Victorian Deer Control Community Network Inc.

Terms of Reference

(amended and subject to approval at the 2026 AGM)

Background

Feral deer are emerging as one of Australia's most serious environmental and agricultural threats. Victoria has possibly the largest deer population in Australia, estimated to be over a million animals. The feral deer population is expanding rapidly and invading new areas.

There are many organisations, institutions, businesses, groups and individuals in Victoria that are actively involved in feral deer control, research, campaigning or are directly impacted by feral deer. However, other than local networks, there is no state-wide forum to share information, experiences and collectively seek solutions.

The Victorian Deer Control Community Network Inc. (VDCCN) will provide a platform for state-wide collaboration over matters related to feral deer.

Vision

By 2030, a healthy and respectful collaboration of community, interest groups, institutions and government has resulted in the substantial and sustained reduction in the distribution of feral deer and the impact of feral deer on the community, environment and the economy.

Purpose

The purpose of the VDCCN is:
To substantially reduce the impact and distribution of feral deer in Victoria.

Roles

The key roles of the VDCCN are, in relation to reducing the impacts and distribution of feral deer in Victoria, to:

- Share information.
- Build knowledge and capacity.
- Raise awareness in the community of the need for effective control.
- Advocate for effective policy and control programs.
- Advocate for adequate funding and resources.
- Advocate for targeted research.
- Identify opportunities for collaboration.

Scope

The geographic scope of the VDCCN encompasses anywhere in Victoria where feral deer are present or have the potential to be present. Matters for the VDCCN are those related to reducing the impact and distribution of feral deer in Victoria.

Aims

The aims of the VDCCN are:

1/ To establish:

- A focal point to support and encourage those concerned about and directly affected by feral deer impacts in Victoria.

2/ To share knowledge on:

- Feral deer impacts and control methods.
- Coping with feral deer presence.
- Feral deer control program outcomes.
- Best practice feral deer control methods.
- Feral deer research priorities and outcomes.
- Funding and grant opportunities.

3/ To encourage and support current research taking place related to reducing the impact and distribution of feral deer in Victoria.

4/ To identify opportunities for collaboration.

5/ To advocate for:

- Effective feral deer control policies.
- Appropriate government funding to achieve effective impact reduction.
- Targeted research into furthering the understanding of:
    - feral deer ecology, population dynamics and genetics.
    - Relationship between feral deer abundance/density and feral deer related impacts.
    - Innovative and effective deer control methods.
- Targeted programs aimed at:
    - Establishment of baseline data of feral deer distribution, abundance and density.
    - Collation and presentation of up-to-date state-wide data related to deer populations, numbers culled in control and recreational programs and the effect on reducing the impact of feral deer.
    - Effective on-ground containment and control across all land tenures.
    - The on-going monitoring of feral deer impacts on a range of values.

6/ To create and maintain:

- An on-line platform for a central collection of knowledge around feral deer ecology, impacts and control methods and current research and on-ground projects.

7/ To establish effective and respectful relationships with:

- The National Deer Coordinator.
- Invasive Species Council (ISC).
- DELWP and Parks Victoria for the implementation of the Victorian Deer Control Strategy.
- Other organisations and agencies involved in feral deer advocacy, research or control.

Membership

Membership of the VDCCN is open to all individuals and organisations that are concerned about, directly affected by, or are carrying out control programs or research related to feral deer impacts in Victoria and align with the purpose of the VDCCN *viz*. ***To substantially reduce the impact and distribution of feral deer in Victoria.***

Members may have an interest in environment, caring for country, agriculture, public safety control methods, research or impact on assets.

Members are expected to:

- Demonstrate views aligned with the vision and purpose of the VDCCN.
- Have a presence at and contribute to scheduled VDCCN meetings as much as possible.
- Provide advice to the Leadership Group on the work of the VDCCN.
- Advocate the work of the VDCCN to others.
- Notify members of the VDCCN of matters on interest or risks to the VDCCN.
- Be open and honest in discussions.
- Be prepared to share personal contact details within the VDCCN.
- Be respectful and demonstrate high standards of behaviour within the VDCCN.

There will be two tiers of membership:

- **Tier 1: Organisations. (agencies, organisations, groups or other legal entities).** Tier 1 membership applications will be vetted and approved by the Committee if they demonstrate a clear and unambiguous alignment with the purpose of the VDCCN. Only Tier 1 members vote for the Committee or for motions raised at an AGM. Each Tier 1 member organisation has one vote only. Tier 1 member organisations adopt who represents them at meetings and to vote. They have discretion to change their representative from time to time without Committee approval.
- **Tier 2: Individuals.** Tier 2 members are not vetted and approved by the Committee. They may include individuals with no affiliation and those affiliated with but not formally representing agencies, organisations, groups and/or legal entities. Tier 2 members can submit nominations for and be nominated for the Committee, submit motions to the AGM and present items and initiatives to put to the Committee for discussion. Tier 2 members are not eligible to vote for the Committee or for motions raised at an AGM. The input, experience and support of Tier 2 members will be of vital importance to the VDCCN.

Membership will be encouraged and promoted through VDCCN communication tools and by direct invitation from the Chair. Prospective members will fill out a membership application form which outlines the Membership Tiers. This will be forwarded to the Executive Officer for processing and then to the Committee in the case of Tier 1 membership.

Membership forfeiture

The Chair, in consultation with the committee, may disqualify a member from the VDCCN should their behaviour consistently and demonstrably conflict with membership expectations as outlined above. This decision will have no recourse.

Affiliate Organisations

Affiliate organisations include those involved in feral deer control or research that may choose not to be Tier 1 members due to potential conflicts of interest on policy matters or associations. This may include State or Federal Government departments or other organisations involved in feral deer control or research that may be in a similar position.

Affiliate organisations are not considered members of the VDCCN and as such have no voting or nomination rights, nor expectations that they support or otherwise any position raised by the VDCCN. Nevertheless, their contribution and involvement in matters related to the VDCCN are considered invaluable. Affiliate organisations will be kept informed of VDCCN discussions and activities and their input and contribution (without prejudice) to VDCCN meetings and discussions will be sought and encouraged.

Whether an affiliate or not, the VDCCN will seek open communication with all relevant government departments, agencies and other organisations.

Leadership Group

The Leadership Group consists of a Chair, up to 10 other Committee members and an Executive Officer.

Committee

The Committee is elected by Tier 1 members at an AGM, from nominations received by Tier 1 and 2 members. The Committee comprises individuals, committee members do not represent Tier 1 organisations. The Committee can have up to 11 individual members, one of which becomes the Chair.

Five of the committee members will be specialist positions.

The five specialist positions include a person having experience with and knowledge of:

1. The impact of feral deer on natural landscapes.
2. The impact of feral deer on Peri-urban environments.
3. The impact of feral deer on agricultural and rural values.
4. Working with Community Groups and networks.
5. Communications and media.

Should nominations for these positions not come from the VDCCN membership, the Committee may leave them vacant and seek to co-opt someone into these specialist Committee positions.

The remaining six positions will be general in nature.

If there are more than 11 nominations, the Tier 1 membership will vote and those with the most votes based on their specialist or general category will form the Committee.

Should a committee position become vacant, the Committee has discretion to call for nominations and a vote if needed, co-opt an individual to meet the skill set or hold over until the next AGM.

The Committee will support the Chair as part of the Leadership Group, assisting the Chair with strategy, direction, timely decisions and tasks of the network, and taking action.

Chair

The Chair will be selected from and by the Committee. This appointment will be by nomination from the Committee at a general meeting immediately following the AGM. If there is more than one nomination the Committee will vote and the nominee with the most votes will be elected Chair. The Chair will be responsible for arranging and presiding over meetings, ensuring good governance, keeping the network to its purpose, and ruling over disputes. If the Chair is absent for a meeting or a time period, the Committee will nominate a member to act as Chair.

Executive Officer

The Executive Officer will provide support to the Chair to ensure the effective and efficient functioning of the VDCCN and manage its day to day activities including providing meeting agendas and minute taking. The Executive Officer will engage and maintain relationships with all VDCCN members and other organisations involved in feral deer control and facilitate the role of information sharing, advocacy and running of the network, bringing issues to the VDCCN for discussion. The Executive Officer will be appointed by or may be removed by the Committee.

Term

The Chair and Committee members will be appointed for a term of twelve months. At the end of that period, positions will remain in place until vacated at the AGM. The existing Committee members may be re-nominated and re-appointed through election for further terms at that AGM. The existing Chair may be re-nominated and re-appointed at the subsequent general committee meeting.

The purpose and effectiveness of the VDCCN will be reviewed in three years from inception and a decision made then whether to continue.

Meetings

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held to:

- Receive the Annual Report from the current Chair on the activities and performance of the VDCCN;
- Vacate all current Committee positions including the Chair;
- Elect the Committee for the next 12 months;
- Determine a membership fee schedule if required; and
- Consider any motions put forward for amendment, variation or modification of the Terms of Reference.

Nominations for the Committee positions and motions to be tabled at the AGM may come from Tier 1 and 2 members. These must be sent to the Executive Officer 2 weeks before the AGM and nominations and motions must be seconded by a Tier 1 or 2 member. Only Tier 1 members can vote for the Committee or for motions raised at an AGM. The Executive Officer will oversee the election process of the Committee.

An extra-ordinary AGM may be called if supported by 2/3 majority of the Tier 1 membership to consider a motion or motions put.

Leadership Group Meetings

Meetings of the Leadership Group will aim to be held monthly or as required by the Chair. Leadership Group meetings will be presided over by the Chair.

General Meetings

General meetings of the Victorian Deer Control Community Network will aim to be at least quarterly or more often as required. All VDCCN members can attend meetings along with invitees. Subgroups may be established for particular issues and these meetings will be arranged separately and reported back to the VDCCN membership at a general meeting.

Meeting Forum

It is expected that the Leadership Group meetings and general meetings of the VDCCN will be mainly online, however there may be opportunities to meet in person from time to time.

Governance

Decision Making

Issues or actions put forward by the membership of the VDCCN at a general meeting will go the Leadership Group meeting for determination. A quorum of half the Committee plus one is required for decisions at the Leadership Group meeting. These and other Committee decisions will principally seek to be made by consensus (i.e. members are satisfied with the decision even though it may not be their first choice). If consensus is not possible, the decision will be that of the majority of Committee members present at the Leadership Group meeting, one of which must include the Chair.

Advocacy

The VDCCN may advocate, campaign or take action on a position that is agreed to by the Leadership Group. This may not be supported by all members. Members are not required to overtly endorse or support each and every decision made by the VDCCN Leadership Group or the position of other members.

The VDCCN members may from time to time seek to advocate or campaign on a position that is in alignment with the purpose of the VDCCN but not supported by the VDCCN Leadership Group. In this case VDCCN members are free to form alliances on a position and work to that outcome but must not purport to represent the views of the VDCCN.

Representing the VDCCN

Only the Chair, or a person delegated by the Chair, may speak publicly or make representation on behalf of the VDCCN.

Financial arrangements

The VDCCN is an incorporated body. In 2026/27 the Invasive Species Council will continue to hold and provide administrative support for the remainder of the DEECA grant funds, in accordance with the requirements of the VDCCN Committee, until June 2027. Now that incorporation has been fulfilled, the VDCCN will apply in its own right for funding from time to time.

Insurance

The VDCCN is a financial member of Landcare Victoria Inc. (LVI) which includes the appropriate insurance package.

Membership Fees

The VDCCN will seek to operate without the need for membership fees. Should circumstances change and funds are needed for VDCCN functioning (such as insurance), a membership fee may be introduced by the agreement of the Leadership Group and vote at the AGM.

Privacy

The VDCCN respects members rights to privacy. Members will not forward any personal information or quote others to any persons or organisations without members consent. Minutes and sound recordings will not be distributed outside the VDCCN.

Dispute Resolution

In the event of a dispute within the VDCCN membership, the Chair will intervene and take the issue to the Committee for a decision on resolution.

Amendment, Modification or Variation

This Terms of Reference may be amended, varied or modified by a motion put at the AGM and the subsequent majority vote of Tier 1 membership at the AGM.