

Appendix 10: Advice from the expert panel

In January 2009, a draft of this report was considered by an expert panel comprising:

- Dr Andrew Baird (CSIRO Veterinarian)
- Dr Ken Hodgkinson (CSIRO Ecologist)
- Dr Sue McIntyre (CSIRO Senior Principal Research Scientist)
- Dr Will Osborne (University of Canberra).

Mr Darro Stinson, the ex-Commissioner for the Environment, facilitated the expert panel and Ms Sarah Sharp provided technical advice.

The advice from the expert panel is as follows:

1. An emphasis needs to be given to strategic field-based work programs and in using an adaptive management approach for the management of all lowland native grassland sites. Such an approach must be based on:

- a site monitoring and assessment program being undertaken on a regular basis
- research
- outcomes
- evaluation of outcomes to ensure that management strategies achieve the desired results.

2. A best practice ('how to') guideline needs to be developed for site-specific actions, for example, mowing regimes, ecological burns, specifications to be used when engaging contactors.

3. It maybe necessary to reintroduce some species to restore the ecosystem.

4. The most threatening processes for lowland native grassland sites are generally weeds and inappropriate mowing regimes.

5. Overgrazing by pests, stock and/or kangaroos is a threatening process, at this time, for some lowland native grassland sites.

6. Fire needs to be used to explicitly manage the ecological condition of lowland native grassland sites. This is generally not done. When grassland is burnt it is for fire management purposes. Ecological burns need to be undertaken and burns to reduce fuel loadings need to be modified so they do not destroy seed production but allow regeneration. Implementation of such burns needs to take into consideration the life-history requirements of the plant and animal species at the site, and the specific spatial and resource requirements of any threatened species present.

7. Use of the grounds maintenance rubbish tip (managed and used by the Department of Defence) that is enclosed by Campbell Park (MA05) should cease and the site rehabilitated. The piles of logs and branches and other debris attracts cats, foxes and rabbits that threaten Grassland Earless Dragon and the Button Wrinkle Wort Daisy population at this site.

8. To protect the Grassland Earless Dragon, strategically located kangaroo management fencing should be erected around Campbell Park (MA05) and possibly parts of Majura West (MA06), if the removal of stock on Campbell Park (MA06) does not significantly assist the recovery of the lowland native grassland, and if the kangaroo density is not reduced, within

the next six months. This should only be considered a temporary measure. Furthermore, this grassland and the affect on the Grassland Earless Dragon (and other species) need to be monitored.

9. Compliance with conditions in land management agreements that support rural leases is an issue that needs to be addressed; Cookanalla (JE08) is of concern.

10. The field assessments under taken by Dr Ken Hodgkinson involved both objective and subjective elements and were not a substitute for routine ecological monitoring; they reflect drought conditions at the time and were limited by out-of-season assessment of perennial forb components.