



# **WEST WIMMERA SHIRE COUNCIL CORELLA MANAGEMENT PLAN**



**2020-2024**

**Adopted 19 August 2020**

# Contents

Introduction	Page 3
Background to Corella issue	Page 4
Plan objectives	Page 8
Review of management strategies	Page 8
Corella action plan	Page 10
Monitoring and review	Page 12

# 1 Introduction

Situated along the Victorian-South Australian border, West Wimmera Shire covers 9,200 square kilometres of predominantly agricultural land and includes the townships of Apsley, Edenhope, Harrow, Goroke, Kaniva and Serviceton.

Over recent years West Wimmera Shire, and in particular its townships, have experienced problems with large numbers of Corellas (*Cacatua tenuirostris* and *Cacatua sanguinea*) congregating into towns. In significant numbers, Corellas cause damage to trees, create noise issues, and can potentially damage buildings and infrastructure.

## Purpose of this plan

The purpose of this plan is to clearly identify the issues, understand the various management strategies available to Council and to outline a Corella action plan to be implemented within townships.

## 2 Background to Corella issue

### About the Corella

Long-billed Corellas (*Cacatua tenuirostris*) and Little Corellas (*Cacatua sanguinea*) are a part of the West Wimmera landscape. They are intelligent, social birds which flock and roost together. The birds mate for life and can live up to 50 years of age. Corellas' beaks grow constantly, and they chew items in their environment to maintain their beaks' length and condition. This occurs wherever they land and can result in damage to trees, turf and built infrastructure.

Corellas have long term memories and use regular flight paths to return to reliable feeding areas. During dry seasons, these areas are often in townships where they have good access to feed and water. Corellas are also very adaptable birds and quickly respond to changes in their environment. They can also quickly become used to various management techniques. Corella damage is seasonal and occurs from late September through to April depending on the season. During this time, thousands of Corellas migrate into West Wimmera Shire creating a challenge for Council to manage.



Long-Billed Corellas (*Cacatua Tenuirostris*)

## Community views

There is a range of opinions within the community around the migration of Corellas. Some residents see this as being a natural phenomenon which occurs each year and residents simply need to accept this. They see the thousands of birds flying in large flocks and roosting in trees turning them white as something impressive and to be appreciated and promoted.

Other residents within the Shire consider these birds to be a menace. They complain that they are noisy, messy and damage trees, lawns and recreation reserves. As such, expectations are placed on Council each year to manage Corella numbers within townships to reduce their impact.

Issues identified by complaints include:

- Noise associated with flocks of birds. This includes the inability of some residents to be able to relax at home due to the noise.
- Damage to trees. This includes native trees and ornamental exotic trees in gardens.
- Damage to ovals, turf and recreation areas.
- Litter such as pine cones, feathers and small branches on roads etc.
- Damage to buildings and infrastructure. Includes damage to TV antennas, window and solar panel seals, vehicles, roof tiles, fencing and park furniture.

## Economic Impacts

Corellas impact on the Shire's economy. This includes damage to crops and pastures, damage to built assets and infrastructure, destruction of recreation turf and sporting ovals, stripping leaves from trees and making significant mess in public and private open space areas, which incurs a maintenance cost.

Large flocks of Corellas can be noisy and unpleasant, and may influence the length of time visitors choose to stay in the Shire or whether to return in the future. However, it is not been explored whether the spectacle of the birds could be turned into a positive tourism asset.

Council has also spent considerable time and cost responding to the Corella issue through developing plans and procedures and implementing various control measures.

## Environmental impacts

The key environmental impacts associated with large Corella flocks include the stripping of leaves from native and exotic trees. This impacts on the appearance of towns and creates a large mess of leaves and sticks on the ground.

Turf (both synthetic and natural) is often targeted by Corellas. They use their long beaks to scratch and dig up the turf looking for food.

In addition, the noise created by the birds has significant amenity impacts on residents and visitors, impacting on their enjoyment of our towns, parks and reserves.

## Corella management

### Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)

Currently in Victoria, the control of Corellas is being undertaken by local government in response to complaints from their residents, business owners and visitors.

To assist councils, in 2018 DELWP published the '*Guidelines for Reducing Cockatoo Damage – Wildlife Management Methods*'. These guidelines describe the ecological and behavioural traits of Corellas and explains why an integrated planned approach promises the best results in managing their impacts. DELWP also employs dedicated regional Wildlife Management Officers who assist councils in responding to the issue.

It is noted that no Corella control measures are implemented on land managed by DELWP.

### West Wimmera Shire Council

Over the past decade, there have been various attempts by Council to manage the issue. These include:

- Using hand held laser lights to disperse roosting Corellas.
- Firing non-lethal bird frightening cartridges to scare Corellas.
- Shooting with live ammunition to reduce Corella numbers.
- Advocating to the State Government to assist councils in the region to manage the issue in a coordinated way.

## **Other regional councils**

There are eight local government areas adjoining West Wimmera Shire. All of these councils are impacted by Corella flocks by varying degree and they respond to the issue in a variety of ways. Such interventions include:

- Flashing orange lights and tooting car horns
- Cracking whips
- Encouraging synthetic turf to be blue rather than green, which deters birds
- Distribution of 'clapping boards', which are left in open space areas and members of the public use them when necessary to create a loud noise to disperse birds
- Spraying ovals with water/chilli powder spray – Corellas do not like the taste
- Community education – developing and distribute brochures to inform the public
- Dividing open space areas with shade cloth
- Gas Scare Gun hire service
- Shooting birds with live ammunition

## **Legislative framework**

Wildlife control must be lawful, thoughtful and well planned. It must consider the needs of residents to protect their land, property and safety and it must also ensure animal welfare is protected.

All native wildlife is protected in Victoria. It is an offence to kill, take, control or harm wildlife under the Wildlife Act 1975. It is also an offence to use poisons to kill, destroy or take wildlife.

Anyone wishing to control wildlife must have an authorisation from DELWP. The most common authorisation is an Authority to Control Wildlife (ATCW). This authority is required when wildlife control activities occur on DELWP managed land. It is not required for a council to control wildlife on land owned or managed by a council.

### 3 Plan objectives

The objectives of Council's Corella Management Plan are:

- To be proactive in the management of Corellas.
- To lessen the impact of Corellas on West Wimmera Shire communities.
- To ensure Council's response is effective and proportionate to the impact of the issue.
- To have a suite of available options to Council when complaints are received.
- To work collaboratively with the community and relevant stakeholders including DELWP and the Victorian Police.

### 4 Review of management strategies

Although Council is not obliged by law to become involved in the management of Corellas, there is a prevailing community and business view that Council should proactively undertake Corella control measures given the economic, environmental and social costs associated with the birds.

Therefore, the discussion must turn to what management strategies are available to Council and what is the effectiveness, cost, and viability of each option. Some traditional strategies could be considered 'control' management techniques, focussed on direct impact on the birds (such as culling or dispersal). However, there are a range of additional strategies that Council can take to minimise the impact of the birds such as managing the environments that attract the birds.

Through applying the learnings from neighbouring councils, it is understood that no single management strategy alone will prove effective. A number of different techniques need to be utilised in different locations and at varying times. To be effective, the management strategies need to be:

- **Timely**, initially focussing on the scout birds at the commencement of the season.
- **Enduring**, to ensure that the issue remains managed throughout the season.
- **Diverse**, ensuring that one technique is not used to the point where it is no longer effective.



The following assessment is provided of the various strategies reasonably available to Council, being:

- Culling birds
- Dispersing birds
- Public education
- Asset design solutions
- Advocacy & partnerships

## **Strategy Option A: Culling birds**

### ***What is it?***

This option involves culling birds by shooting with live ammunition.

### ***How would this operate?***

Culling operations would be undertaken by a pest control contractor who would undertake shooting activities early in the season to deter scout birds.

### ***What are the benefits?***

Targeting scout birds is known to deter the Corella flocks that follow. From Council's own experience, this has been a reasonably effective control method undertaken in previous years. Using a contractor would reduce the operational risk to Council.

### ***What are the disadvantages?***

Destruction of wildlife is becoming increasingly less popular and culling operations may expose Council to negative publicity. It is also costly to engage a contractor to undertake culling operations. The disposal of birds would also need to be at an approval facility.

## **Strategy Option B: Dispersing birds**

### ***What is it?***

This option uses a number of different techniques to disperse Corella flocks.

### ***How would this operate?***

A variety of different methods would be used to disperse Corellas. These techniques may include:

- Hand held laser guns
- Hand held flare guns
- Stock whips
- Clapping boards
- Gas scare guns

These activities would occur at different times, in different locations within Council open space areas and recreation reserves where there are large roosting trees adjacent to townships. Additional techniques can be included and actioned once known.

***What are the benefits?***

No wildlife is injured or killed. Birds are dispersed away from Council township parks and reserves economically using existing Council resources. Council currently own scare and flare guns and ammunition. Council officers currently hold firearm licences. Deterring techniques have been successfully used by Council in the past.

***What are the disadvantages?***

Birds eventually become aware that deterring techniques do not hurt them. Therefore, techniques need to be varied in terms of method, location and time to be effective.

## **Strategy Option C: Public education**

***What is it?***

This option provides up to date information to residents and visitors about Corellas.

***How would this operate?***

Council would create an information brochure to be distributed at the commencement of each Corella season. This brochure would be available to all residents, visitors and clubs providing practical information on Corellas and how to live with them. The brochure would also be made available on Council's website and used to promote the species in a factual and positive way.

***What are the benefits?***

This strategy provides an opportunity for residents and visitors to have a greater understanding of Corellas and reconsider how they view them. The information provided can promote the birds as something to appreciate, being an identifiable part of living in the Wimmera.

***What are the disadvantages?***

There are no identified disadvantages to increasing public awareness of this issue.

## **Strategy Option D: Asset design solutions**

***What is it?***

This option examines public and private infrastructure assets and opportunities to increase their resilience to Corellas through appropriate materials and design.

***How would this operate?***

This option involves Council considering the design and maintenance of Council's infrastructure in view of limiting the destruction that can be caused by Corellas. There are many documented techniques available from the colour of synthetic turf being used to installing polyethylene pipe to prevent perching on aerials and communication cables.

***What are the benefits?***

This strategy encourages Council and residents to be proactive in protecting buildings and other infrastructure through Corella-friendly design techniques.

***What are the disadvantages?***

An initial additional cost may be incurred in relation to materials and works to ensure assets are protected from Corella damage. However, this would be offset by reducing ongoing maintenance costs in the future.

**Strategy Option E: Advocacy and partnerships*****What is it?***

This strategy supports opportunities for a coordinated approach to advocacy and the development of partnerships with relevant stakeholders.

***How would this operate?***

This strategy would involve distributing an adopted Corella Management Plan with councils throughout the region to share ideas around Corella control techniques. It would also provide an opportunity to advocate to the state government for a regional response to Corellas. Every Council is currently approaching the issue differently with varying outcomes. If one Council is effective, they simply disperse Corellas into the next municipality. The Corella Management Plan can also support coordinated external funding and grant applications.

***What are the benefits?***

An integrated regional response to the Corella issue working in conjunction with local and state governments would ensure an effective and cohesive response to Corella management within the region.

***What are the disadvantages?***

There are no identified disadvantages to everyone working together on this issue.

## SUMMARY OF MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The table below summaries the various management strategies outlined above.

Strategy	Technically possible?	Practically possible?	Effective?	Economical?	Environmentally acceptable?	Socially acceptable?
Culling	Yes	Yes	For a period	Unknown	Yes	Unknown
Dispersing birds	Yes	Yes	Dependent	Yes	Yes	Yes
Public education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Asset design solutions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Dependent	Yes	Yes
Advocacy & partnerships	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

## 5 Corella action plan

The following Corella action plan identifies each of the five management strategies and their associated actions. The plan outlines when the actions are to occur and who is responsible for ensuring that they are implemented.

The plan also takes into account a small operating budget and limited staffing levels to implement strategies.

### **Plan objectives (restated):**

The objectives of the Plan are:

- To be proactive in the management of Corellas.
- To lessen the impact of Corellas on West Wimmera Shire communities.
- To ensure Council's response is effective and proportionate to the impact of the issue.
- To have a suite of available options to Council when complaints are received.
- To work collaboratively with the community and relevant stakeholders including DELWP and the Victorian Police.

Strategy	Actions	When	Who
<b>A - Culling of birds</b>	<b>A1:</b> Engage pest controller to cull scout birds	<b>September</b> (annually)	Manager Planning and Environment
<b>B - Dispersal of birds</b>	<b>B1:</b> Gas Scare guns <b>B2:</b> Flare Guns <b>B3:</b> Laser Guns <b>B4:</b> Stockwhips	<b>Following culling operations when complaints are received</b> (NB: Response determined against nature of complaints)	Manager Planning and Environment  Ranger/Local Laws Officer
<b>C - Asset management (design solutions)</b>	<b>C1:</b> Incorporate into asset management plan	<b>Review of Asset Management Plan</b>	Council Assets Manager
<b>D - Advocate and develop partnerships</b>	<b>D1:</b> Distribute adopted Corella Management Plan to neighbouring Councils, DELWP and Victorian Police.	<b>Ongoing</b>	Manager Planning and Environment
<b>E - Improve community awareness and education</b>	<b>E1:</b> Develop a brochure to improve community awareness <b>E2:</b> Place information on Council website	<b>Once Corella Management Plan is adopted by Council.</b>	Council's Communications Officer  Manager Planning and Environment

## 6 Monitoring and review

The plan is intended to be in place for a four year period. This timeframe allows time for the effectiveness and cost of management techniques to be evaluated and adjusted.

Each season, Corella management techniques will be documented and evaluated.

### **How do we know if the plan is successful?**

The success of the Corella Management Plan will be evaluated by:

- Decreasing number of complaints to Council.
- Less damage to built infrastructure parks and reserves.
- Increased community awareness.
- Greater advocacy and collaboration between stakeholders.

A mid-way review will take place in 2022 with a report prepared for Council to advice on outcomes and any other updates to the operating environment.

A full review of this Corella Management Plan is to be undertaken in 2024.



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