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The Illawarra Wild Deer Management Program

Can't go it alone; creating collective action at a local scale

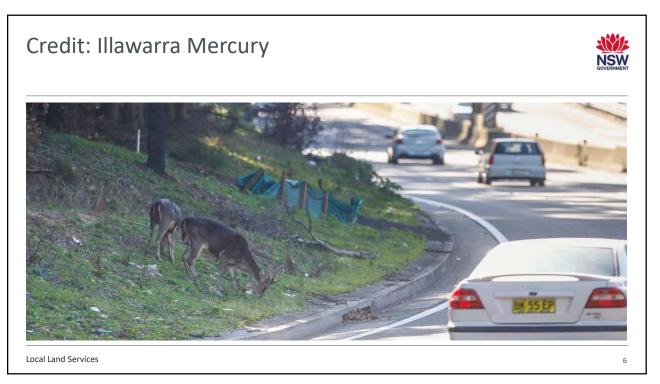NSW Vertebrate Pest Symposium, Dubbo, October 2023

NSW GOVERNMENT

Belinda Davies

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Credit: Illawarra Mercury

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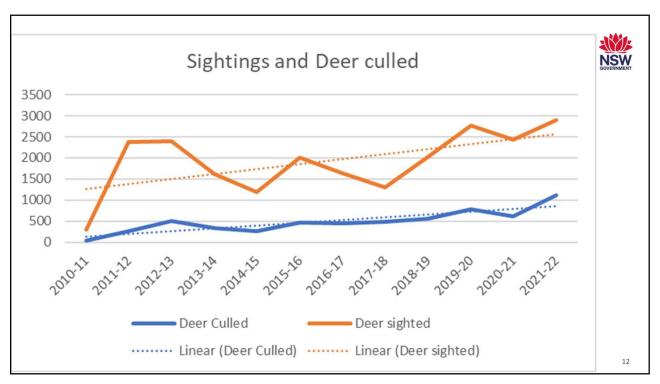
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Credit: Illawarra Mercury

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Credit: Illawarra Mercury; SE LLS

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Credits: 7 NEWS; Illawarra Mercury

A herd of deer spotted in Woonona, Wollongong's nor...

DEER, OH DEER

Play (k)   0:15 / 2:05

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Illawarra Mercury 12ᵗʰ May 2023 – security footage from a home in Woonona

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Sightings and Deer culled

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Key themes of collaborative governance and collective action

INFLUENCE OF STARTING CONDITIONS ON THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

THE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE AND FORMAL PROCESSES THAT UNDERPIN THE IFDMP

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS, INFORMAL PROCESSES AND MULTI TENURE COLLECTIVE ACTION IN THE ILLAWARRA

Acknowledgements: Rachel Jefferson, UOW Honours Student 2022 Associate Professor Nicholas Gill and Dr. Sonia Graham

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Types of collective action

Externally Led
- External agencies or organizations envision, champion, and fund efforts to promote widespread contributions to invasive species control. Such efforts typically include financial incentives or penalties or technical support to landowners.
- Examples: National, State or Local Governments, NGOs, state sponsored extension programs; university research teams

Community Led
- Private landowners or residents provide support, apply social pressure, or organize collaborative efforts with other landowners to control invasive species across property boundaries
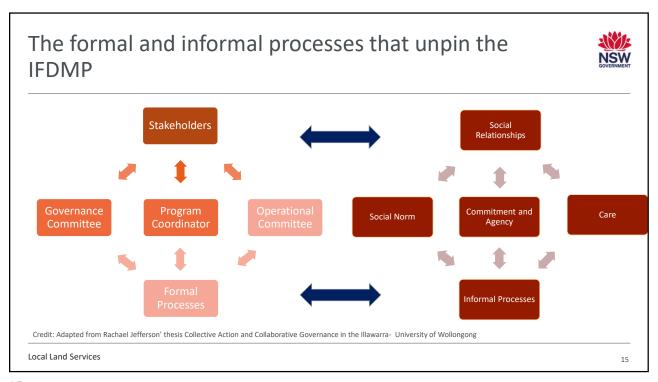- Examples: private landowners or residents

Co-managed
- Private landowners or residents enter in cooperative arrangements with external agencies or organizations to promote invasive species control at a landscape scale. External agencies or organizations often provide regulations and litigation, incentives, technical assistance, or educational outreach.
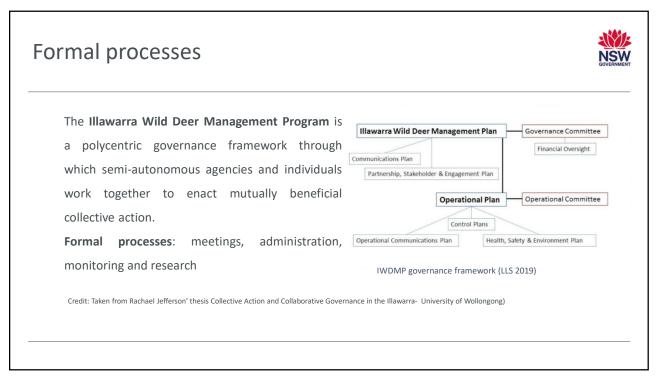- Examples: Agencies or organisations and private landowners and residents

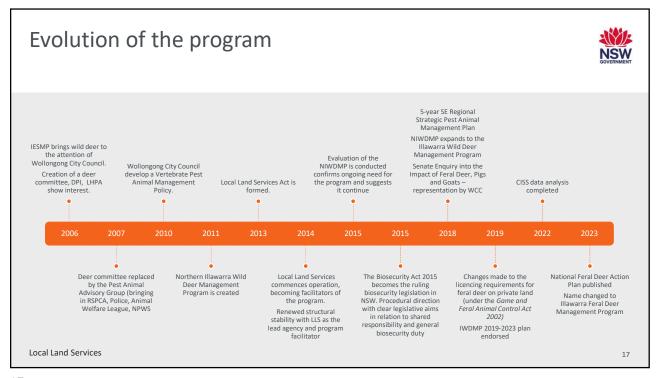**Organisational coalitions**
- Institutions with a formal or informal mesolevel authority and formal networks of government agencies cooperate to control invasive species at a regional scale. Such organizational coalitions coordinate invasive species management programs and activities, pool resources, encourage consistent regulation and engagement, or facilitate management at appropriate ecological scales.
- Examples: partnerships of local, state, and federal government agencies, private landowners, interested stakeholders, and organizations with environmental mandates ie IFDMP.

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Adapted from: Graham, S, Metcalf, A. L, Gill, N, Niemiec, R, Moreno, C, Bach, T, Ikutegbe, V, Hallstrom, L, Ma, Z & Lubeck, A 2019, 'Opportunities for better use of collective action theory in research and governance for invasive species management', Conservation Biology, vol. 33, no. 2, pp. 275- 287.

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The formal and informal processes that unpin the IFDMP

Stakeholders

Social Relationships

Governance Committee

Program Coordinator

Operational Committee

Social Norm

Commitment and Agency

Care

Formal Processes

Informal Processes

Credit: Adapted from Rachael Jefferson' thesis Collective Action and Collaborative Governance in the Illawarra- University of Wollongong

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Formal processes

The **Illawarra Wild Deer Management Program** is a polycentric governance framework through which semi-autonomous agencies and individuals work together to enact mutually beneficial collective action.

Formal processes: meetings, administration, monitoring and research

Illawarra Wild Deer Management Plan — Governance Committee

Financial Oversight

Communications Plan

Partnership, Stakeholder & Engagement Plan

Operational Plan — Operational Committee

Control Plans

Operational Communications Plan   Health, Safety & Environment Plan

IWDMP governance framework (LLS 2019)

Credit: Taken from Rachael Jefferson' thesis Collective Action and Collaborative Governance in the Illawarra- University of Wollongong)

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Evolution of the program

5-year SE Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Plan

NIWDMP expands to the Illawarra Wild Deer Management Program

IESMP brings wild deer to the attention of Wollongong City Council.

Creation of a deer committee, DPI, LHPA show interest.

Wollongong City Council develop a Vertebrate Pest Animal Management Policy.

Local Land Services Act is formed.

Evaluation of the NIWDMP is conducted confirms ongoing need for the program and suggests it continue

Senate Enquiry into the Impact of Feral Deer, Pigs and Goats – representation by WCC

CISS data analysis completed

| 2006 | 2007 | 2010 | 2011 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2015 | 2018 | 2019 | 2022 | 2023 |

Deer committee replaced by the Pest Animal Advisory Group (bringing in RSPCA, Police, Animal Welfare League, NPWS

Northern Illawarra Wild Deer Management Program is created

Local Land Services commences operation, becoming facilitators of the program.

Renewed structural stability with LLS as the lead agency and program facilitator

The Biosecurity Act 2015 becomes the ruling biosecurity legislation in NSW. Procedural direction with clear legislative aims in relation to shared responsibility and general biosecurity duty

Changes made to the licencing requirements for feral deer on private land (under the *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002*)

IWDMP 2019-2023 plan endorsed

National Feral Deer Action Plan published

Name changed to Illawarra Feral Deer Management Program

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Starting Conditions (Ansell and Gash 2008)

Historical Conflict: The initial response from Council was that deer were a National Parks' issue, and Council's role was to encourage National Parks to control the deer, so that they didn't cause trouble for the residents. So, in 2006 there was a sense that something needed to be done, but it pretty much needed to be done by National Parks.

Historical Collaboration: "Bringing all those people together… the old Sydney Catchment Authority and Sydney Water, council at the time… Rural Lands Protection Board, the noxious weeds officer, and some of the mining company reps…we called ourselves the Illawarra Escarpment Managers Forum."

Historical Conflict: "Game Council was trying to be a part of the process, while also undermining it…That challenge early on, established a stronger sense of core purpose. And strangely, probably benefited the program, because it forced people to get organised in a way that perhaps, if it was an easier environment, we wouldn't have…"

Participation Incentive: "Because we realised that the size of the problem was bigger and beyond council's resources and capacity to manage on its own, and the fact that the deer aren't a tenure specific issue, but that we needed a multi-agency, multi-landowner type of coordinate approach to address it, a landscape scale approach."

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An evolving program

Operating 12 years

Financial contributors

~6650 deer culled
(average @700 p/y for last 7 years)

~130 sites

~80 landholders

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Stakeholder Engagement, Contributions and a Dedicated Coordinator

Stakeholder Engagement: "Everyone's around a table and you get those contacts…sometimes the most important part of those meetings is the morning tea and lunch, that's when you're getting to ask people questions about their organisation…building up that whole phone book full of contacts."

Contributions: "We occasionally get asked to identify some priority pest animal management projects in the state and some priority research activities that could use some additional support…In the last five years I've identified…the Illawarra Project as being useful sources for those funds."

Dedicated Coordinator: "Well set up program, well thought out with strong drivers in LLS, and then with loss of staff, that became a bit more fraught because it didn't have the capacity in the organisation to deliver on a program where there was expectations of us as an organisation to deliver."

Credit: Taken from Rachael Jefferson' thesis Collective Action and Collaborative Governance in the Illawarra- University of Wollongong)

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Care

*"*We've got a threatened species on the escarpment land that we've got to protect, and it was being impacted…the deer numbers are escalating, we just need to really deal with it."

"Well, that's essentially what the program is. It is just a collaboration and it's just people with a concern and commitment to trying to deal with the problem [wild deer] having come together.*"*

*"*They weren't getting very big numbers, so I contributed – we started contributing towards the program…So each year we gave about $40,000 for control works and more if we had any additional money."

Credit: Taken from Rachael Jefferson' thesis Collective Action and Collaborative Governance in the Illawarra- University of Wollongong)

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Social Norms

"You can justify to your own organisation to try and keep money coming or try and   increase it based on the fact that others are contributing. I think that definitely helps the program**…**Because there's other organisations involved and if one is seen to be, you know, not contributing as much as they think, then they can be pressured by the program."

"You create some sort of groundswell of what's acceptable. It creates a sort of normalising of what's the right thing to do. And I think we saw that with the example of the deer as a pet, well that's not ok, our community doesn't accept that."

Credit: Taken from Rachael Jefferson' thesis Collective Action and Collaborative Governance in the Illawarra- University of Wollongong)

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Commitment through Agency

"And honestly, the organisation that saved the day was Sydney Water, or Water New South Wales. They really ramped up their control in that period. And that's actually what dragged the program forward."

"We're very protective of the reputation of the program...in terms of collaboration, we're all on the same page that way, as a group. So that makes us stronger...because we don't want people taking pot-shots at our program and then go back 15 years to where we were when we didn't have anything."

Credit: Taken from Rachael Jefferson' thesis Collective Action and Collaborative Governance in the Illawarra- University of Wollongong)

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Lessons

- Collaborative Governance and Collective Action shape the operation of the IFDMP
- Starting condition variables, institutional design and facilitative leadership are key elements within collaborative arrangements that require considered attention.
- Getting organised (formal and informal processes help)
- Formal processes such as stakeholder engagement, participant contribution and a dedicated coordinator are drivers of collaboration
- The existence of a network of informal processes which help to support collective action within the IWDMP organisation coalition
- Social relations of care, social norms and commitment through agency act as reinforcement for collective action within the IWDMP
- Funding and inconsistent coordination by a dedicated coordinator have created barriers to collaboration
- Together, the governance structure and both sets of processes work together to enable the facilitation of wild deer management in a multi-tenure landscape, the Illawarra

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Lessons continued…

- Expect some conflict (community; political; non-equal contributing stakeholders… from any direction)
- Diverse membership – research organisations; local champions; environmental stewards; recognise different drivers
- Get to know your community and target strategies of engagement and operations accordingly
- Collect and analyse data; develop operational strategies; identify measures of success
- Undertake Research and collect Evidence to support your efforts
- Allow for evolution of programs and new ideas; Learn from your mistakes; keep evaluating approach

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Acknowledgements

There have been many contributors to the program since its inception.

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