
<td>Global Positioning System</td>
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<td>Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre</td>
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<td>IUCN</td>
<td>International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources</td>
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<td>GBMWHA</td>
<td>Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area</td>
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<td>LHPA</td>
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<td>Land and Water Biodiversity Committee</td>
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<td>MLA</td>
<td>Meat and Livestock Association</td>
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<td>NFACP</td>
<td>National Feral Animal Control Programme</td>
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<td>NFF</td>
<td>National Farmers’ Federation</td>
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<td>National Heritage Trust</td>
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<td>NRMSC</td>
<td>Natural Resource Management Standing Committee</td>
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<td>NSW</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
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<td>NSWFA</td>
<td>New South Wales Farmers Association</td>
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<td>NSW NPWS</td>
<td>New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service</td>
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<td>NSW PAC</td>
<td>New South Wales Pest Animals Committee</td>
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<td>NSW RLPBs</td>
<td>New South Wales Rural Lands Protection Boards</td>
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<td>NSW RFB</td>
<td>New South Wales Rural Fire Brigade</td>
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<td>NSW WDAG</td>
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<td>OEH</td>
<td>Office of Environment and Heritage</td>
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<td>PACRC</td>
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<td>PACs</td>
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<td>PAPP</td>
<td>para-aminopropiophenone</td>
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<td>PAS</td>
<td>Pest Animal Strategy</td>
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<td>PCO</td>
<td>Pest Control Order</td>
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<td>PIMC</td>
<td>Primary Industries Ministerial Council</td>
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<td>PISC</td>
<td>Primary Industries Standing Committee</td>
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<td>PP</td>
<td>Pastures Protection</td>
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<td>PPB</td>
<td>Pastures Protection Boards</td>
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<td>RLPB</td>
<td>Rural Lands Protection Board</td>
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<td>RLPBs</td>
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<td>RMPS</td>
<td>Regional Pest Management Strategy</td>
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<td>RSL</td>
<td>Returned Servicemen’s League</td>
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<td>RSPCA</td>
<td>Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEWPC</td>
<td>Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCOPI</td>
<td>Standing Committee on Primary Industries</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIA</td>
<td>Social Impact Assessment</td>
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<td>Standing Operating Practices</td>
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<td>WDMC</td>
<td>wild dog management and control</td>
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<td>Table 7.2</td>
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<td>Table 7.3</td>
<td>Total Number of Sheep in NSW 1997-2011</td>
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Chapter One: Introduction

‘Eye of newt and toe of frog, Wool of bat and tongue of dog, Adder’s fork and blind-worm’s sting, Lizard’s leg and owlet’s wing, For a charm of powerful trouble, Like a hell-broth boil and bubble’
Macbeth (IV, 1, 14-15).

The storyline of the ‘dog tree’

In New South Wales (NSW) wild dogs are killed; trapped; shot; or poisoned. Every so often they are hung dead from ‘dog trees’ across the Australian landscape by some farmers and dog trappers.

While this is perceived by some as evocative of a ‘dark, grizzly and grotesque past’ (Matchett 2008 25 June:50) or ‘confronting’ for city dwellers, (Doherty 2008 2 August: B3) the ‘dog tree’ functions as a sign warning other neighbouring farmers that ‘the dogs are in’; that the farmer has ‘got the dog’ and that hopefully, this marks an end to the misery and the stress to the farm family. As Mick Hedger, reportedly a third generation Snowy Mountains’ trapper stated ‘the only dogs in those trees are killing dogs’ (Doherty 2008 2 August: B3).

The ‘dog tree’ also serves as evidence for the dog trapper or farm family; not simply just for payment (Lower North Coast & Tablelands Dingo Destruction Board 1947-1983, Davies 2009, Jopson 2009, 26 October, Inman 2010 9 May). It evokes century old normative expectations of what it means to be a ‘good neighbour.’

From early European settlement a community meeting was called in rural communities when the ‘dogs were in.’ In South East NSW pounds were ‘put on the table’ to pay for a trapper to catch and destroy a problem dog(s) (Franklin, N. pers. comm. 2008).

The terms ‘trapper’ and ‘dogger’ connotes an historical meaning of a person who earned their living trapping and destroying wild dogs. At times these people were employed on contracts, full time and at other times they were paid only on production of a ‘dog scalp’ by the NSW Dingo Destruction Board system, Wild Dog Associations (WDAs) and the NSW Pasture Protection Board system (NSW PPB). The term, ‘pest animal controller’ is a more recent term and connotes a highly skilled and trained person employed through the then RLPB system and/or its successor, the LHPA system in NSW.
Farm families hold the bush knowledge, skills and experience of ‘trappers,’ ‘doggers’ and ‘pest animal controllers’ in high esteem. For example, in South East Australia individuals Bill Coman, Bill Morris, Mick Davis, Andrew McDougall, ‘Boots,’ Warren Schofield, Murray Schofield and the RLB P Ranger, Andrew Miners are all respected for these skills. In contrast, the term ‘Ranger’ usually connotes a person working for a Government Department or Agency or a person working for the LHPA who may be involved in a range of tasks associated with feral animal control and the functions of the LHPA system more generally.

Historically, many Wild Dog Associations (WDAs) across NSW collected voluntary levies on a regular basis from their members to employ a ‘dogger’ full time – some still do - although not all members contributed financially (Lower North Coast & Tablelands Dingo Destruction Board 1947-1983, Fennessy and Bromell undated: circa 1958). Some farming families employed ‘doggers’ privately for particularly ‘problem’ dogs (Bean 1945, Barnard River Wild Dog Association 1956-1968, Rolls 1969, Rolls 1981, Van Eyk 2001 17 December). These practices were widespread from the time of White colonisation of Australia and were undertaken with the full imprimatur of the State (The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser 1864 23 February, Bean 1945, Rolls 1969).

Institutional reports, records and correspondence garnered by farming families, RLPBs and WDAs across NSW reveal that over the past fifty years the meaning of ‘good neighbour’ has been appropriated for a range of different purposes by a suite of Government Departments across Australia (NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service 2002). As late as the 1980s, the principal function of WDMC policy was promulgated – at least publicly – as safeguarding the national flock. Mitchell (1986), for example, stated:

The Department’s Wild Dog Control Program should be seen in the context of providing resource protection (under the good neighbour principle) to sheep graziers in the Eastern Highlands region of Victoria (Mitchell 1986).

However, the meanings associated with ‘dog trees’ and ‘good neighbour’ changed.

From the 1960s, the meaning of ‘dog trees’ is no longer ‘just’ a warning to other farm families that the ‘dogs are in.’ The dog tree functions as a public rebuke and a powerful
statement of protest to public land managers who are perceived to have failed in their responsibilities as a ‘good neighbour’ in controlling wild dogs on public lands.

Overall, the meanings attached to ‘dog trees’ by farm families gleaned from the empirical research of this thesis are clear: Wild dogs cause harm to the social, economic and environmental fabric of the lives of Australian farm families; wild dogs kill, maim, maul and inflict terrific injuries on agricultural stock in Australia; public land managers do not meet their obligations as ‘good neighbours’ in controlling wild dogs; farm families have a moral right to productively farm private land free of wild dogs; a ‘good’ neighbour – irrespective of whether they are a public or private landholder - has a duty to keep the increasing numbers of wild dogs off farms.

The function of storylines within discourse

Thus, the ‘dog tree’ functions as a storyline. A storyline is: ‘a generative sort of narrative that allows actors to draw upon various discursive categories to give meaning to specific or social phenomena’ (Hajer 1995: 56).

Dramaturgically, the ‘dog tree’ highlights the importance of meaning within WDMC wherein it maps ‘...an architecture of meaning’ (Yanow 2003: 235). That is, it speaks of local and situated knowledges – ‘the very mundane, but still expert, understanding of and practical reasoning about local conditions derived from lived experience’ (Yanow 2003 : 236).

As a storyline, the ‘dog tree’ draws attention to the pivotal role that ‘story lines’ have within a particular discourse and how they contribute to it. Yet, storylines are also often subverted performing different functions within other discourses (Hajer 1995). As Hajer writes:

Ideas may make perfect sense within the discourse in which they were constituted, but then subsequently become an element in a debate that is conducted by a far more diverse group of actors and in the context of acts and practices that do not function according to the discursive logic of that original discourse (Hajer 1995 : 46).
For example, the storyline of the ‘dog tree’ is understood by farm families as a symbolic statement of protest and proof of the cruelty meted out by wild dogs on agricultural livestock. Visceral photographic images of dead or dying, disembowelled and savaged sheep and of calves and cattle with their teats and ears chewed off or back legs badly bitten are common.

Yet, within a discourse of animal rights the storyline of the ‘dog tree’ is subverted and appears as evidence of the alleged cruelty meted out to specific ‘non-human’ animals, wild dogs – a storyline in itself - which animal rights activists mobilise politically to prevent: Wild dogs are not ‘pests,’ ‘vermin’ or ferals’ but simply ‘mislocated,’ overabundant and ‘simply born in the wrong place at the wrong time’ (Oogjes G. 1999 26-27 May, Oogjes 2003 25 February). However, to some public land managers and scientists the ‘dog tree’ appears to serve as ‘further’ evidence of ‘backward’ farming traditions and even ignorance which works to cement their privileging of a scientifically informed and bureaucratically controlled discourse of WDMC.

The Research Gap

This thesis examines the policy and practice of WDMC in NSW over the years of successive NSW Labor governments from 1995 until 2011. It argues that the dominant discourse of WDMC in NSW was an ‘administrative rationalist’ one. This thesis understands administrative rationalism as a discourse that seeks: ‘to organise scientific and technical expertise into bureaucratic hierarchy in the service of the state’ (Dryzek 1997: 73).

Methodologically, this thesis responds to John Dryzek’s call that:

the search for administrative rationalism in environmental affairs should begin not with the writings of theorists and the proclamations of activists, but with an examination of actual policy practice’ (Dryzek 1997 :75).

This thesis does just that. Based on empirical findings about ‘actual’ WDMC policy and practice this thesis presents a different ‘story’ of WDMC from that which is publically disseminated through the administrative, scientific and technological public policy literature.
Firstly, this thesis examines the dominant discourse of WDMC policy and practice and the storylines that contribute to it as they are articulated in the public domain. This has not been done previously and represents a significant contribution to the academic literature.

It makes this contribution in three ways. First, it provides a short history of WDMC in NSW. It then draws on 153 parliamentary speeches of the NSW Parliament over successive terms of the NSW Labor Government from 1995 until 2011; second, it draws on the Annual Reports and Financial Statements of the six State actors involved in WDMC over the life of successive NSW Labor Governments; and, third, it draws on the prevailing WDMC public policy literature, scientific and technological literature as well as relevant economic and Government reports.

It then compares and contrasts the findings that emerge from an analysis of publicly available NSW WDMC plans and from attendance at sixty three public WDMC meetings. It supplements this comparison throughout with publicly available, historical WDMC literatures. This ‘triangulation’ (Sarantakos 1998:168-170; 469) of data sources and the analysis which flows from it has not been done previously.

Throughout this thesis, the storylines that emerge from these literatures are presented to see how – and if - they contribute to the dominant administrative rationalist discourse and to see how they position the ‘voice’ of farm families. It also identifies competing discourses in WDMC as they emerge from these literatures. As a consequence of this empirical research, this thesis argues that there is a significant gap between what is said to happen in WDMC in NSW and what happens in ‘actual’ policy practice. It asks: ‘Why?’

**The Interpretative ‘turn’ and Discourse**

To answer the question of: ‘Why?’ this thesis embraces an interpretative ‘turn.’ This thesis is located within the growing field of critical policy studies and, more specifically, interpretative policy analysis. It embraces theoretically-grounded approaches that challenge the idea that public policy is mainly a matter of devising means to clarified ends. It presupposes in ontological terms that there is not an ‘objective’ reality to be discovered ‘out there’ and that there are different ‘ways of
knowing’ (Andrew 2003, Yanow 2006). It rejects the myth of ‘value-free empirical inquiry’ (Hawkesworth 2006: 48). As Yanow explains:

All ideas – including those of the natural and physical sciences - have “a history and a tradition of thought, images, and vocabulary that have given [them] reality and presence”...In this sense, then, social scientific texts do not merely present their subjects through the lenses of their data, but represent and re-present-constitute, construct-them (Yanow 2006: 7).

Further as Hendriks (2007) explains:

Inspired by post-positivism, interpretive researchers reject the idea that the goal of policy analysis is to settle debates by conducting a value-free, objective assessment of the policy situation (Fischer, 2003: 120; Yanow, 200: 5-6). In contrast, they seek to appreciate and improve policy practice by studying its paradoxes and ambiguities (Stone, 2002), and exploring various meanings embedded in language, action and artefacts (Fischer and Forester, 1993; Hajer 1995; Rein and Schon, 1993) (Hendriks 2007: 280).

This thesis explores the ‘paradoxes,’ ‘ambiguities’ and ‘various meanings’ inherent in NSW WDMC and in doing so argues that the policy and practices of NSW WDMC represent an intense socio-political struggle wherein ‘in addition to the dominant discourses, competing discourses struggle to gain recognition and power’ (Fischer 2003: 76). In this thesis a discourse is understood as:

a shared way of apprehending the world. Embedded in language, it enables those who subscribe to it to interpret bits of information and put them together into coherent stories or accounts. Each discourse rests on assumptions, judgments, and contentions that provide the basic terms for analysis, agreements, and disagreements, in the environmental area no less than elsewhere (Dryzek 1997: 6).

This conceptualisation of discourse within an interpretative ‘turn’ rests on constructivism (Parsons 2010) which is underpinned by two philosophical traditions: It understands ‘there is meaning in the underlying frames and assumptions through which
people live their experiences (phenomenology)' and equally that 'there is meaning embedded in actions, text or artefacts (hermeneutics) (Yanow, 2006; Dryzek 1982)' (Hendriks 2007: 280). Discourse ascribes meaning because it actively excludes, ‘other possible sets of articulations or meanings’ (Epstein 2008: 9). It links: ‘together other elements in a logic that modifies each particular element in an explanation that consists in a “synthesis of many determinations”’ (Marx 1973’) (Howarth and Griggs 2012: 324).

In this light the current reliance on ‘experts’ in NSW WDMC policy is hegemonic [See (Howarth 2010) for detailed discussion]. Thus the ‘problem’ of wdmc in NSW ‘has nothing at all to do with the broad concept of “nature”’ (Latour 2004: 5). The policy and practices of NSW WDMC can be seen as an exercise in power which is currently shaped and affected epistemologically by the ‘nature centrism’ of a scientific rationalist discourse. Overall, the strength of an interpretative ‘turn’ is that it:

extends the analytic goal beyond the technical efficiency of the governing institutions to include an assessment of the political interests and needs of the larger political community. From this perspective, the political community is inhabited by citizens who ‘live in a web of interdependencies, loyalties and associations’ in which ‘they envision and fight for the public interest as well as their individual interests’ (Stone 1988: vii)’ (Fischer 2003: 223).

However, of note, ‘discourse is not only about representations and systems of meaning’ (Howarth 2010-4). Drawing on the work of Laclau and Mouffe (1985), Howarth argues persuasively that ‘a discursive structure is not a merely “cognitive” or “contemplatory” entity; it is an articulatory practice which constitutes and organizes social structures’ (Howarth 2010: 312 citing Laclau and Mouffe 1995:96). Importantly, discourses can be seen as ‘relational configurations of elements that comprise agents (or subjects), words, actions and things’ which are ‘intelligible within the context of a particular practice’ (Howarth 2010: 311-312).

For example, the ‘dog tree’ has meaning for farming families and is intelligible within the context of WDMC and it is also an intensely social phenomenon. At the same time, WDMC meetings are also the sites where NSW WDMC policy is both ‘performed’ and enacted by institutional actors such as public servants from NSW NPWS, State Forests and NSW DPI. However, as Howarth (2010) explains:
institutions like states, markets or governance networks can be conceptualised as more or less sedimented systems of discourse, that is, partially fixed systems of rules, norms, resources, practices and subjectivities that are linked together in particular ways (Howarth 2000: 123).

As a result, this thesis views discourses and discursive structures as relational and intertwined; they do not have an existence separate to agents. However, at the same time, and importantly, discourses and discursive structures are marked both by their contingency and undecidability (Howarth 2010). Thus, discourses are 'inherently social phenomena' (Hajer and Wagenaar 2003, Epstein 2008). They involve people, institutions and ideas. They are powerful. They also change (Adams 2001).

For example, many dog trappers and farmers now hang wild dogs well away from main roads and on fence lines on private property out of public view. Since the late 1960s neither the State nor its agents enforce the systematic eradication of 'dingoes' which it had done extensively since European colonialisation (Rolls 1969, Rolls 1981, Marshall 2006). The issue of animal rights is a pervasive presence and informs WDMC policy and practice (Jones 2002 31 October, Sharp and Saunders 2008). Prominent political ecologists now call for the removal of sheep from the Australian landscape altogether and advocate reintroducing dingoes to 'large tracts of Australian sheep grazing country as a means of preserving native animal species’ (Milburn 2007 September, Smith 2009 13 August)

Hence, the policy and practices of NSW WDMC are as much about the discourses and the storylines which inform them as they are about the exercise of power, the social actors, the institutions and the ideas involved at a particular time. The history and the socio-political context of WDMC and how each has contributed to NSW WDMC policy NSW over time must be understood. This thesis addresses these issues.

Collectively, these changes point to a significant discursive ‘turn’ that has occurred since the 1960s which is reflected within the policy and practice of WDMC as Australia moved from a nation that ‘Rode on the sheep’s back’ to one where farm families are engaged in the very earnest endeavour of ‘Playing for sheep stations’ – a story of farming family survival.
A Discursive Turn

From the 1960s onwards, a discursive ‘turn’ occurred in WDMC. Several ‘intervening variables’ contributed to this ‘turn.’ As Fischer & Gottweis (2012) explain:

Communication interaction can (and often does) exert a causal influence on political change, although the influence tends to be that of an intervening rather than an independent variable. For this reason discourse and argumentation based on it cannot be the cause, but it is often a cause of political change (Fischer and Gottweis 2012:17).

During this time, fewer and fewer Australians swore allegiance to ‘Queen, Country and the Merino.’ The world-wide rise of ‘new’ environmentalism, the decline of the ‘power’ of the wool discourse to the Australian economy; the global rise of synthetics; the ‘minerals boom;’ Australia’s growing acceptance of the policy of multiculturalism; and, the decline in the explanatory purchase of an Anglo Saxon discourse in defining Australian culture (Bolton 1999). The collapse of the Australian Reserve Price Scheme (RPS) for wool in 1989 further challenged the power of the ‘wool’ discourse (See Massey 2011 for lengthy discussion).

Together these factors hollowed out a space for the entry of powerful and competing discourses to take hold – most notably, the competing discourse of ‘new’ environmentalism’ (Meyer 2006). Environmentalism is a discourse, like others, that is replete with its own storylines: ‘sustainable development,’ ‘the risk society,’ the ‘precautionary principle,’ ‘ecological modernisation,’ ‘biodiversity,’ ‘intrinsic value’ and ‘animal rights’ are but a few.

The rise of ‘reflexive modernization’ (Beck 1992, Beck 2006) as a consequence of modernity is a feature of the Twentieth Century. Importantly, from the 1950s the effects of ‘reflexive modernization’ were particularly felt through the adoption of the ‘precautionary principle’ in WDMC policy in NSW (Vertebrate Pests Commitee 2003 November).

However, as Smith (2003) notes ‘the ecology movement, when viewed as a whole, draws it force from a range of arguments whose ethical underpinnings are really quite
The discourse of environmentalism, 'new' or 'old,' encompasses a broad church. Like all storylines, the 'environmental' storylines of WDMC contribute to and/or are subverted within competing discourses. Notwithstanding this, taken as a whole, the discourse of 'environmentalism' has proved to be a powerful, competing discourse within the issue of WDMC. Through its reliance on scientific rationalism it draws on the distinction between 'wild dogs' and 'dingoes.' The significance of this distinction in WDMC cannot be understated.

The distinction between ‘wild dogs’ and ‘dingoes’

The current storyline of WDMC legislatively charges public land managers with the twin objectives of conservation and control that is, to conserve the ‘dingo’ and to control ‘wild dogs’ to the extent necessary (Department of Primary Industries, Official Notices, 6 October 2006). Under NSW Labor, the meaning afforded to ‘wild dogs’ was muddied by the adoption of a nomenclature that distinguished ‘wild dogs’ (Canis lupus familiaris) from ‘dingos’ (Canis lupus dingo) and from other dogs. However, the extent of the hybridisation of dingoes with wild dogs made this distinction, without genetic testing, difficult – if not impossible. Nevertheless, this scientific distinction was enshrined in legislation. Technical incongruities between conflicting pieces of legislation were overcome by regulation and administrative fiat (See Fleming, Corbett et al. 2001, for a discussion, New South Wales Gazette 2006).

These changes represented significant discursive shifts in WDMC, not least because power moved from individual farm families to the State, where the meaning of ‘wild dog,’ WDMC, and the extent of WDMC, if at all, would be determined by ‘experts’ and bureaucrats. The involvement of farm families and the meanings of ‘wild dog’ and ‘dingo’ were now legally proscribed which resulted in a sharp delineation between public and private actions. This distinction occurred progressively from the 1950s and by virtue of the distinction it draws, it has forced significant changes on the public policy of WDMC. This policy has directly affected the lives and material wellbeing of Australian farm families who have experienced and are continuing to experience wild dog predation on agricultural stock (Fazio 2002 31 October, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2005, Kenny 2008, Agforce Queensland 2009).
However, this discursive ‘turn’ also marked the entry of ‘new’ players in WDMC. In 2006, the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre was formed, the strategic aims of which were:

   to counteract the impact of invasive animals through the application of new technologies and by integrating approaches across agencies and jurisdictions’ (Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre 2005/2011: 1).

Inherent within these ‘new technologies’ and ‘approaches across agencies and jurisdictions’ is the privileging of ‘scientific expertise,’ measurement and quantification in WDMC (Braysher 1993, Fleming, Corbett et al. 2001, Ballard 2012). Overall, the ‘coupling’ of some parts of industry, ecological interests and government through commercial partnerships has further cemented the reliance on scientific understandings of ‘wild dogs’ as well as fostered an exponential rise in and commitment to technological ‘innovations’ in WDMC. This has significantly redefined what was a personal issue into a public ‘problem’(Mills 2000).

**Delimitations**

This thesis is delimited in two ways:

First, this thesis views the management of agro biodiversity - of which WDMC is a part - as:

   an active anthropogenic enterprise that cannot be divorced from the rich cultural diversity and local knowledge embodied in livelihood systems (Lockie and Carpenter 2009 citing Prain et al 1999; Thrupp, 2000: 5).

It looks at WDMC in both in its historical and current context. Principally, WDMC must be understood firstly as a socio-cultural activity occurring in specific contexts. It is not simply and/or predominantly a scientific and technological ‘growth industry’ wherein: ‘through industry collaboration on the registration, marketing, export and community uptake of new products…’ WDMC is afforded its raison d’être (Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre 2006: Purpose).
Second, this thesis does not explore the meanings of ‘dingoes’ in the Aboriginal Dreaming or their significance in Aboriginal culture. This omission does lessen their significance. A study of this type is simply outside the ability and cultural competence of the writer. [See (Rose 2000) for discussion].

Research Question:

The research question of this thesis is: ‘To what extent can conflicts over wild dog management and control in New South Wales be understood in terms of contending discourses and what does that imply for policy legitimacy?

Substantiated by extensive research across NSW, this thesis argues that the ‘problem’ of WDMC is socially constructed. Currently it is framed within the dominant discourse of administrative rationalism which is perpetuated through storylines in WDMC policy and practice literatures.

This thesis argues that there has been a discursive shift in WDMC from which the knowledge and experiences of farm families have been largely excised. This shift has resulted in a consultation process which, despite political and institutional rhetoric to the contrary, institutionalises inequalities in power relations and negates the ‘situated and embodied knowledges’ of farm families through the privileging of a ‘partial perspective’ (Haraway 1991: 91).

Overwhelmingly, the consultation process represents, at best, a fragile, if not a thin veneer of ‘negotiated participation in governance’ wherein ‘governments consult because they have to (either because the interests concerned are powerful or ministers insist on it)’ (Stewart 2009: 5) and because it is enshrined in legislation.

The importance of understanding epistemology

Thus on one level the ‘problem’ of WDMC in NSW has little to do with nature as the practice of WDMC is an exercise in power. Current WDMC policy and practice in NSW instead is shaped and affected epistemologically by the dominant discourse of administrative rationalism. The reliance has methodological consequences as ‘literally an epistemology is a theory of knowledge’ (Marsh and Furlong 2002: 19) and because
the reliance on a particular epistemology excludes 'other possible sets of articulations or meanings' (Epstein 2008: 9). In turn, an epistemology links:

together other elements in a logic that modifies each particular element in an explanation that consists in a “synthesis of many determinations” (Marx 1973) (Howarth and Griggs 2012: 324).

Within the dominant discourse of WDMC, 'nature' and 'wild dogs' are understood and afforded meaning within the prevailing scientific 'paradigm.' Kuhn (1996) describes a scientific 'paradigm' as sharing two characteristics: First, it attracts an '...enduring group of adherents away from competing modes of scientific activity,' and, second, it is '...sufficiently open ended to leave all sorts of problems for the redefined group of practitioners' (Kuhn 1996: 10). Further, Kuhn writes:

When the individual scientist can take a paradigm for granted, he [sic] need no longer, in his major works, attempt to build his field anew, start from first principles and justifying the use of each concept introduced (Kuhn 1996: 18-19).

The Challenge

Based on extensive empirical research across NSW, the challenge to the current dominant discourse of WDMC that this thesis presents is threefold:

First, it contends that current WDMC policy and practice has everything to do with the maintenance of and the administrative delivery of State power (Lukes 2005, Paehlke and Torgerson 2005). This is affected through the dominant discourse of administrative rationalism which is underscored by a reliance on scientific ‘knowledge’ and technological innovations which are promulgated within the storylines of ‘best practice’ that promulgates ideas of ‘expertise’ and ‘engagement’ in WDMC policy literature.

Second, and fundamentally, this thesis challenges the unilateral claims of scientific and policy ‘objectivity’ which are inherent within WDMC public policy. This thesis argues that:
Although scientific experts continue to maintain that their research is value-neutral, the limits of such neutrality become apparent once the experts introduce their technical findings into the socio-political world of competing interests (Fischer 2005: 71).

While the writer accepts that there is a material reality, it also draws on Hajer’s work in understanding the concept of ‘nature’ and the meanings of ‘wild dogs’ and WDMC within discourse as:

not something ‘out there’ but a culturally appropriated concept, a norm, a counter-image, a memory, a Utopia. When someone talks about nature, the question is ‘which nature?’ (Beck, 1995 pp 36-38) – and, it might be added, ‘whose nature?’(Hajer 1995: 178).

As such, this thesis argues that the current discourse of WDMC in NSW is wedged between the managerial ‘logic of appropriateness’ – that is, ‘the ‘fit’ between circumstances and objectives’ that are imposed on public servants and the managerial ‘logic of obligation’ which reflects ‘the degree of compulsion or pressure to consult’ (Stewart 2009: 4) that is imposed on public servants by government in affecting WDMC.

Third, this thesis re-presents the ‘knowledges’ and experiences of farm families’ who are actively involved in the regular performance of ‘engagement’ through public WDMC meetings across NSW. It demonstrates that this is the place where the rejection of the dominant discourse is most apparent, where alternative meanings are articulated and where storylines are re-affirmed and subverted. The empirical research of this thesis reveals that in everyday life the legitimacy of the dominant administrative discourse is contested by competing discourses. It is apparent that significant antagonism (Mouffe 1999, Mouffe 2000, Mouffe 2005) exists among the social actors involved in WDMC. However, to date the extent of this contestation has not been sufficient to overcome the dominant discourse.

Sub Questions
This thesis in turn asks some specific questions: What are the storylines in WDMC? How are storylines subverted? What discourses are evident? Is there evidence of a discursive turn(s)? How are meanings constructed and changed? (Edelman, p. 194) It asks these questions because it understands hegemony as “…an unstable equilibrium that always remains partial and temporary’ (Fischer 2003: 78); the discourses and the storylines that contribute to WDMC change.

It understands the concept of ‘hegemony’ in WDMC as sharing two characteristics: Firstly, as a:

‘type of rule or governance that captures how a regime, practice or policy holds sway over a set of subjects with a particular entwining of consent, compliance, and coercion,’ and, secondly, as ‘a practice of politics that involves the linking together of disparate demands to forge projects or “discourse coalitions,” which can contest a particular form of rule, practice or policy’ (Howarth: 2009: 317).

Crucially, this thesis asks questions regarding the extent to which ‘local knowledge’ (Andrew and Robottom 2005) is important to the policy analysis relative to a policy issue and how policies are modes for the expression of human meaning (Yanow 2003: 228). This in turn has broader implications for the notions of democracy as it is played out at the grassroots because as Dryzek (2006) argues:

The democratic question then becomes how dispersed, critical, and competent influence over this contestation can be promoted, bearing in mind that decentralization does not necessarily equal democracy, that particular discourses can take oppressive and constraining form, and that interventions in the world of discourses can be designed to manipulate and control them (Dryzek 2006: 75).

Method

This thesis applies the method of discourse analysis as developed in interpretative policy analysis. Drawing on extensive empirical research, it isolates particular storylines that emerge and then looks at ‘if’ and ‘how’ they contribute to, and are reflected in, the current dominant discourse of WDMC. It is necessarily concerned therefore with the ‘performance’ and the ‘everyday’ practices of WDMC policy and practice and how this
plays out at the 'grassroots.' Throughout this thesis, the 'voices' of farm families and their experiences of WDMC are explored. The research on which it is based reveals that there is a significant disconnect between what is said in the policy literature about what happens in WDMC in New South Wales (NSW), Australia and what actually happens. The task of this thesis has been to discover, 'Why?'

To do this it has been necessary to understand methodologically as Charlotte Epstein puts it: 'the current 'hegemonic articulation' as it applies to WDMC and to discover and explore other: 'sets of articulations or meanings' (Chambers 2003, Epstein 2008 citing Sopher 1995: 254). The method of this thesis challenges the constitutive and 'taken for granted' assumptions of the current discourse of WDMC by capturing an alternative 'way of seeing' – looking at WDMC from the 'grassroots.' It suggests instead that: 'the relation between what we see and what we know is never settled' (Berger 1972: 7). It consistently sheds light on how farm families are positioned in the literature, how they 'see' and experience the current dominant discourse of NSW WDMC.

The empirical research on which this thesis relied is substantial. It emanated from sources only in the public domain: one hundred and fifty three (153) Hansard speeches; WDMC policy, scientific and technological literatures; publicly available WDMC plans from New South Wales Rural Lands Protection Boards (NSW RLPBs); attendance at sixty three public WDMC meetings held across NSW in 2007, 2008 and 2009; and, publicly available historical WDMC literature.

Attendance at public WDMC meetings was largely at the invitation of farm families over almost three years – 2007, 2008 and 2009 - and occurred in a 'snowball' fashion across NSW. Meetings were often held in geographically isolated rural and remote areas of NSW. Travel to these meetings was by plane, by hire car and often by four-wheel drive vehicles travelling with farming families and/or with Rangers from various RLPBs. Attendance at many of the sixty three WDMC meetings would have proved extremely difficult without this assistance and certainly beyond the financial resources of this thesis for which the writer is extremely grateful. The research question and method of this thesis have undergone significant revision. There are reasons for these changes:
The original research involved an ex-post social impact assessment (SIA) of the effect on farming families of wild dog predation on agricultural stock and relied on semi-structured interviews in an area called ‘The Northern Demonstration Site.’ This was an area ‘created’ in Northern NSW by the IACRC in which ecological trials involving wild dogs and experimental technologies were to be conducted by staff of the IACRC, working in conjunction with the then NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI). It was also a site where a NSW DPI staff member had been appointed to facilitate and expedite the ‘signing off’ of two WDMC plans by two prominent WDAs – Barnard River and Niangla Wild Dog Associations respectively.

In 2007, the NSW Government called for submissions to what became known as the ‘Schedule Two Review’. Schedule 2 lands, of which there were 248 in NSW, are lands comprising of National Parks, Nature Reserves, State Recreation Areas, State Forest, Crown land and Reserves and Sydney Catchment Authority Land. The purpose of the review was to ensure: ‘that the lands currently listed in Schedule 2 remain relevant to the management objectives of the Pest Control Order’ (PCO). The PCO for wild dogs issued under the NSW Rural Lands Protection Act 1998 requires all land managers to control wild dogs. The potential to impinge directly on the workings of WDMC working groups and WDAs throughout NSW added uncertainty. An air of ‘fragility’ pervaded public WDMC meetings and many were delayed.

In January 2008, the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) publicly released the Sodium Fluoro Acetate (1080) Final Review Report and Regulatory Decision. This report was long-awaited having been first commissioned in 2002. The timing of its release again had significant implications on the field work for this thesis. This report was of particular significance to WDAs and Wild Dog Working Groups across NSW. A ‘wait and see’ approach developed in 2007 and 2008 as the implications of the report were realised.

Significantly, in January 2009, the NSW Rural Lands Protection Board (NSW RLPB) was restructured from 47 autonomous boards across NSW to 14 boards and abolished by the then NSW Labor Government. Its replacement was named the Livestock Health and Pest Authority (LHPA). In the preceding six months of 2008 a sense of inertia developed as the 47 Boards adopted a ‘wait and see’ attitude to the unfolding events. This resulted in a slowing in the number of WDMC meetings held across NSW. In
December 2008, the new governance structure was proclaimed by the Minister for the then NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI). This announcement had significant implications for the completion of field work. There was a drop in the number of meetings held in 2008 and then a spike from early to mid-2009.

Significantly, there was a perception perpetuated in the public policy literature that WDMC plans existed across NSW. This was not the case. After visiting the then Pest Animals Officer for the then State Council of the Rural Lands Protection Board to collect the ‘missing’ plans, it became apparent, that at that time there was not and never had been a full set of completed and/or current WDMC plans across NSW.

Towards the end of 2009, just over a third of the possible 70 WDMC plans existed. Of these, many were incomplete and in what could generally be described as a ‘parlous’ state. Of these, very few plans were available as electronic copies; some were out-dated and/or replaced by or were only ever simple ‘contracts for work.’ In contrast, the research for this thesis revealed that a number of communities were only marginally involved, while some had publicly ‘walked away,’ yet a ‘signed’ plan was still in existence. Management plans that did exist were mostly available only when physically located across NSW and many were ‘unsigned’ by authorised representatives. In some locations, Rangers had difficulty in locating the plan when requested; the WDMC ‘plan’ was clearly not a priority in some locations and Rangers emphatically said so. WDMC plans were something that was imposed on farmers and RLPBs as ‘yet another’ administrative task by bureaucrats and research scientists within Government Departments. This discovery was unanticipated – and, a time-consuming delay.

Initial scoping inquiries of ‘potential’ farming families revealed a perception by many that they may be penalised by public land managers if their individual concerns were revealed, no matter how carefully participants, stock and geographic details were de-identified. This perception was voiced consistently across a number of NSW geographic locations. This was acknowledged and carefully considered. As a result all meetings were coded and individual sentiments or statements articulated by participants were de-identified and coded.

WDMC is an emotive and very controversial issue in Australia. The farming community especially is not immune to these deep concerns. Very often issues
concerning WDMC touch farm families very deeply (Russell 2006 26-27 July). To facilitate these emotions as they arose would have required professional skills in the context of intensive and private semi-structured interviews.

In contrast, farming families positively encouraged attendance at public WDMC meetings. These invitations snowballed as the thesis developed. Public WDMC meetings very often occur in geographically isolated and mostly closed rural communities. WDMC on public lands is also funded by public money administered through a number of government agencies and authorities as well as through compulsory general rates levied on farm families by individual LHPAs. This in-kind and financial contribution from farming families is significant.

As a result, this thesis is not limited to one particular geographical area in NSW such as 'The Northern Demonstration Site' as first envisaged by the IACRC. A case study with a particular focus on individual participants located in one site could not guarantee anonymity for any of the participants or for the members of WDAs involved and any findings may have been artificially skewed, or, worse still, may have been held to be indicative of WDMC across the whole of NSW – a common complaint directed by many farming families towards ecological studies into wild dogs.

As a consequence, this thesis focuses only on material available in the public domain. The scope of the materials of this thesis is necessarily broad and also includes geographic locations from across NSW. This decision necessitated additional, substantial and lengthy field work across NSW which was further complicated by frequent and sudden delays in meeting dates and generally very short notice of public WDMC meetings across NSW. However, the approach taken to the publicly available but little explored 'materials' and 'artefacts' of WDMC in NSW offers a significant contribution to what hopefully will become a continuing line of social science inquiry into WDMC in NSW as it offers a rich insight into understanding the public policy of WDMC in NSW.

Chapter Outlines

This thesis is divided into six substantive chapters:
Chapter Two examines the historical context of WDMC in NSW. It examines some of the ways in which ecological storylines mostly overlook the history of institutional responses to farm families' concerns over WDMC in NSW; the State's early dependence on the economic and cultural contributions of the wool and sheep industry to the nascent Australian nation; the changed role of the State in WDMC policy; and, the continuing contributions of family farming to Australian agriculture. This Chapter explores these anomalies and argues that, from the 1960s, the State acted progressively to control farm families who participated in WDMC and the methods of WDMC. This was achieved in part through a series of administrative and legislative changes which had significant impacts on the 'voices' of farm families and the grassroots practices of WDMC and, at the same time, heralded the entry of powerful new State actors in WDMC. Taken together, this represented a discursive turn in WDMC in NSW.

Chapter Three examines the political context of WDMC in NSW. It examines storylines of WDMC that emerge from the Parliament of NSW during the years 1995 to 2011 – a period of unbroken NSW Australian Labor Party Government in NSW. Using the search term 'wild dogs' as the unit of its analysis it draws on a sample of 153 parliamentary speeches sourced from the Parliament of NSW Hansard. It argues that the storylines that emerge demonstrate successive parliamentary attempts to forge as 'obvious,' 'true' and even 'necessary' (Epstein 2008:10) 'natural' relationships between WDMC and party political affiliation.

Successive attempts to effect this 'naturalisation' served three functions: First, to enhance the political capital of NSW parliamentary parties – especially Country Labor; second, to affect the administrative control of WDMC; and, third, to secure the scientific and technological voice as the 'expert' voice on WDMC. The cumulative effect of this 'naturalisation' was to contain and conduit farm families' concerns within and through an administrative rationalist discourse and to position the alternative 'voices' of farm families as self-serving and subordinate to the over-arching political contest.

Chapter Four examines the financial expenditures on WDMC. It is particularly concerned with two recurring storylines that were voiced by farm families in public WDMC meetings during this time: First, 'How much money was spent on WDMC in real terms?' and, second, 'Where did the money go? It compares the storylines of
successive NSW Labor Governments against the financial expenditures on WDMC as reported in a survey of the Annual Reports, Financial Statements and allied Reports of six institutional actors charged with affecting WDMC on public lands over this period. Taken together, the Annual Reports, Financial Statements and allied Reports reveal that successive NSW Labor Governments used these Reports to legitimise its claims of financial expenditures to WDMC and to promulgate WDMC policy across NSW.

As a result of this analysis, it argues that these Annual Reports and Financial Statements are best understood not as ‘fact.’ Rather, they are rational instruments which contribute collectively to the process of ‘fact building’ and to the construction of ‘expertise’ within the dominant discourse of WDMC in NSW. The storylines that emanate from the minutia of these Reports reify the administrative rationalist discourse, and over time, reveal more about the production of ‘knowledge’ and ‘taken for granted’ assumptions, the networks, and, relations of power inherent in WDMC than they do about financial expenditures in real terms on WDMC across NSW.

Additionally, while the Audit Reports of the NSW Auditor General temper the storylines of NSW Labor by pointing increasingly to disparities between the dominant storylines of NSW Labor on WDMC and the material reality of WDMC as reported, these observations did not prove sufficient to unseat the administrative rationalist discourse. To the contrary, the process of the Audit Reports contributed to the re-embedding of WDMC within the dominant discourse.

Chapter Five examines the dominant discourse coalition within WDMC in NSW during the period of successive NSW Labor Governments. It argues that the storylines of this discourse coalition pivoted around scientific rationalism, ‘good science’ and ‘the strategic approach.’ It then argues that the ‘strategic approach’ is a deeply problematic approach to the management of people. It argues that the dominant discourse coalition in turn facilitated the entry of new commercial actors in WDMC and the rise of the self-proclaimed ‘growth industry’ as an area of expanding employment in the necessity of further ecological research in WDMC. This ‘growth industry’ privileged a scientific and technological understanding of the ‘problem’ of WDMC wherein the storylines of the marginalised discourse coalition which pivoted on the ‘anecdotal’, the lived experiences and ‘situated knowledges’ of farm families were held subordinate to ‘fact’ and ‘truth.’
Chapter Six examines four contending discourses in turn: ‘new’ environmentalism; agrarianism; animal welfare; and, biosecurity. It argues that the function of the storylines within these competing discourses was threefold: to create meaning and validate action, to mobilise action, and to define alternatives (Hannigan 2006: citing Gelcich et al. 2005: 379). Overall, the Chapter reveals that while the NSW Labor Government privileged ecological science as the authorial voice in WDMC the legitimacy of this authority was strongly contested. This added further complexity to the understanding of the issue of WDMC and, in turn, impacted dramatically on its implementation in NSW.

Chapter Seven

This Chapter examines how the conundrum of WDMC, that is, the twin obligations of the management and control of wild dogs, and, the conservation of the dingo ‘plays out’ in the process of public consultation with farm families across NSW. It examines this declared NSW Government policy objective in light of the findings of extensive field work across NSW completed over the years 2007 – 2009. In all, sixty three public WDMC meetings were attended and all ‘signed off plans up to August 2009 were collected and examined. As a result, three key points emerge:

First, the public policy of WDMC is delivered ‘top down.’ Second, during the period of successive NSW Labor Governments, farming families consistently challenged both the authority of ‘experts’ and public land managers and the legitimacy of NSW WDMC policy. Public WDMC meetings became the site of this discursive struggle. Third, this Chapter challenges the explicit assumption in WDMC policy that wild dog predation on agricultural stock has decreased as a result of State intervention. It reveals a significant disconnect between what the policy literature says happens in WDMC in NSW and what actually happens as it is experienced by farm families in public WDMC meetings and through WDMC plans.

This approach varied markedly from that evidenced in substantive bodies of historical literatures and the then storylines of WDMC. It is to this analysis that the thesis now turns.
Chapter Two:

‘Fleecing the lamb’ - Policy adhockery and amnesia in wild dog management and control

As Dovers (1990) notes, there is a great deal of ‘policy adhockery and amnesia’ in ‘modern policy and institutional responses in regards to the unsustainable use of Australian environments and natural resources’ (Dovers 2000: vii). In this sense, it is possible to see the ways in which ecological storylines mostly overlook the history of institutional responses to farm families’ concerns over WDMC in NSW, the State’s early dependence on the economic and cultural contributions of the wool and sheep industry to the nascent Australian nation, the changed role of the State in WDMC policy and the continuing contributions of family farming to Australian agriculture.

This Chapter explores these anomalies and argues that the State acted progressively to control farm families who participated in WDMC and the methods that were used. This was achieved in part through a series of administrative and legislative changes which had significant impacts on the ‘voices’ of farm families and the grassroots practices of WDMC and, at the same time, heralded the entry of powerful new State actors in WDMC. This Chapter, at times, draws on historical literatures, often quite lengthy in order to represent the full sense of their frustration.

The ‘Golden Fleece’

Punitively, any threats to the nascent State’s ‘golden fleece’ were dealt with harshly. In 1834, for example, in the ‘colony’ of NSW the Scab in Sheep Act was passed. This Act was progressively introduced into all Australian colonies. It imposed penalties on any person who ‘turned out’ any sheep infected with the ‘Scab.’ The penalties were:

in every case he or she shall be liable to forfeit and pay for every such offence a penalty or sum not exceeding ten pounds nor less than twenty shillings together with all reasonable costs and charges to be ascertained by the Justice or Justices before whom the conviction shall take place or if such person so offending shall be a convict under sentence then and in every such case such convict shall if a male be liable to be worked in irons on the roads for any time not exceeding six
months or if a female to be confined in the penitentiary class of the factory or other place duly appointed for the custody of female offenders for any time not exceeding six months or to be kept in solitary confinement on bread and water for any time not exceeding one month (Colony of New South Wales 1832 31 August).

Likewise, Glen and Short (2000), albeit in an ecological study designed to measure the distribution and abundance of dingoes across NSW from 1883 until 1930, collated historical data on bounty payments for dingo scalps across NSW. This study concluded that:

The control of dingoes in New South Wales appears to have been a prerequisite for the success of the sheep industry, and it is likely that the protection of livestock was the major incentive for the eradication of the species from much of the State (Glen and Short 2000: 441).

However, it is also apparent that in most current WDMC public policy literatures there is a notable elision of the historical and instrumental role that the State played in actively encouraging WDMC from the time of colonial settlement wherein it was considered a social and legal ‘duty’ to eradicate dingoes and wild dogs (Bean 1945, Rolls 1969, Rolls 1981, Clendinnen 2003, Grattan 2004).

In NSW, as Glen and Short (2000) found:

The payment of bounties began in 1852 with the introduction of “An Act to Facilitate and Encourage the Destruction of Native Dogs” (Breckwoldt 1988). In 1880, the payment of bounties on noxious species became the responsibility of the Pastures and Stock Protection Boards (later shortened to Pastures Protection Boards) (Glen and Short 2000: 433).

For example, the Armidale Pastures Protection Board in a Statement of Receipts and Expenditure for Year Ended 31 December 1926, reported:

353 Native Dogs and 43 Pups at 20s and 5 s per scalp 308 Pounds 7 shillings and 4 pence (Anon. 1927 8 March).
The cultural representation of 'risk'

In an historic sense, early and pervasive attitudes to dingoes – the terms 'dingo' cum 'wild dog' were used synonymously – were symptomatic of Australia’s cultural circumstance and reflected 'white,' 'Eurocentric' and 'settler' values. Clendinnen (2004), the renowned Australian historian, wrote:

The Australian’s alert, handsome dingos especially caught the dog-loving British eye. In flagrant defiance of an ‘all dogs ashore’ order Phillip had given in Portsmouth, a number of officers had brought their dogs with them on the voyage...Soon after they landed the dog-deprived British were searching the countryside or bartering with dog-rich Australians for dingo puppies...

What happened next could have served as an early warning of deep incompatibilities. John Hunter, studying the dingos as carefully as he studied all the creatures of the new continent, discovered them to be fatally flawed. Despite their noble good looks, they had an ineradicable propensity to kill all and any small animals. Some could even drag down kangaroos...

These nomad dogs knew nothing of the pastoralist’s distinction between ‘stock’ and ‘game’ (Clendinnen 2003: 71 - 72).

This ontology gained increasing currency in Australian literary contributions over time. Henry Kendall’s poetry in the 1850s and 1860s mirrors the contradictions inherent in the binary of dingo-wild dog in the Australian imaginary in poems such as ‘The Warrigal’ (1839), his ode to the concept of ‘The Noble Savage.’ In contrast, in the poem ‘The Hut by the Black Swamp’ Kendall describes the wild dog’s behaviour as outcast avoiding both Aboriginal and Settler:

But rather here the wild-dog halts,
And lifts the paw, and looks and howls (Kendall 2006)

Kendall’s lament, albeit about the ‘native dog,’ serves as an allegory to civilisation. The ‘wild dog,’ because of its innate wildness, is anathema to civilised ‘Man’ and must be conquered.
By the late nineteenth century, the notion of the settler state was firmly entrenched. Australia, as most Australian school children learn by rote, was a pastoral nation ‘Riding on the sheep’s back.’ The wool and sheep industry formed the backdrop of a national identity and the fledgling nation’s national accounts in which graziers and farmers were venerated for their stoicism, conservatism and fierce independence in the face of adversity and hardship.

For example, in a collection of short stories, Barbara Baynton retells the chilling story of the rape and murder of an isolated farmer against the backdrop of a dingo attack on sheep:

“By God!” said the boundary rider, “it’s been a dingo right enough? Eight killed up here and there’s more down there in the creek – a ewe and a lamb, I’ll bet (Baynton 1902: 137).

The acceptance of the dingo’s status as feral and the creation of the iconic ‘dingo fence’ – which was first established in 1914 and ran originally for 8,650 kilometres – as a tool of exclusion, not only entered the Australian lexicon, but also became a representation of farmers’ and settlers’ lived experiences in the Australian ‘Bush.’

The eradication and exclusion of the dingo as ‘canus lupus dingo’ was not surprisingly material when compared to the greater calls of nation building. The survival and future prosperity of the nation depended on the success of the agricultural industry. This pervasive representation entered into the wider Australian cultural psyche. Famous Australian bush storytellers and poets, Henry Lawson and ‘Banjo’ Patterson immortalised ‘the dingo,’ the ‘drover’s dog,’ the ‘mongrel’ or the ‘native’ dog in short stories such as ‘Joe Wilson and his Mates at Dead Dingo’ and poems like ‘The Dying Stockman’ and ‘High Explosive.’

The consolidation of the State’s management of ‘risk’

This period also saw a dramatic rise in the numbers of wild dogs. Reportedly, between 1889 and 1930, 1,232, 644 sheep valued at 44,898 pounds, were killed by dingoes across NSW (Franklin 2008). Glen and Short (2000) reported:
Between 1883 and 1930, 286,398 bounties were paid for dingoes in New South Wales; an average of approximately 6,000 per year (Glen and Short 2000: 434).

In 1902, in NSW, immediately after the creation of a newly federated Australia:

Various Acts (including those with provisions pertaining to pest control) were consolidated into the Pastures Protection Act. This Act created Pastures Protection Districts and Pastures Protection Boards. As a result of amendments through the years, there was further consolidation in 1912 and 1934.

The Pastures Protection Act 1934 operated until 1990. Under the Act noxious animals included rabbits (Oryctolagus cuniculus), wild dogs (including dingoes) (Canus familiaris), feral pigs (Sus scrofa) and, until circa 1995, foxes (Vulpes vulpes). Under that Act the Boards were responsible for, inter alia, the administration of noxious animal control. The Act required occupiers of land (not necessarily the owner) to “fully and continuously suppress and destroy” noxious animals on the land (State Council of Rural Lands Protection Boards 2004 29 June: 2).

It is apparent nonetheless – and the case remains the same today - that there is a lack of a national ‘wild dog’ policy across Australia and that the ‘...management of pest animals such as wild dogs is primarily the responsibility of state and territory governments and individual landholders’ – this is the view of the current Commonwealth Government (Lauder 2011 August).

In 1901, in the newly federated nation, the lack of a uniform national policy was perhaps more a function of the difficulties States faced in achieving uniformity on many issues. Conversely, and speculatively, it could also reflect the acculturation of the discourse so completely into the national consciousness that it did not warrant attention: wild dog control was effectively being handled by the States and its agents: farmers and graziers and their respective organisations.

This relationship was pervasive and is evidenced by a wealth of correspondence carefully preserved since the 1900s by farm families and a number of the remaining WDAs in the North East of NSW, especially the Barnard River Wild Dog Association,

These records collectively bear witness to a common purpose: the management of the wild dog predation on agricultural stock. This understanding was pervasive across NSW. For example, in South East NSW, in 1929, the newly formed Brindabella Dingo Association held a Conference in Canberra. The then, NSW Minister for Lands presided over the meeting and the then Federal Minister of Home Affairs was one of the delegates attending. Discussions revolved around the means of instituting ‘...a united and vigorous campaign of dingo destruction in the Monaro and Southern Tableland’ (Green 2006: 3) region prompted by increased wild dog predation on sheep.

In 1934 at the seventeenth Annual Conference of the Graziers’ Association of New South Wales, a motion was passed:

That the Chief Secretary be asked to rigorously enforce the provisions of the Dog and Goat Act in towns and villages, with a view to minimising the straying dog nuisance (The Graziers' Association of New South Wales 1934).

Though the hybridisation of dingoes was acknowledged across NSW during this time, the distinction between ‘dingo,’ ‘feral,’ ‘hybrid,’ ‘native’ and mongrel was immaterial. The terms were used largely interchangeably in common parlance until the second half of the Twentieth Century.

Intrinsic to the discourse of land management at this time was a robust and well developed land ethic. To be a ‘good’ farmer and a ‘good neighbour’ meant fulfilling the obligation of active wild dog control. Hospitality was expected and extended to the ‘dogger’ in the South East by farm families when ‘he came in from the Bush’ and his knowledge of the land and ‘the dingo’ was, and still is, revered. ‘Bounty payment books,’ ‘scalp record books,’ financial entries in leather bound ledgers of bonuses paid...
to farmers tell this story, although they still languish in many LHPA records across NSW. Similarly, the records of many Native Dog Destruction Boards and WDAs scattered throughout NSW and Australia, many in a poor state of repair, tell of the tasks undertaken in managing the ‘risk’ of wild dogs within small rural communities (Rodgers 1984).

In South East NSW ‘doggers,’ ‘trappers’ and ‘dogmen’ were instrumental in this task. ‘Doggers’ were considered valuable assets to local rural communities and were highly valued for their ‘Bush’ skills and cunning and because they ‘knew’ the dog innately. Bush poets in the South East of NSW still venerate the bush skills of John Coman, a ‘dogger’ in highly treasured poetry. Interviews with ‘doggers’ and collections of photographs are carefully preserved in the National Library of Australia today.

Traditional cultural practices also cemented this discourse of land management. The sense of community is palpable among the representatives of many farm families who attend the annual ‘cut up’ and ‘bait days’ that have been held since the late 1960s throughout North East of NSW in preparation for the aerial bait drop days, initially using fixed wing aircraft. Wild Dog Associations have met annually for over fifty years in North East NSW at ‘cut up’ and ‘bait days.’ At these gatherings, the respective Presidents update and inform the communities of their concerns regarding WDMC. In this way, not only does the community act to manage the ‘risk’ of wild dogs but it is a place where leaders receive legitimacy for the practical task at hand as well as reaffirming their mandate to continue representing their community in public forums. In this way, as Parkinson (2006) writes more generally of legitimacy:

Legitimation depends not just on consent processes, but on having claims made in public speech acts or on the unspoken, symbolic acts which leaders use to establish legitimacy’ (Parkinson 2006: 25).

The rise of ecological science

In contrast, the historical practices of farm families are often positioned in the ecological literature as contributing to the increase in wild dog predation across NSW through the ‘interference’ of farm families in the Australian ‘ecosystem’ (Purcell 2010). From the 1960s, this represented a significant discursive shift.
In 1954, the Honorary Secretary of the Barnard River Native Dog Destruction Association wrote to the Graziers Association of NSW offering assistance with a questionnaire. He wrote:

The General Secretary  
NSW Graziers Association of NSW  
Dear Sir,

The reference to Science to Help Kill Off Dingo Muster of Sept 8th 1953

I have been requested by the 40 odd members of the our Dingo Destruction Assn, to write you, requesting that you post to me at the earliest opportunity, 3 copies of the Questionnaires, as prepared by Dr N.W. G. Macintosh, Reader in Anatomy at the Sydney University.

Many of our members have had a wide practical experience with dingoes over many years and feel it possible they might be able to help the learned Doctor, by endeavouring to fill in some of the gaps (sic) in his present knowledge on the subject (Barnard River Native Dog Destruction Association 1954 27 January).

It is not apparent if this offer was in response to concerns regarding mooted restrictions on WDMC. Macintosh, an anatomist and anthropologist, was interested in the scientific study of dingoes and reportedly bred a colony of forty two dingoes in the animal house of the Anderson Stuart Building of the University of Sydney while his wife, Ann, was tasked with exercising them daily in the grounds of the University (Witton 2013 12 March).

However, from this time, it is apparent that the historical ‘voices’ of farm families in WDMC in NSW are frequently subject to erasure or subversion in the policy literature and that the relationship with the ‘learned Doctors’ of ‘science’ rapidly deteriorated.

In juxtaposition, there is a substantial body of literature – letters, newspaper articles, official correspondence, statistical records, reports, minutes of WDAs, Wild Dog Control Boards, Pastures Protection Boards, farming organisations across NSW - that is held by farm families and by farm organisations from this time that evidences
significant concerns regarding the increases in the numbers of wild dogs, concerns over the State led bans on various methods of control such as the removal of fixed wing aeroplanes and, in the late 1960s, the ban on the use of 1080. Allied to these concerns, were the ongoing concerns of farm families regarding the absence of wildlife which they attributed directly to wild dogs and the management of wild dogs cum dingoes in National Parks.

This substantial body of correspondence and the replies from Government Departments and Ministers of the Crown, bear testament both to the entry of new State actors in WDMC and to the significant powers these Government Departments and Agencies now exercised in determining not only when, where and how WDMC should occur, but, if. In this way, it is apparent that public land managers now held significant sway over the material wellbeing and the daily lives of farm families. This was an anathema to farm families and was strongly resisted.

At the same time, this literature also witnesses the progressive gazettal of National Parks, Wilderness Areas and Reserves and the concerns individual farm families held over the lack of wild dog control and the increasing reluctance of public land managers to aerially bait areas previously baited. Meetings of Wild Dog Destruction Boards were held across NSW to discuss these unfolding events (North Coast and Tablelands, Central Tablelands et al. 1972 28 July). This change in land use resulted in significant animosity and a further deterioration in the relationships between farm families, their representative organisations and public land managers; the feeling of antagonism is almost palpable through the pages.

There is a pervasive sense in the replies to the letters sent, particular throughout the 1970s, and 1980s that the new public land managers ‘knew best’ and in particular that they were not adverse to threatening to exercise their new legislative powers to refuse WDMC and to prosecute individual farm families. NSW NPWS and State Forests are the two organisations which feature most commonly in this regard.

However, more significantly, this correspondence evidences changes in the ways Government Departments and Agents viewed the concerns of farm families as subordinate to the conservation of the dingo. Allied to this, Government Departments and agents now viewed anecdotal evidence and the experiences of farm families of
surrounding lands - in many cases the same lands public land managers now administered - as anecdotal and hence not ‘factual.’ ‘Fact’ could now only be ascertained by ‘science’ and, in particular, by ecological studies.

Allied to this rejection of local knowledge, there are significant holdings of documents that bear testament to proactive, community based attempts to lobby politically relevant NSW Ministers about the establishment of National Parks and the effect of this on WDMC. These campaigns were orchestrated by farm families, Wild Dog Associations, Pastures Protection Boards and Native Dog Destruction Boards and local Councils along the Great Diving Range - a range that divides the east coast from the inland - in order to affect the control of wild dogs.

In 1972, for example, the North Coast and Tablelands Dingo Destruction Board wrote to the then Minister for Lands stating:

Reference is made to your letter of 14\textsuperscript{th} March, 1972, concerning a proposed meeting of all Dingo Boards in the State to discuss the establishment of National Parks and the problem of dingo destruction therein.

In December, 1969, the Board wrote letters to five State Members whose electorates or parts thereof are embraced within this Dingo district, and to the Minister for Agriculture, expressing concern that dingoes are to be allowed to roam at large in areas such as National Parks, and requesting that each took the matter up with the appropriate Minister.

A total of six replies were received from the Minister for Lands through the various Parliamentary representatives approached. The six such replies were all worded exactly the same.

The Board also directed a protest to the Council of Advice last year and the Council advised that it had already written to the Minister taking objection to what appears to be the policy of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and intends to pursue the matter. To date nothing further has been heard (Fryer 1972 5 April: 1).
From the 1970s until today, there is also significant evidence of legal advice being sought, the challenge to and the rejection of the authority of NSW NPWS and State Forests and a growing lack of trust in ‘science’ and, in particular, a rejection of the ecological science of wild dogs which was now viewed as being a highly politicised instrument of Government and one that was resulted in material harm to the lives of farming families. Equally, this political agenda was felt to emanate from within the Parliamentary corridors of the then NSW Labor Government. There are significant reasons for this.

In 1976, the then Premier, Neville Wran held a Seminar on Dingoes in Sydney. This aim of this Seminar was reported to Dingo Destruction Boards as being:

- to present a forum to discuss the use of poison for controlling dingoes...Papers will be delivered on the scientific and legal aspects of poisoning dingoes and this will be followed by a panel discussion involving representatives of dingo destruction boards, pastures protection boards, stockowners and relevant conservation bodies (Watts 1976 21 July:1).

At this seminar, the then Chief Scientific Officer of National Parks and Wildlife Service made the position of National Parks clear.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service regards the dingo as an integral part of the Australian native ecosystem and has not made any attempt to eradicate these dogs from any National Park or Nature Reserve...

Wild dogs (including dingoes) are declared noxious animals under the Pastures Protection Act (1972). Under this Act, the owner or occupier of land is required to continuously suppress and destroy all noxious animals on his property...

The National Parks and Wildlife Service is not an owner or occupier under the terms of this Act. However, since some areas of the Service estate can harbour wild dogs which feed on nearby flocks, the Service is considered to have a moral obligation to assist landholders to reduce stock losses due to predation by dogs from within Parks and Reserves, providing that this assistance does not significantly prejudice the values of the Park or Reserve. This has one obvious
implication: if the Service will not assist landholders in this area, then the rural community will become prejudiced against attempts by the Service to acquire further lands which harbour dogs. This could seriously in turn prejudice the acquisition of further lands for National Parks and Nature Reserves...

Dog baiting within National Parks and Nature Reserves has always been restricted to low density strip baiting on park perimeters, with baits placed, where possible, by hand. The baiting from fixed wing aircraft has never been practiced. Within a few days of the distribution of baits, the areas were inspected, dog carcasses and untreated baits were taken and destroyed...

It is considered that the poison 1080 is the best available tool in control of wild dogs in these situations, and that the evidence indicates that the poison, as used against dogs within National Parks is specific, humane, effective and non polluting (stet)... (Giles 1976: 1 - 4).

In 1977, the Premier of NSW, Neville Wran and NSW Labor Senator Mulvihill became the patron and co-patron of the Australian Native Dog Training Society of NSW Ltd (Maguire 1977). This confirmed the perception held by many farming families that the Premier was 'pro-dingo' and 'anti-farming families' and was a complete anathema to the farm families who participated in good faith in the 'Seminar on the Dingo' in the belief that the process would be 'fair.' From this point on, the relationship between the then NSW Labor Government and farm families and their representatives deteriorated rapidly.

Later in 1977, this situation was further exacerbated when Premier Neville Wran failed to intervene in a case to prevent the breeding of dingoes in captivity in direct contravention of NSW law (Moss Vale Pastures Protection Board 1977 8 August). Much to the consternation of the Pastures Protection Boards it was felt that any attempt to intervene directly with the NSW Department of Agriculture in this case would result in intervention by the Premier. This further incensed Pastures Protection Boards, WDAs and Dingo Destruction Boards across NSW (Young 1977 8 August).

In 1986, the Chairman of the then Lower North Coast and Tablelands Wild Dog Control Board in a response to the Review of Wild Dog Control in Eastern NSW, whose terms
of reference at the time did not include the abolition of Wild Dog Control Boards, wrote a long response to suggested changes. The correspondence is worthy of repetition as it indicates the concerns held. The Chairman wrote:

The Abolition of the Wild Dog Control Board to be replaced, with suitable changes to the Act, by a Wild Dog Control Council under the guidance of other Government Departments (sic) – Pastures Protection Boards who we will still have to finance with levies (as we do now) and the Government subsidies distributed to Associations for use in Wild Dog Control, to my mind, is no more than what we have at present except that Departments have, or would, increase their control without being interfered by one body of Ratepayer/Landholder Representatives...

...This really says loud and clear that there is something definitely wrong with policies and methods used, and for the same advisers, (sic) more or less, to recommend that Wild Dog Control Board’s be abolished really takes the cake and, in my view, calls for every effort for the retention of Boards to endeavour to put the Dog Problem back to where it was before all this rot began.

The Review Committee, to my mind, was a very unbalanced and one sided affair and points to the beginning to moves to abolish, as much as possible, grower representative bodies (sic). The whole exercise really collected some very interesting poets and figures (sic). However the facts which we are really only interested in are the results of success of Wild Dog Control and clearly this is not happening as I have already pointed out.

I can see great problems with increases in Wilderness and National Park areas and unless Departments who are responsible can control build up’s and escapes of wild dogs, which I feel is impossible, as always the main breeding grounds have been along the Dividing Range and such unoccupied lands.
A divide and conquer situation does exist here in which landholders, without legislative power, will be denied a voice in their efforts to control wild dogs and protect their livelihood.

The Directors and myself request you to reconsider the legislation currently being processed in order that the abolition of Wild Dog Control Boards is not enacted, and, in particular, the retention of this Wild Dog Control Board (Landers 1986: 2).

In 1986, the Unsworth led NSW Labor Government abolished most Wild Dog Control Boards across NSW. Farm families and their organisations from this time lacked a direct voice in WDMC other than through farm organisations that had carriage of a much larger and broader set of farming issues. This decision robbed farm families of a representative organisation entirely devoted to dingo cum wild dog control, with the exception of the Dingo Destruction Board in the Western Division of NSW which was retained.

In 1989, the NSW Labor Government abolished the Pastures Protection Board system across NSW. It was replaced by the NSW Rural Lands Protection Board Act 1989.

In 2010, the Rural Lands Protection Boards were abolished. This was replaced by the Livestock Health and Pest Authority. The effect of this change in small rural communities was immediate. Significantly, the number of Boards declined from 47 to 14 across NSW. Pastures Protection Boards, known commonly as ‘PP Boards’ had existed across NSW since 1934. Rural Lands Protection Boards were responsible for, inter alia, the administration of noxious animal control (State Council of Rural Lands Protection Boards 2004 29 June: 2). The task on WDMC fell now to the LHPA.

The pervasive and progressive influence of the State in WDMC over the Twentieth Century is also apparent in other ways. For example, the State-driven incentives for the scalping, and/or removal of backbones, tails and/or hind legs as the only acceptable ‘proof’ for payment was driven by and at the behest of Government Departments and its agents (Pastures Protection Board 1934, Bean 1945, Barnard River Dingo Destruction Association 1969 28 October, Elder 2000).
In 1945, for example, C.W. Bean, Australia’s First World War historian, wrote:

There are dogs, though it is not generally known, on the hills thick enough to-day not one hundred miles from Sydney. There are dogs by the hundred across the border in South Australia. In almost all far Western runs there is a dingo or two in the back paddocks. But a man is generally kept dogging, and the boundary rider gets a few pounds out of occasional scalps. There was a time when a scalp meant the two ears of a dog and the forehead between. They paid a pound for each scalp. In those days a Chinaman came to a certain run outback. He asked to be taken on as a dogger. They engaged him, and he disappeared for the time being, out into one of the far paddocks. Presently he brought in a scalp; and then another and another, and then scalps every week. Nobody knew there were many dogs about; nobody else saw the dogs. But the Chinaman was bringing in whole mobs of scalps. In the end someone examined the scalps. They found that when he killed one dog he manufactured about twenty scalps out of him – ears and all. They were fine art. But after that they altered the rule. A scalp since that date has meant a strip of skin cut from the tip of the nose right down the back to the tail. You cannot manufacture two backbones out of one dog (Bean 1945: 31).

Likewise, the ‘capture and release’ of wild dogs for ecological research, the large expense involved (Allen 2006, Honan 2008 8 January) and the potential ‘risk’ this practice creates to confirm what farm families and particularly, trappers, already ‘knew’ – that wild dogs were not confined to ‘home’ runs - was a cause of much angst among farming communities and represented hard fought campaigns.

The uneven NSW NPWS allocation of ‘electric’ or ‘dog’ fencing along the boundaries of public lands for which farm families were expected - and still are - to bear the prohibitive maintenance costs as well as the public opprobrium over its disrepair are still methods of WDMC promoted by Government Departments (2001 17 December). However, the selective allocation of ‘electric’ fences is the source of considerable dissention and cynicism in farming communities.
For example, in 2006, after a documented letter writing campaign to NSW NPWS over many years requesting material for the extension of an electric fence, one farmer reported that:

The following week, after becoming a State Councillor, we received a letter from .........., congratulating me on my appointment and also to inform us that we had been successful in our fencing application. So it is a coincidence? Like I say, you don’t like to think the world works like that (Marshall 2006: 61).

The ‘off again/on again’ ban on the use of 1080, the reduction in bait quantities and rates and the active promotion of the chemical toxin PAPP, a product which is not available and is under review by the APVMA in Australia, are further examples of the long reach of Government, science, public land managers and industry (Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre 2010, Meat & Livestock Australia 2012) in affecting control over the farm families and practices involved in WDMC in NSW.

Yet, these practices are often contained within storylines that pivot around assumptions of farm family ignorance and the ‘risk’ this poses to ‘the’ environment. The ‘problem’ of WDMC is implicitly presented as the ‘problem’ of dealing with alternatively the greed, ignorance and apathy of farm families. In this storyline farm families are implicitly situated as ‘profit maximisers’ in the face of the ‘common good.’ In this way, ecological storylines often implicitly position farm families, who engage in WDMC and who may hold different values, as the outsiders by virtue of the fact that still engage in WDMC at all. In these storylines farming family values are often held to be synonymous with agrarian ideals.

However, as Botterill (2009) points out, agrarianism is often held by rural sociologists to be ‘both nebulous and malleable’ and ‘can be used rhetorically for apparently contradictory purposes (Beus and Dunlap 1994; see, for example, Halpin and Martin 1996:21)’ (Botterill 2009: 60). Botterill (2009) concedes citing Stehlik (1996):

To many of us ‘the bush’ evokes a natural, pristine essentially good place which may be less than the city we live in, but somehow it is still morally our national conscience. We respond emotionally to the ideology of the pioneering spirit, the
challenge against the unknown, the concept of ‘the rural’ (Botterill 2009: 63).

Overall, the more recent critiques of agrarianism often miss comments made in the latter half of the original critique of agrarianism by Flinn and Johnson (1974) wherein they conceded:

Our analysis has spoken of the agrarian creed without much quantification, but there is certainly no implication that agrarian ideology is monolithic. Farmers disagree among themselves on many matters and their disagreements find public expression. In addition, agrarianism may be held with varying degrees of specificity and intensity (Flinn and Johnson 1974: 200).

It is easy to stereotype the issue of WDMC as simply an example of an agrarian storyline writ large which is ‘still’ perpetuated by farm families unnecessarily. However, this critique misses the point: there is a material reality of wild dog predation — wild dogs are predatory animals that maim, maul, harass and kill sheep, cattle and goats and this has enormous repercussions on the lives of farm families.

Importantly, this critique also misses the point, that WDMC is an activity which is intensely political and one which has enormous social ramifications on the lives of farm families and their communities.

Consecutively, NSW Government and Commonwealth Reports found that:

Rural communities bear the immediate, and often horrific, impact of feral animals. However, this does not mean that feral animal control can be seen simply as a rural problem. Indeed, the presence in urban areas of feral animals that are traditionally linked with the bush is becoming an increasing occurrence (General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 2002: x).

As well as the financial impact, feral animals can have a debilitating social impact on farming families and communities that have to deal with the consequences of feral animal attacks on farming stock (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2005: xii).
From the 1960s, farm families across NSW reported dramatic increases in the numbers of wild dog attacks on agricultural stock. In a privately commissioned survey, the Monaro Landholders Wild Dog Committee found:

that in the past 12 months, 62 landholders lost 2892 sheep, total costs in stock and production loss, time and associated items being $238,305 – an average farm loss of $6,621. Losses prior to the last 12 months, $1.3 million ($36,000 per farm). 23,000 ha are no longer used for sheep production. The above statistics were tabled at a meeting held with NPWS in Cooma on 25th June 2001 (Litchfield, Garnock et al. 2001 10 October: 1).

In the Adaminaby and Yaouk Valley, between 1993 and 2003, the number of sheep killed and injured reported by NSW NPWS was as follows:

Table 2.1 Adaminaby/Yaouk Sheep Losses 1993 – 2003*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Sheep killed</th>
<th>Sheep injured</th>
<th>Numbers of dogs trapped/shot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>376</td>
<td></td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>784</td>
<td></td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>124</td>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Figures compiled using figures tabled in Adaminaby/Yaouk Wild Dog Meeting Group Meeting 30/04/08 Minutes by NSW NPWS.
Notably, however, these figures were far from complete as they represent figures from only one agency, NSW NPWS (Adaminaby/Yaouk Cooperative Wild Dog Management Plan October 2007 - October 2013 (Version 2)) and are at best indicative.

In 2004, a farmer from the Yaouk Valley reported:

Trying to make a living out of sheep in the Yaouk Valley has nearly become impossible. Over the last six months I have lost to wild dogs 110 ewes and lambs and...678 sheep over the years. Since aerial baiting was stopped in the late nineties a large build up of dogs have occurred in the Parks surround the Yaouk Valley. Seven dogs have been seen this last week and quite a few heard howling. It’s not a pretty sight to go into your paddocks each morning to find lambs, dead, torn about, half eaten, still staggering about and you have to destroy them and as often as it happens to you it’s a sight you can never get use (stet) to. Many tears are shed and a sick feeling in the gut knowing its going to happen again and again (Kennedy 2004, 10 May: 1, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2005: 41).

During this time, farm families complained consistently that stock losses as well as ‘destocked’ land as a direct result of wild dog predation, were not recorded or not recorded accurately in Departmental and Agency statistics, that GIS mapping was consistently incomplete and that information disappeared into a ‘black hole’ within either the NSW NPWS, NSW DPI or State Forests bureaucracy. Complaints were repeatedly voiced, that these concerns were not recorded in wild dog meeting minutes despite repeated requests to amend written records; some farm families claimed that even getting their concerns onto the agendas of public meetings was difficult and that information from ‘FeralBase’ – a NSW NPWS recording system – was not released, released selectively and were incorrect (Marshall 2006).

In 2002, the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry heard consistent evidence from farm families across NSW of difficulties in the reporting of attacks even to their own RLPBs and continuing difficulties in accessing assistance from Government Departments and Agent. Additionally, farm families reported intense levels of personal and family stress (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2005: 211 - 215).
Subsequently, the House of Representatives Standing Committee found:

That the economic impacts of pest animals can be assessed at two levels. The first is the level of scientific research, which seeks to quantify the economic cost of pest animals across Australia.

The second level is the experience of individual farmers, families and communities experiencing problems with pest animals. Many of the submissions received by the committee discussed the enormous economic, physical and psychological cost of having to deal with pest animal problems. The committee notes that these individual accounts are equally as important as scientific research in attempting to understand the cost to Australia of the pest animal problem (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2005: 36).

However, the Terms of Reference of both Inquiries – the NSW and Commonwealth – technically precluded the reporting of the social impacts on farm families of wild dog predation on agricultural stock. Each Committee ‘stretched’ its Terms of Reference to include these impacts. For example, the NSW Inquiry’s Terms of Reference were:

1) the damage caused by feral animals to the environment across all land tenures;
2) the current and future threat of feral animals to native flora and fauna across all land tenures, including national parks, private land holdings, other publicly owned land etc;
3) the adequacy of current practices and resources for feral animal control;
4) improvements for current practices, and alternative solutions for feral animal control; and
5) any other relevant matters (General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 2002: 1).

In contrast, the Terms of Reference of the House of Representatives Inquiry, perhaps now cognizant of the growing angst and political imbroglio that defined WDMC across Australia as a result of consistent and persistent lobbying by farm families, were a little broader.
However, even here the Terms of Reference focused primarily on the management of the State/Federal relationship in WDMC. The Terms of Reference were:

1. To identify nationally significant pest animal issues and consider how existing Australian and State government processes can be better linked for more coordinated management of these issues across State boundaries.

2. To consider the approaches to pest animal issues across all relevant jurisdictions, including:
   - Prevention of new pest animals becoming established;
   - Detection and reporting systems for new and established pest animals;
   - Eradication of infestations (particularly newly established species or ‘sleeper’ populations of species which are considered to be high risk) where feasible and appropriate; and
   - Reduction of the impact of established pest animal populations

3. Consider the adequacy of State Government expenditure on pest animal control in the context of other conservation and natural resource management priorities, with particular reference to National Parks.

4. Consider the scope to promote community understanding of and involvement in pest animals and their management (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2005).

Yet, despite the limitations of the Terms of Reference, separately, each Report remarked on the enormous toll that wild dog predation was having on farm families and rural communities:

The committee notes with concern the terrible social impact that pest animals are having on rural families and communities. This is manifested in a number of ways: through the physical and psychological stress of having to deal with pest
problems, distress caused by constantly witnessing attacks on livestock and family pets, and in some cases the heartbreak of having to leave family properties due to a combination of drought, pest animals and weeds, and other problems (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2005: 35).

Allied to this, in 2006, in a small purposive sample of farmers affected by wild dog predation, Marshall (2006) reported:

In order to gain some point of reference of the degree of the personal impact of wild dog predation I asked participants to rate it against another significant event in their lives, for them to assign it a value of between 0 to ten; ten being the highest. I was aware that all participants were in a seven year drought period and several had been burnt out by bushfires. In each case wild dog predation rated at either a ‘nine’ or a ‘ten’ ‘...You couldn’t get anyone to help...The dog situation is by far the most difficult. Everybody could see the fire – the damage. Not everybody has got a trained eye to see the significance of the dog, the impact of the dog’ (Marshall 2006: 43).

In direct contrast to claims from NSW NPWS that improvements were being made in WDMC in the Brindabella Wee Jasper Valley of NSW, many farm families and RLPBs presented systematic evidence of intense and continuing wild dog predation across many other parts of NSW. These losses were far from insignificant.

In 2008, Kempsey RLPB reported the following stock losses:
Table 2.2 Reported Cattle Losses in Kempsey RLPB 2000 – 2008*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cattle Killed</th>
<th>Stock Mauled</th>
<th>Wild dogs Killed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1170</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>1343</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>793</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>952</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>934</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>934</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>911</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>1015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8325</td>
<td>3280</td>
<td>5718</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Figures Compiled from Kempsey RLPB reports

Notably, these figures represent only officially reported losses. They do not include sheep, goats and deer. Of the cattle numbers officially reported eighty to ninety per cent were calves. These figures indicate the significant and continuing wild dog predation across parts of NSW.

It is also apparent that there is too, a notable ‘amnesia’ or elision evident in the government WDMC policy literature regarding the interactions between farm families, government agents and the formulation of WDMC policy and its implementation during the time of successive NSW Governments. These interactions were bitter and intensely fought contests that pitched government agents and farm families as antagonists in a ‘bloody’ battle.

In 2007, at the NSW Wild Dog Summit held in Orange NSW one farmer publicly recalled her experiences:

I am a sixth generation farmer. We farmed in South Gippsland, Monaro and the Bega Valley. Our main enterprise has always been sheep and wool. I come from a strong, supportive, rural community which has a deep sense of connection with the land of which little is understood outside this community. This rural community has a culture of which little reaches the public domain and of which even less is understood in terms of the management of wild dogs. My husband’s
people controlled the wild dogs of this region since the 1820’s. Historically, the Green family controlled wild dogs by taking a horse into the bush and strychnine baiting it once a year in a strategic and specific area at a specific time of the year. That was referred to as wild dog control. When I married I moved to the Bemboka area and I lived on that property with my husband for ten years before we were affected by wild dogs. By 1986 we had experienced a progressive dismantling of the Dingo Destruction Board and the removal of fixed wing aerial baiting...Wild dog control moved from traditional hands into the hands of agency staff and scientists, all of whom discredited our experience and knowledge. Suddenly farmers knew nothing and were nothing. Between 1986 and 1996 we lost 2,000 sheep to wild dog predation. We ran 1,000 wethers in our back county. One year we ran 800 ewes and lost the lot to wild dogs. And, for those who don’t realise already, it’s not just about the money. Over that period it was a very stressful time... Wild dog control was peripheral control on public land. The dogs just kept coming. In 1996 we decided to sell what sheep we had and it’s still a very vivid memory seeing the last truck go out to the abattoirs. And so ended several generations of fine wool breeding. So then we turned our hand to cattle production believing we’d fare a better chance with cattle. But the dog trapper told us the dogs would keep coming and they did. We had cows attacked and calves eaten and the hopelessness of it became very apparent. No one listened and no one cared (Green 2007).

However, in highly ‘sanitised’ paragraphs in much of the WDMC policy literature and particularly across wild dog plans that exist, the collective and frequently bitter memories of farm families regarding institutional responses to the reporting of wild dog predation and unfulfilled requests for assistance are omitted completely or relegated to ‘history.’

The public policy literature in this sense excises the historical institutional policies and practices from the official storylines of WDMC. This in turn downplays any enduring legacy and masks any WDMC conflicts as ‘new’ and/or as being managed successfully by the State. In this way, the purchase of the storyline of agrarianism in explaining the issue of WDMC is by itself limited.
Rather, the power of any critique of WDMC lies in the juxtaposition of storylines of agrarianism with other storylines; that is, how the agrarian storylines are contested. For example, how the storylines of ecological science are subverted within an agrarian storyline and then how the agrarian storylines are then subverted or silenced within ecological storylines. In this way, storylines serve different purposes from that which was intended by the original discourse. Overwhelmingly, many of the ecological storylines of WDMC downplay, if not, omit the actual horror of the experience of wild dog predation and the effects this has on the social fabric of the lives of farm families. Yet, this is a pivotal agrarian storyline of WDMC. In 2006, Russell found:

Actual dog attacks are described in horrific terms and as highly sensual and perceptual events. The detailed telling of the experience is mutually created and fashioned anew at every telling and hearing. Yet few want to hear the actual story. Government agencies seek to dismiss the events as hysterical exaggerations; industry bureaucrats see the socio-economic impact as minimal; and neighbouring landholders don’t want to be confronted with detailed descriptions for fear of ‘infection’ (Russell 2006 26-27 July: 1).

In this way, ecological storylines that do not acknowledge the social impacts on farm families of wild dog predation on agricultural stock rob farm families of a voice and a language with which to speak and subordinate the power of alternative discourses that pivot on different ‘ways of knowing,’ understanding, and experiencing WDMC. As Russell (2006) writes:

The ambiguous, contradictory, and mythic qualities of the experience challenge the taken-for-granted managerial style and question the rational understanding of both problem and proposed solution (Russell 2006 26-27 July: 4).

Thus, the focus on ‘new’ innovations in a science and technology discourse, a ‘tools-in the-toolbox’ approach, is misplaced – WDMC in NSW is about people. It is little surprise that in public forums and WDMC meetings that the rejections of personal accounts of WDMC are so keenly felt and so fiercely contested by farm families. This is synonymous with a rejection of their ontological existence, that is, the multiple ways farm families personally experience WDMC, their knowledge’s of it, their cumulative suffering, losses and stressors.
The rejection of ‘new’ technologies is far more easily explained – many farm families and trappers report they do not work. For example, in 2011, the National Farmers’ Federation (NFF) commented:

National Parks and Wildlife Service news release of 5th October 2010 titled ‘New tool in battle against feral dogs and foxes’ highlights the success of M44 ejectors technique on the basis of some field trials. While the introduction and use of any new technique that will effectively control the wild dog attacks is welcome, it may be premature to claim a high success rate in controlling wild dogs by the use of M44 ejectors, as they have been proven ineffective by experienced pest animal controllers (National Farmers’ Federation 2011 11 February: 10 - 11).

Irrespective of the answers to these questions, the ‘conservation’ focus of NSW Labor through NSW NPWS proceeded. This resulted in an exponential increase in the number of ecological studies on dingoes which appear to have been funded by the NSW NPWS and various academic institutions whose mandate was ‘conservation;’ albeit that some of these studies were not conducted in NSW. These studies were not concerned with the eradication of wild dogs per se yet in a policy sense were broadly ‘lumped’ under the rubric of ‘natural resource management’ of which WDMC was now considered officially at least a part.

Overall, the period of successive NSW Labor Governments reinforced the storyline that the policy and the implementation of WDMC had changed. The issue was now defined differently by the State which vested authority in ecological science and looked to ‘new’ technological innovations for ‘solutions’ in a ‘tools in the toolbox’ approach to the management of people. The task of implementing WDMC was now delegated to public land managers and while ostensibly this was conveniently devolved to the ‘local’ it was circumscribed and directed from the ‘top’ down. Yet, publicly at least, the myth of best practice particularly through the promotion of the Brindabella Wee Jasper Valley Wild Fox and Dog Plan dominated the policy literature. However, the reality of how this ‘played out’ at the political level is somewhat different and it is to this that the next Chapter turns.
Chapter Three:

‘So what’s political about wild dogs?’ - The political ‘warp and woof’ of wild dog management and control in NSW

This Chapter examines the storylines of WDMC that emerge from the Parliament of NSW during the years 1995 to 2011 – a period of unbroken NSW Australian Labor Party (NSW ALP) Government in NSW. Using the search term ‘wild dogs’ as the unit of its analysis this Chapter draws on a sample of 153 parliamentary speeches drawn from the Parliament of NSW Hansard during the years 1995-2011 – the 16 years of successive NSW Labor Government.

The purposive sample drew on 153 ‘wild dog’ speeches out of a population of 306 ‘wild dog’ speeches. These speeches were made by Members of successive NSW Parliaments from both the major and minor parties in both the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly in NSW delivered across the period of 1995-2011. All 306 speeches were examined. The criterion used for inclusion in the purposive sample was that the content of the speeches must relate specifically to NSW WDMC. For example, speeches relating to ‘performance circus animals bans,’ interstate veterinary practitioners’ and ‘companion animals welfare’ were excluded using this criteria. The sample of ‘wild dog’ speeches were delivered during Questions without Notice, Questions on Notice, Second and Third Readings of various Bills, Matters of Public Importance, Private Members Statements, House Business Papers, Committee Reports, Notices of Motions and Orders of the Day, and Adjournment Debates. Speeches were analysed across each year of NSW Labor Government and then across the entire period of 1995-2011. The sample contains speeches from members of all the significant parties. These parties included the Australian Labor Party, the Liberals, The Nationals, the Greens, the Shooters Party (renamed the Shooters and Fishers Party in 2011), the Christian Democratic Party, the Australian Democrats (although this period also represented the demise of the Australian Democrats in the NSW Parliament) and the Outdoor Recreation Party. During this period, as Clune and Smith (2012) write:

the Independents and minor parties shared a parliamentary division of labour, with Independents winning seats in the Legislative Assembly and minor parties
claiming seats exclusively in the Legislative Council’ (Clune and Smith 2012: 45 - 46).

The importance of the minor parties acting in coalition with NSW Labor and the Liberals and The Nationals, or acting in coalition with other minor parties, and particularly the ability of the minor parties in the Legislative Council to block the legislative agenda of NSW Labor, provides another insight into the meaning of NSW WDMC. For example, in 2002, a number of the minor parties acting in concert with the Liberals and Nationals – the Shooters Party; the Outdoor Recreation Party and the Christian Democratic Party – ‘forced’ the introduction of the Game Bill by holding NSW Labor to ransom in the Legislative Council over the introduction of the Appropriation Bills (Rhiannon 2002 27 June: 3958). This legislation then allowed licenced hunters to shoot feral animals on public lands; a right previously largely denied.

It is noteworthy therefore that the storylines that emerged from the parliamentary speeches demonstrated successive parliamentary attempts to forge as ‘obvious,’ ‘true’ and even ‘necessary’ (Epstein 2008:10) ‘natural’ relationships between WDMC and party political affiliation. Successive attempts to effect this ‘naturalisation’ served three functions: First, to enhance the political capital of NSW parliamentary parties – especially ‘Country Labor;’ second, to affect the administrative control of WDMC; and, third, to secure the scientific and technological voice as the ‘expert’ voice on WDMC.

**Administrative Rationalism**

Overall this naturalisation was predicated on a discourse of administrative rationalism which as a ‘problem-solving discourse’ (Dryzek 1997:74) attempts to ‘render its subject-matter homogeneous, hence manageable’ (Paehlke and Torgerson 2005:15). According to Dryzek (1997), administrative rationalism comprises four central tenets: liberal capitalism and the administrative State are unchallenged as the ‘rightful’ basis of the State; individuals are subordinate to ‘experts’ and managers; the State is a benign power which acts in the common interest – people have agency although technical experts and managers have more; and the ‘administrative mind’ manages risk and enacts policy on a ‘needs’ basis with certain knowledge and authority – although its response may be piecemeal (Dryzek 1997:74-75).
This thesis argues that within the dominant discourse in NSW WDMC of administrative rationalism that 'nature' and 'wild dogs' are currently understood and afforded meaning within a prevailing scientific 'paradigm' (Kuhn 1996). Kuhn describes a scientific 'paradigm' as sharing two characteristics: First, it attracts an '...enduring group of adherents away from competing modes of scientific activity.' Second, it is '...sufficiently open ended to leave all sorts of problems for the redefined group of practitioners' (Kuhn 1996: 10). Further, as Kuhn writes:

> When the individual scientist can take a paradigm for granted, he [sic] need no longer, in his major works, attempt to build his field anew, start from first principles and justifying the use of each concept introduced (Kuhn 1996: 18-19).

Importantly, this current reliance in NSW WDMC policy on scientific 'experts' and 'new technologies' within the dominant administrative rationalist discourse has methodological consequences because 'literally an epistemology is a theory of knowledge' (Marsh and Furlong 2002: 19). However, as Fischer (1993) writes:

> 'The theory of technocracy, a variant of elite theory, refers to a governance process dominated by technically trained knowledge elites. The function of the technocratic elite is to replace or control democratic deliberation and decision-making processes (based on conflicting interests) with a more technocratically informed discourse (based on scientific decision-making techniques). The result is the transformation of political issues into technically defined ends that can be pursued through administrative means (Fischer 1993: 22).

This methodological dependence had real consequences for farming families who were experiencing wild dog predation on their agricultural stock. These consequences are explored at length in Chapter Five and Chapter Six.

**The role of the State**

The concepts of *articulation* and *interpellation* are useful heuristics in this interpretative analysis. Articulation refers to the functioning of a discourse, how it perpetuates itself, how it operates as 'common sense.' Interpellation, on the other hand, refers to: ‘the
ways in which discourses carve out subject-positions ‘that ‘hail’ actors in such a manner that they become the “subject” – the “I” – of that discourse’ (Epstein 2008: 94).

Parliamentary attempts by NSW Labor to secure this ‘naturalisation’ relied on an articulation of WDMC which was interpolated in turn by the sets of meaning afforded to it progressively by the State. As Epstein suggests:

‘First, the subject recognises the discourse as its own – that is, it relates to, appropriates, and endorses it. Second the subject recognizes itself as the subject – the one who says “I” in this discourse’ (Epstein 2008:94).

Over the years of NSW Labor Government, the State became the “I” – the subject in the discourse of WDMC. This strategy was gradual and iterative.

The issue of WDMC was constructed as a ‘problem’ within the space created by the narratives of parliamentary storylines and the policy process (Bacchi 1999: 2). This created a discourse coalition in which the State and its agents were said publicly to act in concert and in which the ‘problem’ of WDMC was predicated on shared meanings. Hajer (1993) suggests that:

A discourse coalition is the ensemble of a set of story lines, the actors that utters these story lines, and the practices that conform to these story lines, all organized around a discourse (Hajer 1993: 47)

Farm families in turn were rendered the ‘object’ whose knowledge and experience would be harnessed in the service of the State. Thus what counted as an object of inquiry, how results were to be interpreted and which results were to be regarded as true or false’ (Howarth 2000) were in keeping with its underpinning theory of ‘scientific rationalism’ which posits notions of ‘objectivity’ and ‘truth,’ on whose claims to ‘expertise’ the State relied.

This reliance on ‘scientific knowledge’ produced new ‘expert’ elites who were closely linked and acting in concert with economic and political powers. This challenged beliefs about the historical distance science was thought to have – and farm families believed it ‘should’ have - maintained from politics in WDMC. This in turn raised questions
regarding, what Jasanoff (2005) calls the: ‘distance between the governors and the
governed’ (Jasanoff 2005:5). Hence, the extent to which scientific research is
considered ‘value-neutral’ becomes a matter of contestation between the State and
farming families. Notwithstanding this, the issue of WDMC remained a social
construct with a material reality whose meaning was contested in the public sphere.
Thus, this project, as a discourse was both historically contingent and precarious.

This Chapter demonstrates how political parties subverted the storylines of farming
families and how each storyline drew on different discursive categories to give meaning
to the phenomenon of ‘wild dogs.’ These narratives created a social construction of
WDMC which was dependent on the exclusion of other meanings of WDMC as
‘common sense’ and in which the State was preeminent – the ‘I.’ These attempts relied
on pre-existing associations which: ‘when proffered summon” one another implicitly
and automatically’ (Epstein 2008: 94). The power of the parliamentary storylines of
WDMC is that they contributed to the dominant discourse to reinforce how the State
and its agents framed the ‘problem of WDMC.’ In this way, as Bacchi (1999) suggests,
framing reveals how issues come about and what is needed to be done about them
(Bacchi 1999). Within this empiricist setting, frames are the synonym of discourses
which function as mainly instrumental devices intended to: ‘foster common perceptions
and understandings for specific purposes’ (Howarth 2000: 3).

Over its period in government, successive NSW Labor Governments represented the
‘solution’ to WDMC as being in the ‘common good.’ The narratives of its storylines
reveal the articulation of an overarching administrative rationalist discourse. This rested
on ‘taken-for-granted’ assumptions about ‘natural’ relationships in which the State was
pre-eminent, the ‘natural’ world was viewed anthropocentrically and in which relations
of power were unequal. The discourse reveals itself as exclusive and excluding thereby
creating a binary of insiders/outsiders – an ‘us’ and a ‘them’ (Mouffe 2005, Mouffe
2005).

Notwithstanding this, the parliamentary speeches also reveal that the antagonism
between traditional enemies on the issue of WDMC was on two occasions momentarily
transformed in the Parliament into an issue of conflict between adversaries. The
unanimity between political antagonists that the Cooperative Wild Dog/Fox Plan for the
Brindabella and Wee Jasper Valleys - commonly known as the Brindabella Plan -
temporarily achieved was largely in response to a powerful catalyst - the crisis in the 'Bush.' [See Chapter Seven for explanation of the Brindabella Plan]

However, as Grindle and Thomas (1991) argue a crisis:

is an often-invoked reason in explanations of the adoption and pursuit of major changes in public policy…it does not necessarily result in either predictable or recommended policy changes (Grindle and Thomas 1991: 73).

Nevertheless, this crisis provided the window of opportunity through which an administrative rationalist response could, and did, proceed to lay claim to legitimacy in WDMC policy. However, this attempt at administrative capture of the voices of farm families relied on legislative sanction.

The Chapter is divided into two parts: The first compares the central storylines that emerge from the parliamentary contest that occurred between NSW Labor, the NSW Liberal/National Coalition and the minor parties over WDMC. The second demonstrates how this rationality was interpreted instrumentally. It explains briefly the legislative and administrative interpretations of four ‘agreed’ core concepts in WDMC: wild dogs, Schedule Two Lands, the Management Plan and, the Guideline issued to RLPB through whose interpretation WDMC during this period was affected. These words became the language of WDMC. Inherent within their meaning were the mechanisms and processes which contributed to the social reconstruction of WDMC in which the State had centre place.

The political capital of wild dog management and control

During the time of successive NSW Labor Governments, all political parties - NSW Labor, the Liberal National Coalition, the Fishers and Shooters Party of NSW, (The Shooters Party) and the Greens NSW, among other minor parties – all competed for the authorial voice on the issue of WDMC. This was done as a way of establishing their legitimacy in the ‘Bush.’ This resulted in a sustained jockeying for the ‘prize’ of the authorial voice on WDMC in the NSW Parliament from members of both the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council over successive Parliaments (Debus 1996 23 May: 1496, Della Bosca 2000 17 November: 10235, Debus 2001 7

This understanding propelled the issue of WDMC in to a much broader debate that oscillated around two questions: Firstly, who was ‘the true voice of country and regional New South Wales?’ (Cansdell 2005 13 October: 18580): Secondly, who held the mandate to speak for rural and regional issues?

Both questions received significant ‘airplay’ in the Parliament after the 1999 NSW election when Labor won five rural seats spread across all regions of the State (Wear 2000). After the 1999 election, the answers to these questions were further complicated by competing claims from the minor parties which held the balance of power in the Upper House, the Legislative Council (Clune and Griffith 2006: 675).

Thus, the ‘performance,’ that is ‘all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants’ (Goffman 1959:26) and the ‘venue’ - the existing set of political institutions (Baumgartner and Jones 1991) - are both vital considerations for all parliamentary parties. This was no less true for WDMC in the NSW Parliament.

**NSW Labor and Country Labor and the colonisation of wild dog management and control**

The colonialisation of the issue of WDMC by NSW Labor between 1995 and 2011 was strategic and progressive. NSW Labor linked WDMC successively and integrally to the phenomena of Country Labor.

On 15 October 1995 Premier Bob Carr announced in Question Time that:

> Recently I had the pleasure of addressing a great forum in New South Wales, the annual conference of the New South Wales branch of the Australian Labor Party. I was able to report to the conference my Government's program for seeing that the people of regional and rural New South Wales are treated fairly (Carr 1996 15 October: 4776).
Further to this, in 1996 he issued Memorandum Number 1996-17. Prepared by the Office of Rural Communities within NSW Agriculture, it issued instructions to departments and agencies when submitting proposals that could impact on rural communities (Carr 1997). The promise to rural and regional electorates was that in all Cabinet documents the social, economic and environmental effects of any decision on rural communities would be outlined. However, to what extent this was done is unclear. Subsequent claims by The Nationals that ‘Such documents are never seen by the people who are affected by the Cabinet decisions and subsequent legislation. They are kept secret’ were discounted (Maguire 2005 13 October: 18580).

Under the banner of Country Labor, NSW Labor and Bob Carr were now - at least publicly - ‘championing’ the ‘Bush.’ The irony was not missed – at least by some. Clune (2005) noted NSW Labor was: ‘an almost semi rural party for the first half of the twentieth century’ (Clune 2005:48). Paul Davey (2006) argued that the nomenclature of Country Labor was born out of ‘grassroots’ dissatisfaction with NSW Labor.

Country Labor, was in the first instance, the legacy of an initial push in 1941 and 1942 by: ‘a small group of breakaway Labor candidates protesting over the ALP State Executive taking over preselections’ (Davey 2006:396). Nevertheless, the opportunity to resurrect Country Labor was considered important strategically to NSW Labor. As Paul Davey writes: ‘Labor decided to pull the name Country Labor out of the drawer and give it official blessing for candidates in regional electorates (Davey 2006:396). Suddenly it was a case of ‘everything old is new again.’

In contrast, periodic attempts during the years 1995 to 2011 by the Liberal National Coalition, particularly The Nationals, to pass the Rural Communities Impacts Bill, the Wilderness Amendment (Private Property Rights) Bill and the Protection of Agricultural Production (Right to Farm) Bill were frustrated and ultimately defeated by NSW Labor. Andrew Stoner, the then Leader of the Nationals argued particularly that the purpose of the Rural Communities Impacts Bill was: ‘to force the Labor Government to honour a promise made in 1995 by former Premier Bob Carr – a promise that was never honoured’ (Stoner 2005 1 December: 20507).

The issue of WDMC featured in and was debated across all pieces of legislation. Nevertheless, NSW Labor branded each piece of legislation a political ‘stunt.’ The Honourable Steve Whan, a sustained and vocal Country Labor advocate and a prolific
performer on the issue of WDMC in Question Time, argued particularly that the Rural Communities Impacts Bill was ‘a very long-running stunt, but stunt it is’ (Whan 2005 22 September). Further he suggested it was: ‘simply a smokescreen for the Nationals’ failure to stand up for regional New South Wales’ (Whan 2005 22 September). It would seem, at least from the standpoint of NSW Labor that Carr’s 1995 Memorandum and the rebirth of Country Labor were not stunts.

However, if ever there was a moment of amnesia about the political utility of ‘Country Labor’ within NSW it was temporary. Country Labor had served NSW Labor well. Country Labor was registered as a political party for the second time in 1999 in NSW and for the third time in 2003 (Australian Electoral Commission 2011). From 1995 until 2011 successive NSW Labor Premiers, Bob Carr, Morris Iemma, Nathan Rees and Kristina Keneally invested in the nomenclature and the ‘branding’ exercise. Premier Rees at the 2008 Country Labor Conference, for example, reminded delegates that at least ten delegates were from the country at NSW Labor’s first Annual Conference held in 1882 at Temperance Hall in Sydney. Rees insisted that ‘the voice of country people has been heard in our Party’ (Rees 2008 1 November: 1 - 18).

In contrast to this enthusiasm, The Greens branded Country Labor simply as ‘impotent and irrelevant’ and ‘nothing more than a bunch of spin doctors’ (Rhiannon 1999). The Honourable George Souris, the then Leader of The Nationals agreed. To The Nationals, Country Labor was: ‘a slick marketing exercise’ and ‘has been shown up for nothing but Bob Carr’s Labor’ (Souris 2000 24 May: 5705).

Regardless, Country Labor and NSW NPWS were now working publicly in concert and in command of WDMC policy across NSW - at least the Honourable Bob Debus, Minister for the Environment, said so:

Today I am in a position to announce an all-out assault on feral animals and weeds by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Since coming to office the Carr Government has increased funding for pest species management from $1.5 million in 1994-95 - the coalition’s last year in power to almost $5 million. This represents a massive 330 per cent increase to fund the attack on feral animals and weeds since the Government took office (Debus 1996 23 May: 1496).
In 2003, the Honourable Steve Whan reiterated the claims of NSW Labor and NSW NPWS declaring:

I am pleased to say that the budget delivered last week by the Government put up an additional $800,000 for the National Parks and Wildlife Service to combat wild dogs and other feral animal species. That $800,000, the bulk of which is going to the Monaro area, is the first part of a $6.7 million increase in funds over the next four years to combat wild dogs and other feral animal species in the Monaro and the rest of New South Wales (Whan 2003 3 July: 597).

However, over time the critics of Country Labor became increasingly shrill. By March 2011, with the defeat of NSW Labor looming there were increasing calls in the media that the ‘bush cousin’ of NSW Labor was ‘almost extinct’ as a ‘breed’ and that ‘Brand Labor’ was: ‘an image that now associates Labor with all that is indecisive, incompetent and irrelevant’ (Fitzgerald 2011 15 January).


Yet, the nuances of the issue of WDMC were initially unfamiliar to The Nationals so-called ‘city centric’ members of the NSW Labor Party (Stoner 2004 23 June: 9969). For example, John Della Bosca (Labor – Special Minister of State) admitted candidly in Question Time, that he had never heard of the poison ‘sodium monofluoroacetate,’

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1 Former Prime Minister of Australia, Paul Keating, coined this phrase on 13 March 1993 when claiming victory after the 1993 election result; an election which many political commentators predicted the Australian Labor Party would lose: ‘Thank you ladies and gentlemen. Well, this is the sweetest victory of all. This is a victory for the true believers: the people who, in difficult times, have kept the faith.’

2 A ‘Dorothy Dixer’ is a rehearsed or planted question asked of a government Minister by a backbencher of his/her own political party during Parliamentary Question Time.
commonly known as ‘1080’ (Della Bosca 2001 12 December: 20020). This was a considerable public faux pas.

The temporary prohibition on the use of 1080 across most geographic areas of NSW and the accompanying suspension of aerial baiting pending the outcome of a much-debated scientific study into the effects of 1080 on native quolls resulted in significant opprobrium being directed at NSW Labor by the Opposition and minority party members (Webb 2001 6 December: 3969, Tingle 2001 12 December: 5465, Richardson 2005 22 September: 5465). This was especially poignant after studies refuted: ‘the assumption that dog baits are fatal for most quolls that may eat them’ (Kortner, Gresser et al. 2003, Kortner and Watson 2005).

By 2006 NSW NPWS reinstated aerial baiting and the use of 1080 reversing the previous ban declaring:

> Recent NPWS research has shown that aerial baiting with the toxin 1080 is unlikely to have a significant impact on populations of the spotted-tailed quoll, the native carnivore most at risk of being poisoned...This is a very significant finding and NPWS will now use aerial baiting in areas where rugged terrain makes the use of other control techniques extremely difficult or where stock losses are continuing at unacceptably high levels (Department of Environment and Conservation 2006: 36).

In the intervening period, many NSW parliamentary speeches attested repeatedly to a significant escalation in wild dog attacks on agricultural stock on private land across NSW, a significant decline in native wildlife and the: ‘severe social, financial and environmental problem’ this ban had caused farm families (Hodgkinson 2001 6 September: 16486, Webb 2001 7 November: 18203, MacDonald 2002 27 June: 3958). In 2005 the issue of the impacts of wild dogs was escalated to the Commonwealth level and was further affirmed by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Report, Taking Control: A national approach to pest animals (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2005).
The continued use and availability of 1080 was the subject of another contentious inquiry and much delayed report by the Australian Veterinary Pesticides Management Authority (AVPMA), which also generated fierce representations to local members by concerned farm families across NSW. The poison, 1080, is widely used in WDMC and was administered through the then forty seven RLPBs and its predecessor, the NSW Pastures Protection Boards (NSWPPBs). The continued use of ‘1080’ as the preferred, cheapest and most efficacious poison in geographically difficult terrains went to the heart of the WDMC issue for farm families – and still does.

Minister Della Bosca, however, while admitting his ignorance of ‘1080’ resolved to provide an answer, declaring the importance of feral animal control to rural communities. This commitment was not altruistic but opportunistic - an understanding of and a public commitment to WDMC was integral to the acceptance of the ‘brand’ Country Labor. However, there were some large blowflies in the Country Labor ointment.

The implications of NSW Labor strategy and the expansion of the National Estate on wild dog management and control

In 1987, Bob Carr introduced the Wilderness Act, which increased the number of national parks across NSW. In the period from 1995 until 2010, successive NSW Labor Governments added 472 reserves, totalling 2.7 million hectares to the NSW National Parks and Reserve system (Park 2010 July).

These acquisitions were framed as achievements of national significance within the central storyline of NSW Labor’s successes. NSW Labor framed national parks as ‘protected area categories’ in line with the International Union for Conservation of Nature [IUCN], within which NSW Labor defined the function of nationals parks as being: ‘mainly for conservation and recreation’ (Tebbutt 2001 12 December: 20028). However, the resumption of leasehold land, the declaration of national parks and wilderness areas and the extension of the reserve system altered significantly both the existing spatial geography of NSW and relations of power.

The language of wild dog management and control
Under NSW Labor the language of WDMC policy and the meanings within it became enshrined in law. It presupposed a set of values and norms which foreclosed other articulations and interpellations. [See Discussion: The Four Concepts] In this new context, the administrative rationalist discourse, of which the new legal discourse of WDMC was a part and in which the State had centre place, came into being.

The legal discourse which informs WDMC in NSW expresses the values of the NSW Parliament that wild dogs are pests. It achieves this through prescriptive linguistic rules and regulations known as Pest Control Orders (PCOs), which are intended to produce meaningful statements or knowledge about specific cultural practices. The umbrella legislation under which these PCOs sit is the Rural Lands Protection Act 1998 as Amended.

This legal discourse serves as a form of rationality in which the ‘conservation and control’ of dingoes’ and ‘wild dogs’ is married to broader concepts of risk and uncertainty. The policy of WDMC is predicated on the precautionary principle which the State interprets as central to the conservation of the dingo (Feral Animal Inquiry 2008).

Critically, the Act lacks specificity. It provides an interstitial space which allows for the intrusions and the interplay of the contending discourses such as agrarianism, environmentalism, animal welfare, and biosecurity. This was intended to allow for the conservation of the dingo and the eradication of wild dogs to the extent necessary. This became the language around which WDMC policy in NSW was built.

In New South Wales (NSW), the 1998 Act and the accompanying PCOs (1) to (8) set out the definitions of ‘wild dog’ as well as ‘pest’, ‘controlled land’ and ‘management plans’. They establish the legal framework and obligations of the parties and the relationship between public land managers and private land owners through the management plan as a method of wild dog control.

The Four Concepts:

What is a wild dog?
Over the period of NSW Labor Government the language of WDMC was progressively circumscribed – both administratively and legislatively; the effect of which was to exclude other sets of meanings afforded to WDMC. The Act and the accompanying PCOs firmly entrenched WDMC within an administrative rationalist frame and drew heavily on the distinction between different kinds of ‘dogs.’

In NSW, ‘wild dogs’ are ‘pest’ animals. This nomenclature of ‘wild dogs’ and ‘pests’ is the legislative position of all Federal, State and local jurisdictions within Australia. A ‘wild dog’ means any dog, including a dingo, is a ‘pest’ on ‘controlled land’. There are only three exclusions: exhibited dogs, dogs used in research, and, domestic dogs which are covered under separate legislation. A ‘pest’ is any member of the animal kingdom declared by a pest control order to be a pest. The interpretation of ‘pest’ is subject to ministerial prerogative.

**What are Schedule 2 lands?**

In NSW ‘Controlled lands’ are referred to as Schedule 2 lands. These lands comprise National Parks, Nature Reserves, State Recreation Areas, State Forests, Crown Lands and Reserves and Sydney Catchment Authority Land. Currently, in NSW there are 248 Schedule 2 or ‘controlled lands’. All land that is not Schedule 2 land in NSW is deemed to be Schedule 1. A review of Schedule 2 lands commenced in 2004 with its findings reported publicly for the first time in September 2009.

**What is a management plan?**

A ‘management plan’ serves a specific function within the meaning of the Act and within the context of WDMC. There is an important distinction explicit here.

In the first instance, Section 156 (1) in conjunction with Section 155 (4), establishes public land managers’ legal obligation to be a general destruction obligation to destroy ‘pests’. This obligation is qualified in that public land managers must:

...to the extent necessary to minimise the risk [my emphasis] of the pest causing damage on any land) eradicate any pest on the land by any lawful method.
Secondly, the Act establishes that the method or methods of wild dog control used must be legal and approved by the board of the district. There is a raft of accompanying and intersecting legislation – sixteen at last count - pertaining to control methods at both a Federal and State level to which all parties must submit.

Thirdly, it establishes a relationship in law between the respective parties. Public land managers of Schedule 2 land are deemed to have fulfilled their general destruction obligation if they have entered into a wild dog management plan with the local board and, crucially, the content has been agreed. This obligation and the implementation of the management plan were devolved in the Act from the State Council of the RLPB through the instrument of a Guideline to the local boards of the NSW RLPB.

However, this Guideline was not issued until 2005, a gap of some four years. (State Council Document 05/094/G, 4 July 2005).

In contrast to public land managers, under Section 155 (1) and (2), the obligations on owners or occupiers of private land under a limited destruction obligation must:

...eradicate any pest on the land by any lawful method...’ and/or ‘...during the stages of its development or life cycle specified in the order by any lawful method (or, if the order specifies a method to be used, by the method specified) (New South Wales Gazette 2006).

Under Section 141, "control" of a pest includes the eradication of the pest. ‘Eradicate,’ in contrast, means to “fully and continuously suppress and destroy”.

Lastly, the Act states that any management plan will address the twin objectives of control and conservation, on which any management plan is contingent. That is, to control wild dogs and to conserve the dingo.

The Guideline

The State Council Guideline to local Boards required under the Act was not issued until 4 July, 2005. While the Guideline stated that all areas listed in Schedule 2 lands must be covered by a wild dog management plan this was further qualified:
All wild dog management plans for areas listed in Schedule 2 of the Wild Dog Pest Control Order must be in at least draft form by 31 March 2006.

This revised date extended the date by a further year. Five years had elapsed since the legislation was enacted and the directive given to issue a Guideline to local boards.

In essence, the Guideline prescribes as part of State Council Policy that it is the local board’s responsibility to call and facilitate, with the assistance of NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) staff, if necessary, stakeholder wild dog management and control meetings to determine the need for a management plan.

While this appears to be contrary to the Act, this is overcome by Guideline Policy 2.1, where it states that the Board will call a wild dog meeting: ‘to discuss the development of a wild dog management plan to satisfy the general obligation under the RLP Act’ (Guideline Policy 2.1). It also establishes that if there is no need for a management plan: ‘...then this decision should be documented and signed off by the relevant parties, including the Board.’ (Guideline Policy 2.3).

Further, the Guideline prescribes that the appointed co-ordinator of the plan, appointed from an elected committee/working group of stakeholders should, if needed, draft the plan according to:

the “Guidelines for Preparing a Working Plan to Manage Wild Dogs” (Two booklet guides attached to this Guideline) and in consultation with stakeholders. The plan should be put through a critical review process to ensure it meets national, state and regional strategic goals and legislative requirements.

Once completed all relevant stakeholders must ‘sign off’ on the plan after agreement and this includes the local RLPB.

In summary, the Act establishes different legal obligations on the parties; Schedule 2 land managers must, to the extent necessary minimise the risk of wild dogs; occupiers and owners of private land must eradicate wild dogs. This difference is controversial, not least because the interpretation of: ‘to the extent necessary minimise the risk of wild
dogs’ ultimately rests on the interpretation by public land managers. Crucially, there must be agreement between the respective parties on the content of a management plan which is deemed in law to be a method of control.

The Consequence

Specifically, at the behest of NSW Labor, NSW NPWS prohibited entry by surrounding neighbours, a significant portion of whom were farm families, from places previously and regularly ‘trapped.’ Many landholders were ‘locked out’ – sometimes literally. NSW Labor subverted the narrative of ‘lock out’ within the Liberal/National Coalition storyline (Hoggett 2005) by developing a storyline of ‘conservation’ This was in contradistinction to the Nationals’ storyline of ‘throwing away the key,’ in which NSW Labor’s management of the public estate was described as negligent and under whose management farm families would suffer significant social, environmental as well as economic costs (Hodgkinson 2002 21 November: 7380, Cansdell 2005 13 October: 18580).

Ian Armstrong, the then Leader of the Nationals, reminded NSW Labor that the ‘problem’ was in large part of their own making. The Nationals saw the NSW Labor Government’s acquisition of National Parks and the management of the fauna and flora within them differently:

But one owner of animals, probably the largest owner of animals in this State, has a problem that has been exacerbated by acquiring many more animals over the past ten years or so (Armstrong 2003 14 October: 3779).

In turn, NSW Labor rejected the Coalition’s claim that wild dogs emanated from public lands as patently false:

The claim of some of those opposite that feral animals somehow originate in national parks trivialises an important issue and is, of course, demonstrably ridiculous (Debus 2005 12 October: 18474).

In a contradictory response, the then Minister for the Environment, Bob Debus stated:
Australia's introduced animals date from the very first days of European settlement. Ever since that time animals not indigenous to this country have been brought from other places and released into the Australian environment, sometimes with good intentions and sometimes not. When our first national parks were formally created from the late 1960s onward, pest animals were already well established across the whole landscape. Of course, people dump thousands of unwanted cats and dogs every year and many of them end up in national parks, as they end up in other bushland. Pig shooters, illegally hunting in the bush—sometimes in national parks—sometimes intentionally release dogs or pigs, without caring at all about what will happen next. After just a few years in the wild, these released animals become feral cats, wild dogs and feral pigs. They kill our wildlife and also savage livestock on neighbouring farms (Debus 2005 12 October: 18474).

In representing the issue of ‘introduced species’ in this way Minister Debus broadened the responsibility for the management of the problem – and any ‘blame.’ ‘Introduced species’ were now part of a discourse of a global ‘ecological crisis’ which was not limited to NSW. This discourse ‘cut across spatial boundaries and borders’ and relied on ‘...particular forms...of communication which are specialized for trans-national and interregional interaction’ (Fairclough 2006: 3) thereby reinforcing the need for ‘experts.’ The State through its ‘experts’ was now the custodians of specialised communication and had become the medium through which knowledge of ‘wild dogs’ would be disseminated.

Through this narrative, NSW Labor attempted to deflect criticism away from its stewardship of the public estate into a binary of ‘us/them.’ NSW Labor was acting in the ‘common good’ and was the “I” of the discourse concerned about native animals. Farm families, by default, were the ‘profit maximisers’ on ‘neighbouring farms’ who were experiencing ‘savage’ attacks on livestock. However, NSW Labor invoked feral animals and the conservation of the ‘dingo’ as a national and global ecological risk for biodiversity conservation which it claimed - unlike the Commonwealth Government under the Leadership of the then Liberal Prime Minister, the Honourable John Howard – did not abrogate its responsibility (Debus 1996 23 May: 1496).
However, to the Coalition, and to The Nationals particularly, this was obfuscation. A central narrative in The Nationals storyline was NSW Labor’s mismanagement of the public estate. To the Nationals, wild dogs were a scourge, farm families were concerned about native fauna and flora and they had been saying so to NSW Labor for decades. It was not enough to know what had happened – farm families knew this too well – and by extension, ‘naturally,’ so too did The Nationals. To The Nationals the NSW Labor storyline of Australia’s environmental history was an ‘old chestnut’ used opportunistically to blame farm families for environmental degradation and mismanagement and to excise the role of the State which had actively encouraged and punitively enforced it. This was a ‘blame game’ with which farm families were already all too familiar. The ‘real’ question to be answered was: ‘What was being done - now?’

The extent of the eradication and control of wild dogs in national parks and those wild dogs exiting public lands was more than a moot point. Landholders were threatened with prosecution proceedings should ‘illegal’ WDMC occur within boundaries decided arbitrarily by NSW NPWS and State Forest public land managers. Additionally, the ‘information’ and ‘knowledge’ of farm families was now subject to administrative review, the legitimacy of which was established through a process of ‘scientific’ study and peer review.

NSW NPWS positioned the ‘scientific method’ as paramount. For example, in a letter to one farm family, NSW NPWS wrote:

I also intend to have dog scats from the National Park collected and analysed. This should prove whether dogs living in the Park are preying on your stock and will assist in justifying any future control program. This analysis is expensive and involves expertise presently unavailable within the Service. I hope this commitment of time and money to improve the Service’s response to your stock losses shows our continued intention to give you assistance with your dog problems (New South Wales Government 1987 14 August).

Wadbilliga – the park in question - was declared as a national park in 1979. It is described as consisting of a ‘wild and rugged landscape,’ encompassing a land mass of 98,530 hectares. The study conducted in Wadbilliga National Park was not released publicly.
Notwithstanding the increasing choruses of complaint from the Liberal/National Coalition, by 1996-97 the Honourable Pam Allen, the then Minister for the Environment, stated:

It is with a great sense of achievement that I applaud the declaration of 13 new parks and reserves bringing to a total of 39 new parks and reserves declared since this Government took office (NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service 1996-997: 5).

This sense of achievement was matched by self-congratulation. In 1996 the then Minister for the Environment, Bob Debus, in a Consideration of an Urgent Motion moved:

That this House congratulates the New South Wales Government on its record support for feral animals and weed eradication programs (Debus 1996 23 May: 20696).

This congratulatory spirit was not shared by many farming families.

In 2001, a survey of 142 Monaro landholders – commissioned by farm families on the Monaro in an attempt to demonstrate to NSW NPWS and State Forests the extent of agricultural losses – reported that, collectively, farm families had lost 2,892 sheep to wild dog predation, at a cost of $1.3 million or $36,000 per farm in the preceding twelve months. Further the survey reported that 23,000 hectares of land on the Monaro was no longer used for sheep production as a direct result of wild dog predation (Litchfield, Garnock et al. 2001 10 October). The parliamentary speeches reveal that these losses were replicated across NSW.

Commensurate with the expansion of the public estate, NSW Labor expanded the functions and the budget of NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NSW NPWS), a Department first created in 1967. Between 1994 and 2001, NSW Labor reportedly increased the land managed by NSW NPWS by 35 per cent and the total initial budget allocation by 138 per cent (General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 2002).
In 1997, NSW NPWS issued a ‘Wild Dog Policy’ which was reaffirmed by the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC), its successor, in May 2005 and then again in May 2009 by the Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW (DECC) (NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service 2005 May). NSW NPWS also stated its intention to be a ‘good neighbour’ and suggested that:

wild dogs from lands acquired or reserved under the NPW Act sometimes impact on livestock on adjacent areas’ (Department of Environment and Conservation 2005 May: 3).

To farming families the word ‘sometimes’ was a misnomer – if not an insult.

**Reported public expenditures**

In 2001-2002, NSW Agriculture reported to the NSW Parliamentary General Standing Committee No 5 Inquiry that it spent $2.24 million. In contrast, in 2001-02 the NSW NPWS pest budget was reportedly $15.738 million, with over $2.5 million ‘expected’ to be spent on ‘on-ground,’ feral animal programs (General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 2002).

In 2001-2002 the Department of Water, Land and Conservation (DWLC) reported that it managed approximately 5 per cent of NSW public lands under its direct control - some 4 million hectares - and reportedly ‘budgeted up to’ $300,000 for all feral animal control. State Forests reportedly spent $430,203, of which $166,812 was contributed by the State Government (General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 2002). This level of financial support is salutary as State Forests at this time was a ‘for profit’ government trading enterprise of the Government of NSW (State Forests of New South Wales 2002-2003). Pest animal control overall was reported as being funded through the profits that it derived from its trading activities.

In contrast, in 2000-2001 the 48 RLPBs reportedly contributed over $6 million to feral animal control on private lands which came entirely from rate payers’ levies mandatorily collected – that is, from farm families with private land holdings in NSW of more than the minimum rateable land of ten acres (General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 2002).
Table 3.1: 2001-2002 NSW Reported Expenditure on All Feral Animal Control

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Source: Figures Compiled from NSW Parliament General Standing Committee No 5 Feral Animals 2002

However, herein lays a cautionary tale.

**NSW Labor’s ‘Green Legacy’ and NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service**

The reported financial expenditure by NSW Labor on WDMC played out within an already complex social and political relationship. Complexity here: ‘refers to the number and variety of elements and interactions in the environment of a decision system’ (Dryzek 1997:8).

Specifically, the relationship between the NSW NPWS, State Forests and grassroots farm families regarding land management, feral animal control broadly, and WDMC specifically, was fraught with emotion and highly fragmented. The Nationals were more pointed when it came to describing NSW NPWS: ‘They have a record of incompetency, mismanagement and misuse’ (Hodgkinson 2004 18 February: 6221, Maguire 2007, 26 October:3469, Stoner 2008 31 August: 397).
In 2001, NSW NPWS authorised the shooting of over 600 brumbies in Guy Fawkes National Park. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) subsequently brought a Supreme Court case against NSW NPWS over claims of alleged cruelty. Shortly afterwards, in 2003, a Royal Commission was established to inquire into the role of NSW NPWS in the 2003 bushfires in the Kosciuszko National Park. The level of broad community vitriol directed towards NSW NPWS increased dramatically. NSW NPWS and State Forests were accused of not acting as ‘frank and fearless’ public land managers. NSW NPWS, particularly, was represented as working politically in concert with NSW Labor, as an inept public lands manager and, as a captive of a highly politicised ‘science’ (Latour 2004). Latour argues more generally that the politicisation of ‘science’ is achieved ‘…through epistemology in order to render ordinary political life impotent through the threat of an incontestable nature’ (Latour 2004: 10). Notwithstanding this, the level of enmity directed at NSW NPWS was also rooted in a bitter history.

In the 1940s and 1950s the grazing of cattle in the high country of South East New South Wales and North East Victoria and the issuing of ‘snow leases’ were progressively restricted especially in and around Kosciuszko National Park (Merritt 2007) effectively ended most grazing in these areas from 1980. This was a fierce and bitter political battle waged by enemies which was ultimately lost by farm families. However, sustained campaigns to reverse or mitigate this position continue to this day (ABC News 24 Online 2010 14 December, ABC News 24 Online 2011 24 October, Luke 2012, Thursday November 15).

Nevertheless, the collective memory of farm families surrounding this struggle - not simply just the physical landscape - but rather the elision and or the appropriation and commodification of their stories of stock, ‘dogmen’, and mountain people caused great rancour. NSW NPWS was seen as an unwanted intruder – not a ‘good neighbour’ but rather ‘the neighbour from hell’ – which increasingly marginalised – if not ridiculed - the voice and the values of farm families.

However, until the 1960s, Australia, as a nation ‘Rode on the Sheep’s back’ politically, economically and culturally (Bean 1945, Bolton 1999, Grattan 2004, Brett 2011:26, Massey 2011). The ‘merino’ particularly served as an iconic symbol of Australia’s
national and international identity and economic importance and had a: 'talismanic value as an index of Australian distinctiveness' (Bolton 1999:160).

The power of 'wool' as a discursive formation was pervasive. From 1957 until 1959, under the direction of Sir Keith Hancock the Research School of Social Sciences, at the Australian National University (ANU) hosted the Wool Seminar on a fortnightly basis. The Australian Dictionary of Biography, the Noel Butlin Archive and the School of Political Science within the ANU were direct beneficiaries of the wool industry's largesse (Bolton 1999).

Hansard speeches over this period reveal that many farm families had trapped wild dogs regularly across the Australian landscape. This was part of a robust and culturally inscribed belief in being a 'good neighbour' and served as a function in proactively and reactively protecting agricultural stock. This was carried out with the full imprimatur of the State, which acted punitively against farm families in the event that WDMC was not carried out.

As with any discourse 'the permanent interest' in wool as a discourse was: 'always contingent and precarious' (Fairclough 2006: 36). From the 1960s: 'new economic and cultural forces were demoting the simple fleece from its golden pre-eminence' (Bolton 1999:167). The rise of synthetics, the increased dominance of the mineral boom, the challenge to Anglo-Australian monoculturalism, and the growth of 'environmentalism' as a social movement gradually undermined 'wool's' pre-eminence until 'the barbarians were inside the walls' and the discursive power of the 'wool' discourse declined.

Many farm families, in turn, felt their cultural contribution, their cumulative contribution to nation building – once revered - and the settler society values they espoused were now belittled and ridiculed publicly as a result of what was referred to as Carr's 'Green Legacy.' At the 'grassroots, public servants from NSW NPWS or State Forests - many of whom emboldened by the rise of 'new environmentalism' - became the 'public face' (Webb 2002 19 September: 5069) and the physical embodiment of the discursive change and incurred the full wrath of farm families.

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3 Bolton (1999: 161) states 'A few days ahead of the meeting [the Wool Seminar] Hancock circulated a paper which he entitled: 'First very rough Proposals for a Seminar on Wool (from 1850 to the present day). He thought a possible title for the seminar might be 'The Permanent Interest', W C Wentworth's label for the wool industry. Privately he thought of it as 'The Selfish Seminar' because he intended to use it to re-educate himself about Australian matters.'
Farm families, in turn, felt typecast as the ‘enemy’ of the State; the social actors complicit in the ‘ecological crisis’ who now had to be ‘managed’ by the State and its ‘experts.’ The role and power of NSW NPWS, as the agent and intermediary charged with the delivery of NSW Labor’s conservation discourse at the grassroots, increased exponentially. In contrast, farm families experienced a diminution in their power and status (Maguire 2007, 26 October: 3469).

From the 1970s onwards, NSW Labor and NSW NPWS espoused and advocated a different land ethic - one in which dingoes were considered a ‘native’ species and in which increasingly public land managers assumed ‘wild dogs’ to have functional utility in an ecosystem in eradicating other unwanted species from the landscape. NSW Labor judged that it was a: ‘broad community expectation’ that dingoes would be conserved (MacDonald 2005 8 June: 16554). This marked a significant discursive shift in WDMC.

This discursive shift brought with it direct repercussions on the material lives of farm families through increased wild dog predation. The public venting of the anger and desperation farm families felt increased. More recently, as Judith Brett writes, this broad discursive shift to ‘environmentalism’ had cultural and social implications for rural communities:

City reactions to these sporadic eruptions of rural anger range from sympathy through to indifference, bemusement, condescension and contemptuous dismissal (Brett 2011:10).

Farm families felt they were unjustly typecast as ‘rednecks,’ ‘rural idiots,’ ‘environmental vandals’ and ‘whingers’ when raising their concerns at the ‘grassroots’ with public servants from NSW NPWS and State Forests (Maguire 2007, 26 October: 3469).

In 1972, soon after hosting a Wild Dog Summit in Sydney, the then NSW Labor Premier, Nevile Wran, became the Patron of the Australian Dingo Society. This was an anathema to farm families, as it was felt that the hope that NSW Labor’s commitment to controlling wild dogs at the Wild Dog Summit had engendered was misplaced and,
further, that the NSW Labor Premier's commitment to a 'fair go' and 'fair play' was a sham. There was a real sense of betrayal.

To farm families, the question of 'dingo or hybrid?' was in large part immaterial – 'dingo or wild dog? - they are killing our stock' – and in large numbers. To farm families, the discursive shift represented much more than an administrative sleight of hand, academic conjecture or a reliance on an arbitrary scientific distinction. There was a materiality to 'wild dogs' which was being ignored by the State. From 1974 until 1985 – the year that Wild Dog Control Boards were abolished in NSW - the Southern Tablelands Wild Dog Control Board kept records of the numbers of stock killed, hurt or lost because of wild dog predation. From 1976 separate figures were also kept of the numbers of stock killed by wild dogs emanating out of areas of National Parks [See Over]. This period coincided with the expansion of the Public Estate in NSW.
Table 3.2
Southern Tablelands Wild Dog Control Board: Stock losses 1974 - 1985

<table>
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<td>3580</td>
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<td>696</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>35</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL Sheep</td>
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<td>48</td>
<td>3094</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2342</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
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<td>940</td>
<td>1089</td>
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<td>2369</td>
<td>1151</td>
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LH = Last or Most
Moreover, in a submission to the 2005 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Inquiry Into the Impact of Pest Animals on Agriculture, one farmer reported:

When we, as affected farmers have gone to parks authorities and said, ‘Listen, guys, you have dogs in there,’ they say, ‘No, I don’t know whether we have,’ We say, ‘I’m sure you have.’ After decades, we have convinced them that they do have dogs. We have a flow of dogs out of there. Yes, they now acknowledge that, particularly since the New South Wales Rural Lands Act 1998. We say, ‘Can we go in there and do something about it?’ They say, ‘No, you are not allowed in there with traps, poisons, and whatever.’ The local community have basically been stopped from doing their own work, for whatever reasons – policy reasons (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2005: 155)

Additionally, many farming families believed they had not been given a ‘fair go’ – that the State had not kept to the rules, had not treated farm families equally with their urban counterparts in putting the case forward for WDMC; farm families had not been given a ‘fair go’ (Brett 2011 citing Hirst, J.: 6) to earn their living free of wild dogs.

This Australian notion of ‘fair go’ was further linked to the notion of ‘fair play.’ Farm families felt alienated by the State which from the beginning of white colonisation of Australia had venerated agriculture and agriculturalists. Scientific claims regarding the extensive hybridisation of the dingo with the wild dog, the claim that it was not ‘native’ to Australia, but rather Indonesia, (Low 2003), the view that wild dogs pose disease threats, and the materiality of the effects of increasing wild dog predation as reported in the Parliament, were sublimated within NSW Labor’s discourse of WDMC from which The Nationals argued farming families saw little benefit.

Nevertheless, NSW Labor’s public commitment was underpinned by a comprehensive package of legislative instruments. The Brindabella and Wee Jasper Wild Dog/Fox Cooperative Plan model, known as the ‘Brindabella Plan’ was elevated as a ‘best practice’ model and was promulgated widely as both ‘the’ benchmark and as a ‘success’ for the rest of NSW to follow (Burton 2003 3 July: 2878, Debus 2004 11 March: 7169, Debus
2006 7 September: 20696, Kelly 2010 24 November: 2878). In this way the model became the instrument of the State.

NSW Labor attempted to realise WDMC policy in six strategic ways:

Firstly, NSW Labor introduced the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995. Notably, dingoes were exempted from the listing of ‘threatened species.’ This was despite intense lobbying from the Colong Foundation of NSW Labor to list the dingo as endangered under the Act. In 1995 The Colong Foundation nominated the Dingo (Canus lupus dingo) unsuccessfully as endangered populations under Schedule 1 Part 2 of the Threatened Species Conservation Act, 1995. Later amended in 2004, The Nationals branded the Threatened Species legislation as ‘madness’ and proof that NSW Labor had: ‘sold out country New South Wales’ (Stoner 2004 23 June: 9969) because NSW Labor had failed in its stewardship of the public estate to eradicate and control pests, particularly wild dogs, and weeds from the public estate.

Further, NSW Labor had created the means through which dingoes could be listed as endangered. The NSW Scientific Committee comprised of scientists alone had the power to list an animal as ‘threatened’ and or ‘endangered.’ This potential became the ‘elephant in the room.’ Farming families were concerned that should dingoes become listed as endangered WDMC would become nigh on impossible without first capturing and ‘DNA’ testing each dog.

However, within the Parliament others asserted more opportunistic reasons for the introduction of this legislation. The Honourable Rob Oakshott, formerly a member of The Nationals, stated:

I have grave concerns, as do other honourable members, that this bill is nothing more than a scramble before the election and for Green preferences (Oakshott 2002 25 September: 5435).

Secondly, NSW Labor introduced the Rural Lands Protection Act 1998 as Amended as the Authority through which WMDC would be achieved. This Act abolished the NSW PP Board system, which resulted in its successor the RLPB system. This was later replaced in 2008 by the LHPA. Overall, the utility of this user pays system was not lost
on NSW Labor. The size of the mandatory financial contributions made by farm families to the State and the Travelling Stock Reserves system it administered was a significant revenue source and a convenient instrument through which to initiate and promulgate NSW Labor’s solution to WDMC.

Thirdly, NSW Labor introduced the Brindabella Plan as both a legal and administrative instrument. This model was privileged and promulgated as ‘the’ model of ‘best practice’ (Amery 2002 19 September). It became the centrepiece of the strategy of NSW Labor on WDMC.

Fourthly, in 2002 and again in 2007, NSW Labor publicly supported the National Wild Dog Summits held in Wodonga, Victoria and Orange, NSW respectively. However, it is difficult to see this support as being other than for the purposes of co-optation and deradicalisation of the farm families who attended. The resultant NSW Wild Dog Advisory Committee formed as an advisory body to NSW DPI on WDMC – a recommendation of the 2007 Summit - is heavily circumscribed both by its ‘advisory’ role only and by the overwhelming numbers of public land managers, who actively participate and vote as a bloc on this Committee.

Fifthly, NSW Labor committed DPI as a core partner with the IACRC. Minister Debus announced:

The New South Wales hub of the new co-operative centre is based in Orange. The State Government will commit approximately $2.5 million in in-kind support over the next several years to develop new and improved strategies that reduce the impact of pest animals (Debus 2006 28 February: 20696).

Increasingly, wild dogs were positioned as a threat to the biosecurity of NSW. The transmission of ‘zoonotic’ disease – diseases that can be spread from animals to humans such as hydatids, rabies and the increasing concern regarding neospora, a disease spread through dog scats which causes ‘late storm’ abortions in cattle - was increasingly recognised.

Lastly, NSW Labor introduced the Feral Animal and Game Council Act under intense pressure from the Fishers and Shooters Party of NSW, which held the balance of power
in the Legislative Council. The effect of this was a further fracturing and subverting of the storylines of WDMC in the Parliament, while strengthening the power and reach of the administrative hand. The storyline of NSW Labor about the function of National Parks also changed. National parks were no longer just for aesthetic enjoyment, biodiversity conservation and recreation; they were also now places where licensed professional hunters served the interests of the State by engaging in hunting. In contrast, The Nationals were concerned about the effects the Game Council may have on the scheduled work of WDMC across NSW.

**Bob Carr and ‘new’ environmentalism**

Overall, NSW Labor’s role, especially Bob Carr’s, as part of this changed discourse was pre-eminent. Premier Carr positioned himself and NSW Labor as the champions of a ‘new’ environmentalism. To farm families, NSW Labor’s ‘conservation’ was rank hypocrisy, contradictory and myopic. It ignored the necessary public land management functions in relation to pest animals and weeds control, discounted the effects of wild dogs on native flora and fauna, and, trivialised the escalating impacts of wild dogs, which were primarily and immediately experienced by farming families as those most affected both by wild dog predation and the decisions of NSW Labor (Hodgkinson 2005 23 September: 17512, Smith 2010 11 March: 21255). Farming families saw these functions as a duty – and as critical – for the stewardship of public lands.

Increasingly wild dog predation on agriculture stock and the perceived lack of interest in the ‘Bush’ and WDMC through the 1970s, 1980s and the 1990s contributed to a sense of crisis in the ‘Bush.’ The parliamentary speeches attest to a dramatic increase in wild dog predation on agricultural stock from the late-1970s. Additionally, the floating of the Australian dollar in the 1980s, the collapse of the Reserve Price Scheme for wool, a series of droughts in the 1980s, and, commencing in 2000, a ten year drought, cumulatively resulted in hardships for farming families on an unprecedented scale.

Escalating wild dog predation on agricultural stock was cited as the ‘tipping’ point for farm families leaving wool and sheep production completely, for some a turn to cattle production – at least initially – and for some, a final exit from all agricultural production and the sale of agricultural land; dryly referred to as the farmer’s ‘last crop.’

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In juxtaposition, the overwhelming narrative of the NSW Labor storyline was that these land acquisitions, and its conservation discourse, were in the public interest. Premier Bob Carr, later nicknamed 'Bob the Realtor' by The Nationals (Chesterfield-Evans 2004: 11640) declared his 'Green Legacy' to the voters of NSW to be a source of immense personal pride and one of his Government’s greatest achievements (Parliament of New South Wales 2011).

Yet, NSW Labor’s 'Green Legacy' only went so far. It did not challenge the anthropocentric representation of nature, nor were its regulatory ideals and democratic procedures informed by ecological democracy (See Eckersley 1999, Eckersley 2004). On the one hand, NSW Labor and Bob Carr secured NSW Labor’s 'Green Legacy' to the concept of sustainable development without challenging the underlying tenets of capitalism. According to NSW Labor at least, the conservation of the dingo and the 'control' – not necessarily the eradication – of wild dogs could coexist.

On the other hand, NSW Labor faced the material reality of the escalating costs of wild dog predation which had the potential to mobilise the wrath of agri-business interests, undermine the acceptance of the brand Country Labor in the Bush, damage the agricultural economy on which the State economy relied and impinge on the progress of NSW Labor in regional and rural electorates.

In 2002, as a function, and, a public declaration of this sense of crisis, a National Wild Dog Summit was held in Wodonga, Victoria which over 400 representatives of farm families; many from across NSW also attended (Webb 2002 19 September: 5069). The impetus for this public meeting came, not from NSW Labor, but rather from farm families.

These Summits received bipartisan parliamentary support although NSW Labor rejected categorically in the Parliament any suggestion that it was not: 'taking the necessary action with regard to wild dogs' (Amery 2002 19 September: 5069). However, at the 2007 Summit, the distrust of public land managers and contempt for what was perceived as the highly politicised 'science' of WDMC was palpable. A senior research scientist from the then NSW DPI was noticeably heckled throughout his presentation on 'learning by doing - Key steps to developing effective wild dog control plans.'
Previously, in 2002, the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Feral Animals (Parliament of New South Wales 2002) received overwhelming testimony from farm families experiencing severe stress caused by wild dog predation on agricultural stock. Active 'destocking' from agricultural land abutting and adjoining National Parks was occurring as a result of wild dog predation (Smith 2001 3 October: 5069). The public acknowledgement and recording of stock losses by Departments and Agencies – not least the economic, environmental or social costs – were increasingly subject to administrative procedures or not recorded or both (General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 2002).

The Honourable Richard Jones (Australian Democrats) Chairman of the General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5, when tabling the Feral Animals Report, also alluded to the significant fragmentation that existed within Government agencies when dealing with reports of wild dog predation:

The variation in the responses of statutory bodies once the hearings were undertaken was also surprising. One rural lands protection board pretended there was no problem, by not acknowledging kills unless stupid, unnecessary procedures were followed. Neighbouring rural lands protection boards were getting to grips with the problem and doing very good work. However, we are given to understand that during the course of the inquiry that errant rural lands protection board [sic] realised the extent of the problem and is taking steps to remedy its failings. Within the National Parks and Wildlife Service attitudes ranged from a cautious “greenies first” position, irrespective of the daily carnage on their doorsteps, to a positive “roll up your sleeves” approach, which is achieving results (Jones 2002 31 October: 6283).

By 2005 NSW parliamentary speeches reported the acute sense of desperation and frustration experienced by farming families. A second parliamentary inquiry, the Commonwealth inquiry entitled Taking Control: A national approach to pest animals (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2005) in response to these frustrations reiterated these anxieties, escalated the issue of WDMC to the national stage and reiterated the findings of the NSW report.

However, in contrast to the findings of these reports a 2002 report commissioned by the NSW NPWS at the behest of NSW Labor wherein the increase in wild dog attacks was described as a ‘perception’ of farm families requiring objective measurement (English and Chappie 2002) (English and Chappie 2002). While within this report there appears to be empathy, at times, for the social impacts on farm families this appeared to be secondary to the privileging and pre-eminence of the discourse of environmentalism. Nevertheless, overall, these reports also stood as a dire reflection on the antagonism that existed between political parties over the control of the storylines of WDMC.

In a prelude to the tabling of the NSW Feral Animals Inquiry any residual goodwill that had existed during the Inquiry’s hearings ‘boiled over’ into a debate which was marked by both its triviality and viciousness. In the NSW Parliament, the issue of WDMC became the vehicle to score political points: The spirit of bipartisanship, which was for short periods manifest during the Feral Animals Inquiry’s hearings, disintegrated during the tabling of the Committee Report and the Dissenting Report (Fazio 2002 31 October: 6283). This occurred over allegations that the NSW Labor Member of Parliament, the Honourable Amanda Fazio (Labor) had referred to the Inquiry as a ‘Mickey Mouse Inquiry’ (Colless 2002 5 September:4669). The Honourable Amanda Fazio alleged that the Honourable Rick Colless (The Nationals) had used the Committee’s proceedings in a ‘grubby manner...to meet and greet constituents in country New South Wales...as a mechanism to demean the work of the inquiry and obtain a few votes’ (Fazio 2002 5 September). Moreover, it was alleged that:

the performance of the Hon. Jan Burnswoods [was] nothing short of what one would expect form the wildest feral animal’ (Pezzutti 2002 5 September: 4669).

Backgrounding this vitriol was the deep antagonism over the NSW Labor Government’s stance on gun control.
It is significant however, that despite the outpouring of empathy witnessed in the Parliament, the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry technically precluded the examination of the social impacts of wild dog predation on agricultural stock on farm families. Yet, this formed the greater part of the testimony that the Inquiry received (Jones 2002 31 October: 6283).

In 2002 NSW Labor promulgated The Brindabella Plan as the administrative solution to the ‘problem’ of WDMC. This was affirmed by legislative force The Honourable Steve Whan declared:

We have an excellent best practice model that has been developed in the Brindabella-Wee Jasper area, which controlled wild dog numbers. This is a significant problem. The model introduced in that region has resulted in significant drops in losses of stock (Whan 2003: 597).

At the same time, NSW Labor specifically allocated funds to a scientific and technological solution to the now administratively, legislatively and scientifically defined ‘problem’ of WDMC which the ‘model,’ as the administrative and legislative solution, would address.

From 2002, NSW Labor located the issue of WDMC within a rationality of agr-environmentalism. This rationality was predicated on State intervention and control - albeit delivered at the grassroots. It institutionalised an administrative rationalist approach to the public and private sector arrangements of WDMC. It did not challenge the underlying assumptions of capitalism, the scientific paradigm of ‘social facts’ and it relied on and financially encouraged a technological and ‘innovative’ solution.

NSW Labor’s understanding of the issue of WDMC became synonymous with State control of WDMC. The State did not concede power to those most affected by WDMC – farming families. Rather, they were interpellated into the position of the ‘manipulable being’ (Lockie and Carpenter 2009: 409). The knowledge of farming families – and the viability of agricultural production – would be ‘harnessed’ in the interests of the State and interpellated through a discourse of ‘new’ environmentalism. Over this time, NSW Labor deployed various storylines of WDMC to give meaning to this understanding.
This was most notably through the promulgation of the policy instruments as ‘best practice,’ ‘good news’ stories in the rural media, and the reliance on and promotion of a suite of various technological and scientific solutions.

The Liberal National Coalition as the authorial voice on wild dog management and control

In contrast to NSW Labor, The Nationals argued that they were ‘the true voice of country and regional New South Wales’ (Cansdell 2005 13 October: 18580). The imperative to control feral animals was intrinsically understood by The Nationals as a rural and regional issue over which NSW Labor parliamentarians representing inner city electorates such as Balmain – the birthplace of NSW Labor – knew little and should not preside.

For example, when the then Minister for the Environment, the Honourable Bob Debus, was answering a Dorothy Dixer question from The Honourable Steve Whan (Labor - Monaro) about WDMC in Kosciuszko National Park, the then Leader of the Nationals, the Honourable Andrew Stoner called a point of order:

Mr Andrew Stoner interjecting: Point of order, I would just like the Minister -

Mr Speaker: What is your point of order?

Mr Andrew Stoner: - to tell us how many wild dogs there are in Balmain. (Debus 2005 12 October: 18474).

The narrative within this storyline rests on an implicit distinction between the ‘City’ and the ‘Bush,’ invoking the storyline of ‘countrymindedness’ (Aitkin 2005, Botterill 2009, Wear 2009). ‘Countrymindedness’ is a storyline which extols the virtue of country living as ‘wholesome and desirable in contrast to the selfish and corrupt ways of the city’ (Botterill 2009:2).

The Nationals positioned this distinction as a political imperative in their fight against the challenges and incursions into NSW rural electorates from NSW Labor and the minority parties such as The Fishers and Shooters Party, The Outdoor Recreation Party,
One Nation, the Christian Democrats, and the Independent candidates. True to the storyline, Andrew Stoner, the then Leader of The Nationals argued during the Second Reading of the Rural Communities Impacts Bill that the Carr Labor government was: ‘the most Sydney-centric government in the history of New South Wales’ (Stoner 2005 1 December: 20507).

However, the storyline of ‘country mindedness’ in WDMC lacks sufficient explanatory power. The parliamentary speeches reveal that WDMC was not just presented as an issue which mythologised farm families and wild dogs within a socialist agrarian discourse. The material reality of wild dog predation was increasingly recognised across all sides of Parliament. The political opportunity that WDMC offered was apparent to all.

In the Parliament, NSW Labor did not characterise farm families as ‘rent seekers’ who were seeking handouts for WDMC which was ‘properly’ in an age of economic rationalism, a private matter; the cost of which farm families ‘should’ bear. NSW Labor too recognised that: ‘No one can deny that the farmers have done more than their fair share of man-hours’ (Whan 2003: 597).

However, akin to NSW Labor, the narrative of The Nationals positioned farm families as the ‘object’ of a subverted storyline; in this case NSW Labor had done ‘things’ to farm families which had significantly altered the materiality of their lives. This in turn challenged the ‘rugged individualism’ implicit as a narrative in the ‘country mindedness’ storyline. The narrative of The Nationals’ storyline was that it was NSW Labor which had significantly increased the size of the public estate from which wild dogs emanated and that therefore the NSW Labor Government - as the State - had a duty of care as the steward of that public estate.

Stewardship is a central narrative within The Nationals storyline. This extended to both the land itself and to the native fauna and flora in it. (Stoner 2008 31 August: 397). It was morally incumbent on NSW Labor to meet any economic, social, or environmental ‘spill over’ effects of wild dogs onto private lands. This view was predicated on the belief that ‘people had a right to farm’ on private land (Fraser 2005 23 March: 20515) free of wild dogs because, in part, ‘feral animals impact on the wealth-creating farmers of this nation’ (Colless 2002 5 September: 4669).
The Nationals stated that they were: ‘not philosophically opposed to national parks, if they are properly managed’ (Hodgkinson 2002 21 November: 7380). However, it was ‘important for this Parliament and honourable members to preserve the animal kingdom with commonsense’ (Armstrong 2003 14 October: 3779). The Nationals ‘common sense’ discourse of environmentalism was not predicated on ‘the basket weavers of Balmain,’ but rather ‘the environment that supports us all, particularly the environment and in our national parks and wilderness areas’ (Pezzutti 2002 5 September: 4669). It is of note that this anthropocentric approach remained unchallenged by NSW Labor and the Liberal/National Coalition across the parliamentary debates over this time.

The Nationals positioned WDMC as ‘personal’ to them; a part of their ‘lived’ experiences. In many of their speeches they revealed personal ‘hands on’ knowledge and that of their constituents of wild dog predation (Webb 2002 15 March, Hodgkinson 2005 23 September, Maguire 2007, 26 October: 3469). WDMC was performed simultaneously as both a private and public action. It is evident that they were speaking from their own ‘life’ experience and generational knowledge of WDMC which in large part is not revealed in the speeches of NSW Labor during this time.

Russell (2006) reiterated the phenomenological experience of farming families in a small case study. He wrote:

Actual dog attacks are described in horrific terms and as highly sensual and perceptual events. The detailed telling of the experience is mutually created and fashioned anew at every telling and hearing. Yet few want to hear the actual story. Government agencies seek to dismiss the events as hysterical exaggerations; industry bureaucrats see the socio-economic impact as minimal; and neighbouring landholders don't want to be confronted with detailed descriptions for fear of 'infection' (Russell 2006 26-27 July: 3).

However, increasingly, The Nationals framed the issue of wild dogs within their storylines not only as a rural problem, but also as a peri urban one as well which should not depend on a ‘lottery’ of WDMC administered by NSW NPWS and State Forests (Smith 2010 11 March: 21255). Urban and peri urban citizens had a stewardship responsibility akin - but not equal - to that of their country counterparts to control their
pet animals; to eradicate pest animals and weeds on their lands and to stop the 'dumping' of unwanted animals in rural areas.

The economic costs to NSW agriculture were a material reality which slowly but increasingly was converted into a threat to the State. During this time, the social impacts on farm families of wild dog predation on agricultural stock also gained prominence and cut across the parliamentary divide as increasingly farm families exited agricultural production (Colless 2002 9 April: 1078, Smith 2002 19 September: 5069, Webb 2002 21 November: 7380, Tingle 2005 8 June: 16544, Stoner 2006 6 September, Whan 2006 7 September: 1691, Cohen 2010 26 October: 26775).

The 'social impacts' as a storyline became a political tool utilised without compunction by all sides of politics. In a vitriolic debate, the Honourable Amanda Fazio (Labor) accused the Honourable Rick Colless (Nationals) of:

> attempting to again to use the feral animal inquiry as a mechanism to prop up the ever-dwindling support base of the National Party' (Fazio 2002 5 September).

The Honourable, Amanda Fazio, challenged the claims of The Nationals that it was the legitimate and 'true' voice of country NSW: 'I would not like to be a member of a party with a support level of around 3 per cent' (Fazio 2002 5 September: 4669).

The Nationals in turn pointed out that by 'locking up' vast areas within the public estate, NSW Labor had not conducted pest animal and weed eradication to the degree necessary. The Honourable Ian Armstrong, the then leader of The Nationals, re-iterated The Nationals’ storyline of stewardship arguing:

> that governments have a responsibility to protect the flora and fauna that they own and control, just as private enterprise has similar responsibilities for the animals it manages’ to protect the flora and fauna it manages (Armstrong 2003 14 October: 3779).

Moreover, The Nationals argued that NSW Labor ‘did not consult properly with communities and the relevant parties in the rural sector’ (Cansdell 2005 13 October:
18580) and this posed a real threat not just to farm families but to the State. In contrast, NSW Labor argued that:

The proof should be who actually delivers for rural New South Wales – not just who talks the rhetoric in this place – and that is Country Labor (Whan 2005 13 October: 18189).

The Shooters Party

In 1985, the election of the Shooters Party of NSW to the Legislative Council changed the political landscape of WDMC. It drew on a very diverse constituency. The Shooters Party further subverted the storyline of WDMC, to challenge the mandate of NSW Labor and, particularly, the authorial ‘voice’ of The Nationals on WDMC. With the assistance of other minor parties in the Legislative Council, the Shooters Party threatened to block the passage of Supply Bills unless NSW Labor agreed to support legislation which permitted hunting in National Parks.

The Shooters Party ‘forced’ the introduction of the Game Bill, using the balance of power that the minor parties held in the Legislative Council. The NSW Greens ‘were appalled’ by its introduction suggesting instead that it should be called ‘the Blood Sports Act’ (Jones 2002 27 June:3958, Rhiannon 2002 27 June: 3958). The Nationals in turn accused them of being ‘the worldwide wankers,’ who engaged in ‘frivolous hysterics,’ and queried why the: ‘national park estate land was excluded from the definition of public land’ (Gay 2002 27 June: 3958).

In turn, the NSW Greens argued:

The Carr Government is trying to out-National the National Party and thereby catch conservative rural voters. The Greens will be doing everything in their power to reach out to the rest of the community and explain to them what this Labor Government has done (Rhiannon 2002 27 June: 3958).

The Bill was later amended to the Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002. This indicated the power the minor parties wielded in the Legislative Council; particularly the Shooters Party and the Outdoor Recreation Party. The Act established their
parliamentary 'voice.' The Shooters Party consistently argued that it was a citizen's right to bear arms and hunt invoking a Jeffersonian storyline. Feral animal control, of which WDMC was a part, had become the means.

This Bill, introduced by NSW Labor (Amery 2002 19 March: 3958) now became one in which recreational shooters were permitted, under licence to exercise their right to own guns, to shoot, to hunt prescribed feral animals and to gain access to previously unavailable NSW geographic locations – notably public lands. This increasingly blurred the objectives of WDMC and the nuances of the storylines were further subverted in the Parliamentary Debates.

For example, the Honourable Robert Brown, the successor to the founder of the Shooters Party, the Honourable John Tingle, stated in his parliamentary maiden speech:

> contemporary hunters, fishers, foresters and farmers are all interested in the conservation of biodiversity. They do not need city-based extremists to lecture them on stewardship. Perhaps they need someone to champion their collective conservation ethic, and the Shooters Party will be that champion (Brown 2005 23 May: 26).

The Shooters Party, along with the other minor parties such as the NSW Greens, One Nation and The Outdoor Recreation Party, challenged the claim of The Nationals to speak on WDMC alone. It also argued that the NSW Labor Government was 'city centric;' that its results on feral animal control were bereft of logic. However, it tied the issue of WDMC to a conservation 'ethic' and to an interpretation of 'stewardship' outside of an agrarian discourse. While its constituency had some overlaps with the farming community it answered to a far broader one: recreational hunters.

In contrast, the NSW Greens and The Nationals expressed reservations about so-called 'weekend warriors,' especially and particularly the possibility of pig hunters releasing pig dogs into the bush after a period of 'weekend warfare' (Gay 2002 27 June: 3958, Jones 2002 31 October: 6283, Cohen 2005, 6 May: 15869). The narrative within this storyline reveals the concern that these hunters would interfere with or be entirely ignorant of the control work already undertaken by the 47 RLPBs across NSW and that
they would act with impunity, irrespective of any legal sanction that the Parliament may introduce.

Importantly it was suggested that these hunters may not act in humane ways – a central narrative of the storyline of the NSW Greens. The Nationals were ultimately satisfied that the legislative sanctions already in place under the Firearms Act 1996 and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (POCTAA) would impinge sufficiently on the actions of hunters to prevent this occurrence and allowed the passage of the Bill.

The Shooters Party effectively held NSW Labor to ransom and the Game Council Act was passed through both Houses of Parliament. Again, during Premier Kristina Keneally’s Labor leadership between 2009 until 2011, the minority parties held the balance of power in the Legislative Council. The Shooters Party then threatened to introduce the Game and Feral Animal Control Amendment Bill forcing further amendments to the Act. The intention of this Act was to allow entry to licensed game hunters to hunt game animals in parts of the national park estate.

In contrast, the NSW Greens argued that the creation of the Game Council was for one reason only: to fund NSW Labor’s solution to feral animal control. However, in doing this, the NSW Greens claimed NSW Labor had failed:

The Minister says self-funding remains the Government's long-term goal. The motion is urgent because the council is struggling to stay afloat, and more and more public money is being poured into it with dubious benefits. The council's business and strategic plans should be in the public arena for the public to scrutinise and determine whether public money should continue to be spent on this organisation set up by the Labor Party to appease Shooters' Party (Hale 2009 8 September: 17536).

In Question Time the Honourable Lee Rhainnon (NSW Greens) went further:

Can the Minister explain why the Game Council's financial statements for the 2005-06 annual reporting period are not available on its website? Will the Minister require that the missing information be included in this year's annual report; that council respond to significant issues raised by the Auditor-General in
2008 as required by legislation; and that the missing information from prior years be published publicly in the interim? (Rhiannon 2009 8 September: 17356).

The NSW Greens

The storylines of the NSW Greens were twofold. Firstly, it endorsed the need for feral animal control per se:

I concede that feral animals are a significant problem in New South Wales, and the Greens support humane methods to eradicate them (Cohen 2005, 6 May: 15869).

Secondly, it placed caveats on the humane methods by which this was to be achieved (Cohen 2005, 6 May: 15869). Notably, the NSW Greens endorsed solutions to WDMC via the administrative rationalist model promulgated by the State.

The narrative of ‘humaneness’ was a central aspect of the storyline of the NSW Greens. However, this was not a storyline unique to the NSW Greens. The narrative of stewardship espoused by The Nationals was subverted. The NSW Greens positioned their narrative as one in which the environment was conceptualised differently to the way in which it was by NSW Labor and the Liberal/National Coalition – without saying exactly how. It too claimed to represent the people of NSW for the ‘common good.’ In her maiden speech NSW Greens Senator, Lee Rhiannon stated:

The New South Wales Government must put people and their communities first. The common good needs to be central to all policies developed and all projects undertaken in this State (Rhiannon 1999 26 May: 445)

Nevertheless, the NSW Greens positioned themselves as the gatekeepers and the ‘true’ voice of a discourse of environmentalism upon which it claimed its members believed it held the mandate to speak. Notwithstanding this, in successive Parliaments, like the other minority parties in the NSW Parliament during this time, the NSW Greens were not well represented numerically.
In 2004, a member of the NSW Greens was elected to the Legislative Assembly for the first time. At any time during successive NSW Labor Governments, their numbers did not increase beyond five members in the Legislative Council.

As such, the power of the NSW Greens was strategic: Firstly, in their role in securing preferences for NSW Labor in successive elections – this gave the NSW Greens leverage; and secondly, as the champions of an environmental discourse however imprecise which had electoral utility and traction in inner city electorates. Hence the NSW Greens were also strategically useful to NSW Labor. Not surprisingly, over the period of NSW Labor Government the Liberal/National Coalition consistently accused NSW Labor of ‘trying to appease the Greens’ on issues not just limited to WDMC (Stoner 2002 21 November: 7380).

In conclusion, over the years of successive NSW Labor Governments WDMC was a matter of State. Each parliamentary party claimed the mandate to speak on behalf of farming families and to hold the authorial voice on WDMC. This contest was characterised by acrimony, distrust and cynicism in both Houses of the NSW Parliament.

NSW Labor Government framed the issue of WDMC within an administrative rationalist discourse. Propelled by perceived political opportunism, NSW Labor sublimated the issue of WDMC within a Country Labor storyline. This storyline in turn contributed to the overall framing of WDMC. Within the new empiricist frame, it was not only necessary to define and quantify the problem of WDMC, it was also imperative to control it. An analysis of the parliamentary speeches during this time spoke more of the discourse of the ‘I’ – successive attempts by the State to control the meanings of WDMC.

Significantly, the State and farming families were no longer working in concert. Farming families were now rendered the object; not the ‘I’ of this discourse. The ‘local’ and the material reality of escalating wild dog predation and the meanings that farming families ascribed to WDMC were subsumed within the administrative rationalist discourse.
However, perennial questions which challenged the legitimacy of successive NSW Labor Governments arose. This concerned the lack of transparency and accountability in the financial expenditures on WDMC. This issue came under increasing scrutiny. It is to this examination that I now turn in Chapter Three.
Chapter Four

‘Pulling the Wool Over Your Eyes:' Transparency and Accountability in NSW wild dog management and control

In Chapter Two, the parliamentary speeches revealed that during its time in Government from 1995 until 2011 NSW Labor represented its financial allocations to WDMC in storylines. These storylines pivoted around claims by successive NSW Labor Governments of the manifest care and concern it held for rural and regional people. The storylines of financial expenditures on WDMC in the NSW Parliament served as the tangible proof of this care and concern and was a dominant narrative within successive NSW Labor Government’s storylines on WDMC.

This Chapter compares these storylines against the financial expenditures on WDMC as reported in a survey of the Annual Reports, Financial Statements and allied Reports of six institutional actors charged with affecting WDMC on public lands over this period. This survey includes the Annual Reports and Financial Statements of: NSW NPWS and its successors; the Wild Dog Destruction Board; the Department of Agriculture and its successors; State Forests NSW and its successor; Game Council NSW; and, the State Council of the Rural Lands Protection Boards.

Finally, the Chapter draws on relevant allied Reports. These include: the State of the Parks 2004 Report (Department of Environment and Conservation 2005); the State of the Parks 2009 Report (New South Wales Department of Environment Climate Change and Water 2009); the 2004 State of the Environment Report for the Australian Capital Region (The Office of the ACT Commissioner for the Environment 2004); and the McLeod Report: Counting the Costs: Impact of Invasive Animals in Australia (McLeod 2004).

This Chapter has not been selective. It has examined the Reports publicly available. This systematic analysis reflects what little information is available. It is apparent that there was a lack of transparency and accountability in the public reporting of financial expenditures on WDMC over time. Moreover, it appears that the allocation of financial expenditures appears ad hoc, if not, chaotic. There appears to be no financial coordination between the Departments and Agencies over expenditures on WDMC. There is no delineation in these Reports between monies directed specifically to WDMC work and monies directed specifically to the conservation of the dingo. It is also apparent that the administrative costs were disproportionate to the cost of operational 'on ground' work and that these administrative costs appeared to subsume a great deal of any allocations.

Nonetheless, these Annual Reports, Financial Statements and allied Reports had utility in the contributions they made to the dominant discourse. The Reports were used to authenticate NSW Labor’s public commitment to farming families and acted as a legitimising power to the overall discursive turn in WDMC. In this sense, these Reports can be understood not as ‘fact’ but rather as rational instruments of the State which contributed to the process of ‘fact building’ within a specific discourse. Collectively, the minutia of these Reports privileged the social construction of ‘expertise’ and reified the administrative ‘hand.’ Over time, these Reports reveal more about the production of ‘knowledge’ and the consolidation of taken-for-granted assumptions, the networks, and, relations of power inherent in the dominant discourse than they do about financial expenditures on WDMC in real terms across NSW.

Additionally, while the Audit Reports of the NSW Auditor General temper the storylines of NSW Labor by pointing increasingly to disparities between the dominant storylines of NSW Labor on WDMC and the material reality of WDMC as reported, these observations did not prove sufficient to challenge the power of the administrative
rationalist discourse. Rather, the Audit Reports can be seen as instruments (see Gendron, Cooper et al. 2007:102) contributing to the re-embedding of WDMC within the overarching administrative rationalist discourse.

This Chapter presents the findings of this empirical research in two parts. Part One examines the Annual Reports and Financial Reports of NSW NPWS. Part Two examines the Annual Reports and Financial Statements of State Council of the RLPB; State Forests; Game Council NSW; the Wild Dog Destruction Board; and NSW DPI. Allied Reports and the Reports of the Auditor General of NSW are integrated throughout the Chapter. Part III analyses the findings of this empirical research.

Part I - 'Show me the Money'

NSW NPWS Annual Reports and Financial Statements

In 2004 Bob Debus (Minister for the Environment – Labor) announced in the NSW Parliament:

This financial year alone, National Parks will spend $17 million across NSW on feral animal and weed control. This is a record amount. From 1991 to 1995 the Coalition allocated a mere $4.2 million for pest management in national park’s around $1 million a year, over four years. In other words, the Carr Government is spending seventeen times more than the Coalition ever did (Debus 2004 11 March: 7169).

In 2005 Minister Bob Debus again attested to NSW Labor’s largesse. This time he claimed the figure was $18 million (Debus 2005 12 October: 18474). By 2011 the figure had declined to $15 million.

The reporting - or lack thereof – of financial expenditures within the Annual Reports of NSW NPWS and the lack of detail in the Financial Reports over the period of NSW Labor Government makes storylines of financial expenditures on WDMC difficult to substantiate; if not impossible using documents available in the public domain.

In the immediate period preceding NSW Labor government in 1991-92 and 1992-93 there is no mention within the Annual Reports of NSW NPWS of expenditure on WDMC. The NSW NPWS Annual Report 1994-95 reported simply that ‘seventy
percent of the recurrent expenditure provided has been used to employ private contractors’ (NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service 1994-95:32).

Nor is it possible to substantiate the later suggestion by NSW NPWS that no funds were allocated to WDMC in the Brindabella and Wee Jasper Valleys in the period 1995-96 (Department of Environment and Conservation 2006:28); there is simply insufficient information provided in the Reports and Financial Statements of NSW NPWS during this time.

Notwithstanding this, the outsourcing of work to private contractors and the commercial-in-confidence nature of these contractual arrangements raises reasonable questions regarding the degree of public sector accountability and transparency generally in the processes of feral animal and weeds control, and, WDMC specifically. Instead, the Annual Reports and Financial Statements point to the degree to which these arrangements can be ‘abused for political ends’ (Jacobs 2009:1280) and can be vehicles of ‘rhetoric.’ Overall, there is no publicly available audit of this outsourcing process for contractual work or a public listing of the locations of WDMC work completed against costs in real terms in any of the Annual Reports and Financial Statements over the period of Labor Government in NSW. As a consequence Minister Debus’ 2004 claim of expenditures ‘...seventeen times more than the Coalition...’ cannot be substantiated against the Annual Reports and Financial Statements of that time.

Nevertheless, in 1996-97, the NSW NPWS Annual Report claimed that NSW NPWS had undertaken ‘...over 400 programs, aimed at minimising the impacts of pest animals’ (NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service 1997:34). The number of programs reported increased exponentially to 1,500 over the period of NSW Labor Government. This may well have been true. However, during this time, in successive Annual Reports the reporting of the locations and the programs undertaken is generalised. In lieu of this reporting, the use of strategic case studies within these Reports is selective and widespread. They are held within these Annual Reports to be representative of widespread success in pest animal, WDMC and weeds control across NSW.

The utility of the NSW NPWS Annual Reports therefore as instruments of an administrative rationalist discourse lies in the way they frame the ‘problem’ of WDMC. This specific framing is used to perpetuate storylines of success through the
construction of the ‘social facts’ of both the implementation of WDMC and the consultation process with stakeholders.

In this way, the NSW NPWS Annual Reports and Financial Statements over the period of the NSW Labor Government acted as a corroborating ‘authority’ providing legitimacy for the parliamentary claims of NSW Labor. They were mutually reinforcing. The empirical evidence provided in the Annual Reports and Financial Statements in support of these claims however is problematic as the substantive ‘proof’ proffered is neither transparent nor coherent. This next section examines in turn this substantive ‘proof.’

‘Major works – pest weed and animal management’

In 2000-2001, the NSW NPWS Annual Report stated under ‘2000-2001 major works’ that $4,587,000 was spent on ‘pest species management’ (NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service 2001:145). No detail of the locations of the feral animal control work or public accounting of the expenditures in real terms is provided.

In 2001-2002, the NSW NPWS Annual Report also revealed an expenditure of $4,964,000 under the heading ‘major works,’ ‘pest species management’. Notably, this figure appears to contradict the figure of $2.5 million reported by NSW NPWS to the Feral Animals Inquiry (General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 2002). [See further discussion in this Chapter]

However, in 2002-2004 (stet), the Annual Report included the following caveat:

DEC prioritises its pest control programs to focus on parks and reserves where the impact of pests are likely to be greatest’ (Department of Environment and Conservation 2004:145).

However, the geographic locations where the impacts were likely to be greatest were not provided.

Importantly, from 2004, the reporting of pest eradication in the Annual Reports is linked directly to biodiversity conservation values and programs dealing with Regional Pest Management Strategies (Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW 2007), and Threat Abatement Plans (TAPs) in line with the legal provisions of the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 (TSCA).
The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage defines Threat Abatement Plans (TAPs) as:

- a statutory document prepared and approved in accordance with Part 5 of the TSC Act, and Ministers and public authorities are required to take any appropriate action available to them to implement the measures in the plan. A threat abatement plan:
  - outlines actions to manage the threatening process
  - explains how the success of these actions will be measured
  - identifies the authorities that will be responsible for carrying out those actions, gives a cost estimate and timetable, if possible, for carrying out the plan


On the other hand, the purpose of a Regional Pest Management Strategy (RPMS):

- provides NPWS with a strategic approach to pest management across NSW. The Strategy developed for each region provides a tool to broadly identify pest distribution and their associated impacts across the park system. It details priorities for each Region, including actions listed in the PAS and TAPs as well as other actions such as wild dog and feral pig control to protect neighbouring properties and site-based weed control and allows resources to be allocated to high priority programs. The RPMS also identifies the requirement for other plans or strategies, such as Wild Dog Plans or Bush Regeneration Plans, that provide a more detailed approach

(Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW 2007:7).

However, the efficacy of TAPs was widely questioned.

In 2004, in its submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Inquiry, the Managing Director of Animal Control Technologies and Applied Biotechnologies Group wrote:

It is a plain reality that the pest animals of Australia are neither constrained by geographical boundaries of land tenure nor by bureaucracy. They focus only on eating and breeding while the rest of us throw harmless policy statements in
their general direction. A betting man would rather place his money of (sic) the terrorist fox, feral pig or innocuous female mouse with a litter of 10, than on a threat abatement plan backed with policy documentation, regulations, enforcement and surveys. It is a war zone in Australia and there needs to be a more systematic approach to supporting effector actions (Animal Control Technologies and Applied Biotechnologies Group 2004 August: 5).

Likewise, a small survey of a sample of four Regional Pest Management Strategies across NSW from 2007-2012 did not provide information pertaining to financial expenditures (Department of Environment and Climate Change 2007, Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW 2007, Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW 2007, Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW 2007).

It is clear that the capacity to report publicly on financial expenditures on WDMC is possible. The Annual Reports and Financial Statements alone could reasonably be seen as the appropriate place and certainly provided an opportunity annually to provide financial information from Regional Pest Management Strategies across NSW. The necessity to report through an Annual Report and accompanying Financial Statements was a statutory obligation. The introduction of the RPMS and accompanying TAPs too also offered the opportunity - but this was not done.

Instead publications emanating from NSW NPWS and its successors are profuse in scientific data but are severely deficient in the reporting of precise or even meaningful financial expenditures. It is difficult to conclude that this is other than obfuscation.

In 2003, the Department was renamed the Department of Environment and Conservation (NSW).

In 2004-05 the Annual Report stated:

Management of pest animals and weeds is a high priority for DEC and expenditure on their control reached a record $18 million in 2004-2005. The State of the Parks 2004 showed that our pest animal and weed control programs were either effectively holding the line or reducing pest animal and weed impacts in more than 90 per cent of our parks

(Department of Environment and Conservation 2005:54).
This figure of $18 million represents the zenith of claims of spending by NSW Labor.

However, several anomalies in the reporting of this figure are immediately apparent. Of note, the Financial Statements of 2004-2005 report under: ‘2004-2005 Major works’ that the cost to date of: ‘pest weed and animal control’ across NSW amounted to $612,000 (Department of Environment and Conservation 2005:107).

In the following year, in 2005-06, the Financial Statements reported under the heading ‘pest weed and animal control’ that the cost to date was $927,000 (Department of Environment and Conservation 2006:125).

However, from 2005, NSW NPWS Annual Reports reported against new performance indicators. The entry: ‘Pest weed and animal control’ was now subsumed within the performance indicator of: ‘conservation management.’

‘Conservation management’ is directly linked to the objective of the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995. This is reflective of the discursive shift in WDMC. The purpose of the Act broadly is: ‘to conserve threatened species, populations and ecological communities of animals and plants, ‘native’ species that need protection.’ Dingoes are defined as ‘native’ species under this Act and are to be conserved. While some scientific studies explicitly promote the hypothesis that wild dog predation on other invasive species has functional utility in protecting native species (Corbett and Newsome 1987) this is not prescribed under the Act nor commented on in the Annual Report.

In 2006, the Department of Environment and Conservation was renamed the Department of Environment and Climate Change under the direction of two new Labor Government Ministers, The Honourables Phil Koperberg and Verity Firth. The 2006-2007 Financial Statements, reported under: ‘pest weed and animal control’ that the total cost to date was $1,273,000.

From 2008, it is not possible to identify financial expenditures on: ‘pest animal and weed control’ as the entry listing: ‘Major works’ or ‘pest animals and weed control’ no longer appears.

Of note, the Annual Report claims that:
DECC's State of the Parks has been recognised internationally through the International Union for the Conservation of Nature using the 2004 report as a best practice case study in a publication released in 2007 (Department of Environment and Climate Change 2007:85).

However, despite this accolade, there appears to be significant omissions in the State of the Parks Report in the public reporting of financial expenditures on pest control and weeds. Without this information it is difficult to see how the legitimacy of this claim could be substantiated.

**NSW State of the Environment Reports**

The purpose of the NSW State of the Environment Reports is:

> to provide credible, scientifically based, statewide environmental information to assist those involved in environmental policy- and decision-making and managing the state's natural resources

(Department of Environment and Climate Change 2009).

A survey of the 2004 NSW State of the Environment Report reveals no detail of financial expenditures on which to make those ‘management’ decisions. The Report stated that the overall intention of NSW NPWS at this time was:

> To apply cost-effective methods that will have minimal negative impacts on the environment and in the case of pest animals provide humane control options (Department of Environment and Conservation 2004:45).

Yet, across the 2004 NSW State of the Environment Report, pest animals were identified as: ‘...a significant issue in 500 parks (78 per cent)” (Department of Environment and Conservation 2005 p.47). Weeds and pest animals were framed within successive reports as a problem that ‘... is growing daily with severe economic and environmental impacts (Department of Environment and Conservation 2004:43).

In 2009, the NSW State of the Environment Report stated:

> Although SoE 9 (stet) 2009 has been prepared by the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW), much of its content is the
result of extensive input by a wide range of state and local government agencies, other organisations and individual specialists, who provided data, information, analysis and interpretation, and reviewed the assembled content of the report. DECCW relies heavily on receiving such support from contributing agencies (Department of Environment and Climate Change 2009).

The Disclaimer to this Report states:

DECCW does not accept responsibility for any inaccurate or incomplete information in the report supplied by third parties. No representation is made about the accuracy, completeness or suitability for any particular purpose of the source material included in this report (New South Wales Department of Environment Climate Change and Water 2009).

The McLeod Report: Counting the Cost: Impact of Invasive Animals in Australia 2004


McLeod (2004) predicated his findings of economic costs based on ‘guesstimates’ supplied by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) and NSW government scientific studies from which McLeod then made estimates. The Report did not factor in the ‘hidden costs’ or ‘costs foregone’ as a result of wild dog predation on agricultural stock. The cost of wild dog predation on goats was not factored. The estimates were based on the replacement cost only of sheep and calves based on fixed market price of $30 and $540 respectively. It did not differentiate between say, ‘wethers,’ ‘fat lambs’ ‘super fine merinos,’ or ‘stud’ merinos. Future earning capacity, reductions in wool quality, sheep weight, saleyard price, effects on the existing health of remaining flocks and mobs, mismothering of lambs, fencing, trapping, baiting, management and change over costs, for example, were not factored in.

In particular, the social and environmental costs were not quantified. Leaving McLeod’s notion of the ‘performance’ of wild dogs to one side, there was no triple bottom line
reporting. As Fitzgerald and Wilkinson (2009) subsequently argued, McLeod’s approach - that losses are quantifiable - was also problematic because:

Not everything that counts can be counted in a meaningful way, and where something can be counted it cannot necessarily be converted to one agreed standard measure such as dollar values (Fitzgerald and Wilkinson 2009: 3)

Social costs were vague. These were described only in the most general of terms: the potential threat wild dogs posed to public health, the trade in dingo scalps, the threat of dingo attacks on tourists, and, the iconic place of the dingo in the Australian imagination. Moreover, the environmental costs appear predicated on ‘taken for granted’ ecological assumptions regarding the function of wild dogs in an ecosystem.

Yet, the findings of this Report and the quantum of the problem of ‘invasive species’ are reified and repeated across all NSW Annual Reports, and appear on NSW DPI, NSW NPWS, and DAFF websites as indicative of the ‘triple bottom line’ costs of WDMC. Yet, clearly the McLeod Report did not report on the ‘triple bottom line.’

The McLeod Report concedes that the information was far from complete and that the empirical data was based on guesstimates. Nevertheless the Report concludes:

Around $16.5 million per year is spent by the public sector on extensive wild dog population management programs, including $10 million building and maintaining barrier fencing. A further $1.5 million dollars is invested in research (McLeod 2004: 40).

There is no empirical data provided to support these claims. The Disclaimer in the Preface that: ‘it is not exhaustive...it is conservative...it is transparent’ and that: ‘All methodology is included in the report to enable others to build on it or too argue whether an impact is under or overstated’ (McLeod 2004:Forward, np) is obfuscation. It is apparent that the author just simply did not know.

The logic of the Report that ‘...the report therefore provides us with a springboard for looking at investments into invasive animal management’ (McLeod 2004: Forward, np) is inherently circular. The comments appear self-serving and prefaced on the
assumption these investments should be properly directed to the IACRC as the lead ‘scientific authority’ on invasive species.

Overall, McLeod (2004) estimated conservatively in a ‘desk top’ review, using a ‘triple bottom line’ approach, that wild dogs in Australia cause financial losses of $66 million nationally to agricultural production per annum (McLeod 2004). However, this figure has been repeatedly repudiated by other studies (Kenny 2008). For example, Kenny (2008) found:

It was conservatively estimated that wild dogs cost Queensland $33 million through lost production, disease and the cost of control (Rural Management Partners, 2003). In the five years since that report the Queensland sheep flock has continued to decline from an estimated 4.3 million to less than four million (DPI&F website). As stated, AgForce Queensland reported a further decline of 400,000 sheep between 2007 and 2008 amongst its membership, resulting in one hundred less properties running sheep in Queensland. However, the presence of wild dogs has additional impacts on the livestock industry such as less wool growth and weight gain in livestock (including cattle) due to stress and the reduction in market prices as a result of the downgrading of carcasses exhibiting dog bites (Kenny 2008: np).

In 2009, AgForce, on one indicator alone, estimated the major economic costs associated with wild dogs in the Queensland grazing industry at $67,016,575. Agforce found that:

The social costs, opportunity losses associated with lost or damaged stock and in-kind contributions of producers toward wild dog management were not encapsulated by the study, and it is expected that these factors would have a substantial upwards impact on the total economic cost of wild dogs (Agforce Queensland 2009: ii).

**The 2004 State of the Environment for the Australian Capital Region Report**

The 2004 State of the Environment for the Australian Capital Region Report - a complementary report to the NSW State of the Environment Reports - was prepared consistent with state of the environment reporting requirements of the ACT
Commissioner for the Environment Act 1993 and the NSW Local Government Act 1993. Its purpose was to report on areas within NSW which encompassed the ACT Region. The Report was compiled using Local Government Shire (LGS) areas. These reporting areas were not commensurate with the reporting and geographical areas of the then 48 RLPBs. An analysis of a small sample of the information contained within this Report – the South East indicates that the information was far from complete. [See Table 4:1 over]
Table 4:1 2004 State of the Environment Report for the Australian Capital Region – ‘South East’*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shire Council</th>
<th>Expenditure on Wild dog Control</th>
<th>Wild dogs identified as pest</th>
<th>Source of Funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bega</td>
<td>No information available</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooma Monaro</td>
<td>No information available</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombala</td>
<td>179,236</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>RLPB rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boorowa</td>
<td>No information available</td>
<td>Other pests' $5,600</td>
<td>RLPB rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cootamundra</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Not identified</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gundagai</td>
<td>No information available</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eurobodalla</td>
<td>No information available</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goulburn Mulwaree</td>
<td>No information available</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harden</td>
<td>No information available</td>
<td>Other pests' $4,400</td>
<td>RLPB rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palerang *</td>
<td>27,500</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>RLPB rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queanbeyan</td>
<td>No information available</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>See Note 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snowy River</td>
<td>132,500</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>RLPB rates, DEC,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Forests NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tallaganda</td>
<td>No information available</td>
<td>No information available</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumut</td>
<td>No information available</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>RLPB rates &amp; DEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumbarumba</td>
<td>115,000</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Lachlan</td>
<td>No information available</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(* Information provided only for Queanbeyan City Council)

*Source: Compiled from information in the State of the Environment Report for the Australian Capital Region 2004
A large part of the information appears to have been supplied by DPI and pertains to scientific studies compiled by DPI. It is unclear if the RLPBs were consulted in the compilation of this report. Of note, consistently used statements throughout this report that: ‘...No data were provided by the RLPB for this report...’ and, specifically, that: ‘...no information was available regarding South Coast RLPB expenditure on pest animal control within Bega Valley Shire for the current reporting period’ (The Office of the ACT Commissioner for the Environment 2004) are misleading.

For example, Tumut, Harden and Cootamundra defined as geographic areas within South East NSW, were not part of the then South East RLPB region. This region differs from the South East reporting area of the Local Government Shires. Likewise, the Southern Rivers Catchment Management Area (SRCMA) boundary differs again and does not encompass the entire RLPB reporting area.

In 2008, the Department of Environment and Climate Change Annual Report under the helm of newly appointed Minister, the Honourable Carmel Tebbutt, reported that reducing the impact of invasive species was now one of 12 state-wide targets for natural resource management under the statewide plan. WDMC now was considered under the heading of ‘natural resource management.’ It defined its key objective in this regard as being: ‘prioritising management programs to areas where benefits are greatest’ (Department of Environment and Climate Change 2008:75).

In 2009, the Department of Environment and Climate Change Annual Report under the helm of newly appointed Minister, the Honourable John Robertson - the third Minister in just over 12 months - claimed under the heading ‘wild dog control’ that:

Controlling wild dogs has continued to be a major priority for park managers during the year. Control is guided in most cases through local wild dog management plans which are developed in consultation with other public land managers, livestock health and pest authorities and wild dog associations. The plans identify where dogs are causing a problem and where control programs need to be undertaken, independent of tenure’

(Department of Environment and Climate Change 2009:81).

Overall, the claims in the Annual Reports of NSW NPWS regarding the largesse of the NSW Labor Government on expenditure on WDMC and the success of the Brindabella
Plan as the benchmark model for all NSW were widely disseminated through the Annual Reports as ‘taken-for-granted’ ‘facts.’ Yet, it is not possible to corroborate the ‘taken-for-granted’ ‘facts’ against the information provided in the Annual Reports and Financial Statements of NSW NPWS. Nevertheless, they contribute to the overall discourse of WDMC because as Gendron (2007) points out: ‘Claims are understood to be widely accepted and taken-for-granted when they are supported by stable and solid networks’ (Gendron, Cooper et al. 2007:105).


In juxtaposition, in 2001, NSW NPWS commissioned a report at the instruction of the NSW Labor Government. It contained specific Terms of Reference following the national public outcry against the NSW NPWS authorised culling of wild horses in the Guy Fawkes National Park and the subsequent NSW Supreme Court case led by the RSPCA against NSW NPWS for alleged cruelty (Burnswoods 2002 5 September: 4669, Tingle 2005 14 September: 17649).

This Report found that the 2001-2002 NSW NPWS budget for operational programs by feral animal species, which listed ‘wild dogs’ separately – dingos were included - amounted to $793,000 (English and Chappie 2002). This was reported as the total NSW NPWS operational budget for WDMC for a public land mass of 5,419,343 hectares (State of New South Wales 2001-2002). There is no further breakdown of this figure. [See Table 4:2 over page]
*Source: Figures Compiled from NSW Hansard and (English and Chappie 2002)

(Note: Figure 2001-2002 includes $345,000 for the development of WDMC plans)

This figure is salutary for a number of reasons and three in particular: First, the 2001-02 figure of $793,000 represented a 58 per cent increase in the WDMC budget on the previous year. In 2001-2002 an additional $345,000 was given to the NSW NPWS to develop and implement WDMC plans. (Tebbutt 2001 20 September: 20028). Second, it appears that the ‘actual’ total NSW NPWS operational budget for WDMC in 2000-2001 was $448,000 across 5,419, 343 hectares of NSW public land. Third, in light of the publicly declared task at hand across the landscapes within NSW NPWS control at this time – both by NSW NPWS and NSW Labor – these amounts appear insufficient.

The Report recommended that:

Critical decisions must also be made on the use of resources for reactive, tactical activities as opposed to long-term, strategic preventative measures. There is no better example of this than with the control of wild dogs, and there will always be this requirement to balance tactical with strategic activities, in seeking the most cost-effective outcomes (English and Chappie 2002:56).
This framing of 'critical decisions' is problematic. In the first instance, it positions the State's contributions as unilateral. It pays little regard to the financial contribution of farm families to WDMC on public lands which continues to date. Overwhelmingly, the narrative of this storyline does not factor the financial and in kind contributions made previously by farm families to WDMC work on public lands; work completed voluntarily by farm families prior to their exclusion across this landscape. This contribution is subject to erasure or framed as a storyline of 'blame.' It ignores what by this point was increasingly reported in the Hansard - the social and economic impacts on farm families of wild dog predation on agricultural stock were acute.

In contrast, the Report posits a number of economic scenarios as 'interesting' arguments to consider (English and Chapple 2002:63). The Report cites two principles: 'the polluter pays principle' and 'the beneficiary pays principle' through which farmers could become involved in cost sharing arrangements for feral animal control on public lands. These principles draw on suggestions made in the Sharing for Biodiversity Conservation: A Conceptual Framework, Productivity Commission Staff Research Paper wherein it states:

In 1972, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) adopted the polluter pays principle, which requires individuals to meet the full costs of their actions, requiring them to bear the costs of implementing pollution prevention and control measures necessary to maintain the environment in an acceptable state... The beneficiary pays principle (also known as the victim pays principle) requires anyone who benefits from an activity to contribute to the costs of undertaking it’ (Australian Government Productivity Commission 2001: Appendix D: 81)

It couches these scenarios in terms of the concept of 'additionality.' These scenarios attribute land degradation and biodiversity loss to the historical actions of farmers and the rise in feral animals as a direct result therefore they should pay commensurate with the derived benefit they received over time. This is 'wool gathering' at best and demonstrates an ignorance of the socio-political context in which agri business is situated.

While each economic scenario is speculative – and highly inflammatory in the socio-political context of WDMC – the Report overlooks the inherent flaws in these models.
Firstly, farm families already contributed through annual rates levied by the RLPB system to pests and weeds control on private lands.

Secondly, while the Report suggest that the socio-political context must be considered in any feral animal control program (English and Chapple 2002:3) the models do not recognises this. Each model relies entirely on quantitative measurement, all ‘things’ being equal, explicitly posits the erroneous assumption that all ‘things’ can be measured and factors out differentials in relations of power. Farmers are framed as only ‘profit maximisers’ who act only in their own selfish interests thereby denying a space for their concerns over the environment. This is a simplistic representation.

Thirdly, each model negates the overarching influence of: ‘party politics or the constitutional conventions of ministerial and collective responsibility’ (Rhodes and Wanna 2007:206). It positions public land managers as the unelected ‘new Platonic guardians and arbiters of public interest’ (Rhodes and Wanna 2007: 406). As Rhodes and Wanna write there is inherent risk in this as in each model unelected public land managers: ‘...are charged with imagining value and defending their notions of the ‘public good’ against other conceptions’ (Rhodes and Wanna 2007:412). As Rhodes and Wanna (2007) argue this is a power within the Westminster system of government public officials should not have.

Nevertheless, viewed in this light, NSW NPWS are active agents in the performance of knowledge, its production and dissemination through storylines that contribute to and reinforce the overall framing of the discourse of administrative rationalism as positive and in the public interest. [For further discussion on ‘public interest’ see Rhodes & Wanna (2007)].

Lastly, while the Report places land degradation and biodiversity loss squarely at the feet of farmers it excises the historical role of the State and its agents in actively encouraging farm families in activities which contributed to these effects. This is a revisionist view of history in so far as European ecological knowledge of the Australian environment at that time was limited. The Report nevertheless positions farmers instead simply as functionaries whose knowledge of feral animals must be harnessed for the ‘common good’ of the environment. Farm families in this paradigm lack both agency and identity.
Notwithstanding these concerns, - and as the Report acknowledged - the financial capacity of NSW NPWS to fulfil its commitment to WDMC as part of being a ‘good neighbour’ was already additionally compromised in the public sphere:

Given the current and historical antipathy toward, and lack of trust in, the NPWS, community involvement in the Services programs plus communication and information dissemination should be of high priority (English and Chapple 2002: 67).

The utility of the Report is that it reveals the network of institutional actors charged by the NSW Labor Government to produce and disseminate ‘knowledge.’ The Report found that:

Most of the NPWS policies are directly translated from other agencies, such as NSW Agriculture. More recent policies are derived from biodiversity conservation legislation and strategies (English and Chapple 2002: 69).

Additionally, the Report cites Policy 2.6 of the NSW NPWS Field Management Policies:

Policy 2.6 Wild Dogs acknowledges the complexities inherent in the need to conserve native dingoes (and their hybrids), together with the need to control wild dogs. Baiting programs may only be undertaken on Service estate where there is adequate evidence of wild dogs coming from Service estate and killing or maiming stock (English and Chapple 2002:81).

The notion of ‘adequate’ pivoted on both an empiricist understanding of ‘facts’ and the degree of subjective judgment that the word imputes.

The implicit assumption of the Report nevertheless remains: NSW NPWS was best positioned to be the adjudicator of social values and norms and the arbiter of the most cost effective outcomes. This was based on a discourse – vaguely expressed – as environmentalism. This reasoning appears predicated on the acceptance of a scientific framing of the ‘problem’ - however inadequate and incomplete - and the privileging of an increased bureaucratic control of WDMC.

The Report in turn suggests strongly that NSW NPWS: ‘has been much maligned’ (English and Chapple 2002: 63) and decries the influencing of ‘politics’ on resourcing.
It does not countenance the idea that NSW NPWS and its successors are political actors within the socio-political context of WDMC or that it may exercise power in furtherance of its own interests or that as a government department NSW NPWS is beholden to the Government of the Day.

**A Point of Comparison: NSW NPWS Annual Report 2002-2004 and the NSW Parliament General Standing Committee No. 5, Feral Animals Inquiry**

In 2001, NSW NPWS reported to the NSW Parliament General Standing Committee No 5, Feral Animals Inquiry, that in 2001-02 the NSW NPWS pest budget was $15.738 million, with over $2.5 million ‘expected’ to be spent on ‘on-ground’ feral animal programs (General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 2002).

A close examination reveals that these figures did not include financial expenditures allocated to scientific research and development, assets, capital items and salaries separate from the cost of feral animal control completed on the ground in real terms. They also included total ‘intended’ not ‘real’ expenditures.

Specifically, the Inquiry found that contracts for WDMC work across individual Departments and Agencies were often fulfilled by outside contractors in partnership with individual Rural Lands Protection Boards. These were commercial-in-confidence contracts. For example, dog trappers were employed by Departments and Agencies on short term contracts not necessarily specific to WDMC work. The picture of ‘who paid what’, ‘how much’ and ‘for what’ cannot be discerned.

Nevertheless, the 2002-2004 [stet] NSW NPWS Annual Report reported that:

DEC spent approximately $5.5 million ($17 million including pest control-related salaries and assets) on around 1500 weed and pest animal control programs across NSW. Reports on many of these are available on the DEC website or from DEC offices (Department of Environment and Conservation 2004).

This claim of financial expenditures on pest animal control programs is again difficult to substantiate. A search of the DEC website for further details – as recommended in the 2002-2004 Annual Report - reveals that it did not report on ‘many’ programs or provide financial detail. Nevertheless, the Report states that:
Last year NPWS alone spent almost $17 million on pest animal and weed management. This constitutes a 1700 per cent increase in the level of funding over the past 10 years, within the park system alone (Department of Environment and Conservation 2005:44).

Together these two claims corroborate NSW Labor’s storylines of expenditures on WDMC but there is insufficient detail provided in the Annual Reports and Financial Statements to discern the detail of financial expenditures on WDMC in real terms.

**Protecting Our National Parks from Pests and Weeds**

This report recommends in turn a further report – Protecting Our National Parks from Pests and Weeds (Department of Environment and Conservation 2006) for further detail. This report states:

> As part of the Iemma Government’s 2006-2007 budgets, a record $18 million will be spent to run pest control programs and develop new initiatives’ (Department of Environment and Conservation 2006:35).

A close analysis of this Report reveals that the total: ‘estimated statewide NSW expenditure’ on ‘wild dogs’ was $1.5 million (Department of Environment and Conservation 2006: 35). Of note, this reported funding was intended not for the eradication of wild dogs but rather: ‘for a range of works at priority sites including cooperative control, fencing, trials of new innovations, public education.’

The Report reveals that the total: ‘estimated statewide NPWS expenditure on weed and pest animal control in 2006-2007 and some indicative programs’ was reported as $7.3 million. The Report also revealed that: ‘Labour and other costs directly associated with carrying out pest animal and weed control programs’ amounted to $10.7 million (Department of Environment and Conservation 2006:35). In order to spend $7.3 million on programs it appears that some $10.7 million was spent.

The financial allocations within the $7.3 million, for ‘cooperative control;’ ‘trials of new innovations;’ the detail of the ‘innovations,’ the geographic locations, the nature or purpose of the ‘public education’ are not specified. Importantly these reported total expenditures cannot be corroborated against the Annual Report and Financial Statements.
In contrast, many farm families expressed the view that the expansion of the National Estate was lacking the necessary infrastructure. The Country Women’s Association (CWA) (2004) wrote:

The cost of a National Park is a lot greater and more ongoing than seems to be considered by Government when they announce the acquisitions of more land to be set aside as national Parks. These announcements are sure-fire vote winners, and maps issued showing the percentage of a state given aside to national parks are certainly impressive. The question is, can Governments afford to operate these vast areas in a (sic) ecologically sound and sustainable manner? (Country Women's Association of New South Wales 2004 12 May: 2).

The Audit Office of New South Wales

In 2004, the Audit Office of New South Wales conducted a Performance Audit of NSW NPWS in Managing Natural and Cultural Heritage in Parks and Reserves. The Auditor-General concluded that: ‘The Service has yet to clarify what constitutes success in reserve management’ or to: ‘develop an adequate information base to measure its success’ (The Audit Office of New South Wales 2004:2). The Auditor-General found that:

The law requires each reserve to have a Plan of Management. Less than one third of reserves have such a plan. Some areas have been without a plan for many years, and many that now have them were without a plan for a long time. The Service’s annual budget per hectare has roughly doubled in real terms since 1991-92. It is not possible to determine whether this is sufficient because the Service cannot reliably demonstrate its efficiency and effectiveness (The Audit Office of New South Wales 2004: 5).

The Audit Office Report also concluded that reporting by the Service did not provide: ‘a basis for improving management performance and demonstrating accountability’ (The Audit Office of New South Wales 2004:48).

Part II – Other Institutional Actors

State Council of the Rural Lands Protection Boards Annual Reports
This overall lack of financial detail is replicated in the financial information supplied by the State Council of the Rural Lands Protection Boards to the Feral Animal Inquiry. In later correspondence the State Council of the LHPA, the successor to the State Council of the RLPB, revealed that: ‘the general rate income is not subdivided into categories such as wild dog control.’ It is therefore difficult to ascertain what ‘actual’ WDMC was completed on private lands and where the $6 million reported to the Feral Animals Inquiry was spent.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the LHPA wrote ‘There is no comprehensive list of current wild dog control activities across the State’ (Milan 2011 11 September). Further to this correspondence, in personal communication the CEO stated: ‘There is no centralised collection of statistics relating to feral animals and, wild dogs in particular - the figure was an estimate’ (Milan, N. 2011 11 September).

It is salutary to compare this lack of financial detail within the 2004 State of the Environment Report for the Australian Capital Region with the State Council of the RLPBs 2004 Annual Report. Across 48 RLPBs there is evidence of extensive pest animal control and specifically WDMC work conducted across NSW. There is mention of programs for the control of: rabbits; locusts; pigs; deer; foxes; goats; wild dogs; wingless grasshoppers; cats; rats; mice; and domestic dogs. Little financial detail is provided in individual RLPB reports regarding feral animal control yet WDMC work is mentioned in most (State Council of Rural Lands Protection Boards 2005). Individual RLPBs, for example, state:

The Board was able to access the million dollar State Government grant funds allocated to the Western division for pest animal destruction

(State Council of Rural Lands Protection Boards 2003:64).

Yet, no further explanatory financial detail is provided. Likewise, in 2002, the Grafton RLPB reported:

The sheep industry has become virtually non-existent due to the inability of landholders to control wild dogs effectively despite the use of available control methods (State Council of Rural Lands Protection Boards 2003:64).
From these Reports, it is evident that there is considerable fragmentation in the reporting of financial expenditures on WDMC and an ad hoc approach to WDMC work completed without any description of financial expenditures in real terms – or in any terms. There is no estimation of the ‘social cost’ to farm families. There is no economic cost. There is no reporting of the environmental costs of wild dog predation.

**State Forests, Forests NSW**

In 2001-2002, State Forests reported to the NSW parliamentary Feral Animal Inquiry that it spent $430,203 on feral animal control and managed approximately 2.8 million hectares of land. An analysis of the Financial Statements of State Forests and its successor, Forests NSW, from 1997 until 2007 reveals that the total budget for the control of ‘targeted pests’ – foxes, dogs, goats, possums, pigs, cattle - increased from $328,000 to $528,000. From 2003, the amount allocated to feral animal control was in overall decline. No information specific to WDMC expenditure is provided. [See Table 2:3]

From 1995 until 2009, across the Annual Reports of State Forests and its successor, Forests NSW, reported against ‘six performance indicators.’ There is no further breakdown of financial expenditures against the locations of work completed.

In 2004, State Forests amalgamated with the NSW DPI along with NSW Agriculture and was renamed Forests NSW. From 2004, Forests NSW was a public trading enterprise within NSW DPI (NSW Department of Primary Industries 2005:2).

In 2002, with the passage of the NSW Game and Feral Animal Control Act, the role in part of Forests NSW was to facilitate access ‘...by suitably qualified and licensed hunters onto 97 state forests declared under the Act to undertake feral animal control’ (NSW Department of Primary Industries 2005:31). By 2008 the number of State Forests in NSW declared for licensed hunting covering more than two million hectares increased to 372 State Forests (Game Council New South Wales 2008:3).
In 2010, Forests NSW reported that the number of wild dogs removed by licensed hunters from State Forests for the financial years 2007-2008 until 2009-10 totalled 211 (Forests NSW 2010:41). State Forests employee’s sometimes publicly stated adage: ‘wild dogs don’t eat trees’ as a justification for not investing in WDMC highlights the different objectives and reporting mechanisms as reported in the Annual Reports across the whole of government.

**Game Council NSW**

Under the Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002 the Game Council has two objectives:

a) To provide for the effective management of introduced species of game animals, and

b) To promote responsible and orderly hunting of those game animals on public and private land and of certain pest animals on public land
Pursuant to the Act, the Game Council and Feral Animal Control Regulation 2004 commenced on 6 August 2004 allowing licensed hunters access to NSW public lands (Game Council New South Wales 2005:15).


In 2004, the Audit Office reported that Game Council NSW had net liabilities of over $0.634 million and that:

the Treasurer approved a grant of $2 million for the 2005-2006 year’ and that: ‘without this funding significant uncertainty would exist as to whether the Council could pay its debts as and when they fall due’ (Audit Office of New South Wales 2006:17).

In 2005-06 the Audit Office reported that:

In addition, the Treasurer gave his approval for the Council to request a TCorp loan not exceeding $1 million in 2006-07 year’ and that: ‘without this funding significant uncertainty would exist as to whether the Council could pay its debts as and when they fall due’ (Audit Office of New South Wales 2006:23).


By 2008, the Audit Office, in its third Financial Audit, expressed:

material uncertainty about the Council’s ability to continue as a going concern (Audit Office of New South Wales 2008: 79).

Further, the Audit Office found:
the Council had an excess of liabilities over assets at the reporting date and its ongoing viability is dependent on its ability to derive sufficient future government funding' (Audit Office of New South Wales 2008:79).

The NSW Treasurer extended funding until 30 April 2008.

From 2009, the Audit Office made no further comment as grants from the NSW Government exceeded Game Council NSW expenditures. The Audit Office does not comment on Government policy. Its only concern was its financial viability.

Nevertheless, the pervasive storyline of Annual Reports of Game Council NSW is that it is a ‘success.’ This ‘success’ appears to be measured in the Annual Reports in two ways: First via the financial contribution hunters make to the State in license fees and tourist dollars spent in regional and rural NSW; and, second, by the contribution hunters make in eradicating pest animals from the NSW landscape thereby lessening the economic burden of feral animal control to the State.

On both counts, there is a distinct lack of empirical evidence to support the material claims emanating from successive Game Council Annual Reports. First, collections from license fees did not offset expenditures. Successive Financial Audits from the Audit Office of NSW affirm this understanding. Second, successive claims within and across all Annual Reports attempt to establish a causal relationship between the number of licensed hunters and the number of tourist dollars generated by hunters in regional and rural NSW. These figures are, at best, speculative. Third, in 2009-2010, Game Council NSW reported that licensed hunters across NSW had eradicated 15,232 animals. It is not possible to corroborate these material claims. Lastly, and of particular note, across successive Annual Reports from 2003-2004 up to and including 2008-2009 - the cumulative tally of wild dogs eradicated was reported as 136. That is across more than two million hectares of public lands. It is difficult to see how this contribution could materially diminish the need for State intervention or how Game Council NSW as an entity can offset its own expenditures against its revenue.

The utility of Game Council NSW came not from its economic contribution but from elsewhere. Game Council NSW is best understood as a creature of NSW Labor’s creation whose raison d’être lies within the prevailing socio-political context of that time. The passage of the Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002 and the subsequent creation of the entity, Game Council NSW, offered NSW Labor a bloc of votes in the
Upper House to further its legislative agenda. Its utility cannot be understood in terms of its contribution to WDMC.

The Wild Dog Destruction Board

The Wild Dog Destruction Board was created originally under the Wild Dog Destruction Board Act 1921. The Board’s broad objective is to:

‘allow the multimillion dollar grazing enterprises to continue to be carried out in the Western Division of New South Wales without the threat of wild dog attacks’ (Wild Dog Destruction Board 2003:5).

However, to explain the ‘dog fence’ simply in terms of its financial expenditures would be remiss. It is widely held to serve as an icon of the Australian imagination which resonates clearly with the central tenets of country mindedness and speaks of a time when Australia ‘Rode on the Sheep’s Back’ (Bean 1945, Rolls 1969, Grattan 2004, Woodford 2004, Massey 2007).

An additional survey of its Annual Reports in 1986-89 – prior to the collapse of the Reserve Price Scheme for wool - indicates the size of the sheep flock and the estimated gross value of the sheep industry. For example, the 1987 Annual Report states: ‘In 1986, the area served by the Board carried approximately 7.8 million sheep, which produced wool with an estimated gross value of $137m’ (Wild Dog Destruction Board 1987:np). In 1988: ‘the flock had grown to 7.6 million and produced an estimated value of $315 million (Wild Dog Destruction Board 1988:np). In 1989 the Annual Report stated: ‘In the 12 months to March 1989, the area served by the Board carried approximately 8.5 million sheep, which produced wool with an estimated value of $353 million’ (Wild Dog Destruction Board 1989:np).

By 1997-98, the Annual Report reported that the: ‘area served by the Board carried approximately 4.9 million sheep’ (Wild Dog Destruction Board 1998, np). Its value was not recorded and in successive Reports no information regarding the value of sheep or the size of the NSW flock is provided.

From 1995 until 2009, the Wild Dog Destruction Board received a grant of $60,000 annually from DPI to erect, maintain and repair:
a dog proof fence along specified section of the New South Wales borders with Queensland and South Australia, thereby excluding wild dogs from the grazing lands of the Western Division' (The Wild Dog Destruction Board 2004:3).

In the 2002-03 and 2003-04 Annual Reports, the Board reported that:

as part of the NSW Premiers’ Drought Relief Package wild dog rates were waived for the Western Division landholders and paid for by the State Government’ (Wild Dog Destruction Board 2004:np).

This amounted to over $1 million for each financial year. No other explanatory detail is provided.

In addition, the Wild Dog Destruction Board, unlike any other Department or agency in NSW, is authorised to pay bounties on the presentation of dog scalps. The payment is reported as $10 per scalp. For example, in 2002-03, 230 scalps were presented for payment as compared with the 2003-04, when 62 scalps were presented for payment.

**NSW Department of Primary Industries**

The Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture and its successors stated successively that its ‘Vision’ was: Profitable, adaptive⁴ and sustainable primary industries building vibrant communities’ (Industries 2009).

A review of the Annual Reports of NSW Agriculture and DPI and DII, reveals a lack of detail in the reporting of financial expenditures on feral animal control and, specifically, WDMC in real terms and for some years – in any terms. DPI’s reporting of its performance is difficult to reconcile against this Vision.

Of note, details of DPI financial expenditure on WDMC are provided only for the financial years, 2004-2005, 2005-06 and 2006-07. The Financial Statements report that within these financial years the monies were to: ‘assist in the destruction of wild dogs.’ The exact use of these financial allocations is unclear although the financial expenditures may have contributed towards offsetting the costs of aerial baiting of public lands although this is conjecture. [See Table 2. 4]

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⁴ The word ‘adaptive’ was added to the Vision in Annual Report 2008-09. Prior to that the vision was ‘profitable, and sustainable primary industries building vibrant communities.’ Chapter Four will demonstrate how the word ‘adaptive’ denotes a particular administrative meaning within WDMC.
Nevertheless, it is apparent that the financial allocations to the Yass Board appear significantly larger than other RLPBs. An analysis of the information compiled from these Reports reveals that overall three RLPBs received the greatest financial allocations – Yass RLPB; Northern New England and Armidale RLPBs.

Table 4.4 Actual NSW DPI Expenditure to Rural Lands Protection Boards: ‘to assist in the destruction of wild dogs’. *

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armidale RLPB</td>
<td>5626.27</td>
<td>4,186.43</td>
<td>6,435.03</td>
<td>10,786.21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bombala RLPB</td>
<td></td>
<td>509.7</td>
<td>502.71</td>
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<tr>
<td>Braidwood RLPB</td>
<td>5189.33</td>
<td>4,412.81</td>
<td>4,443.70</td>
<td>2,088.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central Tablelands RLPB</td>
<td>396.30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooma RLPB</td>
<td>2343.67</td>
<td>8,327.10</td>
<td>2,414.44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester RLPB</td>
<td>2847.68</td>
<td>1,904.74</td>
<td>3816.95</td>
<td>5,514.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goulburn RLPB</td>
<td>1288.11</td>
<td>419.33</td>
<td>1,501.53</td>
<td>1,261.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grafton RLPB</td>
<td>2408.40</td>
<td>1,706.10</td>
<td>1227.54</td>
<td>2,608.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gundagai RLPB</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>1,859.72</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hume RLPB</td>
<td></td>
<td>5,317.92</td>
<td>3,287.02</td>
<td>1,790.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter RLPB</td>
<td>3795.86</td>
<td>2,547.86</td>
<td>3397.28</td>
<td>5,429.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kempsey RLPB</td>
<td>1318.59</td>
<td>1,387.51</td>
<td>2,939.30</td>
<td>2,099.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maitland RLPB</td>
<td></td>
<td>636.22</td>
<td></td>
<td>610.22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moss Vale RLPB</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,727.58</td>
<td>1,790.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern New England RLPB</td>
<td>8,540.60</td>
<td>6,213.54</td>
<td>13,635.48</td>
<td>16,735.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Coast RLPB</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>732.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamworth RLPB</td>
<td>1923.41</td>
<td>1,443.91</td>
<td>1,656.54</td>
<td>2,537.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yass RLPB</td>
<td>24,719.28</td>
<td>15,719.01</td>
<td>9,538.43</td>
<td>5,443.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young RLPB</td>
<td>2,653.74</td>
<td>3,406.61</td>
<td></td>
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*Source: Figures Compiled from Annual Reports of the NSW Department of Primary Industries 2004 – 2008

It is clear from the Hansard that NSW Labor targeted specific geographic areas of NSW disproportionately (Tebbutt 2002 9 April:1078, Whan 2004 25 June: 10234). For
example, in 2001-02 of the reported $448,000 NSW NPWS allocated in its operational budget, approximately $55,000 was given to one geographic area in NSW for both WDMC and fox control – the Brindabella and Wee Jasper Valleys (Department of Environment and Conservation 2006:28). The then Minister for the Environment, the Honourable Bob Debus announced:

There has never been a time in the history of this State when so much money and so much effort has gone into the elimination of wild dogs in Kosciuszko (Debus 2001 7 November: 18203).

Kosciuszko National Park, and later the 2002 Brindabella Plan, were considered the ‘jewels in the crown’ and celebrated by NSW Labor as the benchmark of its success in WMDC [See Chapter Seven for an evaluation of success].

Kosciuszko National Park was also recognised for its alpine habitat as well as for its ability to generate: ‘a great deal of revenue for reinvestment in conservation’ through various imposts on visitors, as one of only two winter ski destinations in Australia (Richardson 2004 18 February: 6221). Across the Parliament the importance of this revenue collection was undisputed. This was evident in the Parliamentary Debates over the Thredbo Landslide when management of the Alpine Way and Kosciusko Roads were transferred from NSW NPWS to the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority following the NSW Coroners’ Report (Hand 2000, Richardson 2004 18 February: 6221, Whan 2004 18 February: 6221).

In 2005, NSW DPI announced it had become a partner in six new cooperative research centres funded by the Australian Government, one of which was the IACRC. Of note, the 2006 Financial Statements accompanying the DPI Annual Report, reflect a major contribution for research and development from the IACRC. The detail of this research and development and the detail of this ‘major’ financial contribution are not specified. This partnering of DPI with the IACRC along with its unspecified ‘major’ financial contribution further consolidated a specific framing of WDMC as an administrative ‘problem’ which required a ‘scientific and technological’ solution.

In 2006, the then Minister for Primary Industries cemented this relationship announcing at the NSW Farmers’ Association Annual Conference that:
Over their seven-year life, we will invest in excess of $71 million in science staff related resources within the Australian Government providing $159 million in grant funding (NSW Farmers Association 2006: np).

In the Parliament, the then Minister for the Environment, the Honourable Bob Debus reinforced this commitment to scientific research. He announced in response to a Dorothy Dixer question:

The Department of Primary Industries is a core partner in the new Invasive Animals Co-operative Research Centre...The State Government will commit approximately $2.5 million in in-kind support over the next several years to develop new and improved strategies that reduce the impact of pest animals. The State’s wild dog management plans provide some of the best examples of co-operative pest control in New South Wales

(Debus 2006 28 February: 20696).

It is unclear from the Annual Reports and Financial Statements where and how much of this in-kind support was allocated to the WDMC. The financial expenditure on scientific and technological research in real terms is not supplied. Likewise, how potential conflicts of interest that may arise from this relationship were to be resolved were not detailed. It is apparent that departmental staff from DPI played a prominent and active partnership role within the IACRC (Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre 2006).

The Audit Office of New South Wales

In 2002, The Audit Office of New South Wales conducted a Performance Audit of NSW Agriculture in Managing Animal Disease Emergencies. The Audit Office recommended that there were:

...significant gaps in our ability to respond to and manage large-scale emergency animal disease outbreaks’ and that ‘....while planning and response issues remain unresolved, the State is at significant risk from large scale emergencies...’ (Audit Office of New South Wales 2002:2).

Further the Audit Office found, that
NSW Agriculture does not have memoranda of understanding in place with any neighbouring States to help manage common response issues (Audit Office of New South Wales 2002:6).

It is difficult to see how, without a memorandum of understanding in place, cross jurisdictional issue arising out of WDMC could be overcome and the concept of ‘nil tenure’ could conceivably work. [See Chapter Seven for discussion on ‘nil tenure’].

Part III - Findings

Overall, the Annual Reports and Financial Statements and allied Reports across the whole of government are instructive as storylines which contributed to the dominant discourse of administrative rationalism through which WDMC was promulgated in the public sphere.

The Annual Reports and Financial Statements perpetuate the storylines of NSW Labor. They do not challenge them. Collectively, they contributed six main storylines to WDMC: they add legitimacy to the claims of expenditures by NSW Labor – however incomplete; they establish and privilege a ‘knowledge community’ which projected a ‘common’ understanding of WDMC [see Chapter Four]; they privileged a scientific and technological understanding of WDMC which was underpinned by an empiricist understanding of ‘fact’; they promote the Brindabella Plan as the benchmark of success and implicitly suggest that the adoption of this model is widespread across NSW; they render the impacts of wild dog predation on farm families – where noted - in generalised terms; and lastly, they reveal differing objectives through which WDMC was understood.

In contrast, the Annual Reports and Financial Statements do not answer two questions raised consistently by NSW farm families: ‘How much money was spent on WDMC in real terms?’ and ‘Where did the money go?’ In lieu of any definitive answers to these questions four observations can made:

Firstly, and overwhelmingly, the Annual Reports, Financial Statements and allied Reports highlight the absence of a public audit trail through which financial expenditures on WDMC in real terms are both self-evident and publicly accessible.
Second, the role of Audit Reports can be seen as ‘producing legitimacy’ (Power 2003:379) for the NSW Labor Government as the terms of its inquiry are strictly prescribed. In this sense, as Power (2003) writes, auditing:

must be understood as an activity with significance beyond the manifest (programmatic) rational function attributed to it in official documents...how auditing is done is essential to understanding its micro-and macro social role’ (Power 2003: 385).

Thus, the social and economic base of each Audit Report and its purchase on: ‘legitimacy will be constructed around specific rhetorics of public interest and knowledge’ (Power 2003:391-2). These specific rhetorics centred on the conservation of the dingo as being in the public good and the importance of a scientific and technological approach.

Thirdly, as Townley et al. (2003) point out the introduction of ‘performance measurement’ in the public sector - as witnessed across most of the Annual Reports cited - can be interpreted as a:

dissatisfaction with pluralistic or interest group politics and that its use is an attempt to replace the ‘rationality of politics’ with the ‘rationality of planning’ (Townley, Cooper et al. 2003:1045).

This posits public land managers as ‘Platonic guardians of the public interest’ – a role which some argue they should not have in the Westminster system and that this role, in turn, silences and disenfranchise social actors.

Fourthly, the parliamentary claims of NSW Labor regarding the largesse of its expenditure referred to total expenditures for all feral animals and weeds control on public lands across NSW. The parliamentary claims did not reveal the amount allocated, for example, to scientific research and development, assets, capital items and salaries separate from the cost of feral animal control and weed control completed on the ground in real terms; nor do the Annual Reports and Financial Statements.

Lastly, it is difficult to corroborate the accuracy of the NSW Labor financial allocations to feral animal control and, specifically, the expenditure directed to WDMC in real
terms against the Annual Reports and Financial Statements of the six social agents charged with implementing WDMC.

Notwithstanding these four observations, there is a significant gap between the NSW Labor storylines of expenditures on WDMC and the expenditures as reported – or not - in the Annual Reports and Financial Statements. It is only possible to identify specific financial expenditures on WDMC in one location of NSW: the areas of land under the control of the Wild Dog Destruction Board.

Notwithstanding this, the Annual Reports and Financial Statements highlight the meagre financial allocations to the Departments and Agencies involved in WDMC over time; a task, nevertheless, which each institutional actor respectively declared to be committed. The analysis of the financial expenditures when compared against the NSW Labor parliamentary storylines suggests that the issue of WDMC was used opportunistically by NSW Labor because it resonated so strongly with ‘grassroots’ farm families under siege from wild dog predation on agricultural stock.

The NSW Labor rhetoric which relied so heavily on claims of a dramatic increase in expenditure on WDMC as part of the overall political strategy of Country Labor was inherently misleading. Nevertheless, NSW Labor and Country Labor continued to claim in the NSW Parliament to be working in the interests of its targeted constituency – rural and regional voters – on the issue of WDMC (Debus 1996 23 May: 1496). However unintentionally, this analysis of the Annual Reports and Financial Statements acts as a counterpoint to the claims of the largesse of NSW Labor and its commitment to WDMC.

The differing Departmental objectives of each institutional actor also point to considerable fragmentation in the ways ‘wild dogs’ and the actual purpose of WDMC were understood. There is also evidence of considerable variance in the respective financial commitments to feral animal control and, WDMC more specifically, between Departments and Agencies and the RLPBs.

Collectively, the Annual Reports and Financial Statements highlight the paucity of financial information in the reporting of operational budgets in real terms, ‘actual’ WDMC work completed over time, and a complete lack of whole of Government indicators across WDMC. More tellingly, the sheer size of the public land mass involved in turn raises reasonable questions regarding the capacity and capabilities of
each Department, Agency and Statutory Authority to fulfil the task of WDMC across the landscapes under its control within the allocated financial expenditures.

In sum, during the period of successive NSW Labor Governments it appears that there was a lack of transparency and accountability in the reporting of financial expenditures on WDMC in real terms across the whole of Government. Nevertheless, the dominant discourse positioned institutional actors in ongoing narratives through storylines which were reproduced in the Annual Reports, Financial Statements and allied Reports. These narratives provided these Reports an internal coherence while masking the apparent internal contradictions. The narrative of the storylines, of NSW Labor and its country cousin, Country Labor, of the care and concern it had for farming families and the largesse of NSW Labor Governments, were challenged by storylines which disputed their legitimacy; emanating from other political parties and farming families. However, it is evident that across all Annual Reports, Financial Statements and allied Reports these challenges were not sufficient to unseat the ways in which the administrative rationalist discourse represented and understood WDMC; rather these Reports collectively contributed to it.
Chapter Five:

Dyed in the Wool: The epistemological basis of wild dog management and control

This Chapter examines the dominant discourse coalition within WDMC in NSW during the period of successive NSW Labor Governments. It draws on Hajer's (1993) definition of a discourse coalition:

A discourse coalition is the ensemble of a set of story lines, the actors that utters these story lines, and the practices that conform to these story lines, all organized around a discourse (Hajer 1993: 47).

The storylines of the dominant discourse coalition pivoted around scientific rationalism, 'ecological science;' the notion of 'good science' and 'the strategic approach.' Notably, the storyline of 'good science' is pervasive throughout the WDMC public policy yet the criteria of it remains unspecified (Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council 2007). In contrast, the marginalised discourse coalition privileged storylines that pivoted on generational knowledge and experiences of WDMC. These storylines did not espouse a disbelief in 'science' per se. Rather these storylines rejected the legitimacy of 'science' as it was applied in the implementation of WDMC policy in NSW at the 'grassroots' and within the context of their knowledges and experiences.

Overall, this Chapter argues that the current 'strategic approach' is a deeply problematic approach to the management of people. It argues that the dominant discourse coalition in turn facilitated the entry of new commercial actors in WDMC and the rise of the self-proclaimed 'growth industry' (Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre 2006) as an area of expanding employment in the necessity of further ecological research in WDMC. This 'growth industry' privileged a scientific and technological understanding of the 'problem' of WDMC wherein the 'anecdotal', the lived experiences and 'situated knowledges' of farm families were held subordinate to 'fact' and 'truth.'

There is an uncritical circularity at the basis of the 'strategic approach' as it is applied in WDMC policy and implementation which is self-fulfilling and self-serving of the interests of the dominant discourse coalition. Scientists, public land managers and, increasingly, commercial entities, defined the criterion of 'success' in WDMC and evaluated where, how, and, if, it was achieved in largely 'quantifiable' terms. (West
and Saunders 2006, Hart and Bomford 2006 February). ‘Science’ and public land managers were the self-appointed ‘experts.’ This period was characterised by a reliance on the ‘scientific method’ and the development of ‘new’ technologies and ‘innovations’ in a ‘tools in the toolbox’ approach to WDMC (NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service 2006, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service 2006, Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre 2007, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service 2010, Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2012); all of which were purportedly underpinned by ‘good science.’

However, in a pluralist society the purchase of the ‘strategic approach’ on claims to legitimacy is strongly contested. The effect of the dominant discourse coalition was to subvert the storylines of the marginalised discourse coalition. As a consequence, farming families were largely excluded from the policy making arena wherein the reliance on evidence based policy was integral to the framing and implementation of WDMC.

**The Fundamental Clash of Epistemologies**

In NSW, the discourse of WDMC public policy reflects an epistemological dependence on scientific rationalism. As Fischer writes:

> ‘logical empiricism’ (also called ‘logical positivism’) is an epistemology – a theory of knowledge – holding that reality exists as an objective phenomenon and is driven by causal laws of cause and effect that can be discovered through empirical testing of hypothesis and deductive statements (Fischer 2003: 118).

However, within WDMC policy, it is apparent that there is a fundamental clash of epistemologies, namely between, positivism and social constructivism. This applies in many areas, unrelated to WDMC. The reasons for this theoretical difference are deep seated and long held (Feyerabend 1978, Kuhn 1996, Feyerabend 2002, Marsh and Stoker 2002, Hawkesworth 2006, Yanow 2006: 79 - 82).

As Marsh and Furlong (2002) write, positivism is a ‘foundationalist ontology’ whose core belief is that ‘...the world exists independently of our knowledge of it.’ As applied in WDMC it espouses ‘the scientific method.’ This is ‘a method which derives
hypothesis from theory and then tests them in an attempt to falsify them (Marsh and Furlong 2002: 17-41). The central tenets of positivism posit the idea of ‘manifest truth’ (Hawkesworth 2006: 31). Within WDMC, this is characterised by a belief in ‘objectivity,’ the existence of ‘fact,’ and a reliance on measurement as ‘proof’ of empirical rigor, reliability and validity.

The storyline of adaptive management

The adaptive management model (Holling 1978, Gunderson and Holling 2002) applies the ‘scientific method’ to natural resource management of which WDMC has been deemed by successive Federal and State Governments to be a part (Vertebrate Pests Commitee 2003 November, Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council 2007, Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2012). It has become a ‘buzzword’ (Simberloff 2009: 76) and ‘rhetorically embedded … in natural resource management culture’ (Allan 2007: 1).

In essence, adaptive management ‘...treats on-the-ground actions and policies as hypotheses from which learning derives’ (Armidale Rural Lands Protection Board 2004 1 May to 1 May 2005). It is a form of instrumental rationality which privileges the knowledge of ‘experts’ and proceeds by way of experiment over long periods for the purpose of falsifying hypotheses as an opportunity for ecological and social learning. Lee (1993) puts it more bluntly:

Adaptive Management is an approach to natural resource policy that embodies a simple imperative: policies are experiments; learn from them (Lee 1993, Lee 2005).

More recently, there have been significant calls in the ecological literature for ‘adaptive management’ to embrace a ‘non-technocratic’ management approach (Jiggins and Roling 2002, Oglethorpe 2002, Warner 2002, Huitema, Mostert et al. 2009, Chapple, Ramp et al. 2011). These iterations suggest variously a form of:

adaptive co-management’ - a non-technocratic management approach which – in theory – at least ‘should’ embrace ‘multiple centers of power (polycentric) rather than one center of control’ (Huitema, Mostert et al. 2009).
These iterations pivot around public participation and a bioregional approach to natural resource management (Lee 2005).

Adaptive management as it is interpreted in WDMC policy literature lays claim to notions of 'co-management.' However, it is conceded in the academic literature that as a model of 'co-management' '...adaptive management might be full of promise, generally, it has fallen short on delivery' and that it has been '...more influential so far, as an idea than as a practical means of gaining insights into the behaviour of ecosystems utilized and inhabited by humans' (Stankey, Clark et al. 2005: 7). Significantly, as its critics argue, judged against its own criterion, '...it is rarely truly practiced' (Simberloff 2009: 76, Williams 2012).

The inherent assumption of adaptive management is that 'co-management' should be 'driven' by science and public land managers (Holling 1978, English and Chappie 2002, Chappie, Ramp et al. 2011). The knowledges of 'stakeholders' are captured in furtherance of ecological science and subject to evidence based assessments made in turn by scientists and public land managers.

Yet, in advocating this model as a model of governance, 'adaptive management is irreducibly socio-political in nature' (Stankey, Clark et al. 2005: 57). Adaption is decided by people and this exercise of power. Not surprisingly therefore:

significant barriers confront adaptive management and that legal, organizational, and ideological changes must occur before implementation can succeed' (Stankey, Bormann et al. 2003: 45).

At its core, the model of adaptive management enshrines and privileges scientific rationalism because it is the 'experts' who make the decisions about what requires adaptation.

The Strategic Approach

The dependence on scientific rationalism in WDMC policy manifests itself most clearly in the adoption of the so-called 'strategic approach' (Braysher 1993, Fleming, Corbett et al. 2001, Braysher and Saunders 2003, Allen B. L., Ballard et al. 2011). The 'strategic
approach has its genesis in the ‘adaptive management’ model (Holling 1978, Braysher 1993, Gunderson and Holling 2002, Braysher and Saunders 2003). Yet, it is conceded even by its advocates that:

There is more potential for conflict between stakeholders in wild dog management than for any other vertebrates pest species’ (Fleming, Corbett et al. 2001: 114).

And, that:

The dingo elicits divergent opinions like no other species of Australian wildlife, and discussions on dingo management can quickly turn into explosive disputes (Johnson and Ritchie 2012: 9).

Notwithstanding this, the ‘strategic approach’ is ‘the’ model of governance in WDMC in NSW (Fleming, Corbett et al. 2001, Allen B. L., Ballard et al. 2011). It is a model of governance based on an interpretation of ‘adaptive management’ (Holling 1978, Gunderson and Holling 2002). Yet, at the same time, it is generally conceded across the academic literature that while the adaptive model: ‘...might be full of promise, generally it has fallen short on delivery (Halbert 1993, McLain and Lee 1996, Roe 1996, Stankey and Shindler 1997, Walters 1997’ (Stankey, Clark et al. 2005: 7).

The ‘strategic approach,’ or ‘learning-by doing’ as it is sometimes called, mimics a linear step by step policy process. As Fleming (2001) – one of the chief proponents of the strategic approach - writes:

The four steps that constitute a strategic approach to the management of wild dogs are: defining the problem; developing a management plan; implementing the plan; and monitoring and evaluating progress (Fleming, Corbett et al. 2001: 112).

PestPlan Toolkit, a further iteration of the strategic approach, models community participation and engagement in a three-stage chart replete with a score card as a marker of implementation success. The authors caution readers:
The success of PESTPLAN relies on participants constantly questioning (often long-held beliefs and reviewing new information as it is received in various Stages and Steps (Braysher and Saunders 2003: 1).

However, observations of WDMC meetings throughout South East and North East of NSW reveal this ‘review’ of long held beliefs as a linear unidirectional process [See Chapter Seven]. Moreover, in 2003, the RSPCA reported:

Much has been said about the need for strategic and coordinated control of vertebrate pests, however there is a strong feeling, from within the RSPCA and from many people involved in the management of vertebrate pests, that we have a long way to go before this is the reality on the ground (Jones 2003 25 February: 11).

Nevertheless, the strategic approach is the pivotal scientific and administrative storyline of WDMC which is actively promulgated throughout WDMC policy literature. Notably, it was promoted by the NSW Labor Government despite growing political pressure from farm families and agricultural organisations about the decline – if not ‘the verge of collapse’ (Kenny 2008: 4) – of the sheep industry across Australia (Milburn 2007 September, Kenny 2008, Curtis 2009, Nason 2009, NSW Farmers Association 2010 25 January) and the increasing threat wild dog predation posed to the cattle and goat industries.

The strategic approach to WDMC mimics ‘incrementalism’ (Lindblom 1959) in its ‘learning by doing’ experimental design. This view, that:

policy principally as a process of problem solving. The fundamental assumption of the model is that there is a best collective decision, the public interest, that can be rationally and analytically determined if the correct neutral procedure is followed (Bacchi 1999: 17)

informs the strategic approach to WDMC. The strategic approach privileges the ‘correct neutral procedure’ as the ‘scientific method.’ All iterations of the ‘strategic approach’ in NSW WDMC policy are underpinned by a reliance on it. As Fleming (2001) writes:
The strategic approach to pest management incorporates adaptive management principles recommended by Walters (1986). In passive-adaptive management (Walters and Holling 1990) a single strategy is selected, implemented monitored and evaluated, and adapted according to the success or otherwise of the strategy. The active-adaptive approach puts up a number of alternative strategies which are all implemented, monitored and evaluated, and adapted according to which strategies work best (Walters and Holling 1990). The latter technique is more experimental and requires standardisation of monitoring and effort across strategies, replication of strategies, and, ideally, nil-treatment areas where no control strategy is imposed (Fleming, Corbett et al. 2001: 112).

This approach in turn is used to justify the ‘necessity’ of further ecological research. The rubric of ‘wild dogs’ and ‘dingoes’ extends now to a myriad of ecological studies of native fauna (Howden 2012, 14 May, Beef Central 2013, King 2013, Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre 2013 ) as well as the pursuit of ‘technological’ innovations under the auspices of the Commonwealth Australian Pest Animal Research Program (ARARP) (Department of Agriculture 2013) and the Commonwealth strategy entitled *Caring for Our Country* – an initiative of the Commonwealth Labor Government (Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2013).

The ‘strategic approach’ serves the advocates of scientific rationalism well. It reflects the ‘power’ of the overarching administrative rationalist discourse to ‘control’ the direction of WDMC policy through the imposition of and reliance on scientific ‘expertise’ which defines and circumscribes the meaning of WDMC and its praxis. It controls the ‘language’ of WDMC and in doing so it controls the basis on which and the ways in which people can be heard.

Currently, the language of WDMC centres around an ‘Eco-speak’ – ‘a distinctive language of ecological campaigning and consciousness’ (Hajer 2005: 178-180); the goal of which is ostensibly the preservation of the Australian dingo and the continuation of the distinction between ‘wild dog’ and ‘dingo.’ This language is not benign and has significant repercussions for farm families. The ‘common parlance’ of WDMC: ‘purity;’ ‘hybrid;’ ‘feral;’ ‘buffer zones;’ ‘core areas;’ ‘potential habitats;’ ‘sand plot monitoring;’ ‘top order predator;’ ‘mesopredator release;’ ‘Schedule 2 lands’ and ‘experts;’ attempts to cement particular scientific meanings, to create and privilege a
scientific storyline of ‘wild dog’; to homogenise discussion and to ‘other’ dissent as ill-informed and/or ignorant. Any attempt at discussion in plain language, or dissent from the scientific language is seen as ill-informed and/or ignorant. In this way, it materially affects the way, if and where, WDMC is implemented.

Similarly the current emphasis on multiple technological ‘solutions’ through the advocacy of ‘tools-in-the-toolbox’ approach to the ‘problem’ of WDMC jettisons off the platform of these scientific assumptions and is underscored by imperatives of continued research and commercial exploitation of the technology of that research. This is implicitly driven by a political imperative not only to increase the development of ‘new’ technological ‘innovations’ but also to control the discourse of WDMC itself. Notably, the elaboration of the ‘strategic approach’ has been perpetuated as ‘common sense.’ It has been elevated to ‘best practice’ and as the ‘benchmark’ (West and Saunders 2006: 11) throughout WDMC policy literature (Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2011) – and in public WDMC forums.

In 2007, at the NSW Wild Dog Summit held in Orange, NSW, it was asserted by a research scientist of NSW DPI Vertebrate Pest Research Unit to an audience of over four hundred, mainly farm families, as ‘democratic’ because he claimed it involved farming families at the grassroots. This comment was received with derision and cynicism.

Lockie (1998) argues the concept of ‘best practice’ is a:

signifier, or sign, to which a whole range of culturally produced meanings may be attached, or signified by competing social groups (Lockie 1998: 243).

Yet, this conception of ‘best practice’ in WDMC is formulated on the presumption that:

a central agency knows which actions are best for the common good, and are equally desired by all, independent of culture, gender, religion and other differences among people and among or within communities (Andrew and Robottom 2005: 64).
At the same time, the deliberate strategy of the Vertebrate Pest Unit of NSW DPI, the NSW Government and the IACRC during this time was to ‘nationalise’ the ‘strategic approach’ (Fleming, Allen et al. 2006: 759). This was self-serving of the intent of the dominant discourse coalition to control the discourse of WDMC.

Yet, the rise and rise of the ‘strategic approach’ in WDMC occurred during the rise of a broader call for ‘postempiricism’ - ‘an orientation that seeks to move beyond an ‘objectivist conception of reality’ (Fischer 2003: 12). As Fischer notes: ‘In the postempiricist view, there are many valid forms of explanation, empirical-scientific/causal analysis being only one of them’ (Fischer 2003: 13). However, this is not the case in WDMC policy.

In the dominant discourse coalition, the storylines of the New South Wales Invasive Species Plan 2008–2015 is a case in point (NSW Department of Primary Industries 2008). It equates ‘effective management’ with a strong adherence to both ‘strategic management programs’ in WDMC and the ‘adaptive management’ model (NSW Department of Primary Industries 2008: 7).

**The Inherent Problem within the Strategic Approach**

It is difficult to see the incorporation of ‘community engagement’ in this model as being anything other than an ‘add-on’ to the ‘strategic approach,’ if not a ‘spray-on-solution’ (Head 2007: 441) which places local farm families at a disadvantage. Engagement and consultation of farm families are circumscribed within boundaries of rationality that are defined a priori by the ‘strategic approach.’ In this sense, the often-dissenting storylines as well as the contributions of farm families are marginalised.

Iterations of NSW WDMC policy as enunciated in ‘Pest Plan,’ (Braysher and Saunders 2003) - a guidebook to public land managers - have not travelled far. It is ‘stuck’ in a scientific rationalist frame wherein the experiences and knowledges of farm families are limited and subordinate to the degree to which the participants accept the underlying tenets of scientific rationalism. These findings echo the findings of Andrew (1997) who critiqued the Bureau of Resource Science publication, ‘Managing Vertebrate Pests: Principles and Strategies’ (Braysher 1993) which were adopted by successive Federal
and NSW State Governments as the guiding principles in NSW WDMC. Andrew (1997) wrote then of these vertebrate pest management principles and strategies that:

The handling of this issue within the *Principles and Strategies* document demonstrates an objectivist view of knowledge and, further to this, a linear conception of information transfer (Andrew 1997: 84).

The same holds true for WDMC policy during the period of successive NSW Labor Governments. The ‘strategic approach’ remains the pivotal storyline within WDMC policy (Fleming, Corbett et al. 2001). It upholds and reinforces the meaning, values and power that contribute to the administrative rationalist ‘framing’ (Baumgartner and Jones 1991, Bacchi 1999) of WDMC and deviates little from its scientific and technocratic roots.

While the first of the four steps in the ‘strategic approach’ asks: ‘What’s the problem?’ the problem definition is limited to the extent that the underlying precepts of the model allow. It is also iterative. Feedback loops in the model continue until ‘the’ problem is defined and consensus is achieved (Fleming, Corbett et al. 2001). Many stakeholders are unable to influence these choices. There is no capacity in ‘the’ model of governance to conclude that the model itself is flawed or biased.

In this regard, the ‘strategic approach’ reinforces a central tenet of positivism that ‘...it is possible to separate empirical questions – that is, questions about what is – from normative questions – that is, questions about what should be’ (Marsh and Furlong 2002: 22). Moreover, the ‘strategic approach’ prescribes a rationality whereby ‘freedom is granted only to those who have already accepted part of the rationalist (i.e. scientific) ideology’ (Feyerabend 1978: 76). However, as Feyerabend asks:

is it *desirable* to support such a tradition to the exclusion of everything else? Should we transfer to it the sole rights for dealing in knowledge, so that any result that has been obtained by other methods is at once ruled out of court? ...my answer will be a firm and resounding NO (Feyerabend 2002: 11).

Overall, there are several ‘problems’ with the application of the ‘strategic approach.’
First, the ‘strategic approach’ is less than transparent in its approaches to alternative ‘ways of knowing.’ As Yanow (2003) writes more generally of the positivist approach:

The lack of attention to (at best) or outright devaluing of (at worst) local knowledge has been a common occurrence in several policy issue areas. (Yanow 2003: 236).

Second, it attempts to homogenise the existence of non-uniform preferences among members of society. For example, the NSW Invasive Species Plan states that ‘Relevant stakeholders’ will be consulted. However, questions of who is ‘relevant,’ who is a ‘stakeholder’ and who is not, and to what extent any contributions will be of any consequence remain.

Third, it exemplifies one of the many points where a discourse of scientific rationalism entered the realms of the public policy on WDMC in furtherance of its own agenda. The strategic approach is based on an ecological model designed to further future ecological research and social learning about that ecological research. The salient point here as Simberloff (2009) asks is:

At what point is an adaptive hypothesis considered adequately tested, and under what circumstances is a treatment deemed to be not working and suitable for termination (Simberloff 2009: 73).

To date, the ecological research in WDMC has been very broad ranging (Allen, Fleming et al. 1989, Paltridge 2002, Kortner and Watson 2005, Letnic, Crowther et al. 2009, Rhodes, McAlpine et al. 2013) and often the implications of this research – if not the methods of the research themselves - have negatively impacted on the lives of farm families (General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 2002, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2005, NSW Farmers Association 2010 25 January).

For example, in 1997, the use of 1080 was banned in most parts of NSW, particularly in South East NSW, by NSW NPWS pending the outcome of native quoll research. The research subsequently found that native quolls were not susceptible to 1080 (Kortner
and Watson 2005). The Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) repudiated its former stance stating in 2010:

Research in northern and southern NSW on the impacts on spotted-tailed quolls of aerial baiting with 1080 poison found that aerial baiting had little impact on the quoll populations studied. As a result of these findings, NPWS now routinely uses aerial baiting as an additional control technique where access from the ground is limited (Office of Environment and Heritage 2012: 2).

Moreover, the OEH reported:

NPWS is also an active participant in the Invasive Animal Cooperative Research Centre’s demonstration project integrated canid management (Office of Environment and Heritage 2012: 3).

However, in the intervening period, across NSW, farm families argued that there was a strong correlation between the removal of 1080 and the rise in the number of wild dogs and the numbers of attacks by wild dogs on agricultural stock.

Lastly, the ‘strategic approach’ masks the intent of Government to control the entry of alternative discourses through the power of the dominant discourse which reifies its dependence on scientific rationalism. More recently, ecological research has encompassed explicitly normative ecological objectives: studies that are intended to assist in the conservation and/or preservation of dingoes (Purcell 2010) and/or studies that would support or refute the hypothesis that wild dogs have utility in the ecosystem as the so-called ‘top order predator’ in controlling other ‘invasives’ (Beef Central 2013).

Yet, at the same time, the proponents of this research hold the ‘scientific method’ - a belief in the empiricist distinction between ‘fact’ and ‘values’ and the notion of ‘scientific objectivity’ - as a ‘truth.’ This is a non sequitur and a misnomer. It is veil behind which a desired goal is sought. It is a value laden hypothesis.

The issue of WDMC is highly political. As Flannery (2012) concedes more generally of the conservation of endangered species, it ‘is a matter of values’ (Flannery 1994: 10). Yet, he also insists on the primacy of the ‘scientific method.’ He argues:
Quantify the problem, devise a plan to deal with it based on sound science, and report on the outcomes. And keep the politics out of it (Flannery 1994: 76).

This is naïve. It is also typical of many of the storylines within the dominant discourse coalition within WDMC which hold as true claims of ‘objectivity.’

Against this light, the salient questions of the ‘strategic approach’ as it is applied in WDMC remain: Who is learning what? To farm families, to suggest that their livelihoods are subject to ‘ecological experiment,’ that ‘experiments’ that may result in ongoing material harm to the lives of farm families are ‘just’ examples of ‘bad science’ or ‘a failure in technical studies’ (Braysher and Saunders 2003: 2) or a part of a broader ‘learning-by-doing’ storyline appears clearly inadequate.

Yet, within the ‘strategic approach’ farm families are socially constructed and positioned as the ‘passive’ recipients of ‘ecological knowledge’ delivered by ‘experts.’ It is at the point of the transmission of knowledge that ‘learning’ occurs as well as in its formulation. However, what is ‘learned’ from these forms of highly institutionalised and politicised ecological ‘lessons’ may well be not what is intended and, it probably goes without saying, not what is reported in the public policy literature. As Andrew (2003) writes:

Reflection on observation shapes knowledge. Knowledge is therefore, historically and socially constructed and, as a consequence, it relates to the context in which it is derived (Andrew 2003: 1015).

Yet, the ‘strategic approach’, is committed to ‘implementing policies as experiments’ (Lee 2005) within an ecological limits storyline wherein the livelihoods of farm families are held subordinate to ‘fact’ and ‘truth,’ and, whose motivation, in the face of conflict, is judged of lesser consequence than an ill-defined ‘common good.’ The 2008 NSW Invasive Species Plan states that:

It will be of benefit to the people of NSW by providing a whole of government approach to managing invasive species in this State. Its implementation will reduce the impact of weeds and other pests resulting in more profitable
agricultural production and lower costs of control for land managers (NSW Department of Primary Industries 2008: Forward).

However, in light of the exploitation of the issue of WDMC for political capital as demonstrated in Chapter Three, the seemingly inadequate financial expenditures on WDMC and the apparent fragmentation between the social actors over the ‘actual’ purpose of WDMC, the question remains: ‘How?’

While it is suggested that the basis of a strategic wild dog management plan: ‘...should be flexible and respond to measured changes in economic, environmental and pest circumstances (Fleming, Corbett et al. 2001:112) this cannot be achieved without significant funding for the management of the National Estate. In the interim, it is farm families who shoulder the initial and direct costs of wild dog predation on agricultural stock – not ‘experts.’ It is also apparent that the definitions of ‘measured’ and the ‘processes of measurement’ themselves constitute highly normative undertakings and are less than ‘objective’ and processes from which farm families are seldom included yet are often critical.

The 2008 Plan refines the Government’s commitment further when it states:

The NSW Invasive Species Plan delivers on the NSW State Plan’s commitment to target resources to manage weeds and pests in key locations in NSW (NSW Department of Primary Industries 2008: Forward).

There is a bitter irony here. First, the identification of ‘key’ locations remains a normative decision of public land managers and ‘experts.’ Second, this does little to alleviate the concerns of farm families who are not geographically ‘located’ in ‘key’ areas and are subject to public land managers’ ‘interpretations.’ Third, while the ‘strategic approach’ privileges the role of scientists and public land managers as ‘objective’ and ‘experts’ they are often dependent on the large scale involvement and knowledges of ‘stakeholders’ of WDMC at the grassroots level; not least the financial support garnered through the mandatory levies imposed on farming families. The location of wild dogs; their typical ‘runs’ and their whelping areas also form part of this historical knowledge.
Very often, farm families define the ‘problem’ of WDMC differently and cumulatively hold considerable personal knowledges and experiences of wild dogs. Yet, by virtue of the dependence on scientific rationalism within the ‘strategic approach’ the alternative knowledges and experiences of farm families are held as subordinate, subject to falsification, or, are ‘captured’ (West and Saunders 2006: 12) through consultation wherein they are rated against an established hierarchy of scientific and ecological knowledge. This same ‘benchmark’ is not applied to the ‘experiences’ of public land managers. For example, when describing ‘an innovative and reliable knowledge-based technique’ of pest animal management, West and Saunders (2006) write:

It captures two types of information: information contained within formalised datasets and records wherever available and referred to by land managers, and perception-base information from land managers based on their experiences and observations (West and Saunders 2006: 12).

The same cannot be said of the ‘perception-base information’ of farm families. There is a palpable double standard here.

Overall, the ‘strategic approach’ is in essence ‘strategic.’ Its ‘power’ is its convenience to and utility in serving the interests of the administrative rationalist model. It marginalises alternative discourses and relies on the authority of ecological science and public land managers in the administration, implementation and maintenance of State power (Lukes, 2005; Foucault, 2003).

The effect of a scientific rationalist approach on the public policy of WDMC

The effect of this dependence on the institutional response to WDMC during the time of successive NSW Labor Governments was simply to subjugate alternative discourses which embraced differing epistemologies. This is achieved in discourse coalitions by:

blocking the flow of differences in meaning and setting itself up as the centre of interpretative processes (Fischer 2003:78 citing Battistelli and Ricotta 2001:4).

In contrast, as Boswell (2012) describes of anecdotes more generally:
Anecdotes are stories of personal experience. They play a critical role in helping people to make sense of their world and their place in it (Boswell 2012: 4).

‘Wild dogs’ and ‘dingoes’ became known officially only through a ‘scientific rationalist’ discourse which relied on ‘experts.’ The personal experiences and in many cases, generational knowledges, that farm families had acquired of wild dogs and dingoes through their ‘shoe leather’ were relegated to ‘anecdote’ and hence ‘unscientific’ or, at very best, subject to scientific ‘validation.’

Similarly, the recognition in the public policy literature that wild dog predation on agricultural stock may also have ‘much more direct, emotional consequences...’ (Hart and Bomford 2006 February: 4) on farm families is often held to be indicative of the ‘truculence’ of farm families in achieving ecological objectives and not a reflection of the failure of the ‘strategic approach’ to countenance different forms of meaning and emotional expression that may be pivotal within alternative discourses and/or a recognition that the material effect of the application of the ‘strategic approach’ on the daily lives of farm families may result in on-going harm to their well-being.

Further, an analysis of WDMC policy documents reveals that the overall aim of scientific research was to establish the precise nature of the relationship between ‘variables’ and wild dogs in order to produce causal models which could then be utilised predictively to aid in the conservation of the dingo as well as native fauna (Lunney, Matthews et al. 2002, Daniels and Corbett 2003, Kortner, Gresser et al. 2003, Kortner and Watson 2005, Elledge, Leung. L. K. -P. et al. 2006, Fenner 2009, Brook and Kutt 2011). What is interesting about these studies are the ways they were generalised and the overlaps that occurred among those conducting the research and the determination of policy.

This approach relied on the scientific method wherein there is also a considerable emphasis – as well as considerable funding given to it by successive Federal Governments - on a ‘tools in the toolbox’ approach. This is evidenced by the continued promotion of ‘tools’ as ‘solutions’ to WDMC. These have included: synthetic lures (Hunt, Dall et al. 2007), Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping (Robley, Gormley et al. 2010), ‘sand plot’ monitoring (NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service 2006, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service 2006, NSW National Parks
and Wildlife Service 2006, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service 2010), the ‘satellite tracking of wild dogs (Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre 2007, Claridge and Hunt 2008 August, Claridge, Mills et al. 2009), the development and trial of ‘M-44’ injectors (Hooke, Allen et al. 2006), the ‘blue-sky’ development of the as yet unregistered, chemical toxin, para-aminopropiophenone as Dogabate, commonly known as ‘PAPP’ and its antidote, Methylene Blue ‘Blue-Heeler’(Lapidge, Dali et al. 2006, Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre 2012) and the promotion of the dingo as ‘tropic regulators’ (Glen and Dickman 2005, Glen, Dickman et al. 2007). The storyline of ‘tropic regulators’ is repeated frequently throughout the ecological literature. Put simply, it is a hypothesis only that suggests that wild dogs serve a utilitarian function in the ecosystem in controlling other ‘invasive’ species.

This ‘tools-in-toolbox’ ‘innovative’ and ‘modern’ approach focused on a ‘technical rationality’ (Fischer 2003: 13) which was compounded and enforced by the creation of a “quasi-guardianship” of autonomous experts, no longer accountable to the ordinary citizen’ (Fischer 2005: 7) – mostly emanating from within Government, particularly NSW NPWS, the Vertebrate Pest Research Unit of NSW DPI, the IACRC and researchers from within the ecological science disciplines of a number of Australian universities (Dickman, Glen et al. 2009, Purcell 2010).

Cumulatively these organisations promoted specific meanings of ‘wild dog’ and ‘dingo’ both from within government departments and agencies and from scientific organisations closely allied to government. Hence wild dogs became known as ‘wild,’ ‘feral,’ ‘pest,’ ‘commensal,’ ‘alien,’ ‘hybrid’ or, more recently, ‘free-ranging’ (Fleming, Corbett et al. 2001, The Conversation Media Trust 2013 18 February: 12).

The principle aim of most of the research appeared not to be the eradication of wild dogs per se but rather the acquisition and promotion of ecological knowledge. Wild dogs in many instances appeared peripheral but seemingly provided the funding stream (Lapidge, Dall et al. 2006). Often, technological ‘innovations,’ which were represented as the new ‘tools’ of WDMC, were progressed to trial largely independent of direct input from farm families regarding either their efficacy or even their need. At times, these trials were also conducted without their knowledge.
This is not without irony, as it was the support from farm organisations and farm families and the skills of ‘doggers’ on which Government Departments and agencies often relied during field trials in the first instance to trap wild dogs, and for accommodation, in-kind support and ultimately for research funding, endorsement, and promotion of potential new ‘products.’ Two organisations, for example, the Meat and Livestock Association (MLA) and Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) alone contributed almost $6 million to the development of ‘PAPP’ of which the IACRC was the leading research organisation and commercial proponent (Australian Wool Innovation Ltd 2012, Meat & Livestock Australia 2012).

Crossing the Rubicon - The commercialisation of WDMC

During the time of successive NSW Labor Governments, there was a palpable shift in WDMC towards ‘new’ technological innovations. This ‘turn’ was accelerated by the pervasive intertwining of the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre (IACRC) – a cooperative research centre established in 2002, whose predecessor, established in July 1991, was the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Biological Control of Pest Animals, known more familiarly as the Pest Animals CRC (PACRC) – with that of government agencies both State and Federal (Peacock 2006 August) who are charged with WDMC in NSW.

In 2003, Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) signed a commercial agreement with:

the ‘Pest Animal Control Cooperative Research Centre (now Invasive Animals CRC)...to evaluate and develop a new toxic agent for control of wild dogs and foxes (canids) (Lapidge, Dall et al. 2006: 259).

It would appear that this was largely in response to concerns that the 2005 APVMA Inquiry into the continued use of ‘1080’ (Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority 2007) may make a recommendation that would withdraw it from use in WDMC (Lapidge, Dall et al. 2006: 259). This concern appeared to have contributed to the rise of a ‘science and technology’ discourse in WDMC which the IACRC itself promoted as a ‘growth industry’ (Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre 2006).
Chief among the claims of the IACRC was that:

The IACRC brings together about 40 partners representing private and public land managers, universities, and training, research and development organisations in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States of America (Fleming, Allen et al. 2006: 753 - 754).

This period was marked by the entry of new commercial actors in WDMC (NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service 2006, Animal Control Technologies 2007 12 February, Humphrys and Lapidge 2008, Eason, Fagerstone et al. 2010, Pestat Pty Ltd 2010), many of whom were in direct commercial relationships and/or provided in-kind support to the IACRC (Fleming, Allen et al. 2006, Animal Control Technologies 2007 12 February).

In 2005, the Commonwealth Government subsequently recommended the IACRC as the ‘authorial voice’ on WDMC – albeit, originally, in scientific ‘research’ alone (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2005).

In 2006, the Chief Executive Officer of the IACRC in a report to the Productivity Commission on ‘the Advantages of a Cooperative Research Centre’ commented:

All jurisdictions have retained some capacity to conduct R&D into invasive animal issues. However, even within jurisdictions, this capacity is often split between agriculture and environment agencies and the largest grouping (NSW DPI) probably remains less than a dozen people, even with significant cash support from the IA CRC (Peacock 2006 August: 1).

Government, technological ‘innovation’ and ecological science were thus seen to be acting publicly in concert – because they were. The quest for technological ‘innovations’ created a ‘club’ of ecological scientists, researchers and advocates who came mostly from within existing and very small research units within Government Departments and science based academic institutes whose research reified and reaffirmed their own empiricist values. Davis (2003) reported:
There are relatively few Australian scientists in the vertebrate pest arena. They collaborate closely, both directly and through the Pest Animal Cooperative Research Centre and other institutions. Funding bodies like BRS also facilitate coordination of research effort (Davis 2003: 36).

Many co-authored scientific papers together. Many were also members of the Australasian Wildlife Management Society (AWMS), later held positions of authority in the IACRC and were, at the same time, members of the NSW DPI Vertebrate Pest Research Unit or members of NSW DPI (Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre 2010, Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre 2010). The stated aims of AWMS were to:

influence policy and management decisions through the provision of clear, explicit and pragmatic advice on options for wildlife management and associated risks (Australasian Wildlife Management Society 2010: np).

Close links were forged between Commonwealth and State Governments and scientific organisations over this period.

A National Wild Dog Facilitator – previously employed by NSW NPWS - was appointed specifically to ‘facilitate’ the ‘strategic approach’ (Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre 2010). These organisations simultaneously ‘jockeyed’ for the ‘authorial voice’ on WDMC. However, in 2005, the Federal Government subsequently and very publicly recommended the IACRC as:

the appropriate body to take responsibility for national coordination of pest animal research, given its existing focus on collaboration with community groups, government agencies, RDCs, industry, research providers and educational and training institutions (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2005: 183 - 185).

This ‘research’ was predicated on the ‘scientific method,’ the ‘strategic model’ and the development of ‘new’ technological ‘innovations.’ Consultation and engagement with farm families – re-presented as ‘new’ innovations - was predicated, perhaps not surprisingly, on the explicit and implicit acceptance by farm families of the ‘truth’ of all
three empiricist precepts. This is problematic because as Fischer (2000) writes generally of discourses:

Not only do such explanatory models empty the meaning out of the lives of the relevant social actors, but even worse, they refill these lives with their own imposed meanings (Fischer 2005: 66)

Progressively over this time, a sharp demarcation emerged in responsibilities for WDMC. Successive ALP Federal Governments invested in ‘research.’ The States — at least according to the Federal Government — were responsible for funding implementation, that is, the actual ‘eradication and control.’ Nevertheless, this sharp delineation in the control of so-called ‘invasives’ became a source of angst in Federal/State relations not least because the States claimed to have insufficient money to complete the task. The Commonwealth Government was also not averse to flexing its muscle when it sought to intervene using the ‘trump card’ of the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBCA).

Overall, the relationship between Federal and State government departments, agencies and scientific organizations, particularly the IACRC was often held in storylines by the marginalised discourse coalition to be less than ‘arms-length’ and lacking in transparency. However, more recently the Vertebrate Pest Unit of NSW DPI revealed that it was often assisted and/or was dependent on the financial largesse and/or in-kind support of ‘independent’ commercial organisations for the continuation of research. For example, in an article in the e-newsletter, The Conversation, both authors — both employees of the NSW DPI — disclosed that the Vertebrate Pest Unit DPI had received:


The second author revealed that he had similarly received support from:

the Australian Pest Animals Research Program, Australian Wool Innovation and the Invasive Animals CRC. He has previously received funding and in-kind contributions from organisations including Catchment Management Authorities
and the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service (The Conversation Media Trust 2013 18 February).

During this time, close relationships were also forged between Government and industry. In 2006, for example, NSW NPWS reported in an ‘Information Fact Sheet’ that during ‘M-44 ejector trials’: ‘Close liaison with Pestat Ltd and the Invasive Animals CRC will continue throughout the trial’ (NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service 2010). In 2007, Pestat Ltd reported:

Pestat was established by the Pest Animal Control Cooperative Research Centre (PAC CRC) in 1999. Pestat is now is a member of The Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre.

At the Commonwealth level, for example, in 2013, Southwell et al (2013) reported that: ‘This work was funded by the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre (IACRC)’. The research paper investigated the barriers to the uptake of the as-yet unregistered chemical toxin, PAPP, which is being developed by the IACRC. The authors of this paper were all employees of the Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES), from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF). It appears that the IACRC is commercially dependent on the Commonwealth Government under the Cooperative Research Centre model literally for its continued existence (Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre 2012) while, at the same time, the Commonwealth is also its commercial client (Southwell, Boero et al. 2013). To farming families this form of commercialisation and the public safeguards involved in these forms of networked governance are not easily apparent.

Importantly, to many farming families it is also difficult to discern in the public arena on whose authority and in which capacity social actors particularly from within the NSW DPI Vertebrate Pest Unit are acting. This often gave rise in WDMC public meetings to accusations of a lack of transparency and accountability in governance and accusations of a conflict of interest. There are recurring storylines that suggest a strong perception among farm families that WDMC policy is based on highly skewed ‘ecological science’ which is often flawed by virtue of its design, into which they have no input and for which their farming levies and rates pay.
One example of this is the controversial but continued use of ‘sand plot monitoring’ as an indicator of the presence of wild dogs. It involves the monitoring of transects of land on which sand is literally placed at regular intervals to monitor the presence of wildlife, not just wild dogs. Yet, these ‘sand plots’ are often washed away, are monitored only for three days yet are still held to be indicative of the presence or absence of wildlife – and wild dogs - in the area. The delimitations placed on these ‘sand plots’ are that no baiting must have occurred previously within a prescribed distance and that transects ‘run’ for at least twenty five kilometres. The criticism is that the location of the sand plots themselves precludes meaningful results and rather than being a measure of wildlife they are actually used to establish critical weight ranges of fauna. Farming families argue vehemently that this is not a WDMC method.

Likewise, the insistence on a reliance on ‘mound-baiting’ and the endorsement of ‘M-44’ injectors occurs in the face of trenchant criticisms from farm families and trappers that they do not work and that they create ‘bait-shy’ wild dogs. Importantly, farming families argue that these techniques are not indicative of the presence of wild dogs yet they nevertheless absorb large WDMC financial expenditures; especially when infra-red camera monitoring or ‘radio-collaring’ of dogs occurs at the same time. In this way the methods of ‘science’ and the ‘science’ itself is perceived to work against the interests of farm families. Yet, within the scientific literatures there is a palpable sense of ‘fascination’ that emerges from these studies and ‘new’ technologies.

Crucially, farming families often argue that in raising their commercial imperatives publicly, that is, their ‘right to farm’ they are presumed to speak only from self-interest – not from any environmental concerns; and that cumulatively, the emphasis on questionable ‘ecological’ research and ‘new’ technological innovations have obscured their ‘voices’ even though the day-to-day impacts of wild dog predation on agricultural stock are felt foremost by farm families. Implicitly, the livelihoods of farm families appear secondary.

Paradigm shift – same old, same old…

Overall, the period of successive NSW Labor Governments, the formation of a discourse coalition among policy, scientific and technological actors occurred in which the marginalised discourse, which pivoted on storylines of the knowledges and
experiences of farm families, was held as subordinate to 'fact' and 'truth.' The 'strategic approach' became one of the dominant storylines of the dominant discourse coalition. However, the demise of the NSW Labor Government in 2011 coincided with the beginning of a paradigm shift in the ecological understandings of WDMC which in turn began to challenge and unravel accepted maxims in ecological science pertaining to wild dogs, and, particularly the assertion that wild dogs have a function in an ecosystem in predating on other 'invasive' species (Allen and Fleming 2012, Fleming, Allen et al. 2012, Johnson and Ritchie 2012). This is reminiscent of the storylines that surrounded the 'native quoll' research which again is being played out in the ecological science literature and which has direct effects on WDMC in NSW.

This latest paradigm shift occurred amid concerns that the large financial investments in the development of 'new' technologies for the 'control' of wild dogs may not reach fruition and/or implementation, that they may have biological impacts on livestock (The National Possum Control Agencies (NPCA) nd: 5) and native fauna, particularly birds (Eason, Murphy et al. 2010); and/or that the physical restrictions on their use and its delivery may significantly compromise results. For example, many experienced doggers argue that a wild dog will not enter an enclosed cage and will 'teach' their pups not to touch a 'processed' meat bait delivered in either 'mounds' or inside an enclosed cage.

However, the main storylines of the marginalised discourse coalition appeared to have been missed by many: The so-called 'growth industry' in the science and technological 'tools in the toolbox' approach to WDMC appeared to coincide with a 'growth' in wild dog predation on agricultural stock (Agforce Queensland 2009) – a problem that a cost-benefit analysis of investments in scientific and technological research, 'new' technological innovations and the introduction of a 'National Wild Dog Facilitator' – the subject of reports all commissioned by the IACRC - claimed to be overcoming (Gong, Sinden et al. 2009, Chudleigh, Simpson et al. 2011).

These reports conveniently failed to report that the national sheep flock, euphemistically called the 'disappearing flock' was also at its lowest since 1915 (Curtis 2009) and that many lands previously stocked with sheep have been actively destocked because of wild dogs.
Notwithstanding this, the public acknowledgment of the research and development focus in WDMC in contrast to a focus on the eradication of wild dogs, and, the financial links – if not interdependency - between government agencies and commercial entities such as the IACRC appears to reiterate the storyline of the marginalised discourse that the ‘line’ between research and development and government had been crossed. This often repeated storyline circles around issues of transparency and accountability in governance and conflicts of interest. This remains of particular concern to many farm families.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Fulton and Vanclay (2011) report that across Australia reported levels of trust in agricultural extension has waned significantly (Fulton and Vanclay 2011). Vanclay argues that the emphasis on models of traditional top-down agricultural extension, the positioning of farmers as ‘passive recipients,’ of ‘education,’ the ‘push’ for the ‘uptake’ of ‘new’ products through commercial partnerships and the implicit assumption of trust in ‘Science’ by farm families has proved to be misplaced. Importantly, and overwhelmingly, as Vanclay (2011) writes: ‘It is inappropriate to believe that only ‘Science’ (as a social institution) can create knowledge that is then transferred to the public via extension’ (Vanclay 2011: 57).

It is evident that there was an unwillingness to review the short comings of the ‘strategic approach’ - its claims of ‘objectivity’, the appropriateness of the ‘model’ as it is applied to the management of people, or, it seems, an intention to relinquish power in or through polycentric centres of governance. This is despite a considerable rhetoric of ‘learning-by-doing’ in WDMC literature. It is apparent that what ‘learning’ occurs is selective. As Fleming et al (2010) implicitly suggest it is people’s values that have to be ‘overcome:’

In moving from theoretical ecology to real-world management (i.e. from proposing positive management of dingoes to actually achieving it), the biggest stumbling blocks are people and their associated sociopolitical views (Fleming, Allen et al. 2012: 753).

Instead, the oft-repeated storyline of the dominant discourse coalition was that it is:
being applied with some success to wild dog management in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory (Fleming, Allen et al. 2006: 758 citing Jenkins et al. 2002).

Importantly, the criteria of ‘success’ is not enunciated, nor is widespread empirical evidence provided to substantiate this purported ‘success’ or more recent claims of ‘success’ across NSW other than in purely numerical terms. Any isolated case of reported success is held to be representative of the whole. In this way the initial success of the Brindabella Plan was continuously represented as a ‘success’ story for others to follow. However, at the same time, the rise of other discourses in WDMC began to make their presence felt and it is this that the next Chapter turns.
Chapter Six:

‘Strangers in the Home Paddock’ – the competing discourses in wild dog management and control

During the period of successive NSW Labor Governments, competing discourses acted progressively as the counter point to the dominant discourse of administrative rationalism. These include: ‘new’ environmentalism, agrarianism, animal welfare and biosecurity. Within the administrative rationalist discourse of WDMC, ‘wild dogs’ were positioned in storylines as a risk to the future of the agricultural industry, as a threat to the purity of the dingo through hybridisation, and as a by-product of modernity which was manifest in the form of ‘pests.’ However, wherever their origin and whatever the internal inconsistencies that existed within and between them, these storylines were ultimately subverted in service of the dominant administrative rationalist discourse.

This Chapter examines four contending discourses in turn: ‘new’ environmentalism; agrarianism; animal welfare; and, biosecurity. It argues that the function of the storylines within these competing discourses was threefold: to create meaning and validate action, to mobilise action, and to define alternatives (Hannigan 2006: citing Gelcich et al. 2005: 379). Overall, the Chapter reveals that while the NSW Labor Government privileged ecological science as the authorial voice in WDMC, the legitimacy of this authority was strongly contested. This added further complexity to the understanding of the issue of WDMC and, in turn, impacted dramatically on its implementation in NSW.

Background

In 2002, the NSW Parliament General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 found:

Feral animals cause extensive damage to Australia’s natural resources and agricultural production and cost the nation hundreds of millions of dollars in lost agricultural production and conservation expenses. The major environmental impacts of feral animals involve predation of and competition with native animals and the destruction of native plants. Feral animals also cause land
degradation, and are a potential threat for the spread and distribution of exotic diseases.

As well as the financial impact, feral animals can have a debilitating social impact on farming families and communities that have to deal with the consequences of feral animal attacks on farming stock (General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 2002: xii)

Later, in 2005, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry reported:

The committee considers that feral dogs are the most serious pest animal currently facing Australian sheep and cattle farmers. They are also one of the most significant pest animal problems for Australian agriculture generally (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2005: 17).

The discourse of ‘new’ environmentalism

Hajer (1993) argues that:

The re-emergence of environmentalism in the late 1950s was not just a protest against the perceived risk implied in new large-scale technological projects. It was also a celebration of the virtues and morality of unspoiled nature and a call to change the conceptual framework and start thinking about nature in terms of beauty and as necessary to life instead of in terms of domination and as a system of cause-and-effect relationships (Hajer 1993: 47).

This was positioned as a direct rebuke to the discourse of agrarianism. However, within the discourse of ‘new’ environmentalism several disparate storylines emerged, most noticeably the storylines of ecological science. During this time, within the ecological storylines ‘wild dogs’ were understood as a threat to the ‘purity’ of the dingo (Canis lupus dingo) through hybridisation (Benson 2004). Yet, at the same time, throughout the ecological literature wild dogs were also believed to have utility as a ‘top-order’ predator in controlling other animals prescribed also by the Minister as ‘pests’ under the
Pest Control Order (Glen and Dickman 2005, Glen, Dickman et al. 2007, Johnson 2009, Letnic, Crowther et al. 2009). Both of these storylines rested on hypotheses only. Yet, these hypotheses were often ‘taken-for-granted’ as ‘fact’ (General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 2002, Claridge, Mills et al. 2009, Brook and Kutt 2011: 79).

In 2002, for example, the NSW Government reported:

In terms of their impact on native animals, it is recognised that dingoes and wild dogs are the top order predator in natural ecosystems in Australia (General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 2002: 17).

To many farm families this was arrant nonsense: ‘white man has been the top order predator since colonisation and before him, Aboriginal man’ (Franklin 2001 March: np).

Nevertheless, these ecological hypotheses rested on strongly held but divergent storylines in the ecological literatures which informed and overlapped with WDMC policy and restricted the ways in which WDMC at the grassroots was implemented. Successive NSW Labor Governments contained WDMC within a broad political rhetoric that espoused ‘ecological sustainable development’ (General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 2002) as part of its self-proclaimed ‘Green Legacy.’ In NSW, WDMC proceeded on the basis of the ‘precautionary principle.’

In 2002, in furtherance of this, in its Report, Feral Animals, the NSW Parliament General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 stated:

The Committee believes the precautionary principle should prevail, and so supports the current approach by the NPWS (General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 2002: xvi).

The effect of the precautionary principle in WDMC was that ‘potential habitats’ of dingoes were identified across NSW and were designated ‘core’ areas. Any measure that may affect these locations required ecological assessment. All WDMC in these areas was prohibited.
In 1999, NSW NPWS commissioned a species impact statement (SIS) into the effect of 1080 on native quolls (Jones 2002 31 October: 50). As a result, NSW NPWS ceased aerial baiting in NSW as 1080 was considered to pose ‘...too great a risk to populations of the spotted-tailed quoll in three areas examined’ (Jones 2002 31 October: 50).

In a response to the interpretations given by NSW NPWS to the findings of the SIS, the NSW Farmers Association argued emphatically:

The 1999 SIS recommended that 1080 aerial baiting should not be undertaken in a small area of Kosciuszko National Park called the Byadbo Wilderness Area (an area that comprises only 0.9 % of the Kosciuszko NP).

Importantly, it is the clear understanding of the Association that the SIS did not recommend a total blanket ban on aerial baiting in the remainder of the Kosciuszko National Park or southern NSW. In the future, the Association requests that NPWS officials acknowledge the published recommendations of the SIS (NSW Farmers Association 2004: 9 - 10).

In the interim, in 2001, the Victorian and NSW Wild Dog Coordinating Committee was formed as a result of the ‘...serious and escalating wild dog problem in the rangelands grazing country of Victoria and NSW’ (Tallangatta Branch Victorian Farmers Federation 2001: 1). This was convened by Wodonga District Council of the Victorian Farmers Federation, the Albury-Wodonga Region of the Australian Superfine Woolgrowers Association and the Cooma Branch of the NSW Farmers Association (Tallangatta Branch Victorian Farmers Federation 2001).

Additionally, in July 2002, the APVMA began a review into 1080 following the public regulatory review of chemicals by the National Registration Authority for Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (NRA) (State Council of Rural Lands Protection Boards 2002 24 July). However, the APVMA did not publicly report its preliminary findings until 2005 or present its final Review until 2008. The decision to proceed with the Review was based on the application of the precautionary principle ‘...because of concerns over poisoning of non-target animals’ raised in submissions to the NRA (Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority 2007: iv).
Subsequently, the APVMA found:

that although poisoning of non-target animals occurs, it is limited to individual animals and does not adversely affect overall populations of the non-target animals (Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority 2007).

However, many farm families, in response to the widespread withdrawal of 1080 and the ban on aerial baiting by NSW NPWS from 1997, expressed frustration, anger and concern. A Ranger with the then Armidale Rural Lands Protection Board also voiced the concern of many of the local NSW RLPBs at this time:

The deregulation of 1080 would be an intolerable situation for all landholders and land managers (Van Eyk 2001 17 December: 1 - 2).

Further to this, the Chief Executive Officer, of the then State Council of the Rural Lands Protection Boards in a submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry wrote:

Of major relevance in pest animal management is the use of 1080 poison to control various pest species. The crucial importance in pest species program cannot be overemphasised. In many ways it is the primary tool in controlling such pests. Without the continued availability of 1080 poison for this purpose, the deleterious effects of the pest species would no doubt increase to disastrous levels. State Council and Boards are aware of the opposition to the use of 1080 which comes from various individuals and organisations. However, the benefits of use of the chemical for pest control far outweigh any problems associated with its use (State Council of Rural Lands Protection Boards 2004 29 June: 2).

In contrast to the institutional responses of the State Council of the RLPB and many individual Boards across NSW, many submissions from representatives of farm families received by the Parliamentary Inquiry viewed the management of wild dogs very personally. One witness reported:

I am one of the survivors from the original Barnard Valley area. Mr Moore’s family is the other family that is there after the dogs ate everybody out in the late 1950s. I have seen a change in my lifetime, and I certainly do not want to see the
change go back the other way. I have seen the heartache and despair of the dogs eating sheep and dogs eating wildlife. I was never privileged as a child to see the sort of wildlife that I can see every day of the week since the introduction of aerial baiting. That was never, ever evident. What has made that possible is aerial baiting, cleaning up feral dogs and foxes. I make it very plain, feral dogs; feral dogs and bread (sic) twice a year, unlike a dingo. There are twice as many of them than there would have been before. Once they start to eat sheep or something it is like having a front-door key to the butcher shop...If you want to see the country cleaned out and devoid of wildlife, leave feral dogs and foxes in abundance over there like they were when I was a boy and you will have nothing. We have to have a long hard think about how we look after and maintain our national parks and forest country (Wiggan 2002: 12).

Over successive years, increasing concern was voiced across and by many farming organisations. In 2002, a National Wild Dog Summit was convened in Albury/Wodonga, a NSW and Victorian border town, at the instigation of farm families and farm organisations across NSW and Victoria where:

all but two of the 400 people present voted in favour of the reintroduction of aerial baiting across the wild dog breeding areas of all mainland states and territories’ (National Wild Dog Summit 2002 22nd February: 3).

In 2004, NSW Farmers Cooma District Council submitted the following unanimous motion to the National Inquiry:

That the National Inquiry on Pest Animals recommend immediate re-introduction of aerial baiting programs within State held lands, to protect the productivity of the rural sector affected by wild dog predation, and also to protect our native fauna from wild dog predation (NSW Farmers Association Cooma District Council 2004 16 June: np).

After NSW NPWS field studies in 2004 and 2005 in NSW and in Queensland between 2004 and 2005, NSW NPWS reversed its original decision and resumed aerial baiting with 1080. It concluded that:
It may be that quolls have a higher resistance to 1080 than would otherwise be predicted on the basis of laboratory-based trials (New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage 2011: np).

Nevertheless, the NSW NPWS Steering Committee ‘...identified the need for further research to improve quoll conservation’ (New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage 2011). Fenner et al (2009) later concluded:

Therefore, determination of theoretical risk should be regarded only as a first step in assessing the actual risk faced by non-target species (King 1989; Kortner et al. 2003; Kornter and Watson 2005; Claridge et al. 2006; Claridge and Mills 2007; Kortner 2007). Without monitoring the fate of individual animals and populations during the actual baiting campaigns, any risk assessments of baiting remain highly speculative and can lead to erroneous management decisions (Fenner 2009: 531).

However, the public standing and the sincerity of the public commitment by NSW NPWS to continue aerial baiting was further challenged. In 2005, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry took evidence in Cooma that:

the re-introduction of aerial baiting in these areas has been a ‘token’ effort, and that there has been little attempt to reintroduce aerial baiting, particularly in national parks. The committee is hopeful that an effective aerial baiting campaign will resume following the release of research showing that dog baits do not harm native wildlife (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2005: 124).

In contrast, in a stinging rebuke, Animal Control Technologies, described as the chief manufacturer of baits in Australia, presented a storyline of risk within a context of the abrogation of national responsibility. It argued:

...without any doubt, the nation must face the reality of aerial baiting campaigns if we seek to make a serious impact on the pest problems in larges (sic) areas of low human density or inaccessible country and where budgetary constraints
limit other options. The only debate is on how to best mange (sic) the slightly higher non-target risk that may be associated with such baiting. In doing so the analysis should not only consider the risk but also the benefits from the control operation. The do-nothing option is always risk free but the downside is that there are no benefits either. This is the current approach at many sites and it is a totally reprehensible abrogation of responsibility (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2005 84: 35).

The Determination of the NSW Scientific Committee and the risk of hybridisation

In 2001, pressure from an increasingly politicised ecological science discourse re the extensive, if not irreversible, genetic hybridisation of the ‘native dog’ (Australian Native Dog Conservation Society 1993: 1, Colong Foundation nd) fuelled attempts to ‘list’ dingoes as ‘endangered populations’ under the Threatened Species Conservation Act (TSCA) 1995.

In 2008, the NSW Scientific Committee, using its powers under the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1996, found in its preliminary determination that:

Predation and Hybridisation by Feral Dogs (Canis lupus familiaris) is eligible to be listed as a key threatening process as, in the opinion of the Scientific Committee:

(a) it adversely affects threatened species, populations or ecological communities, or

(b) could cause species, populations or ecological communities that are not threatened to become threatened (Department of Environment and Climate Change 2008 29 August).

Under this Act, the NSW Scientific Committee subsequently ‘listed’ the predation and hybridisation by feral dogs as a ‘key threatening process’ but the attempts to ‘list’ the dingo as ‘endangered populations’ failed (Dickman and Lunney 2001, Department of Environment and Climate Change 2008 29 August, Colong Foundation nd).
Progressively during the time of the NSW Labor Government, meanings which distinguished 'wild dogs' from 'dingoes' were 'fixed' in WDMC policy literature. A plethora of ecological meanings emerged that drew further distinctions among types of 'dogs' and these were variously described and detailed based on the Cartesian system of classification. This became the plank around which the administrative language of WDMC in NSW was built.

This 'naming' of 'wild dogs' was administratively convenient and self-serving of the interests of ecological science because over time the language of the discourse became taken-for-granted. More generally, Kuhn (1996) notes of 'paradigms' that:

> When the individual scientist can take a paradigm for granted, he [sic] need no longer, in his major works, attempt to build his field anew, starting from first principles and justify-the use of each concept introduced (Kuhn 1996: 19).

However, the material reality of this distinction and the 'listing' of the risk of hybridisation as a threat to the purity dingoes had a direct bearing on the lives of farm families who were experiencing escalating wild dog predation on agricultural stock because how, where, when, and, if wild dogs could be killed became further restricted (Doherty 2008 15August).

Additionally, the attempt to 'list' dingoes as 'endangered' in practical terms, had the potential, at the very least, to present policy makers with '...an intriguing legal conundrum,' (Dickman, Glen et al. 2009: p 60), if not, severely curtail all WDMC in NSW. This was because:

> ...the practical implications of such a decision would be to never kill any wild dog because it might be a dingo, or obtain a license to kill any wild dog as threatened fauna' (Dickman and Lunney 2001).

As a consequence:

In collaboration with NSW Agriculture, NPWS convened four meetings of public land management agencies to consider arrangements capable of meeting both agricultural protection and conservation objectives, but avoiding conflict
between the RLP Act 1998 and the TSC Act 1995. To ensure transparency, limited representation from Rural Lands Protection Boards (RLPB) also attended these meetings. Broader consultation occurred at a later stage (Davis and Leys 2001: 109).

Nevertheless, core dingo conservation areas were identified across NSW as ‘potential’ habitats for dingoes and WDMC in these areas was prohibited. At the same time, ‘buffer zones’ were created around many National Parks in which WDMC was often prohibited (Moore 2002, 22 February). However, the size of these ‘buffer zones’ varied across NSW and the decision of whether trapping or baiting could occur within these zones ultimately rested on the interpretation of the Area Managers of various Government Departments. From the 1960s this became a cause of intense hostility between public land managers and farm families adding further fuel to the storyline of the ‘locking up’ of the National Estate. These decisions were often hotly contested and became the cause of intense and lingering acrimony and vitriol between farm families and local land managers.

In 2001, in a land mark case, Ron Stockwell, a farmer from Victoria successfully sued the Victorian Government. Justice Gillard (2001) found that:

the government was liable for private nuisance and common law negligence because it knew of the presence of wild dogs, it was foreseeable that that the Stockwells would suffer damage if nothing was done, and the government failed to take reasonable measures to rectify the problem (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2005: 156).

Moreover, the Court found that the Victoria Department of Conservation had failed to take reasonable measures to rectify the issue. However, the victory was pyrrhic. By the time of the legal ruling, Ron Stockwell was bankrupt and had lost the family farm (Gillard 2001 17 December: 427).

The ecological framing of ‘wild dogs’

The attempt at ‘listing’ dingoes also gave added impetus to further challenge the remnant power of the ‘wool discourse’ in WDMC [See Chapter Two for discussion].
During this time, some ecological scientists called publicly and regularly for the removal of sheep from the landscape, the retention and utility of wild dogs as perceived 'top order' predators and the reintroduction of the dingo into national parks, conservation zones, arid zones and rangelands (ABC News 2006 15 November, Macey 2007 11 July, Dayton 2007, 11 July, Smith 2009 13 August). One academic advocated the introduction of elephants and komodo dragons into the Australian landscape (Bowman 2009); another suggested retaining wild dogs to control feral pigs (Flannery 1994).

In 2007, at the Australian Biodiversity Conference, Chris Dickman (2007), a Professor from the University of Sydney, made a very public call to release wild dogs into the Western Division of NSW to contain feral goat populations. Under his plan, farm families would simply receive compensation for any stock losses (Clarke 2007). The exact details of this scheme were not clarified. This call attracted considerable criticism because such a plan, if introduced, would severely affect, if not, curtail the existing feral goat industries which was valued in 2010 as A$113 million in Western NSW (Ferguson 2012: 21).

In 2009, Dickman et al (2009) further argued: 'That dingo reintroduction would be a cost-effective means of restoring Australia's conservation wastelands' (Dickman, Glen et al. 2009: 239). Cumulatively, these ecological challenges were couched in a language of 'risk.' As Dickman et al (2009) argued:

> However, if we do insist on continuing “business as usual,” we must factor in the catastrophic costs in future of the loss of ecological processes and ecosystem function owing to more over-grazing, the further spread of noxious weeds, the continuing overuse of poisons to reduce impacts of pests, and ongoing loss and salinization of the soil that remains. If returning dingoes to the system can help to alleviate these costs, then we cannot afford to delay reintroductions any longer (Dickman, Glen et al. 2009: 261).

This 'new' environmental storyline of 'risk' resonated with some ecologists and signified a much more strident approach. In a direct affront to the findings of many industry and Government Reports and the overwhelming collective knowledges and experiences of farm families, Purcell (2010) claimed:
The considerable resources devoted to dingo control, the number of dingoes controlled, and the assertion that controlling predators is necessary to maintain the viability of the Australian livestock industry appears to be a façade (Purcell 2010: 127).

However, noticeably absent from this ‘analysis’ was any substantive evidence. Similarly, his argument that: ‘All wild-living dogs regardless of pelt colour or genetic status should be labelled dingoes and their functional role should be preserved’ (Fleming, Allen et al. 2012: 125 citing Purcell 2010) was highly normative – and inflammatory.

In contrast, in an extraordinarily wide ranging polemic, Low (2003) argued:

And what about dingoes? We treat them in national parks as native animals while knowing they are really feral dogs brought in from Indonesia 4000 years ago. We need them for ecological stability, but do they fit the idea of wilderness? (Low 2003: 44).

It is not surprising these very public announcements and the unwillingness to see ‘ecology’ as a political discourse was met with both incredulity and consternation among farm organisations and farm families.

Nevertheless, these divisions of opinion in the ecological science literature are instructive. Collectively, they point to the piecemeal, fractured and markedly different storylines that contributed to an overarching ecological science discourse of WDMC within WDMC policy in NSW.

**A change in the ecological storylines**

However, during the time of successive NSW Labor Governments, the ecological storylines that advocated ‘dingo’ conservation changed. Much of the ecological literature on dingoes now suggests that the complete hybridisation of the ‘dingo’ is all but inevitable (Benson 2004, Anon 2008 6 December). Further, it appears that while the dingo was understood to have ‘iconic’ status in the national and cultural imaginary and
in the Aboriginal Dreamtime, the claim that the ‘dingo’ was ‘native’ was challenged consistently (Savolainen 2002, Savolainen 2004, Fleming, Allen et al. 2012, Johnson and Ritchie 2012).

The oft repeated storyline in the ecological literature is that the ‘dingo’ was brought to Australia most probably by fisher peoples (Low 1999: 7, Johnson and Ritchie 2012). Yet even here, the ecological storylines reveal dissenting opinions that emanate from within the ecological science literature.

Corbett (1995-96), for example, refutes the ‘non-native’ nomenclature essentially arguing that ‘any’ animal born in Australia qualifies as ‘native.’ Low (1998) in turn refutes this as ‘questionable’. He rails:

The word [native] sheds its meaning. Native rabbits, native goats, native toads, native trout, native camphor laurels and native prickly pear. O brave new world! (Low 1999: 256 - 257).

This begs some hard but necessary questions that impinged directly on WDMC in NSW: ‘Is it the ‘idea’ of the ‘dingo’ in the cultural imaginary that is being conserved? Or, is it the case now that ‘any dog will do,’ that is, the reason dingoes cum wild dogs must be conserved is because they are assumed to have ‘utility’ in the ecosystem in controlling other species.

In an interview with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Catalyst program, Purcell (2009) forcefully pushes this line: ‘They definitely act like dingoes so I’d have no doubt to say they are dingoes’ (Newby 2009). Daniels and Corbett (2003) too reiterate this line of reasoning. They argue:

Protecting animals for where and how they live, and for their cultural or ecosystem function value rather than focusing on their appearance, offers the best solution for maintaining their conservation status (Daniels and Corbett 2003: 213).
This solution may be politically expedient but the argument that the conservation of the dingo, whether it is a dingo or wild dog, is hardly honest. More recently, Fleming et al argue:

The key question is not ‘are they native’ but ‘should they be treated as though they are’? (stet) (Fleming, Allen et al. 2012: 21).

Overwhelmingly, the ecological science literature reveals that these arguments are not based on notions of ‘objectivity’ but rather on highly normative beliefs of what ‘should be.’

Departmental ‘news’ stories attempt to subvert this storyline of agrarianism by representing case studies that embrace an ecological storyline. Images of NSW NPWS and DPI departmental staff standing or kneeling besides radio-collared dogs, sand plots or M44’s as well as the visual imagery from infra-red monitoring cameras are foregrounded to suggest the superiority of the ecological discourse (Beeby 2007, Hoskins 2007 13 September, Hoskins 2007 October 11, Anon 2009 5 November, York 2011 6 July, Anon 2012 3 May, Anon 2012 7 June, Howden 2012 14 May). These storylines attempt to legitimise ‘new’ technologies, ‘new’ innovations and the entry of scientific actors in WDMC.

A visual binary is therefore created which delineates between the traditional knowledges and experiences of ‘doggers’ and/or farm families, and, scientific and technological expertise. In this way, the storyline functions to downplay the experiences and knowledges of the ‘trapper’ as well as the anger and frustration of the farm family. In these storylines it becomes immaterial who actually caught the wild dog – often the ‘trapper’ is noticeably absent from the photograph. The new imagery and symbols suggest the management of wild dogs through new ‘innovations’ as well as the ‘control’ of ‘the unintended consequences of modernity’ by the application of ecological ‘science.’

The storylines of jingoism, racism and anthromorphism

At times, however, some of the storylines that emerged from the storyline of ‘native’ were simply jingoistic, racist or anthropomorphic. For example, the Australian Native

It is also clear that the ‘dingo’ cum ‘wild dog’ is significant in the Aboriginal Dreaming (Rose 2000: 47). However, within an ecological discourse the storyline of the significance of the dingo in the Aboriginal Dreaming was subverted. The ‘new’ storyline used the ‘dingo’ to reinforce the ecological call for a specific Australian ecological identity and to bolster the claims for the conservation, if not, the preservation of the dingo.

However, some storylines evidenced strains of anthropomorphism. For example, in a Sydney Morning Herald newspaper article, an officer from NSW DPI, states:

the wild dogs have names - Tim Owen, Debbie Donna, Buck Too, Stinky Too...People see what dogs do as evil and cruel ... [but] they don't mean to do it (Howden 2012, 14 May).

This attributes ‘wild dogs’ the human characteristic of rationality.

Advocates of the preservation of the dingo claimed that the dingo is ‘an esteemed Australian mammal’ (Purcell 2010), or a ‘very elegant animal'(Breckwoldt 1983). However, these descriptions are offered, in essence, as the legitimating storyline for its preservation – not necessarily just its conservation. In this context, hybridisation is framed as a risk to the ‘purity’ of the dingo; wild dogs put at risk Australia’s so-called ‘unique,’ ‘natural,’ and national identity.

Overall, Flannery’s (2012) assertion that the management of invasive animals and the conservation of endangered species is all about ‘values’ may well be true – but this line of argumentation goes only so far if advocates of the ecological discourse are then the ultimate arbiters – the self-appointed experts’ - of what is in the ‘common good.’ This line of reasoning is pervasive in some of the ecological literature of WDMC.

For example, Purcell (2010) advocates a radical and utopian restructuring of society in which ‘science’ should be the arbiter of the ‘common good.’ He writes:
The most important concept in contention is that many tiers of culture will have to accommodate change and evolve to a new level. Fortunately this cultural evolution can be based on objective scientific measurement rather than on subjective judgement, anecdote and the resultant cultural transmission of behaviours between humans (Purcell 2010: 130).

Putting aside the repugnant strains of eugenics in this storyline, the storylines of purity, hybridisation, conservation, preservation and anthropomorphism – contributed to the ecological science discourse in WDMC. This was a discourse centred on the primacy of ‘science’ and the belief that wild dogs and *ipso facto* farm families and their activities needed to be ‘managed’ to the degree that they no longer posed a ‘risk’ to what ‘rightly’ belonged in the ecosystem.

**The discourse of agrarianism**

In Australia, as Botterill (2009) notes, so-called ‘countrymindedness,’ the Australian variant of agrarian sentiments, mimics a discourse which has been ‘a feature of Western culture for centuries’ (Botterill 2009: 20); the academic critiques of which have been well canvassed in the literature (Craig and Phillips 1983, Aitkin 1985, Beus and Dunlap 1994, Aitkin 2005, Botterill 2006, Botterill 2009, Wear 2009).

Much of this discussion emanates from the critique of Flinn & Johnson (1974) wherein they cumulatively invoke the classical works of Aristotle, Hesiod, Cicero, Virgil, Horace, and Locke while downplaying the works of the relative ‘newcomer’ Thomas Jefferson, in their search for the historical antecedents of agrarian ideology (Flinn and Johnson 1974: 187). They argued that American agrarianism – based on surveys of approximately seven hundred Wisconsin farmers - enshrined five central tenets:

(1) Farming is the basic occupation on which all other economic pursuits depend for raw materials and food;

(2) Agricultural life is the natural life of man; therefore, being natural, it is good, while city life is artificial and evil;

(3) The complete economic independence of the farmer;

(4) The farmer should work hard to demonstrate his virtue, which is made possible only through an orderly society;
Family farms have become indissolubly connected with American democracy (Flinn and Johnson 1974: 189 - 193).

Aitken’s (1985) subsequent reformulation of the discourse of agrarianism in the Australian context as, ‘countrymindedness,’ is equally well known. As Botterill (2009) points out: ‘The term is of uncertain origin but is traceable to the beginnings of the Country Party in the 1920s’ and reflects ‘the wholesome nature of agricultural activity and the contrast between the virtues of farming and the unpleasantness of urban life’ (Botterill 2009: 62). Aitken argued that the characteristics of Australian ‘countrymindedness’ were:

(i) Australia depends on its primary producers for its high standards of living, for only those who produce a physical good add to a country’s wealth.

(ii) Therefore, all Australians, from city and country alike, should in their own interest support policies aimed at improving the position of primary industries.

(iii) Farming and grazing, and rural pursuits generally, are virtuous, ennobling and cooperative; they bring out the best in people.

(iv) In contrast, city life is competitive and nasty, as well as parasitical.

(v) The characteristic Australian is a countryman [sic], and the core elements of the national character come from the struggles of country people to tame their environment and make it productive. City people are much the same the world over.

(vi) For all these reasons, and others like defence, people should be encouraged to settle in the country, not in the city.

(vii) But power resides in the city, where politics is trapped in a sterile debate about classes. There has to be a separate political party for country people to articulate the true voice of the nation (Botterill 2009: 21 citing Aitken, 1985: 35)

However, more recently, there has been greater variance in the ways in which the storylines of agrarianism position farming families and the ways in which the storylines of agrarianism are deployed. Traditionally, as Botterill (2009) notes, party political
differences were understood to rest on societal ‘cleavages’ that drew distinctions between rural and urban capital. However, 

From Federation until the 1970s, the big debates over policy settings were not so much between the squatter/grazier class and the city but between the former and the smaller ‘farmer’ organisations over government intervention, both in agriculture and the broader economy (Botterill 2009: 20)

However, as Cockfield and Botterill (2010) found in an exploratory survey ‘agriculture and rural areas are still considered to be important to Australia’s future’ and that there was little in their research to suggest that ‘rural industries and communities are generally considered to be anachronistic’. Moreover, they found:

There is still a tendency to attribute stereotypical countryminded characteristics to rural people, strong support for farmers’ production methods, and very strong belief in the importance of agriculture to the future of the nation (Cockfield and Botterill 2010: 609).

In contrast, in the context of NSW WDMC the discourse of agrarianism functions as the ‘straw man’ of the ecological discourse. For example, Low (2003) argues that: ‘The fact remains cows and sheep have done irrevocable harm to Australia’ (Low 2003: 295 - 296). Positioned in this way, agrarian values and, ipso facto, farming families - who are assumed to hold these values dear - are a ‘risk’ to the Australian ecosystem. The ‘risk’ that agrarianism and farming families therefore pose implicitly warrants intervention by ‘experts’ - ‘wild dogs’ and farming families need to be both managed and their ‘ignorance’ and their ‘behaviour’ modified and/or over come through State intervention and environmental ‘education.’ Within the ecological storylines of WDMC, Australian agrarian values are often held to be ‘old fashioned and ‘out of date.’ These storylines not surprisingly incur the wrath of many farming families. As one farmer wrote:

Since the days of the Snowy Scheme farmers have been portrayed as the environmental villain for cheap political gain. Stockmen claim that after any political capital has been obtained by Governments declaring gully filling by dams or new National Parks, interest and commitment to maintain management excellence plummets and by default neighbours out of shame and necessity are
compensating for what is flawed conservation policy and legislation essentially justifying the circumstances of neglect. Stockmen have endured a protracted ‘consultative’ and ‘lets (sic) research it’ culture dismissing their educated advice based on proven management outcomes, endorsed by thriving wildlife populations on most private land. Stockmen have nurtured and created an environment where biodiversity can and does persist’ (Franklin 2001 March: 4).

Brett (2011) argues that often in the Australian context the adherents of agrarianism are the subject of both trenchant criticism and derision. Farming practices and ipso facto farm families are often held responsible, if not, ‘blamed’ for environmental damage. Thus, within this storyline, the social, environmental and economic impacts of wild dog predation can be easily downplayed or dismissed as having been caused by farming families in the first instance, by farm families simply continuing to ‘be there’ or through their ‘interference’ in the ecosystem in eradicating wild dogs or in ‘disturbing’ dingo pack structure (Purcell 2010); agrarian ‘values’ ‘are conceived as convenient “covers” for the pursuit of self-interest (Banchoff, 2004)’(Stewart 2006: 183). Yet, in contrast, ecological ‘values’ are not.

The utility of agrarian storylines as a political strategy in invoking iconic images of Australian cultural mythology is pervasive and powerful despite the relative decline in the power of the wool discourse in Australian society generally. However, like all storylines, the various storylines of agrarianism have rhetorical power in: ‘invoking discourses in the audience conducive to the claim made by the representative, and downplaying competing discourses’ (Dryzek 2010: 320). As demonstrated in Chapter Two, the issue of WDMC was universally exploited by all political parties in NSW throughout the years of successive NSW Labor Government from 1995 until 2011 wherein storylines of agrarianism were invoked for political capital.

The discourse of animal welfare

In NSW, within the dominant discourse animal welfare is informed by anthropocentrism. The storylines that emanate from within this discourse pivot in part around the idea of the stewardship of animals. Wild dogs are not afforded intrinsic rights. However, the wild dog is judged sentient.
The period of successive NSW Labor Governments was marked by a significant change in the ways ‘wild dogs’ and ‘dingos’ were represented. These representations spilled over, not surprisingly, into the implementation of WDMC and resulted progressively in significant changes in the methods that could be accessed and/or used by public land managers and farm families across NSW. What were once entirely legal methods of control that carried with them the full imprimatur and sanction of the State, such as the use of fixed wing aeroplanes other than in the Western Division of NSW, bounties, strychnine poisoning and hard jaw traps were now prohibited. In addition, allied legislation progressively emerged that further impinged on the implementation of WDMC at the grassroots. The methods of WDMC were also increasingly regulated and prescribed by the State through a raft of Commonwealth and State legislation. However, the approved methods of WDMC remain far from uniform across Australia.

Progressively, from the 1960s storylines of ‘humaneness’ emerged which were accompanied by significant changes in the actual spatial geography of rural communities. In some parts of NSW, farmers owned or leased what became public land through a combination of the resumption of leasehold lands and the gazettal of National Parks, wilderness areas and/or reserves (Merritt 2007, Park 2010 July).

During this time, the knowledge and the experiences of farm families of the surrounding land and WDMC was often far more intimate that that of the public land managers. Yet, many farm families found that neighbouring lands were now administered and controlled by public land managers who were promoted as ‘experts’ by the State and who were often physically located far from the landscape they administered and whose contact with the local community was minimal. For example, at one aerial ‘bait drop’ day and after a visiting NSW DPI officer finished instructing the farmers present on the surrounding Bush, a farmer commented drily and quietly that his family had owned all the surrounding land prior to its gazettal as National Park.

During this time a storyline of ‘humaneness’ progressively emerged within the dominant administrative rationalist discourse of WDMC. This had its genesis in a very broad discourse of ‘animal welfare.’ This was endorsed by NSW Labor as part of its self-proclaimed ‘Green Legacy’ particularly through the rise of a ‘new’ environmentalist discourse to which the NSW Greens also broadly adhered.
Codes of Practice and Standing Operating Procedures

In 2005, the then Minister for Natural Resources, Minister for Primary Industries and Minister for Mineral Resources, Mr Ian McDonald, MLC released a publication entitled ‘Humane Pest Animal Control: Codes of Practice and Standing Operating Procedures,’ commonly referred to as ‘COPs’ and SOPs’ (NSW Department of Primary Industries 2005). These COPs and SOPs, reportedly, were adopted immediately:

by the Commonwealth Government for lands under its control, particularly defence estate and national parks, and have been endorsed by NSW Pest Animal Council. They serve as a useful adjunct to the NSW Vertebrate Pest Control Manual, and have been written to be applicable across the whole of Australia (NSW Department of Primary Industries 2005: Foreword).

This storyline of ‘humaneness’ was widely promulgated in a model produced by the NSW DPI Vertebrate Pest Unit (Sharp and Saunders 2008) under a very broad discourse of ‘animal welfare.’

This model of ‘humaneness’ in WDMC enshrined scientific rationalism, the ‘strategic approach’ and the concept of ‘best practice’ (NSW Department of Primary Industries 2005). It resulted from a ‘desk top’ literature review and a review by a panel of scientific experts after which representatives of peak bodies were invited to comment. The ‘humaneness’ calculator – a metric that increases to the colour ‘red’ the higher the ‘inhumaneness’ score - that accompanied this model was subsequently publicised by NSW DPI as ‘raising the bar’ in WDMC (York 2009 21 January). Yet, the model was a guide only. Nevertheless, it recommended that:

An ideal vertebrate pest control method should be humane, target specific, efficient, cost-effective and safe for humans to use’ (Saunders 2004: np)

This became known as the ‘gold standard.’ However, against this backdrop, ‘humaneness’ and, in particular, the use of 1080 and specifically the continued use of 1080 in aerial baiting represents a battle writ large. The storylines that emerge from this draw on a variety of competing discourses and are bitterly contested. It is apparent from the literature that the definition of ‘humaneness’ is also contested.
The storylines of aerial baiting with 1080

In NSW, aerial baiting with 1080 generally occurs across rugged and inaccessible terrains on public lands using injected 1080 meat baits. This occurs at specific times of the year according to a prearranged and fixed schedule. The timing of aerial baiting is important to prevent wild dogs 'breeding up.' Wild dogs breed bi-annually, unlike dingoes which breed annually.

Aerial baiting with 1080 is considered a ‘risk’ management strategy by NSW NPWS intended to: ‘...to maintain effective dog-free buffer zones adjacent to livestock grazing areas’ (NSW Department of Primary Industries 2005: np). The storyline of ‘buffer zones’ is similarly contested. For example, farm families and trappers have always argued that wild dogs are not restricted to particular ‘home ranges’ and can travel vast distances at particular times of the year. This has been subsequently ‘validated’ as ‘fact’ by ecological studies.

Within WDMC in NSW 1080 is used as an approved method of control. Aerial baiting using 1080 occurs across NSW according to an approved and monitored mapped route. All helicopters and aircraft must be fitted with a Global Positioning System (GPS). Further:

In NSW, the approval of both the Director-General of the NSW Department of Primary Industries and the relevant Department of Environment and Conservation branch director is required before aerial baiting may occur on lands acquired or reserved under the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act (NSW Department of Primary Industries 2005: np).

The amount of bait used and the frequency, which is referred to more commonly as ‘the bait rate’ was also reduced following the release of the APVMA Review into 1080. This decision was and, remains, controversial as many farm groups following the APVMA Review decision argued that the reduced bait rate was ‘...ineffective in controlling wild dogs in their area’ (Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority 2011 10 November). The APVMA subsequently issued a temporary permit for the use of 1080 in only three of fourteen LHPAs with the ‘old’ bait rate on the condition that ecological
studies proceeded (Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority 2011 10 November) which farm families and/or their representative organisations would have to fund. This research was ultimately funded by AWI; an organisation funded by wool producers’ levies (National Farmers’ Federation 2011 11 February: 9) Many farm families felt this was ecological science and public policy done at ‘the point of a gun.’

Annual public aerial baiting meetings occur prior to the scheduled ‘drop’ commencing. Public land managers and representatives of Wild Dog Associations as well as individual representatives of farm families attend these meetings. The routes may require a prior Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which may result in a refusal to proceed. Permission for the commencement of aerial baiting does not rest with farm families or with individual LHPA Boards.

For the Wild Dog Associations, farm families and the staff of RLPBs that coordinate the annual ‘drop’ this involves a great deal of work. Appropriate and documented public notice must be given of an intention to aerially bait. ‘Cut’ up and ‘bait days’ must be planned and coordinated.

In North East NSW meat is sourced by WDAs at their own expense (Barnard River Wild Dog Association 1956-1968). Annual fees levied on members contribute to offsetting this cost and meat is often donated by farm families. The meat is then literally ‘cut up’ in to pieces of a certain size and ‘bagged’ or placed on the back of a ‘pick-up’ truck ready for the next day. Usually this task involves many of the family members of WDAs. These are not social occasions; those present are committed to the necessity of the task of ameliorating the ‘risk’ of wild dogs. The meat is subsequently injected with 1080 poison by authorised LHPA Rangers on the second day in situ at the designated helicopter site.

On this day, an officer from NSW DPI who has responsibility for the overall coordination is charged with making sure all regulations are followed and that individual farmers have the necessary up-to-date licences, for example, a Chemical Certificate III. Contracted pilots, as well as designated navigators who assist on the day are required to strictly and only follow the approved route. A third person may despatch the meat from the helicopter.
Signed indemnity forms are required from each landholder over the periphery of whose land aerial baits are to be dropped. These indemnity forms must be signed well in advance and submitted. This responsibility falls usually to Wild Dog Associations, individual farmers or LHPA Rangers. This is an onerous task. Signed indemnity forms are not always forthcoming and can result in a great deal of community dissention. This is especially the case when individual farm families or farming communities as a whole are experiencing continuous wild dog predation on agricultural stock. The storyline that emerge from this refusal is that these landholders are not meeting their obligations as ‘good neighbours.’ The efficacy of the ‘drop’ reportedly can also be compromised if there are too many gaps in the ‘line’ – caused by individual landholders or a Government Agency not agreeing to aerial baiting on the periphery of their land or because of a decision by an LHPA Board not to participate. Refusal to sign an indemnity form is more common in areas where there has been a significant change of land use over time. For example, this is most noticeable in areas around Kempsey in North East NSW and in the Hunter where land has been subdivided into smaller ‘hobby farm’ blocks. This is also the case when land declared as a National Park, State Forest, wilderness areas or reserve is subject to an unfavourable Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Public land managers can and do veto particular routes. For example, in 1995, in his Annual Address, the President of the Barnard River Wild Dog Association wrote:

As a result of the determination of the EIS which covers the Kempsey area, the Kempsey Association is not baiting this year because, they are not allowed into State Forests. Remember the EIS for this area will be determined over the next 12 months. A recommendation from State Forests to the last EIS consultation committee meeting was that Ben Halls Gap State Forest should be a flora reserve. The Heritage Commission is about to list Ben Halls Gap on the register of the National Estate, and to make sure he did not miss out on the act Bob Carr has made an election promise that Ben Hall Gap would be made a National park within 12 months of him being elected. So it is obvious that this year will be the last year that this Association will be allowed to bait Ben Halls Gap, thus ensuring that there will be a never ending supply of wild dogs for the Upper Peel Valley (Wiggan 1995: 2).
The withholding of 1080 for use in WDMC and the ban on aerial baiting have been contentious for a number of reasons as has been explained previously. However, in a discursive sense, the storylines that are offered in support of the varied arguments for or against the use of 1080 invariably turn to storylines of ‘risk’ management and ‘humaneness’ for support. Not surprisingly, there is considerable variance in the ways in which these storylines are presented.

The Commercial Partnerships

In a commercial context, the discourse of animal welfare pivoted on cost effectiveness. Lapidge et al (2006) reported:

> proactive research and management strategies must balance the economic cost of developing and registering new control products with the benefits of control to maximize profitability for the industry (Choquenot and Hone 2002) To do this effectively, one must first know the economic impact of each species (Lapidge, Dall et al. 2006: 258-263).

However, as previously shown, the economic impact of WDMC was very much a guesstimate. Notwithstanding this, over this period commercial and scientific partnerships were forged in furtherance of the development of new products.

In 1999, Pestat Pty Ltd was first established as a company of the PACRC. It was instrumental in the development of the synthetic lure, the spray attractant product registered as ‘FeralMone’. ‘FeralMone’ is a product of:

Pestat Pty Ltd and Australian Wool Innovation Ltd, developed with the assistance of NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service…FeralMone is distributed by the company, Animal Control Technologies Australia (ACTA) (Pestat Pty Ltd 2010: np).

Later in 2003, Lapidge et al (2006) reported that:

Australian Wool Innovation Ltd signed a contract with the Pest Animal Control Cooperative Research Centre (now Invasive Animals CRC) in June 2003 to
evaluate and develop a new toxic agent for control of wild dogs and foxes (canids) (Lapidge, Dall et al. 2006: 259).

In turn, in 2004, ACTA reported:

The group is currently actively participating in the development of a new bait for control of feral pigs (project part supported by Meat & Livestock Commission and Feral Animal Program) and on the practical applications of a putative new target specific and humane toxin for wild dog and fox control (project with Pestat, the present Pest Animal CRC with support from Australian Wool Innovation). The company is the principal commercial partner in the new Australasian Invasive Animal (AIA) CRC proposal (Animal Control Technologies and Applied Biotechnologies Group 2004 August: 1-14).

Later, in 2007, ACTA reported:

The CRC catch cry of “together we achieve solutions” welds well with our own mission of “Excellence in Pest Animal Management Technology”. Apart from helping to establish the CRC itself, we have made a considerable commitment to the CRC program in a number of major projects that will bring new technology to pest animal management.

Chief amongst these are the effort, co-sponsored by the Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) and managed by Pestat Ltd, to explore the use of a possible new toxin for control of foxes, feral cats and wild dogs. The chemical given the common name of PAPP works in a similar way to carbon monoxide by preventing oxygen transport by red cells and thus is fast-acting and humane (Animal Control Technologies 2007 12 February: np).

However, the financial expenditure and the requirements of the registration process to develop a new toxin became all too apparent. In 2010, Eason et al reported:

The considerable expense of developing new products (a new predacide in Australia and New Zealand, para-aminopropiopheone (PAPP), will be in excess of AUS$5M; Lapidge et al. 2007), the challenging and onerous registration
process for minor use vertebrate pesticides, and the lack of return on investment leading to market failure in the industry has meant that progress within the field of vertebrate pesticide product development can sometimes be stifled (Eason, Fagerstone et al. 2010: 111).

In 2010, the IACRC restated its position. The IACRC was designed to deliver:

new types of registered lethal baits with improved specificity and acceptability for use in control of canid pests (wild dogs and foxes) in Australia. The baits will utilise a new toxicant formulation; para-aminopropiophenone or PAPP. The project will also deliver an antidote to the toxicant for use in case of accidental poisoning of, eg, working and companion dogs (Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre 2010: np).

In 2010, the commercial partners in the development of PAPP were listed as:

IA CRC, Australian Wool Innovation, Animal Control Technologies Australia, University of Western Sydney, Connovation, Pestat, Industry and Innovation NSW, Queensland Department of Employment, Economic Development & Innovation, Victorian Department of Primary Industries, Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment (Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre 2010).

However, the use of PAPP as chemical toxin was not new (Rose, Welles et al. 1946, October 14, Marrs, Inns et al. 1991, Eason, Fagerstone et al. 2010) and there appears to be some confusion within the literature as to its reported purpose. Eason et al (2010) report:

On the positive side, PAPP is being developed for the control of foxes and feral cats in Australia and stoats and feral cats in NZ. If the research and registration of PAPP baits are successfully completed it will be the first vertebrate toxicant developed for mammalian pest control since the 1980s (Murphy et al. 2007), and the only one developed with target specificity, humaneness and low residue risk as priority features (Eason, Fagerstone et al. 2010: 115)
However, by 2010, the IACRC reported difficulties in bringing PAPP to fruition. It stated:

Balancing these difficult studies against the ambitious timeframes originally negotiated with the sponsor of the project; AWI have proven very challenging. However, in the last 12 months the project has crossed a critical threshold with the completion of a series of field trials for the 2 target species that demonstrated the necessary efficacy for submission of 2 product registration applications earlier this year.

The key outcomes of product registrations still hinge on a consultative process with the Office of chemical safety and environmental health (OCSEH). We expect a response to the new active and product applications acceptance for assessment from OCSEH during June 2010 (Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre 2010: np).

However, some ten years on from the signing of the first contract with AWI, the mandatory AVPMA registration review is not complete. Notwithstanding this, in 2012, the IACRC embarked on the ‘Pest Smart Roadshow’ across Australia wherein it claimed:

It will showcase best practice pest management incorporating currently used techniques and the latest innovations.

New products to be covered include the following:

For wild dogs and foxes: PAPP baits, Blue-Healer™ antidote (Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre 2012: np).

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)

In marked contrast, to this cost benefit approach, the RSPCA’s storyline on ‘humaneness’ pivots on the appropriate ‘justification’ for the selective killing of animals and on the method used being as ‘humane as possible’ (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals 2003: 5). It argues that these conditions apply equally to introduced, native or domestic animals. Integral to its understanding of ‘justification’ the RSPCA identified four areas where ‘an objective assessment’ may justify killing.
The examples cited were: disease risk, agricultural impacts, environmental impacts and social impacts (Jones 2003 25 February).

Overall, the RSPCA was very familiar with killing dogs. In 2003, for example, it reported:

The RSPCA is itself responsible for killing tens of thousands of animals every year, in the name of animal welfare. Over the past 5 years over 700,000 animals have been received by the RSPCA across Australia...In this period the RSPCA has killed a total of 150,000 dogs and 180,000 cats (Jones 2003 25 February: 7).

However, the RSPCA was opposed to the continued use of 1080 on animals. It believed on ‘the available evidence’ that it was not humane and was ‘...opposed to its continued use for the control of populations of introduced or native species (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals 2003: 13). Drawing on the storyline of modernity, the RSPCA argued:

Where current killing methods do not result in a death free of pain and distress, every effort should be made to develop a method that does. We cannot go on accepting 19th century (stet) killing methods just because there is thought to be no alternative to their use (Jones 2003 25 February: 9).

It also noted that the BWJV Plan which was held by successive NSW Labor Governments as ‘the’ model of best practice made no provision for any animal welfare standards. In 2010, the RSPCA reaffirmed its opposition to the use of 1080 stating that it was: ‘closely monitoring the research into a new type of lethal bait containing para-aminopropiophenone’ (PAPP) (RSPCA 2011).

Further, that any baiting programs must be:

carried out in accordance with the codes of practice (COPs) and standard operating procedures (SOPs) produced by the NSW Department of Primary Industries and funded by the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage (RSPCA 2011).
However, in a stinging rebuke to Government, the RSPCA argued that:

In terms of the numbers of animals killed, and the cruelty of the methods used, the control of vertebrate pests is probably the biggest animal welfare issue in Australia (Jones 2003 25 February: 7).

Animals Australia

In 2004, the organisation, Animals Australia: the voice for animals, in a submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Inquiry, contested the nomenclature being used to describe animals as ‘pests.’ It complained that within the Terms of Reference there was no provision for any discussion of animal welfare. To this organisation, animals were ‘mislocated’ rather than ‘feral’ or pests. It argued that:

Privately and publicly owned land which is not being kept as a museum of native flora and fauna should be permitted to continue its evolution towards a natural balance incorporating both native and non-native plants and animals. In the absence of any will to restore these areas to their original condition, natural selection should be allowed to take its course. Attempting to hold back the tide of evolutionary process can only ensure that far more native and non-native animals suffer than would suffer in nature was permitted to do what nature does best. Species which cannot survive in the altered environment should be permitted to achieve the peace of extinction’ (Animals Australia 2004 14 May: 4 - 5).

Animals Australia, like the RSPCA, invoked the storyline of modernity, arguing that: ‘No civilised society would deliberately inflict this array of appalling suffering on its animals.’ However, there was a diametrical departure between the two organisations in its attitudes to killing. The basic premise of the Animals Australia argument was that: ‘no method of control which robs a healthy animal of its life can be considered humane, and all such measures should always be avoided’ (Animals Australia 2004 14 May: 1 - 14).
In contrast to the RSPCA, this storyline of ‘humaneness’ and its interpretation of ‘risk’ as it applied to the management of non-human animals, challenged the primacy of specific ‘ecological’ understandings, rejected technological ‘innovations’ as inhumane and rejected agrarian as well as scientific and economic rationalist ideas of stewardship and anthropocentrism (Oogjes G. 1999 26-27 May, Oogjes 2003 25 February, Paplia 2009). However, it is also apparent that the implementation of any of its suggested ‘solutions’ to the issue of ‘mislocated’ animals, like Purcell (2010), relied on a radical - and most improbable - restructuring of society.

**Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority**

It juxtaposition to the Department of Industries and Investment ‘best practice’ Humaneness Model (Saunders and Sharp 2009) the APVMA in its Review did not consider ‘humaneness.’ It stated:

> There is public concern about the humaneness of using 1080. The Preliminary Review Findings report provides an overview of available information of 1080 and animal welfare. However the report has not formulated any conclusions on this matter. This is because animal humaneness is not a specific criterion in the Agvet Codes and because there are no well established scientific criteria for assessing or making decisions about animal humaneness. However the report notes that humaneness aspects in relation to the use of pesticides, is a broader government policy matter (Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority 2007: np).

**The National Farmers’ Federation and NSW Farmers Association**

In contrast, the National Farmers’ Federation and the NSW Farmers Association endorsed the NSW DPI ‘humaneness model’ and the subsequent COPs and SOPs that emanated from this model. However, representatives of NSWFA publicly voiced significant misgivings regarding what it considered to be the Government’s selective interpretation of animal welfare and, in particular, ‘humaneness.’ They argued that within the storylines of humaneness particularly within the NSW model of ‘humaneness’ itself there was a failure to acknowledge the appalling injuries inflicted on agricultural stock by wild dogs.
The NFF’s argument was twofold. Firstly, it argued that: ‘there is an ongoing need to develop improved control techniques that address efficacy, specificity, safety and humaneness requirements,’ and, secondly, it recommended that: ‘Prior to the banning or removal of any pest animal control method, that Governments ensure viable and cost effective options are available’ (National Farmers' Federation 2011 11 February: 8).

However, NSWFA linked this model of ‘humaneness’ to the wider context of WDMC which it argued was a direct result of the policy failure of successive NSW Labor Governments to appropriately address the issue. NSW Farmers argued that:

The explosion of environmental legislation and regulation in the last 15 years has resulted in the practices and landscapes of farmers being changed - dramatically in some instances - to the point that large tracts of land have been ‘locked up’ and/or converted to national parks. Unfortunately, the day-to-day maintenance of these parcels of land can fall by the wayside, meaning that invasive pest animals such as wild dogs can breed uncontrollably. This spreads the problem onto productive farm land previously unaffected by wild dogs, as well as the fringes of towns and villages. (NSW Farmers Association 2010 25 January: np).

However, it appears from the NFF submission that irrespective of any input from farm organisations, the Commonwealth Government had already implemented national bans on various control methods across the States using its legislative powers. Notably, the continued use of 1080 was not included in these bans.

NSW Farmers Association, in particular, noted that the adoption of the ‘humaneness model’ had clear ramifications and was directly linked to the funding of the implementation of WDMC across NSW which it argued was insufficient. These concerns were paramount. In direct response to the threats to remove 1080, NSW Farmers at its Annual Conference in 2011, passed the following motions:

AC 06 That the Association lobby to ensure delivery of 1080 aerial baiting for wild dogs at an application rate of 10kg/km (or 40 x 250g baits/km) by the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) in national parks;
and further that:

AC 08: That the Association lobby to ensure the procedures which govern aerial wild dog baiting are not applied in a manner which unreasonably restrict the implementation of effective wild dog control programs (NSW Farmers Association 2011: np).

Further, in 2011-2012 the Executive Council of NSW Farmers expressed in its Policy Statement that:

EC09 That the Association appeal to the NSW Government for total funding for the employment of contract dog trappers on land under the Wild Dog Association Program;

EC 09: That the Association continue to lobby Government for a fully integrated and coordinated approach to control wild dogs on private and public lands, providing more resources and supplying all the tools to bring these pest animals to a sustainable level (NSW Farmers Association 2011-2012).

Overall, the debate over the management of ‘risk’ and ‘humaneness’ were ones that were formally ‘played out’ at the ‘top end of town’ from which grassroots farm families largely lacked input other than through largely the NFF and NSW Farmers Association. However, the storyline of ‘humaneness’ also signalled the involvement of the Commonwealth Government in WDMC in a more direct way, most noticeably through the promotion of ‘risk’ management within a discourse of biosecurity.

The discourse of biosecurity

The Commonwealth driven biosecurity discourse gained increased impetus following the public release of the 2008 Beale Report (Beale, Fairbrother et al. 2008 30 September). The aim of the new ‘Australia’s biosecurity regime’ sought:

through careful management, to minimise the risk of the entry, establishment or spread of exotic pests and diseases that have the potential to cause significant
harm to people, animals, plants and other aspects of Australia’s unique environment (Beale, Fairbrother et al. 2008 30 September: xiii).

Within this discourse the storyline of the ‘invasive’ was positioned by the Commonwealth Government as a threat to the ‘common good’ and as part of Australia’s responsibility as a ‘global citizen’ to eradicate (Beale, Fairbrother et al. 2008 30 September).

In turn, the Beale Report recommended a comprehensive ‘risk-return’ approach to deciding where to direct resources across the spectrum. Moreover, it argued that:

The approach used to manage biosecurity risks to human health, food, safety and the environment (including aquatic environments) needs to be consistent with the approach used to address risks that primarily affect the agriculture sector (Beale, Fairbrother et al. 2008 30 September: XXVI).

To farm families, the risks were all too apparent. In WDMC, the risk to the agricultural sector was most noticeable in the spread of ‘zoonotic’ diseases. Zoonotic diseases are defined as: ‘...any disease or infection which is naturally transmissible from animals to humans’ (Beale, Fairbrother et al. 2008 30 September: LIII). For example, zoonotic diseases such as neospora caninum are spread through dog scats, hydatidosis is spread through wild dogs eating the offal (internal organs) of sheep, cattle, kangaroos and pigs, and, rabies is spread through saliva, most usually passed on through bites.

In 2004, AgForce Queensland reported:

...feral dogs are estimated to cost the cattle industry at least $9 million annually through the spread of disease such as neospora caninum and hydatidosis. Neospora caninum, a microscopic parasite, that has been shown to be a significant cause of bovine abortion, lower milk production and reduced weight gain in cattle throughout the world (AgForce Queensland 2004: 1 - 2).

These findings echoed the experiences of many farm families across Australia. For example, an abattoir in Western Australia reported:
it was evident during processing that a large number of skin-on goats had serious
dog bite injuries to the hindlegs. Of this line...approximately 25% or about 100
animals out of 400 killed were affected. The majority of bites were over a week
old but needed aggressive trimming to remove the affected tissue which had
either scaring or infected abscesses. Some animals had their hind quarters
condemned due to severe bite marks (Kirkpatrick 2009 14 August: np).

During the time of successive NSW Labor Governments there was a heightened sense
of awareness of the spread of zoonotic diseases. This was especially so after the
outbreak of Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) commonly known as ‘mad cow’
disease in North America and Europe, the discovery of Hendra virus in Queensland,
equine flu in NSW, H5NI in Asia, ‘foot and mouth’ disease in the United Kingdom and
the presence of rabies in Bali, Indonesia. The cost of managing and containing the
outbreak of equine flu alone was reportedly $110 million. However, as explained in
Chapter Three there were serious concerns raised about the actual capacity of NSW
Government Departments to effectively contain any major outbreak of zoonotic diseases
in NSW (Audit Office of New South Wales 2002). In turn, Beale et al reported:

While some efficiencies will arise from amalgamating Biosecurity Australia,
AQIS and elements of PIAPH, it is impossible to escape the conclusion that
the agencies are significantly under-resourced. Without additional resources,
One Biosecurity: a working partnership the National Biosecurity Authority will
not be capable of delivering the One Biosecurity: a working partnership model
envisaged by the Panel (Beale, Fairbrother et al. 2008 30 September: xxvii -
xxviii).

It is apparent that during this time, successive Commonwealth and State Government
Departments and their Agents, were both underprepared and under resourced to combat
any major outbreak of zoonotic diseases. Beale et al recommended an injection of $260
million was needed to rectify this situation. In a discursive sense, this broadened the
reach of the biosecurity discourse even further. Storylines pivoted most noticeably
around Commonwealth State relations, the use of the External Affairs powers under the
Australian Constitution; interstate, intrastate and international trade, and the use of the
Corporations powers.
However, in light of the findings of successive Government Reports, both State and Federal, and the deficiencies that each Report highlighted, it is difficult to see how the Commonwealth biosecurity storyline of a ‘working partnership model’ could fulfil this task. The storyline of biosecurity as a ‘risk’ management strategy is nonetheless important as this period saw a significant growth in the exercise of Commonwealth powers in both natural resource management and biosecurity. However, in light of this heightened awareness of the biosecurity discourse and the visual reminders to farm families of it - literally a ‘tagged’ animal in the ‘home paddock’ or at the saleyards – these storylines were subverted and instead pivoted around the ability of the Governments’ capacity to manage ‘risk’ and the accompanying financial expenditures especially after the global financial crisis (Dempster 2008 19 September)

However, wherever their origin and whatever the internal inconsistencies that existed within and between these storylines that emanated from the competing discourses of ecological science, agrarianism, animal welfare and biosecurity they were ultimately subverted in service of the dominant administrative rationalist discourse. Notwithstanding this, the legitimacy of the dominant discourse was strongly contested by farming families at the grassroots. It is to this contest that the next Chapter turns.
Chapter Seven

Greasy Wool – public consultation in wild dog management and control

This Chapter examines how the conundrum of WDMC, that is, the twin obligations of the management and control of wild dogs, and, the conservation of the dingo ‘plays out’ in the process of public consultation with farm families across NSW. It examines this declared NSW Government policy objective in light of the findings of extensive field work across NSW completed over the years 2007 – 2009. In all, sixty three public WDMC meetings were attended and all ‘signed off’ plans up to August 2009 were collected and examined. As a result of this examination, three key points emerge:

First, the public policy of WDMC is delivered ‘top down.’ The State, through its agents, exercised power relying on the ‘authority’ of ‘experts’ and public land managers to inform, shape and promulgate the dominant administrative rationalist discourse of WDMC to farm families in order to affect the conservation of the dingo in core areas. This exercise of power is further refined at the local level by a reliance on the interpretations of public land managers from a number of different Departments or Agencies. Representatives of local farm families were co-opted or driven into this process of consultation largely out of frustration and/or desperation arising from both an increase in the numbers of wild dogs and wild dog attacks on agricultural stock. Public land managers in turn were legislatively forced to consult.

Second, during the period of successive NSW Labor Governments the authority of ‘experts’ and public land managers and the legitimacy of NSW WDMC policy was consistently and continuously challenged by farm families. Public WDMC meetings became the site of this struggle. At the same time, these public meetings were the site of determined attempts by farm families to subvert unsuccessfully the dominant discourse of administrative rationalism and the public policy of WDMC it espoused.

Third, this Chapter challenges the contention in WDMC policy that wild dog predation on agricultural stock has decreased as a result of State intervention. Instead, and
specifically, it appears that the decline in wild dog attacks may well be more a function of the decline in the size of the national flock, the increase in ‘destocked’ land, and, the increase in the numbers of farm families exiting farming. Put simply: there are less sheep, less lands devoted to sheep and fewer farmers.

Overall, this research reveals that there is a significant disconnect between what is said in the Government policy literature about the success of WDMC policy as revealed through public WDMC meetings and WDMC plans across NSW and against what was reflected in the industry during this time. This disconnect is substantiated by a number of Government and industry Reports. This suggests in turn that farm families lacked the confidence to restock ‘destocked’ lands because of wild dogs especially on lands in the vicinity of Schedule Two lands. This raises serious doubts over whether it is possible for Schedule Two lands and sheep production to coexist, or, in fact, if they are mutually exclusive.

This Chapter outlines briefly the Commonwealth and State administrative structure of WDMC. It outlines the key elements of the Brindabella Plan model and the role of the State Council of the RLPB and the local Boards as segue to the introduction of the context of WDMC meetings. All identifying information concerning these public meetings has been removed. There is a notation only of the code given to this meeting. It then presents the empirical findings of both public WDMC meetings and WDMC plans. It compares these findings against recent Government and industry Reports regarding the sheep industry. It argues that the disconnect between the success of WDMC policy and the reality at the grassroots was further exacerbated by State driven changes to the ways in which the concerns of farm families over WDMC were represented and could be heard.

The Commonwealth Structure

The administrative structure of WDMC during this time clearly reflected the Federalist model of government in Australia. The overarching body responsible for formulating coordinated national policy on vertebrate pests was the Coalition of Australian Governments (COAG). Beneath this Commonwealth organisation were the respective Federal Ministers for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the Minister for
Environment, Heritage and the Arts. This Department underwent several name changes during this time.

The Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council (NRMMC) and the Natural Resource Management Standing Committee (NRMSC) advised the respective Ministers within the jurisdictions of their portfolios. Additionally, the national Vertebrate Pests Committee (VPC), the Primary Industries Ministerial Council (PIMC) and the Primary Industries Standing Committee (PISC) were advisory bodies reporting directly to the Commonwealth Minister. In 2011, the NRMMC and PIMC had their remits withdrawn when the Standing Council on Primary Industries (SCOPI) was established. SCOPI was appointed as the peak forum:

to pursue and monitor priority issues of national significance affecting Australia’s primary production sectors which require a sustained and collaborative effort across jurisdictions; and address key areas of shared Commonwealth, state and territory responsibility and funding for Australia’s primary production sectors (Council of Australian Governments' Standing Council on Primary Industries 2012: np)

The National Feral Animal Control Programme (NFACP) was later replaced by the Australian Pest Animal Strategy (APAS) (Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council 2007). The Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) – which was later abolished - divided Australia into 56 regions and worked closely to implement natural resource management initiatives through DAFF, the DAFF Standing Committee on Pest Animals and the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA). This Department was subsequently renamed the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Populations and Communities (SEWPC).

In 2008, the ‘Caring for Country’ strategy, later rebadged, ‘Caring For our Country,’ was implemented. This strategy was reported as: ‘Australian Government’s flagship natural resource management initiative to help Australians sustainably manage the environment and productive lands’ (Caring For Our Country Review Team 2012: 3).

Under this strategy, substantial funding was directed particularly to the IACRC to conduct research under the rubric of ‘wild dog’ research (Invasive Animals Cooperative
The NSW State administrative structure of wild dog management and control

In NSW, during this time, NSW DPI, NSW Agriculture and State Forests – which was later renamed Forests NSW and then subsumed within NSW DPI - reported directly to the Minister for Primary Industries.

NSW DPI was a division within NSW Trade and Investment. Within this Department there were seven divisions: Agriculture NSW, Fisheries NSW, NSW Food Authority, Biosecurity NSW, NSW Office of Water, Catchment & Lands, and Business Services. NSW DPI was a core partner with the IACRC.

Advisory members of Biosecurity NSW were the IACRC, MLA, AWI, and the NSW Wild Dog Advisory Group (NWDAG).

In 1995, the goal of the NSW Pest Animal Council (NSW PAC) was described as:

The use of environmentally, economically and socially acceptable pest control through the adoption of well coordinated best practice programs. Inherent in this goal is that wherever possible, the animals causing the problem will be eradicated. Where eradication is not possible, control will be implemented to ensure that the pest animal causes minimal economic/ecological damage (Korn 1995: np).

The NSW PAC was chaired by NSW Agriculture. Its membership included: NSW DPI, the Environmental Protection Office (EPA), the only remaining Wild Dog Destruction Board located in the Western Division of NSW, the LHPA, the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) NSW NPWS, NSWFA, RSPCA NSW, NSW Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia, Nature Conservation Council, RLPBs, the Commonwealth Scientific Industry and Research Organisation (CSIRO), Department of Land, Water and Conservation (LWC) and Game Council NSW. However, this organisation met irregularly.

Within WDMC, there is a clear separation of powers. The Commonwealth undertakes research and the State is responsible for the implementation of WDMC. However, the Commonwealth has the power to intervene if matters intersect with the provisions of the EPBC Act 1995. The Act was invoked typically over issues arising from various
methods of WDMC; such as the ‘bait rate.’ The consistent argument of the States is that they lack sufficient funds to carry out the control required on public lands.

The State Council of the NSW Rural Lands Protection Board

The State Council of the NSW Rural Lands Protection Board was a statutory authority comprising of 47 autonomous boards throughout NSW which were legislatively charged with formulating WDMC plans. Its predecessor, the Pastures Protection Board, was created in 1903. These Boards were located across NSW in rural communities and were subsequently replaced by the RLPB system.

In 2009, the RLPB system was replaced by the LHPA system. The State Council of the LHPA is a Statutory Authority which reports to the Minister of Primary Industries. In 2012, the Minister for Primary Industries announced the abolition of the LHPA system. This will take effect in January 2014. The new ‘Local Land Services’ (LLS) will amalgamate the functions of the LHPA system, CMAs, certain functions of NSW DPI and possibly Game Council NSW under the one umbrella.

As explained in Chapter Two, public land managers of Schedule 2 land are deemed to have fulfilled their general destruction obligation if they have entered into a WDMC plan with the local board and, crucially, the content has been agreed. This obligation and the implementation of the management plan were devolved in the Act from the State Council of the RLPB through the instrument of a Guideline to the local boards of the RLPB and its successor, the LHPA.

Under the RLPB Act, there is no legal requirement on individual farmers or farm families to participate in a WDMC plan. The legal remedy to any WDMC plan resides not in the plan but in any contracts for work that may result as a consequence of WDMC activities. However, individual farmers may be prosecuted if they are found to have known of the existence of declared pests on their property and have been found negligent in eradicating them. WDAs appear not to have legal indemnity in carrying out WDMC work unless they are incorporated bodies and carry public liability insurance.

The Cooperative Wild Dog/Fox Control Plan for the Brindabella & Wee Jasper Valleys
From 1995, successive Commonwealth and NSW Governments were under intense political pressure to implement measures both to conserve the dingo and to curb escalating wild dog attacks on agricultural stock (General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 2002, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2005, Anon 2007). The policy response was twofold:

The first, involved the advocacy and development of technologies and new ‘innovations’ in WDMC principally from organisations which were ‘new players’ in WDMC; the PACCRC formed in 1996 and its successor, the AIACRC, rebadged as the IACRC, formed in 2004. The second response, in 2002, involved the public endorsement of a process of consultation initially trialled through the Cooperative Wild Dog/Fox Control Plan Brindabella and Wee Jasper Valleys – the so-called ‘Brindabella Plan.’

The Brindabella and Wee Jasper Valleys cover an area of approximately 150,000 hectares at the northern end of the Australian Alps and comprise a small area of land relative to the rest of NSW. Between 1996 and 2001, significant areas of bushland around the Brindabella and Wee Jasper Valleys were gazetted as National Park or Nature Reserve and were now managed by NSW NPWS (Cooperative Wild Dog/Fox Control Plan Brindabella and Wee Jasper Valleys 2002: 4).

The Brindabella Plan was then widely promulgated across NSW as the model of ‘best practice’ in WDMC by all Commonwealth and State Departments and Agencies charged with WDMC or with functions that overlapped it. The express intention of farm families in trialling this model was to halt spiralling wild dog predation on agricultural stock in the Brindabella and Wee Jasper Valleys. The cumulative ‘articulation’ of ‘nil tenure’ [see below] enunciated in the Brindabella Plan; the advocacy of the so-called, ‘strategic approach’ promoted by NSW DPI; the ‘good neighbour policy’ as outlined in the 2005 NSW NPWS, ‘Neighbour Relations Policy;’ and the ‘Wild Dog Policy’ enunciated by DECC NSW in 2005 all contribute to the reification of this approach. Together, these policies map out through language a careful process of consultation with farm families that is then implemented at public WDMC meetings.
The central features of the Brindabella Wee Jasper model are the creation of a written plan. The plan details: the recording of historical data about previous farming and wild dog activity; a commitment to a ‘nil tenure’ approach; the commitment of ‘resources necessary to effectively and equitably implement the plan;’ the adoption of the ‘strategic approach;’ descriptions of all methods of control; an outline and timeframe of all activities to be achieved and by whom; intense scientific monitoring and evaluation of native fauna and wild dogs; and, the incorporation of this data within the plan (Cooperative Wild Dog/Fox Control Plan Brindabella and Wee Jasper Valleys 2002).

The OEH later claimed probably accurately that ‘Under the initial plan (2002-05) attacks on stock decreased by an average of 75 per cent per year’(Office of Environment & Heritage 2012). However, this storyline misses the point. Most lands in the area had already been destocked and this meant there were fewer stock subject to predation. As well, relative to its size, this area received resources above that devoted to most other areas during this time.

Unequivocally, the adoption of ‘nil tenure’ and the commitment of ‘resources necessary to effectively and equitably implement the plan’ have proved problematic across other planning areas of NSW.

‘Nil tenure’

The ‘nil tenure’ approach first arose out of the ‘independent of tenures’ model first suggested by a local farmer, Noeline Franklin (Franklin nd). This was further refined to ‘the tenure blind’ approach and then finally to what is now known as the ‘nil tenure’ approach. This approach is the benchmark of all management plans. The concept of ‘nil tenure’ relies on the understanding that wild dogs travel across different land tenures which has the effect of dissolving issues of dog ownership thus making the dog ‘independent’ of categorisation; the wild dog is no longer the farmer’s dog; NSW NPWS’s dog or Forests NSW’s dog. This change was to enable the tracking and trapping of wild dogs across all landholdings as a coordinated response irrespective of who owns or controls the land. It was claimed that:

The nil tenure approach allows local communities, in collaboration with government land managers, to cooperatively address wild dog/fox issues across
all land tenures by collectively identifying the scope of the issue, the management technique required and the level of resources required (Hunt 2005: 1).

‘Resources necessary to effectively and equitably implement the plan’

Discounting the original amount of $345,000 given to NSW NPWS by the NSW Labor Government in 2001-2002 to develop WDMC plans across NSW, the amount allocated to the Brindabella Plan from 2001 until 2010 amounted to $814,563. The breakdown of this amount is as follows:

Table 7.1 2002- 2010 Expenditures on Wild Dog Management and Control in the Brindabella & Wee Jasper Valleys *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establishment Costs</td>
<td>$17,847</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>$13,760</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yass Board</td>
<td>$28,896</td>
<td>$75,972</td>
<td>$126,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Forests</td>
<td>$16,512</td>
<td>$89,550</td>
<td>$126,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW NPWS</td>
<td>$37,152</td>
<td>$102,798</td>
<td>$178,594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td><strong>114,167</strong></td>
<td><strong>268,320</strong></td>
<td><strong>$432,076</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This total of $814,563 did not include an amount of $55,512.01 given to the Yass Board over the years 2004-2008 by NSW DPI. This figure also does not include any additional funding provided by the IACRC or the Commonwealth over this period. During this period, it appears from this analysis that per hectare few WDMC planning areas in NSW have received this level of funding. Yet, often the numbers of wild dog attacks and stock losses in other areas were significantly higher. In this regard, the Brindabella Plan as the example of ‘best practice’ and ‘the jewel in the crown’ of the NSW Labor Government WDMC policy appears to have benefitted continuously over and above that of other areas [See Chapter Two and Three].
Moreover, farm families have progressively voiced their concerns at public WDMC meetings over the so-called success of the Brindabella Plan [1B01; 2B03; 01EK01; 01NB01; 01001]. They argued that the first years of the Plan had been a successful in reducing wild dog attacks. This had resulted in the support of local farming communities. However, more recently, farmers claimed that the Plan was dominated by an Executive Committee comprising mostly public land managers; that public WDMC meetings were only held annually; and, that they were directed to ‘put all submissions to the Executive Committee on paper’ [2B03; 1AW02]. The general feeling was that the Brindabella Plan ‘may look good on paper’ but that in WDMC meetings ‘we’re told ‘bloody nothing’ [01UA01].

Across NSW, criticisms of the model were widespread among other farm families. These criticisms centre on the disparities in the amount of assured funding that it receives, that geographically the two valleys constitute only a small area relative to the rest of NSW; that the voices of local farm families have become progressively disenfranchised over the passage of time; and, importantly, that they were not consulted about the appropriateness of the planning process for their local area. The oft-repeated claim was: ‘it was just dumped on us’ [1A03; 1IG03; 01T03; 01003; 01HG01; 01ET03; 01ML02].

The Sites of Contestation

To convey the flavour of WDMC meetings this next section is written in a more stylistic way:

The sites of public consultation in WDMC occurs in meeting halls, Returned Servicemen’s League Clubs (RSL), Board rooms of RLPBs, Country Women’s Association (CWA) buildings, School of Arts buildings, Ex-Servicemen’s clubs, Town Halls and community halls spread across NSW. However, more often than not, in rural and remote locations of NSW, public WDMC meetings occur in CWA buildings, School of Arts, Town Halls and community halls. Often in autumn and winter these halls are cold, if not icy. Someone usually arrives early to pick up the key to the building in order to put the chairs out and to start either the large gas heater(s) or the wood fire in an attempt to take the chill out of the building.
Often these meeting places have a framed photo on the wall of a youthful Queen of England wearing an evening gown, a tiara and a necklace with a dazzling blue diamond in the middle. Rolls of Honour from the First and Second World War inscribe in gold lettering on wooden plaques the names of the ‘Fallen.’ Often there are photos of community leaders alongside the latest crayon art work or painting of young children. Very occasionally, another group will meet at the same time in the side wings of the building.

Sometimes, the memorabilia on the walls reflects farming history: photos of prize winning merinos with ribbons draped over their backs positioned next to their smiling proud owners; bullock teams pulling enormous wagons loaded up to a dizzy height with bales of wool or timber logs along dusty tracks with young boys and men in the lead and working dogs hard at work; and, men and women in full Victorian dress; the women sheathed up to the neck in black taffeta with grim looks sweltering in the middle of an Australian summer. The names of these ‘locals’ and the years are etched beneath in the frame. The hard wooden floors of the hall appear to mirror this hard early life. Flyers advertising local community events are displayed on the walls as well. These buildings ooze a rich culture.

Meetings usually start at around 9.30am for a 10am start. Slowly, the ‘utes’ line up outside the hall and are parked on the grassy verges. Working dogs are chained on the back or wait patiently in cages. Their owners check all is well ‘on the back’ before leaving their prized working dogs. Groups assemble slowly, quiet conversations start outside invariably in the Australia way, about the weather, the drought; the saleyards, and, in summer, the direction of the wind and the latest fire. The trappers or PACs arrive and at that point the conversations turn to the ‘dog job.’ Farm families greet these men for a first hand report. Slowly the PACs and trappers talk among themselves. Rangers from respective RLPB’s usually arrive with the office manager and a Board member or two in tow.

Progressively the representatives of NSW NPWS, Forests NSW or occasionally NSW DPI arrive and almost palpably the mood changes. Their ‘utes’ are often near new and the uniforms of their respective departments or agency separate them from the ‘rest.’ Green for NSW NPWS and Forests NSW/DPI staff; and, blue for the Rangers of the respective RLPBs. Slowly people move inside the hall and careful ‘hellos’ are offered
to the respective public land managers; sometimes not. NSW NPWS Rangers sit together. Rangers of the RLPBs move between the groups.

At these meetings, local CWA and Red Cross members invariably provide the morning tea, the cups of steaming hot black tea, milk and sugar. Some farmers arrive late, some straight from the paddock, and go into the halls to consume tea and cakes with gusto. At lunch depending on the season, soup and sandwiches are served and very occasionally sausages are grilled on a makeshift barbeque outside. The CWA and Red Cross members are thanked. The meeting ends. Afternoon tea with leftover cakes and slices from lunch will be offered before people depart for what is often a long drive home; sometimes up to four hours. Over the next days, farmers get on the ‘bush’ telegraph and dissect the meeting and work out their next move.

This is the site of the service delivery of WDMC public policy in NSW at the grassroots. This site invokes the ‘performance’ of WDMC as well as the rituals of WDMC public meetings which are observed at most meetings. To do otherwise is to court trouble; a lack of hospitality reinforces storylines of ignorance. However, WDMC meetings for all this apparent civility are anything but social occasions.

**Public Wild Dog Management and Control Meetings**

Public WDMC meetings are mandated under the RLPB Act 1998 as Amended. They are held ostensibly to create and review a WDMC plan in the public arena. They are frequently the site of significant and, on occasion, fiery contestation. They are also the site of meaning-making. It is the place where storylines are reproduced and reaffirmed at the grassroots and where WDMC policy and practice is played out.

Throwing dead mauled sheep at the four-wheel drive cars of NSW NPWS officers, dumping dead sheep at the doorway of the local RLPB or the offices of NSW NPWS (Bell 2012 8 May) or exasperated and desperate calls to ‘settle things outside’ a meeting shed or community hall does not appear to be a common practice of the farm families present [01CW02]. Yet, they are evident as social practices in WDMC and convey specific meanings.
At one meeting, one farmer tried to describe the social impacts of wild dog predation. A public land manager in a throw-away line which it appears he mistakenly thought was not heard, said: ‘Yeah, yeah; we’ve heard it all before; we’re over that now’ [02B03]. The meeting hall erupted in arguments. One farmer called out: ‘We’re told to keep the emotions out of it, you can’t.’ [02B03].

Often in these WDMC meetings, farmers recall their horror at finding dead and mauled animals and then having to either shoot them or cut their throats. This was a visceral experience for many. One hardened farmer quietly remarked; ‘this was the hardest job of all’ [1DE01]. Added to this experience, Russell (2006) in a small phenomenological study reported one pastoralist family as saying: ...Really the dogs are no problem in comparison to the rubbish that you have to put up with in trying to find solutions to these problems’ (Russell 2006 26-27 July: 41).

Meetings were often ‘bloody.’ They have a history. Many farm families recall particular public WDMC meetings. One WDMC meeting is still recalled among local farm families [0EB02]. The storyline of this meeting was that the ‘violence’ reflected the degree of intransigence by NSW NPWS in refusing to acknowledge and respond to wild dog predation on agricultural stock and the effects this was having on farm families. This storyline of ‘bloody’ meetings appears a reflection on the passion and often poorly facilitated raw emotion at WDMC meetings that the material reality of wild dog predation on agricultural stock evokes in farm families. As one farmer recalled, ‘It was amazing someone wasn’t killed’ [1UN08; 01CW08]. To many farm families, ‘bloody’ meetings as a storyline reiterate publicly their losses and hardships and their distrust and, on occasion, even hatred of public land managers.

At one meeting large tables were prearranged in a circle. The meeting room was packed with at least sixty people in attendance; extra chairs were needed. Within a few minutes of the meeting starting, a farmer recounted a recent experience of reporting wild dog attacks to a public land manager. The public land manager had reportedly called the farmer’s ‘story’ a lie. At that point in the meeting, some enraged farmers stood up and their anger and hatred of NSW NPWS officers was visible. The public land manager denied calling the farmer a liar claiming the farmer had misrepresented the story. The enmity between the groups was almost palpable. At lunch time, those present went to lunch in separate groups; some were visibly affected, white or red faced with rage and
shaken. After lunch, the meeting was emotionally charged with distrust and barely concealed anger. Public land managers and farm families determinedly and vocally disagreed over every agenda item. The atmosphere was vitriolic and the emotional toll on all was obvious [01GE01].

However, this storyline of ‘bloody’ meetings is also subverted within an administrative rationalist discourse. The subverted storyline focuses instead on the ‘violence’ expressed rather than on an analysis of the underlying systemic causes of the discontent. At the same time, institutional responses at public WDMC meetings often appear impervious to the material reality of the lives of farm families who are affected by wild dog predation on agricultural stock. At times, public lands staff appear to have been ‘marshalled’ to remain wooden [02GE01; 01ES03].

While a history of WDMC is recorded in some plans this does not do justice to the emotional response to wild dogs. It misses the effect of WDMC; the more common, possibly, traditionally conservative, social and cultural responses of farmers at WDMC meetings, sitting with arms crossed and silent; occasionally with fists clenched under the table; farmers leaving to go outside and choosing not to participate or comment rather than ‘explode’ with frustration inside the meeting hall; farming families who attend only in the hope of achieving relief from wild dog predation on agricultural stock; on occasion, farmers breaking down emotionally which results in a shared ‘silence of meaning’ among most farm families present; and, farmers leaving.

This storyline instead views the ‘violence’ as a defining characteristic of the farm families present rather than the desperation farm families feel when faced with unrelenting wild dog predation on agricultural stock (Jones 2002 31 October, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2005, Russell 2006 26-27 July, Kenny 2008). It is all too familiar to farm families as part of a wider storyline of ‘blame:’ farmers are simply ‘red necks,’ self-serving, profit maximisers and unconcerned with environmental issues (Brett 2011). Nevertheless, this positioning of farmers does not preclude their presence in Annual Reports being reported as a ‘proof’ of community ‘consultation’ and, incorrectly, as validation of the WDMC planning process.
This fraught relationship between NSW NPWS, State Forests and farming families in South East Australia has a history stretching back for at least fifty years, sometimes longer. Very often, the same public land managers have remained in the job over considerable periods of time in the same regions. Almost all public land managers and officers are known personally to farming families; they have a history of personal interactions over WDMC over time. At a WDMC meeting a highly respected farmer in the community, publicly rebuked a public land manager over a report of the numbers of wild dog attacks in the local area ‘You know’ the farmer said, ‘we’re not making them up’ At this point another farmer called out bitterly: ‘the tale is hanging from the tree’ [02CSB08].

Wild dog predation on agricultural stock is strongly perceived by farming families as a consequence of the lack of ‘appropriate’ intervention by government, ineffective and poorly resourced WDMC programs, a rigid adherence to disputed and/or flawed ecological science, and a poorly conceived and funded natural resource management policy. As one farmer quipped, ‘If they’ve made a decision to keep the dogs; then they have to control them’ [01FS03].

These views are echoed by the NSWFA (NSW Farmers Association 2010 25 January) whose representatives are periodically called on to intervene with public land managers, and if not possible, to take the issue to the Minister and/or to call extraordinary WDMC meetings. These meetings may be ‘open’ or ‘closed’ wherein only members of NSWFA and invited guests may attend.

This ‘performance’ of farm families – ‘all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants’ (Goffman 1959: 15) – and their ‘mere’ physical presence at WDMC meetings does not signify consent or agreement with current WDMC policy and practice; it often signifies the opposite. As one farmer dryly remarked looking at the number of farm ‘utes’ parked outside a community hall ‘…it’ll be on today’ [01CS09].

It is salutary that some public WDMC meetings are only held once a year and not all farm families attend. Farmers assemble only once to receive updates on wild dog activity; changes in legislative requirements; and, information about proposed aerial baiting routes [01WCT03]. At one public WDMC meeting, a Ranger held up a Plan and
announced: ‘This is your Plan.’ One farmer replied: ‘What’s in it?’ The seven assembled farmers looked unimpressed; one clenched his fists under the table and refused to pass on a pamphlet that a NSW NPWS Ranger was distributing. The meeting ended after less than forty minutes [01BEW01].

Sometimes a plan is completely prepared by RLPB Rangers. The Plan is a ‘rubber stamp’ affair that simply fulfils a legislative requirement. A WDMC meeting is called to ratify it and then it is simply ‘filed.’ In these cases, contracts for work are arranged by the Board, the Ranger and the relevant public land managers. Sometimes all necessary administrative work and operational work for aerial bait drops is completed by the one RLPB Ranger in advance of these meeting; this is a heavy load. However, it appears that the lack of commitment to the planning process is not apathy; it reflects a deep cynicism over the planning process; farmers often angrily state: ‘the planning process is a joke’ [01LEN02].

Conflicts over other ways of knowing and understanding WDMC are fiercely contested and in this sense are, to a large degree, predictable. ‘Consultation’ in WDMC is a misnomer. It represents a powerful ‘non sequitur’ within the internal logic of ‘cooperation’ as it is enunciated in the Brindabella Plan. Public WDMC meetings were never intended to become sites of ‘empowerment’ as envisaged in one of the recommendations of the 2005 Taking Control Report. Rather, these sites represent spaces for the public performance and promulgation of the State’s interests in order to achieve its objectives and achieving the cooperation of farm families. Herein lays the irony.

The success of the administrative rationalist discourse is dependent on the continued cooperation of farm families in a public planning process which pivots on their acquiescence to a discourse that subordinates their concerns and at the same time privileges this model as ‘best practice.’ This is accompanied by the implicit suggestion in the policy literature that there was widespread adoption of this model by farm families across NSW. This is deeply problematic.

Overwhelmingly, at public WDMC meetings farm families reject the State’s reliance on administrative rationalism and a chorus of voices reflects the significant gap that exists between the political and policy rhetoric of WDMC and the lived reality. Ultimately, the
extent to which the voices of farm families were ‘heard’ – or not – depends on the extent to which farm families engage with and ‘embraced’ the precepts and the primacy of scientific rationalism which renders their collective and individual experiences and knowledges as ‘anecdote’ and as lacking in both ‘rigor’ and ‘validity.’ On consistent occasions over a number of meetings farming families revealed areas known as wild dog habitats. Only when this was validated by ecological studies was this information accepted as ‘fact.’ Farmers also appear on occasion to be reluctant to reveal details of the native fauna and flora in their area because of what appears to be an uncertainty surrounding the consequences of any revelation.

In all, sixty three public WDMC meetings were attended from 2007 until late 2009. Public meetings were coded. Observations were then grouped under four main headings. These headings were derived directly from the data. These were: contending discourses; funding; perceptions of the consultation process; and, social impacts. As outlined previously the contending discourses of agrarianism; science and technology; animal welfare and biosecurity are central to understanding WDMC during this time. These were reproduced in storylines across all public WDMC meetings. Farm families consistently challenged the dominant discourse of administrative rationalism. However, ultimately these storylines in turn reflected the cumulative inability of farm families to materially alter the dominant discourse of WDMC. This in turn reflects on the fragility as well as the lack of legitimacy given to the planning process.

Contending discourses

The presence of contending discourses was played out in WDMC through the use of storylines. The following storylines of farm families were consistently reported across most WDMC meetings:

The storylines of agrarianism

The storylines of agrarianism included: the ‘destocking’ of land as a consequence of poor management of WDMC and the National Estate by public land managers; that ‘farmers were defending lands all of the time’[01P103]; that subdivision of farming land and changes in land use resulted in a changed land ‘ethic’ which has severe impacts on effective WDMC; the ‘right’ of farmers to farm on private lands unhindered
by wild dogs; concerns that farmers were always typecast as the 'villain' in any
discussion about the environment; that public land managers were making decisions that
materially impacted on the productivity of farms and on the wellbeing of farm families;
real concerns over the rise in power of Game Council NSW and the IACRC; that
WDMC was being promoted as a 'growth industry'; that re-stocking land was the only
ture barometer of effective WDMC policy and this had not happened; that the numbers
of wild dogs were increasing; real concerns about the sheep industry’s decline across
Australia, that it was ‘gone;’ and, that crucially that ‘the increase in wild dogs precludes
effective participation or return to the industry by producers.’

The storylines of animal welfare

The storylines of animal welfare drew strongly on notions of stewardship of animals.
The storylines of animal welfare included: farmers’ concern for the health and welfare
of their stock; concerns over the rise of Game Council NSW and its impact on the
scheduled work programs of dog trappers and PACs; the failure of Government
Departments to acknowledge that farmers have a deep compassion for their stock; that
RLPB Rangers, PACs and trappers have to ‘clean up the mess’ caused by irresponsible
hunters and yet often they carried the blame for the behaviour of others; that the
integrity of WDMC rests with the trapper and that this is consistently ‘white-anted;’ that
‘it is getting harder and harder to kill a dog’ [01WEM03]; the ‘arrogance and absurdity’
of NSW DPI in not factoring the impacts of wild dogs on agricultural stock into its
humaneness model;

In contrast, the storylines of animal ‘rights’ were perceived as ill-informed and the
cause of material harm to the lives of farming families through the depiction of farming
families as uncaring; if not, cruel. These storylines included: the pervasive impact of
‘faceless’ animal rights activists who never attended public WDMC meetings; the
perceived close relationship between the RSPCA and Animals Australia; and the narrow
and unrealistic position of animal rights groups such as Animals Australia.

The storylines of science and technology

In contrast to storylines of ‘experiments’ and ‘success’ that often emanate from
particularly NSW DPI, NSW NPWS and the IACRC, the subverted storylines of farm
families reveal that they are often highly critical of the efficacy and cost effectiveness of the tools that are promoted by Departments and Agencies. Moreover, there appeared to be a distrust of science.

The storyline of ‘tools,’ pivots around effectiveness and, specifically, the retention of 1080, trapping and aerial baiting. This storyline across all WDMC meetings reveals overwhelmingly that these three methods are preferred and ‘must be protected.’ The oft-repeated question of all tools is: ‘Does it kill a dog?’

The storylines of farming families of science and technology pivoted around criticisms of the application of questionable ecological science and the reliance on science and technology as the ‘solution’ to WDMC. These storylines included: the threat to the continued use of 1080; ‘a fundamental problem with overzealous scientists’; flawed ecological research that directs public policy; the lack of information from public land managers as to the location of ‘experiments’ on public lands; the release of ‘pure’ dingos in to some parts of NSW and the repatriation of captured ‘dingoes’ to licensed dingo breeders; the selective release, if at all, of information from the NSW NPWS ‘Feralbase’ monitoring system; accusations of an apparent conflict of interest in the relationship between the IACRC and NSW DPI staff; the ‘waste of money’ directed to the development of PAPP; the loss of aerial baiting and concerns over the diminution in the bait rate; that new technologies did not work; that ecological science ‘never killed a dog’; and, that ‘research can wait until we get the dogs out of our paddocks.’ At one public WDMC meeting, a farmer drily remarked that ‘the dogs were walking over bait stations to get to sheep’ [02WME03].

Overall, farm families’ interest in ‘new’ technologies was marginal. They argued: ‘we know what works.' Nonetheless, farm families asked where ‘new’ tools were being trialled, how much they cost, and often sought guarantees that the resources allocated to the trialling of ‘new’ technologies does not impact on agreed WDMC programs and/or budgets or result in a diminution in use and availability of 1080, trapping and aerial baiting. The answers to these questions were unclear.

There is consistent and widespread criticism of what are perceived to be the ‘toys’ of Agencies and Departments and ecological science: ‘sand plot monitoring’ ‘mound baiting;’ the changed ‘bait rate’ research; the capture, collaring and release of wild dogs;
the genetic testing of captured ‘wild dogs;’ the exorbitant cost of infra-red cameras; the inconsistent and divisive allocation of electric fencing; and; the trialling of M44’s. Moreover, these tools are perceived as the tangible evidence of the power of administrative rationalism which they reject.

The storyline of mapping in WDMC is extremely controversial and remains a source of real angst among farm families. In 2007, at a WDMC meeting an elderly and highly respected farmer in the community, publicly rebuked a public land manager over recorded but disputed numbers of wild dog attacks in the local area ‘You know’ she said, ‘we’re not making them up.’ At this point another farmer called out bitterly: ‘the tale is hanging from the tree’ [01TW03].

Often maps that accompanied plans were out-of-date; the proffered statistics were contested; only reflected wild dog attacks or stock losses as recorded by one Agency or Department; and, yet were held to be indicative of losses in a particular area. The validity afforded to these figures by farm families is marginal yet farm families were also very aware that these maps and figures were then used as: ‘a stick to beat us with’ [01FS03].

Crucially, many maps do not reflect ‘destocked’ lands. The failure to map ‘destocked’ land is a recurrent and highly emotive storyline across all WDMC meetings. It is a major source of contention. Maps are powerful, emotional and visual reminders to farm families of the losses they have incurred, the loss of productive lands and visible ‘proof’ of the continuing social impacts of wild dogs. They are not viewed as benign [See Table 7.3].

There are pervasive storylines across WDMC meetings that suggest that there is a lack of consultation over the allocation of doggers, a restriction on the numbers of dogs they are ‘allowed’ to catch and of the ‘retribution and white anting’ meted out to trappers by public lands staff. Trappers, PACs, doggers are highly prized by most farm families. The storylines that emerge suggests that there is little to no recognition of their skills, knowledges and experiences in ecological journals.

Moreover, farm families argue that these men were not labourers but highly skilled tradesmen. Farm families argue that PACs and trappers are rarely consulted. Across
many WDMC meetings there was widespread criticism of the NSW DPI so-called 'humaneness model' (Sharp and Saunders 2008). This appears to have arisen for three reasons: umbrage over the implicit suggestion that farmers were cruel; that trappers and PACs were not consulted in the development of this model, and, that the model does not take into account the effects of wild dog predation on agricultural stock.

**The storylines of biodiversity**

The storylines of biodiversity pivoted around; farmer’s love of wildlife and of their environment; their extensive involvement in other environmental programs such as Landcare; their concerns over the impact of wild dogs on native flora and fauna; biosecurity concerns over the health and wellbeing of their animals; particularly through the threats of neospora and hydatids; the lack of respect given by public land managers to the experience and generational knowledges of farm families of the environment accrued over a life time and in some cases, generations of farming families.

**The storylines of funding**

In all but two public WDMC meetings attended there were concerns raised over the continuity of funding of WDMC programs beyond the financial year and/or the period of the contract for work as well as the provision of funding for reactive work. At two public meetings, public land managers repeated the claims of the NSW Labor Government’s largesse of $18 million and an additional amount of $6.7 million allocated to WDMC in NSW and the South East of NSW respectively. This claim was received with widespread disbelief and cynicism.

In one meeting, in a packed meeting hall, one farmer stood angrily and demanded of the seated public land manager: ‘What is it about our personalities that you have a problem with? What’s the issue you have with us?’ The dispute centred on the continued refusal by a public land manager to release funds for a dog trapper until the next financial year – two months away. The Chair, another public land manager, tried to defuse the escalating situation and asked those present: ‘let’s not get personal.’ At this point another farmer stood up and angrily called out: ‘Sheep in our paddock – it is very, very personal’ [03WCSB03].
It was evident that in public WDMC meetings there was a lack of public accountability and transparency across all Agencies and Departments in the public reporting of the funding of WDMC programs at the grassroots. Moreover, decisions regarding additional funding appeared to often reside with NSW NPWS. At two meetings those present were informed that funding sources had ‘dried up’ and that they would ‘need to think outside the box’ or ‘source money through the Caring For our Country strategy.’ At one joint meeting, a Ranger from the ACT Parks Service advocated instead a ‘user pays’ system. At another, motions for the writing of ‘ministerials’ subsequent to the decisions of local or area public land managers were drafted and passed unanimously [01T03].

There was considerable dissatisfaction with what was perceived to be the attitude of the IACRC towards the allocation of the cumulative financial resources of farm organisations; that farm families’ mandatory levies had become the ‘cash cow’ for scientific research. At no public WDMC meeting was the National Wild Dog Facilitator present. At one meeting, a public land manager told those present: ‘To get off your arses and do something for yourselves’ [01BEW01] At this point a shouting match ensued and a number of farmers left the meeting.

However, it is apparent that farm families contribute to WDMC through mandatory levies and rates collected through the then respective RLPB system and through the imposition of mandatory levies raised by industry on the sale of stock. Additionally, it is apparent that farm families often act in voluntary capacities, that their commitment to WDMC are substantial within their own resources and that much WDMC relies on their good will and ‘in kind’ support. Across some WDMC meetings concerns were raised about the role of Game Council NSW and that it ‘should not have a voice in our plan’ [02WEM08].

**Perceptions of the consultation process**

There is widespread perception by farm families that they play a subordinate role in the WDMC planning process. This is the source of considerable resentment. Farm families consistently argue that there is a fundamental disagreement over the scope of the issue and that ultimate power rests with public land managers and, in turn, the Minister of the day. Farmers consistently argue that: ‘we are disempowered at every step’ [01AFT03].
Perceptions of the consultation process revolve around the degree to which their concerns are heard. There is a real sense of decisions being made without consultation and that their voices are not heard, are misrepresented or are dismissed. Farm families understand the process of consultation as the ‘regulation of the conflict’ that is presented in only: ‘the idiom of one of the parties.’ One farmer remarked at a public WDMC meeting: ‘what I resent most is science’s rejection of generational knowledge and all the bureaucratic bullshit’. Another stated that meetings were just: ‘bureaucratic claptrap’ [01JW09].

Public WDMC meetings are the sites where farm families try to redress this imbalance. They argue strongly that current WDMC policy reflects a highly political agenda which has devastating impacts on farm families. There is a strong perception that: ‘each year we are further disenfranchised’ and that ‘we fight the same battles every year with fewer resources’ [01IW03]. In contrast, public land managers argue that the costs of WDMC each year have risen and that any reallocation of monies must be cost effective, directed to areas where the greatest benefit can occur and must marry with the objectives of the Department(s).

Over a period of three WDMC meetings of the one wild dog working group, continued reasons were given by a public land manager for the delay in the approval for an application for aerial baiting. Angered by the continual obfuscation, those farm families present argued: ‘that it was part of the WDMC plan and that the credibility of the plan was at stake’ [01ML03]. After continual goading by farm families, a public land manager retorted: ‘It’s not going to happen and it never was going to happen’ [01ML03]. NSWFA was contacted and intervened. This is not unusual.

Farm families often work outside of the WDMC planning process, returning when there is a ‘done deal’ negotiated often between the Directors of the relevant Board and/or NSWFA. These meetings are often held in private with public land managers. ‘Threats’ of holding government agents to account by going to the local Member of Parliament and/or the media, and/or of written ‘ministerials’ and/or or the intervention of NSWFA are common when an impasse is consistently reached.

Often, farm families argue that harmonisation between State boundaries is lacking, that significant cross-jurisdictional issues arise over the implementation of WDMC and
there is an increasing dissatisfaction with the local LHPA and/or previously, with the State Council of the RLPB. This appears to undermine the ‘nil tenure’ approach advocated in the Brindabella Plan.

Moreover, this storyline reflects deep dissatisfaction with the ‘lack of dialogue’ with the State Council of the RLPB as well as Departments and Agencies. Farm families argue that over the years of WDMC in NSW that there has been a steady centralisation of power and that as a consequence Agencies and Departments and the State Council are: ‘not answerable to anyone’ over the lack of implementation of WDMC.

At one meeting, a relief public lands manager who had been ‘two days in the job,’ gave an ill-informed presentation to a large and at times ‘fiery’ meeting to explain why the agency would not intervene to release additional funding to stop wild dog predation on sheep occurring around a State border. The audience was informed that officers were on annual leave. An officer from another public lands Department admitted to being ‘brand new in the job’ and having: ‘little to no knowledge of wild dogs.’ He suggested to the audience that: ‘you should all calm down and read Laurie Corbett’s book ‘The Dingo in Australia and Asia’ and held a copy in the air (Corbett 2001). He went on to say: ‘...look, if we lit up the barbeque the men here today could probably sort this out overnight’ [01WFA03].

This lack of knowledge of the ‘historically specific systems of meaning that form the identities of subjects and objects’ (Howarth 2000: 9 citing Foucault 1972: 49) in WDMC together with the gendered reality of Australian farming and the contribution that women such as those present in the room that day make to it in turn reaffirmed to those farmers present the storyline of the contempt ‘bureaucrats,’ particularly public land managers from NSW NPWS, held for farmers. One farmer commented at the meeting that he found both presentations ‘deeply offensive’ and ‘a waste of his time’ [01WFA03].

On only one occasion, at a public WDMC meeting did farm families reflect positively on the planning process. Recalling previous WDMC meetings one farmer guardedly stated: ‘whoever would have thought we could have got to this point?’ The public land manager replied: ‘it’s interesting that science has caught up with the farmer’ [05CSB02]. It is salutary, that at this time, a local WDMC plan was not ‘signed off’ and only a contract for work existed. However, there was a strong sense engendered at the
meeting that progress had occurred. Yet, at the same time, all parties to the plan recognised the fragility of the ‘plan.’ Particular farmers acting with the full support of other local farming families appeared to be the lynch-pin to achieving continuing success. Moreover, these social actors were perceived as ‘tough.’ Farming families were extremely candid about the failings of public land managers over time. Any wild dog attack which resulted in stock losses was ‘personal.’

Over the three years of field work, these particular meetings occurred haphazardly. At the beginning there was enormous amount of anger directed at all public land managers present. In turn, public land managers often appeared intractable if not, at times, belligerent and/or arrogant. Meetings were emotionally charged as the agenda proceeded item by item. Minutes taken by and distributed by public land managers were often not reflective of important key issues, motions passed at the meetings were not recorded or often minutes were not distributed in time for the meeting. Meetings times were often rescheduled at the last minute and then adjourned. GIS mapping was largely incorrect, did not reflect destocked lands and on one occasion equipment ran out of power. During this period additional funding sources were negotiated and/or reinstated after at times intervention by farmers with NSWFA and/or direct appeals to local members and/or Ministers. All public land managers were held to account for any omission. PACs and trappers at every meeting provided detailed reports of their activities to farm families. The historical enmity between farming families and public land managers in this location was pronounced and had developed over the previous forty years. All parties were known to each other. It was evident that there was a ‘history’ and a lack of trust. Over time, farming families appeared fatigued but resolute. The emotional toll of attending WDMC meetings on all was obvious. Nevertheless, farming families continued to attend. One farmer described it as: ‘having your backs against the wall;’ attendance at WDMC meetings was the result of sustained wild dog predation and a personal determination to affect change. At the last meeting attended, the meeting progressed in a business-like fashion; it appeared that all present knew their respective roles. The consequences of any departure from what was agreed resulted in immediate calls for explanation [02CSB05]. These meetings were not ‘pleasant’ but effective. It is also completely apparent that this ‘plan’ was ultimately dependent on continued funding for the eradication of wild dogs and that none of the farming families who attended had forgotten the impacts of a lack of WDMC in their communities.
Overwhelmingly, the bitter and historical enmity that has existed between NSW NPWS, State Forests and many farm families and the role Departmental and Agency staff played is a pervasive storyline across all WDMC meetings attended. Farming families who have attended WDMC meetings have argued that from their perspective, the objective of any WDMC meeting is: ‘to get the dogs off our land;’ absolute honesty and transparency across all areas of the plan; completed localised plans; and, a working relationship of ‘sorts’ with Departmental and Agency public land managers. Moreover, they argued that: Department and Agencies ‘must be in it for the long haul’ and that this commitment can only be ‘proven’ by a minimum commitment of funding for at least five years in order to redress the issue and restore the necessary confidence to enable farming families to restock destocked lands.

Social impacts

The social impacts of wild dog predation on agricultural stock are felt keenly across NSW. As one farmer commented at an extraordinary WDMC public meeting convened with NSW NPWS public land managers: ‘It’s great if you come to meetings but it’s an insult if you’re only looking at numbers’ [01MA02].

The social impacts have been documented both in the 2002 ‘Feral Animals’ Report of the NSW Government and in the 2005 ‘Taking Control’ Report. The Report stated:

The committee notes with concern the terrible social impact that pest animals are having on rural families and communities. (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2005: 35).

The social impacts reported across WDMC meetings were broadly grouped into four categories:

Personal

These include: Stress; continual anxiety over when and where the next ‘dog attack’ will occur; frustration; anger; fatigue; increased personal debt; increase in mental health illnesses; depression; insomnia; loss of self-esteem; a sense of personal failure; loss of status; marital discord; psychological trauma; health issues; loss of time spent with the
family due to wild dog control work; loss of generational knowledge and experience; trauma associated with the discovery and killing of injured animals; loss of family pets; inability to participate in community activities due to wild dog work; increased workloads on family members; increased work hours; a loss of independence; an increased sense of personal fear; uncertainties about legal rights and remedies; intense feelings of personal isolation and separation from a wider community; hand rearing of sheep and ‘bobby calves;’ ongoing conflict between Departmental and Agency public land managers; and deep sense of resentment over a lack of understanding of the issue by others; feelings of sheer hopelessness and empathy for the injured animal in the face of what is perceived to be an uncaring wider community; and, time spent off-farm attending WDMC meetings which often reinforces the vicious cycle and further exacerbates stress.

**Environmental**

These include: Loss of amenity; loss of wildlife; concerns over physical safety; loss of sense of community; increased threat of zoonotic diseases; land returning to scrub; community discord caused by neighbours not agreeing to aerial baiting or baiting; and an overall reduction in social capital.

**Infrastructure**

These include: Loss of shearing teams; loss of farm hands due to lack of income; change-over costs from sheep to cattle; flow-on losses in community spending; loss of schools and teachers; loss of transport services; loss of jobs; loss of childcare services; falls in real estate prices; loss of local businesses; loss of community organisations; and loss of health care professionals.

**Financial**

These include: Loss of income; increased farm debt; loss of business confidence; loss of financial certainty; rejection or partial rejection of ‘lots’ at abattoirs; decreased farm production through destocked land; costs of restructuring to cattle; reductions in wool quality; loss of future earnings; lack of compensation; loss of future income derived from ‘stud’ animals; increased necessity for ‘off-farm’ income; inability to pay school
fees; costs of different fencing; mismothering of sheep; late term abortions in cattle; 'working dog' shy flocks; 'forced' sales of family farms; reduced purchasing power; loss of value in property because of 'known' wild dog problems; loss of forward planning; and, loss of certainty in the production of on-farm business plans.

There are also substantial bodies of literatures and correspondences from the 1950s held by WDAs, Dingo Destruction Boards, RLPBs and NSWFA reports that attest to the quantum and longevity of these effects on farm families. Farm families report these social impacts to varying degrees at each and every public WDMC meeting.

The real question is not: 'Do they exist?' because all parties to WDMC appear to agree publicly and finally to some degree that they do. Rather, the question has become: 'What is the State doing to ameliorate the root cause?'

This is not an easy question to answer because the answer lies in two parts: The first appears obvious: effective WDMC across all landscapes to the extent that farm families have the confidence to restock destocked lands. This is salutary as farm families consistently report the absence of political will to affect this outcome. Responsibility is held to be a State responsibility because the management of Schedule Two lands rests with the State. Farm families argue that they already contribute heavily through mandatory rates.

The second part of the answer lies in the degree to which the discursive shift in WDMC turns to reaccommodate the voices of farm families over WDMC and to give it legitimacy. At this time, both appear highly unlikely.

**The silencing of farmers' voices**

The impact of the discursive shift in WDMC has resulted in large part in the silencing of farmers 'voices' over the material consequences of wild dog predation. This was exacerbated -- if not achieved - by the State driven abolition of most WDAs, the State enforced abolition of all Dingo or Wild Dog Destruction Boards except one in the Western Division, the abolition of the PP Board system, the RLPB system, followed quickly by the forthcoming abolition of the LHPA and merger into the Local Land Services (LLS) system.
These institutions traditionally represented the voices of farm families at the grassroots on WDMC. The abolition of these organisations importantly, however, did not lessen the impact of wild dogs. It is also of note that the representatives of these Boards were publicly elected. In contrast, the National Wild Dog Advisory Group (NWDAG) was an unelected advisory group established by the IACRC, comprising until 2009 of mostly State Government representatives.

The cumulative effect of these changes further restricted the ways in which farm families’ concerns over WDMC were represented and heard. Farming organisations, particularly, NSWFA and AWI through its National Wild Dog Advisory Committee, in turn have tried to redress this imbalance.

In 2008, a NSW Wild Dog meeting was held. From this meeting, the NSW Wild Dog Steering Committee was formed. This later became the NSW Wild Dog Advisory Group. However, from the outset its powers were severely circumscribed. NSW DPI set the Terms of Reference for what was an Advisory Committee and its very existence is subject to the continuing approval of the NSW PAC. The numbers of Government officials on this Committee with ‘voting’ rights outnumber the representatives of farm families and farm organisations. Yet, farm families are those most affected by wild dog predation on agricultural stock.

Farmers report that wild dog predation on agricultural stock has a direct correlation to farming families exiting the sheep meat, wool and/or cattle industries, and, sometimes from agricultural production altogether. This is a powerful storyline across all WDMC public meetings. Wild dog predation on agricultural stock while not the only factor in the decision of farm families to exit sheep production is nevertheless considered by many to be ‘the’ factor or the ‘tipping point’ that contributes most to this decision.

At one public WDMC meeting every farmer in attendance revealed that they had either left the sheep industry completely or were in the process of changing over to cattle. All members present cited the continual predation of wild dogs on agricultural stock coupled with the intransigence and ‘bloody-mindedness’ of government agencies as the major cause of ‘destocking’ [01T03].
Moreover, there appears to be a consistent pattern of farming behaviour that eventually leads to this decision. First, farming families consciously decide to remove or 'destock' paddocks in an attempt to reduce wild dog predation. Second, farm families will bring flocks or mobs into the 'home' paddock. Third, they 'turn over' to cattle production.

To farming families who worked extremely hard to have the legitimacy of the social impacts recognised by Departments and Agencies and reflected in the public policy literature this is a bitter pill. They believed that if the social impacts were realised change would occur; 'that someone would care.' Yet, while the social impacts are publicly acknowledged, the root cause of the problem is still not adequately addressed. They are still occurring.

**Wild dog management and control plans**

Wild dog management and control plans were collected and examined from across NSW up to August 2009 to allow for any delays that may have occurred in the 'signing off' of WDMC plans as a result of the abolition of the RLPB system and the introduction of the LHPA system in 2009. The results of this empirical research are revealing. [See over page].
Table 7.2: ‘Signed Off’ Wild Dog Management and Control Plans as at 1 August 2009 *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RLPB Area</th>
<th>Number of WDMC Plans Based on Schedule 2 lands</th>
<th>‘Signed off’ Status as at 1 August 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Coast</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid Coast</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumberland</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hume</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tablelands</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central North</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>70</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: This information was confirmed as correct by the then Pest Animal Manager of the State Council of the RLPB and the LHPA in 2009 and 2013 respectively.

As at 1 August 2009, twenty five out of a possible seventy WDMC plans (less than thirty six per cent) were ‘signed off’ across NSW. Yet, a wild dog management plan was mandated under Schedule 2 of the Pest Control Order of the RLPB Board Act 1998 as Amended for lands abutting or adjacent to Schedule 2 public lands. This is salutary for a number of reasons:

First, unless as a result of a publicly advertised meeting it is agreed not to proceed with a WDMC plan - and this is minuted - the completion of a WDMC plan by public land managers is mandated by law. Clearly, the State Council of the RLPB as the Agency tasked with the legal responsibility for affecting these plans did not fulfil its mandate.

Second, of those ‘signed off’ plans, the overwhelming majority of WDMC did not include details of the ‘resources necessary to effectively and equitably implement the plan’ as outlined in the Brindabella model. Work appeared to be negotiated with public land managers and completed under ‘contracts for work’ only; the detail of which was not publicly available. However, it appeared that at public WDMC meetings these ‘contracts for work’ were tied closely to regional financial year budgets of public land
managers and adjusted for changes in the financial year. There appeared to be a fragility and uncertainty regarding these amounts.

Nevertheless, in 2012, the year after the NSW Labor Government lost power, the OEH released information for the financial year 2010-2011 of the areas across NSW where WDMC work had occurred. There was no accompanying financial information provided. It stated:

NPWS works closely with the Livestock Health and Pest Authorities, wild dog associations, other public-land managers and park neighbours to deliver cooperative control programs across tenure. This includes the development and implementation of wild dog management plans for reserves listed under Schedule 2 (such as the Brindabella Wild Dog Management Plan) (Office of Environment and Heritage 2012: 2).

NSW NPWS may have worked ‘closely with the Livestock Health and Pest Authorities’ but equally clearly they may have delivered ‘cooperative control programs across tenure’ clearly. However, this was not as a consequence of a ‘signed off’ plan.

Third, WDMC plans were frequently ‘signed off’ by only one or two of a number of relevant public land managers; if at all. There was no collection or publicly available audit of these WDMC plans, what auditing occurred appears to have been of ‘contracts for work.’ Some plans appeared to be ‘carbon copies’ of each other with only names and locations changed.

Four, WDMC work by public land managers – the RLPB; NSW NPWS; Forests NSW WDAs - and farm families - continued over this period, irrespective, of any WDMC plan in place.

Fifth, it was apparent that a WDMC plan had been ‘signed off’ even though there was no evidence of involvement by farm families or WDAs through public WDMC meetings, or, conversely, it was apparent that while a WDMC was in place even when the community had ‘walked away’ and no longer participated.
Overwhelmingly, this empirical research puts the lie to the success of the model of the Brindabella Plan and of the ‘strategic approach’ across NSW. Yet, these two central tenets of the WDMC policy approach were promulgated across all Departments and Agencies. There is a significant disconnect between the public policy literature and what actually happens in WDMC.

In 1996, and again in 2002, NSW NPWS released its ‘Neighbour Relations Policy.’ The stated intention of this Policy appeared to reflect the public pressure NSW NPWS was experiencing from farming families. This policy stated: ‘We recognise the right of neighbours to undertake their activities without undue impact from our activities (NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service 2002: 3). However, by 2005, NSW NPWS ‘Wild Dog Policy’ backgrounded a larger discourse of ‘land management’ and subsumed WDMC plans as an administrative task:

Wild dog management plans will be prepared for Schedule 2 areas. Wherever possible, the plans should be part of a regional wild dog management plan or strategy covering all land tenures’ (NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service 2005 May: 4)

In 2008, the then Minister for Primary Industries, the Hon. Ian MacDonald, and the Minister for Climate Change and the Environment, the Hon. Verity Firth - the fourth Minister in less than five years - released ‘The New South Wales Invasive Species Plan 2008-2015. It stated its vision as: ‘The environment, economy and community of NSW are protected from the adverse impacts of invasive species’ (NSW Department of Primary Industries 2008: 3). However, between the years 2007-2009, across all of the WDMC meetings attended farming families expressly challenged the basis and the voracity of the claims articulated in each of these policies.

Industry and Government Reports

In 2008, the ABS reported that:

the number of farming families in Australia decreased by 22% between 1986 and 2001’ (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2008).
In 2009, the Western Australia Department of Agriculture and Food reported:

- the number of sheep in Australia has fallen and continues to fall;
- the number of sheep producers across Australia has also fallen (Curtis 2009: 15).

Moreover, the total number of sheep in Australia had dropped to the lowest level since 1915. Even allowing for a fall in commodity prices and the extended drought, this means that the effects on farming families of any wild dog predation on sheep has a far greater impact as there are fewer farmers and fewer sheep. It also gives an indication of the scale of the increase in destocked lands.

From 1997 until 2011, the ABS reported yearly on the decline in the national sheep flock and disaggregates this information by State. In NSW, the total number of sheep for this period was as follows:

### Table 7.3: Total Number of Sheep in NSW 1997-2011 *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number of Sheep in NSW</th>
<th>000'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997-1998</td>
<td>40,821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>40,583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>43,405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>40,887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>38,491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>33,706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>35,227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>34,341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>32,146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>28,607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>26,378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>25,546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>24,366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>26,825</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Figures Compiled from ABS Agricultural Commodities 7121.0 1997-2011*
This empirical research reveals that WDMC policy is delivered 'top down;' the reliance on scientific 'experts' had increased rather than decreased and that the implementation of local WDMC ultimately rested with public land managers from a number of Departments and Agencies. In doing so, the NSW policy approach in WDMC mirrors the central tenets of the discourse of administrative rationalism.

Overwhelmingly, the legitimacy of this discourse was challenged by farming families who attended WDMC meetings. Additionally, this empirical research reveals that farming families rejected both the Brindabella Plan model and the 'strategic approach;' This puts the lie to the so-called ‘success’ of both in WDMC across NSW.

It is apparent that there is a significant disconnect between what is said to happen in WDMC and what happens at the grassroots. During this time there were also enforced changes in the organisations that traditionally had represented farming families on WDMC; the cumulative effect of which was to attempt to sublimate the voices of farming families within the dominant discourse.

Further, it is clear that just under two thirds of all potential plans had not been ‘signed off’ and of these many revealed significant omissions – not least, necessary signatures to the agreement, commitments to funding and authorship by local farming families. By the admission of farming families themselves across many WDMC meetings in NSW many ‘signed off plans were ‘a joke.’

Overall, it is also clear that the environment, economy and communities of farm families across NSW were not protected from the adverse impacts of wild dogs. Wild dogs continued to severely impact on the daily lives and material wellbeing of farm families across NSW. This left the remaining farming families engaged in sheep production in a parlous position: either to suffer the consequences of increasing wild dog predation on fewer sheep on less lands or exit sheep production.

Compounded by drought and falling commodity prices, wild dog predation on agricultural stock was often sighted as ‘the’ reason or ‘the’ tipping point in the decision to exit sheep production. It was clear that wild dogs continued to severely impact on the daily lives and material wellbeing of farm families and that the effects of this broader rural community were significant. Wild dog management and control was not done ‘to
the extent necessary’ to ameliorate wild dog predation on agricultural stock to the extent necessary to restore the necessary confidence needed to restock destocked lands with sheep. From the point of view of farming families this was the central purpose of WDMC, WDMC meetings and WDMC plans: ‘to get the dogs off our lands.’

In the light of this empirical research the conundrum in NSW WDMC policy of conserving the dingo and controlling wild dogs ‘to the extent necessary’ remains a site of continuing contestation.
Conclusion:

‘It all went to hell in a hand basket’

With the impending abolition of the LHPA system across NSW at the end of 2013 by Ministerial fiat and the ‘forced’ creation of an administratively centralised organisation called the Local Land Services (LLS) that will come into being in 2014 - this time at the behest of the NSW Liberal and National Coalition - it is difficult to see how the voice of farming families regarding issues surrounding WDMC across NSW will be heard.

This is not least because the three targeted organisations - Landcare NSW, the CMAs and the LHPAs - have very different reasons for existence as well as potentially conflicting visions for the future. Of these organisations it appears that the LHPA system - the descendent of the RLPB system and the PP system – is the only organisation which appears to be both ‘cashed up’ financially and asset ‘rich’ – a direct consequence of mandatory contributions by farming families over one hundred years. It is equally concerning that the LHPA is currently the only organisation of the three that can lay claim to legitimacy as it is the only organisation that holds democratically and transparently contested elections at the grassroots.

In contrast, the newly envisaged LLS will be majorly controlled through Ministerial appointments and seemingly administratively controlled by DII. This will strengthen not lessen the grip of the administrative rationalist discourse. The creation of the LLS may well have arisen out of concerns over wider government budgetary shortfalls; particularly in regard to DII. However, notwithstanding this, local existing Boards will be subsumed into ‘super’ Boards that will encompass vast tracks of both public and private lands across NSW. To the dismay of many farming families governance arrangements have been poorly developed and what policies have emerged lack detail and appear to have been made ‘on the run.’

Crucially for WMDC across NSW, the future employment of existing staff and in particular, pest animal controllers and ‘trappers’ currently contracted or appointed to the various local Boards, government departments and agencies for the specific purpose of WDMC, appears uncertain if not completely tenuous. How WDMC funding is to be allocated to these new ‘super’ boards and what say, and to what degree, local farming
families will have that say is equally uncertain as only a minority of LLS positions will come from direct election. It is difficult therefore to be positive about the future involvement of NSW farming families in an organisation in which farming families are further disenfranchised yet to which they remain financially liable and from which they may well be even further geographically distant. It is near on impossible, if not foolhardy, to make NSW WDMC policy recommendations in light of this uncertainty. Literally, the lay of the land of the LLS, the governance arrangements, the financial allocations to NSW WDMC and even the continued commitment to the necessity of WDMC are lacking certainty. It is clear, however, that as it is currently envisaged the future organisation lacks legitimacy.

Equally, it is important to reiterate that the purpose of this thesis has not been to resolve the issue of WDMC. This is beyond the scope of this thesis and the purpose of interpretative research. The research question of this thesis: ‘To what extent can conflicts over wild dog management and control in New South Wales be understood in terms of contending discourses and what does that imply for policy legitimacy?’ has been comprehensively answered.

The purpose of the thesis has been to locate, identify and analyse the dominant discourse in WDMC during the period of successive NSW Labor Governments from 1995-2011 and, in doing so, to locate, identify, and analyse the marginalised discourses. It has done this. This thesis presents the issue of WDMC as an empirical case study in contending discourses, primarily between the discourses of agrarianism and ‘new’ environmentalism. It presents the findings of this case study through an examination of the actual policy practices of WDMC in NSW and presents ‘what actually happens’ at the grassroots.

In adopting this approach, this thesis addresses the significant gap that exists in the existing academic literature about the issue of WDMC and the public policy of WDMC in NSW. It provides insights into the implications, the groups of concerns and the internal contradictions that are evident within the storylines of the contending discourses of WDMC in NSW. This is a significant contribution. Overall, this thesis demonstrates that legitimacy seemingly was achieved by the domination of one discourse over others. The empirical research of this thesis shows that this is morally
problematic because it hurts the material interests of farming families and involved marginalising and suppressing particular voices. In our democracy this is indefensible.

The empirical research of this thesis was driven by three aims: to locate and analyse the historical context of WDMC; to discern if a discursive shift had occurred; and to identify and analyse how storylines contributed to or were subverted in support of the dominant discourse. It did this by drawing on substantial but disparate bodies of literatures in the public domain; through attendance at sixty three public WDMC meetings and through the analysis of all ‘signed off’ WDMC plans. The premise of this thesis is that the issue of WDMC is a social construct which was framed as a ‘problem’ in contending discourses over time; but for very different reasons.

The thesis openly acknowledges the limitations of this research. It did not provide a critique of NSW WDMC policy from an institutional point of view or from the viewpoint of other marginalised discourse coalitions. Instead it approached the actual policy and practice of WDMC from the viewpoint of grassroots farming families. It did not provide, as was stated in the delimitations, any analysis of NSW WDMC policy from the traditional owners of the land, the Aboriginal people of NSW. It did not seek further clarification through semi-structured interviews from either farming families or farming families who did not hold the views of farming families who attended WDMC meetings. These areas of empirical research will provide very fruitful and useful critiques into the future. These areas of academic inquiry are sorely needed. However, they were simply beyond the scope and financial resources of this thesis.

In defence of the approach taken, as explained in the Introduction to this thesis, interpretive researchers reject the idea that the goal of policy analysis is to settle debates by conducting a value-free, objective assessment of the policy situation. In contrast, they seek to appreciate and improve policy practice by studying its paradoxes and ambiguities (Stone, 2002), and exploring various meanings embedded in language, action and artefacts. It is clear that any analysis from the viewpoint of the marginalised discourse coalition of farming families currently represents an omission in the academic literature. This thesis redresses this omission. It is a first step in what hopefully will become a productive area for further empirical work. It is as yet an understudied and little understood area of Australian life.
The literature review revealed that a significant discursive turn had occurred in the framing of the ‘problem’ of wild dogs and that this ‘turn’ was vigorously contested by farming families. Based on this empirical research, this thesis identifies the dominant discourse as administrative rationalism. It is a discourse which seeks to: ‘organise scientific and technical expertise into bureaucratic hierarchy in the service of the state’ (Dryzek 1997: 73). It identifies the contending discourses as agrarianism; ‘new’ environmentalism; animal welfare; and, biosecurity.

In furtherance of the dominant discourse, a legislative meaning was afforded to wild dogs through language. In this way, the ‘language’ of wild dogs lost its neutral status. Who was responsible, what could be done about wild dogs and the language of WDMC and wild dogs was highly politicised. The increase in public lands and the creation of Schedule Two land in NSW furthered this delineation. Over time, this resulted in what Hajer (1993) refers to as the ‘mobilisation of bias’ (Hajer 1993: 45). Schisms appeared between the storylines of the administrative rationalist discourse and the agrarian discourse; storylines were subsequently subverted to serve the dominant discourse no matter what the internal inconsistency.

This discursive contestation resulted in a consultation process which, despite political and institutional rhetoric to the contrary, institutionalised inequalities in power relations and negated the local knowledges and experiences of farming families. The public consultation, through the processes of WDMC meetings and the creation of a WDMC plan, was enshrined by legislative fiat. These became the sites of contestation and the rejection of the dominant discourse. Not surprisingly, during this time the consultation process was at very best, fragile, often deeply antagonistic and vitriolic and, at worst, and, often, completely irrelevant.

Farm families were increasingly alienated from the State. The planning process was held to be the discursive instrument of the State directed from ‘top down’ because it was. Public land managers were ‘forced’ to consult; farming families through desperation and frustration were ‘forced’ to participate. Notably, each discourse coalition mobilised around different meanings of wild dogs.

In Chapter Two, the historical context of wild dog policy in NSW revealed that from White colonialisation of Australia, the agrarian discourse coalition was dominant.
Farming families worked with the full imprimatur of the State on WDMC. They constituted the ‘I’ of the dominant discourse. However, from the 1960s, the rise of the discourse of ‘new’ environmentalism challenged the dominance of the agrarian discourse. Progressively, the State abolished the traditional forums in which the voices of farm families were heard. It then attempted to sublimate these concerns in to forums of the dominant discourse. This again was contested. The State however achieved this through a series of administrative and legislative changes; most notably the abolition of WDAs and the Dingo Destruction Boards across NSW and through increased prohibitions on methods of WDMC. This was contested by the marginalised discourse coalition.

At the same time, this period heralded the entry of powerful new State actors who further reified the dominant administrative rationalist discourse through a reliance on science and technology and particularly through the storylines of ecological science. During this period of successive NSW Labor Governments the legitimacy of the dominant discourse was continually contested. This was largely achieved through the storylines of the agrarian discourse, most notably the crisis in the ‘Bush’ and by alarming reports of unchecked wild dog predation on agricultural stock. However, rather than reverse the dominance of the administrative rationalist discourse the cumulative actions of State actors reinforced it.

Political parties exploited the issue of WDMC as a way of securing political capital. The representation of WDMC as a political issue served three functions: First, it enhanced the political capital of NSW parliamentary parties – especially Country Labor; second, it further reinforced the administrative control of WDMC; and, third, it secured the scientific and technological voice as the ‘expert’ voice on WDMC. The dominant administrative discourse positioned the alternative ‘voices’ of farm families as self-serving and subordinate. In this way, the dominant discourse predetermined how NSW WDMC was both conceptualised and implemented at the grassroots.

This dominance was compounded by what Hajer (1993) refers to in discourse coalitions as the ‘aura of responsible bookkeeper’ (Hajer 1993: 55). This ‘aura’ in WDMC was affected by instrumental use of the Annual Reports, Financial Statements and Allied Reports of six State actors charged with implementing WDMC at the grassroots. As Chapter Four argues these literatures are not best understood as ‘fact.’ The paucity of
information regarding financial expenditures on WDMC in real terms during this period is apparent and salutary. Over the period of successive NSW Labor Governments, the storylines of these Reports reveal more about the production of ‘knowledge’ and ‘taken for granted’ assumptions, the networks, and, relations of power inherent in WDMC than they do about financial expenditures on WDMC across NSW in real terms.

At the same time, these storylines reveal compelling internal contradictions and inconsistencies when compared to the storylines of financial expenditures promulgated by the dominant discourse. These inconsistencies in turn were compounded by the storylines that emanated from the Audit Reports of the NSW Auditor General during this time. Game Council NSW is notable in this regard. These Reports tempered the storylines of Government largesse in WDMC by pointing increasingly to disparities between the dominant storylines and the material reality of WDMC as reported. However, and importantly, they did not prove sufficient to unseat the administrative rationalist discourse. To the contrary, the process of the Audit Reports re-embedded WDMC within the dominant discourse.

In contrast, the storylines of an increasingly disenfranchised agrarian discourse centred on two questions: ‘How much money was spent on WDMC in real terms?’ and, ‘Where did the money go?’ These storylines in turn revolved around claims of financial mismanagement and a lack of transparency and accountability in WDMC. The storylines challenged but did not undermine the dominant discourse.

However, the administrative rationalist discourse also sought legitimacy through the reliance on ‘experts.’ Chapter Five argued that within the dominant discourse of WDMC there was a dependence on scientific rationalism. In the policy of WDMC this dependence manifested itself in storylines of ‘good science,’ the adoption of the ‘the strategic approach,’ and the development of technologies and ‘new’ innovations. This in turn facilitated the entry of new commercial actors in WDMC and the rise of the self-proclaimed ‘growth industry’ in WDMC. These storylines of a ‘growth industry’ viewed WDMC differently to those that emanated from an agrarian discourse. These storylines evidenced a sense of increasing desperation and frustration and a loss of discursive power. The storylines of these new social actors re-presented WDMC as an area of expanding employment and the necessity of further ecological research in WDMC. This reliance further marginalised the storylines of the agrarian discourse coalition which pivoted around the ‘anecdotal’, the lived experiences and ‘situated
knowledges’ of farm families. Within the dominant discourse these storylines were held to be subordinate to ‘fact’ and ‘truth.’

Notwithstanding this, the dominant discourse was increasingly challenged by the storylines of other discourses, namely ‘new’ environmentalism; animal welfare and biosecurity. As argued in Chapter Six the function of storylines within competing discourses was threefold: to create meaning and validate action, to mobilise action, and to define alternatives (Hannigan 2006: citing Gelcich et al. 2005: 379). The storyline of humaneness that emanated from an animal welfare discourse and the storyline of biosecurity collectively resonated across all discourses but for different reasons. Individually they drew on contending discourses. However, each storyline was subverted to serve the dominant discourse.

Overall, the Chapter reveals that while the NSW Labor Government privileged scientific rationalism as the authorial voice in WDMC, the legitimacy of this authority was strongly contested by the rise of contending discourses. This added further complexity to the understanding of the issue of WDMC and, in turn, impacted dramatically on its implementation in NSW. However, the policy conundrum of WDMC remained. The State was legislatively committed to fulfilling the twin obligations of the management and control of wild dogs, and, the conservation of the dingo – at the same time.

Chapter Seven examined this declared NSW Labor Government policy objective in light of the findings of extensive field work across NSW completed over the years 2007 – 2009. Two observations were made before the penultimate conclusion was derived: First, that the public policy of WDMC was delivered ‘top down;’ Second, that during the period of successive NSW Labor Governments, farming families consistently challenged both the legitimacy of ‘experts,’ public land managers and NSW WDMC policy. This was done through storylines. Public WDMC meetings and the lack of ‘signed off plans became the site and the point of rejection of the legitimacy of the dominant discourse respectively.

The penultimate conclusion that this thesis makes challenges the explicit claim of the storylines in NSW WDMC policy; that it was a success and that wild dog predation on agricultural stock had decreased through State intervention. The findings of this
empirical research are at odds with the storylines promulgated in the dominant administrative rationalist discourse.

Wild dog policy in NSW reveres the Brindabella Plan and the ‘strategic approach’ as not only ‘best practice’ but as a measure of the success of WDMC policy and as validation of the administrative rationalist discourse. However, the findings of this empirical research suggest that neither has travelled far. Just a little more than one third of NSW designated Schedule Two lands as at August 2009 were covered by a plan. Moreover, the ‘strategic approach’ which is the model on which the Brindabella Plan was based was overwhelmingly rejected at the grassroots. Farming families did not adopt the ways of reasoning advocated in the dominant discourse; rather they emphatically rejected them.

In contrast, Chapter Seven revealed that the findings of Industry and Government Reports reported both the increased impacts of wild dog predation on agricultural stock on farming families and, at the same time, the parlous state of the sheep industry across NSW. In contrast to the administrative rationalist discourse, the empirical research of this thesis suggests there were fewer sheep, fewer lands and fewer farmers. This ever declining pool made the impacts of wild dog predation felt even more keenly.

Overwhelmingly, farming families repeated the same storyline at WDMC meetings: wild dog predation on sheep was held to be ‘the’ reason and ‘the’ tipping point for sheep producers exiting the industry and, conversely, the reason why they lacked the confidence to restock destocked lands. These storylines were not discounting the storylines of the impact of an extended drought or the fall in commodity prices that was experienced during this time.

In this light, claims in the storylines of the administrative rationalist discourse that wild dog predation has declined as a result of the adoption of the strategic approach as enshrined in the Brindabella Plan or through the development of technologies and new innovations in WDMC appear specious. Overwhelmingly, the empirical research of this thesis reveals the contrary to be the case: Over the period of successive NSW Labor Governments from 1995-2011, the sheep industry in NSW, and farming families in NSW were facing a crisis unparalleled since Federation.
Collectively, the empirical findings of this thesis challenge the veracity of the claim of ‘best practice’ in WDMC policy literatures which is publicly disseminated through the storylines of the dominant discourse. It reveals that during this period farming families who attended WDMC meetings rejected overwhelmingly the legitimacy of the dominant discourse. However, the bitter irony within the public policy of WDMC is that the success of WDMC policy was dependent on the continued involvement of farm families as an indicator of the success of the public planning process. This success relied on the acquiescence of farming families to a discourse that subordinated their concerns. As such the public policy of WDMC represented an exercise in the ‘forced’ recognition of the dominant discourse coalition. However, its lack of legitimacy among farming families was clear in the widespread contestation at public WDMC meetings and the lack of ‘signed off’ plans across NSW during this period.

On only two occasions did farming families legitimise WDMC ‘plans.’ The first was reportedly at the inception of Brindabella Plan. Farming families validated this during meetings attended during the course of the empirical research. This plan was written reportedly by farming families for farming families. However, increasingly farming families reported: ‘that the wheels had fallen off.’ The second occasion was one in which legitimacy was given only conditionally on the proviso that ‘agreed’ caveats to the unsigned plan were honoured into the future. Thus, the future of this ‘plan’ remains uncertain. Nevertheless, on both occasions the plans were written from the ‘grassroots’ by farming families whose involvement was motivated by desperation, that they had ‘their backs against the wall.’ Their collective involvement was ‘forced’ by the overwhelming desire to get ‘the dogs off our lands.’ However, these instances were by far the exception rather than the rule.

In this sense, the storylines of the administrative rationalist discourse reveal a significant disconnect between what is said to happen in WDMC in NSW and what happens. Overwhelmingly the policy of WDMC in NSW lacked legitimacy within the marginalised discourse coalition of farming families because the State had not managed wild dogs ‘to the extent necessary’ that allowed sheep producers to restock destocked land.

It is apparent that over this period farming families were indeed ‘Playing for sheep stations.’ The storylines that emerged from the public consultation process represented
instead not the acquiescence to the dominant discourse coalition but rather the very real struggle for the survival of the sheep industry across NSW and, ipso facto, the survival of farming families and the family farm. Thus, the ‘dog tree’ as a sign of the rejection of the dominant discourse continues to function to this day as a public rebuke and a powerful statement of protest to public land managers who are perceived to have failed in their responsibilities as a ‘good neighbour’ in controlling wild dogs on public lands.

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