



Department of
Primary Industries and
Regional Development

Protect
Grow
Innovate

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo Plan

2026 - 2031



Cover photograph

Sulphur-crested cockatoo (*Cacatua galerita*). (Image credit – birdsoftheworld.org)

Version

June 2026

Important Disclaimer

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Cockatoos feeding in paddock

Introduction

The sulphur-crested cockatoo (*Cacatua galerita*), although native to eastern and northern Australia, has become an invasive pest species outside its native range in Western Australia (WA), where pet birds have escaped or been deliberately released from captivity.

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) has been controlling the introduced birds since 1977 across the Shires of Chittering, Swan, Murray, Mandurah and Waroona. These birds compete with the local native cockatoos and parrots and add further pest issues to the horticultural and agriculture industries. It is estimated they could potentially cause agricultural damage of \$1.8-8.5 million over 50 years if they become widely established in WA.

This plan outlines the activities required by DPIRD over the next 5 years to work towards eradication, as this is still considered a feasible goal.

DPIRD recognises that landholders, the broader community, local governments and other state government agencies play a key role in assisting with the detection and eradication of pest birds and will seek support from affected groups to implement this Plan.

Aim

To eradicate sulphur-crested cockatoos outside their native range in WA and prevent further incursions.

Governance

Landholders are responsible for managing pests on their land, while DPIRD is responsible for protecting WA's agricultural resources from biosecurity threats under the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007* (BAM Act) and associated regulations.

The Invasive Species Operations section leads the implementation and reporting on this plan. The Invasive Species Planning section will evaluate this plan in 2031.

New detections will be managed in accordance with this plan.

Important links

- DPIRD, (2025) *Pest Parrot and Cockatoo Management report 2025*. [Pest parrot and cockatoo management in Western Australia](#)
- Sulphur-crested cockatoo [Biosecurity-alert WA](#), DPIRD.

Report sightings via:

- An online report at mypestguide.dpiird.wa.gov.au or
- Use the MyPestGuide reporter app, or
- Phone: (08) 9368 3080, or
- Email: padis@dpiird.wa.gov.au

Context

The problem

The sulphur-crested cockatoo (*Cacatua galerita*) is a native species of eastern and northern Australia including the Kimberley region in WA, but it has established beyond its natural range into the areas south of the 20° latitude in WA, either as escaped or deliberately released birds from captivity.

It is a large white bird 40 cm – 51 cm long, with a distinctive long, yellow crest on top of its head, slightly larger than the white corellas and galahs that the cockatoos sometimes associate with in mixed flocks. They are monogamous birds that usually produce one clutch a year of 2-3 eggs. However, they are slow breeders, only reaching sexual maturity at 7 years old, a characteristic which assists in limiting their spread and making the eradication goal easier to attain.

Their invasive characteristics and impacts include:

- Forming large flocks which damage broadacre, fruit and nut crops, and timber, eating stock feed, stored grain and hay and fouling and damaging human infrastructure.
- Competing with native parrot and cockatoo species (especially, the rare and endangered Red-tailed Black Carnaby's and Baudin's cockatoos) for food and nesting sites.
- Damage to mature trees and solid infrastructure because of the requirement for them to chew to maintain bill condition and length.
- A vector for the spread of diseases, specifically, beak and feather disease.
- Creating noise pollution at feeding and nesting sites.

Legal Status

Sulphur-crested cockatoos are native to northern WA and protected under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (administered by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, DBCA) in that region.

Two pieces of legislation enable the control of the cockatoos outside their native range:

- For all areas south of the 20° latitude, the birds are a declared pest under section 22 (2) of the BAM Act and assigned to the control category 'C1 – exclusion' (Figure 1) ([Western Australian Organism List DPIRD](#)). All landholders have a responsibility under the BAM Act to control declared pests on land under their management.
- Under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*, the bird is declared "Acclimatised Fauna", which means that within the south-west land division a person can control the species without first obtaining a damage permit from DBCA.

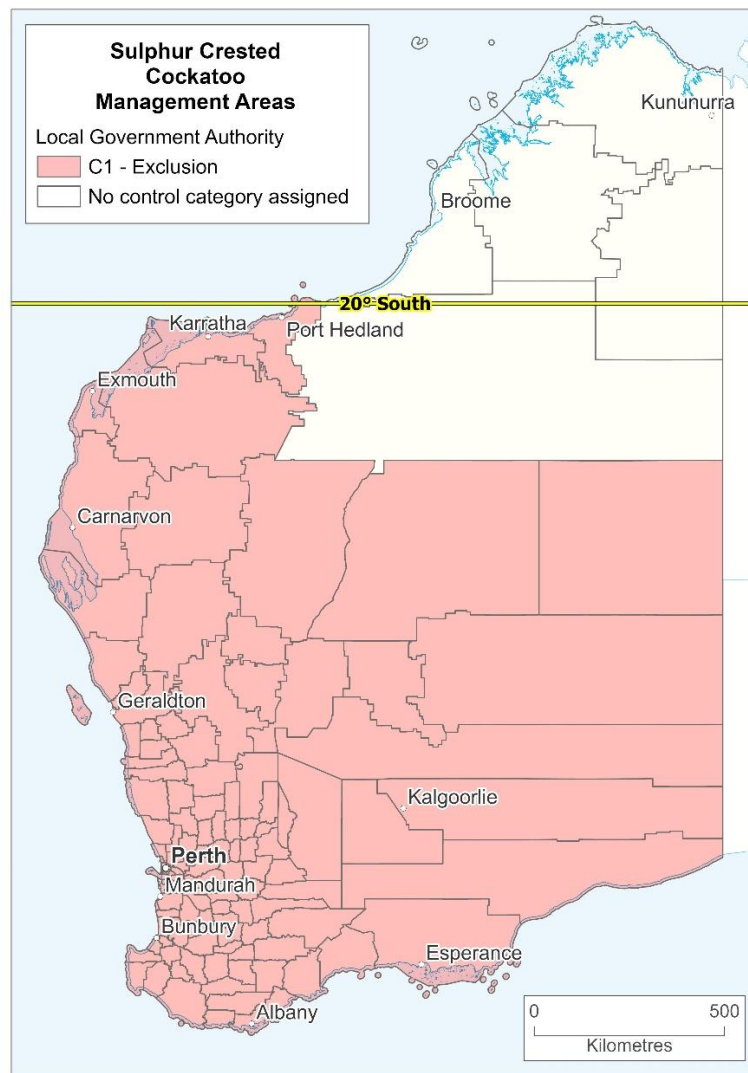


Figure 1: Sulphur-crested cockatoo (*Cacatua galerita*) legal and control status in WA under the BAM Act ([Western Australian Organism List \(WAOL\) | DPIRD](#)).

A permit is required from DPIRD to keep sulphur-crested cockatoos in captivity, in areas outside their native range, i.e. areas south of the 20° latitude, with no restrictions for keeping the birds north of the 20° parallel, as they are naturally occurring there.

A fauna possessing (pet keeper's) licence is also required under Regulation 36 of the *Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2018*, administered by DBCA ([CEO licensing guideline – Fauna possessing \(pet keeper's\)](#)).

There are strict requirements for keeping birds in captivity including cage quality and size and numbers of birds allowed. As part of the permit, owners are required to report if their bird escapes. Currently, there are over 180 active permits, representing more than 330 sulphur-crested cockatoos being kept in captivity.

Distribution

An Australian native bird, the range of the sulphur-crested cockatoo extends from the Kimberley region in WA, east to Cape York and south to Tasmania, however, introduced populations occur in the southwestern region of WA (Figure 2).



Figure 2 – Distribution of the sulphur-crested cockatoo in Australia, native to orange regions, introduced in purple regions ([ICUN Redlist](#)).

Distribution in WA

The sulphur-crested cockatoo was recorded in the wild outside its natural distribution in WA as early as 1935, introduced as a result of accidental or deliberate release of pet birds. Small numbers were observed, ranging from 2 to 28 in the localities of Byford, Coolup, Mandurah, Guildford, Kalamunda, Pinjarra and West Swan. In 1977 the bird was declared a pest and eradication activities commenced. Intermittent control activities have been undertaken since.

Currently, there are only 2 key areas where the introduced populations occur: Meelon – Pinjarra; and the Mandurah estuary (which includes Lake Clifton, Point Grey and Lake Mealup) with several isolated birds remaining at 4 other locations (Figure 3).

Satellite tracking of the birds has established that the bird's range is limited and that the separate populations do not seem to mix. These characteristics, along with being a slow breeding bird, have meant that the number of birds has not increased rapidly or spread further.

All locations where the birds have been detected are the result of escaped birds. Table 1 summarises the current sites and their eradication status.

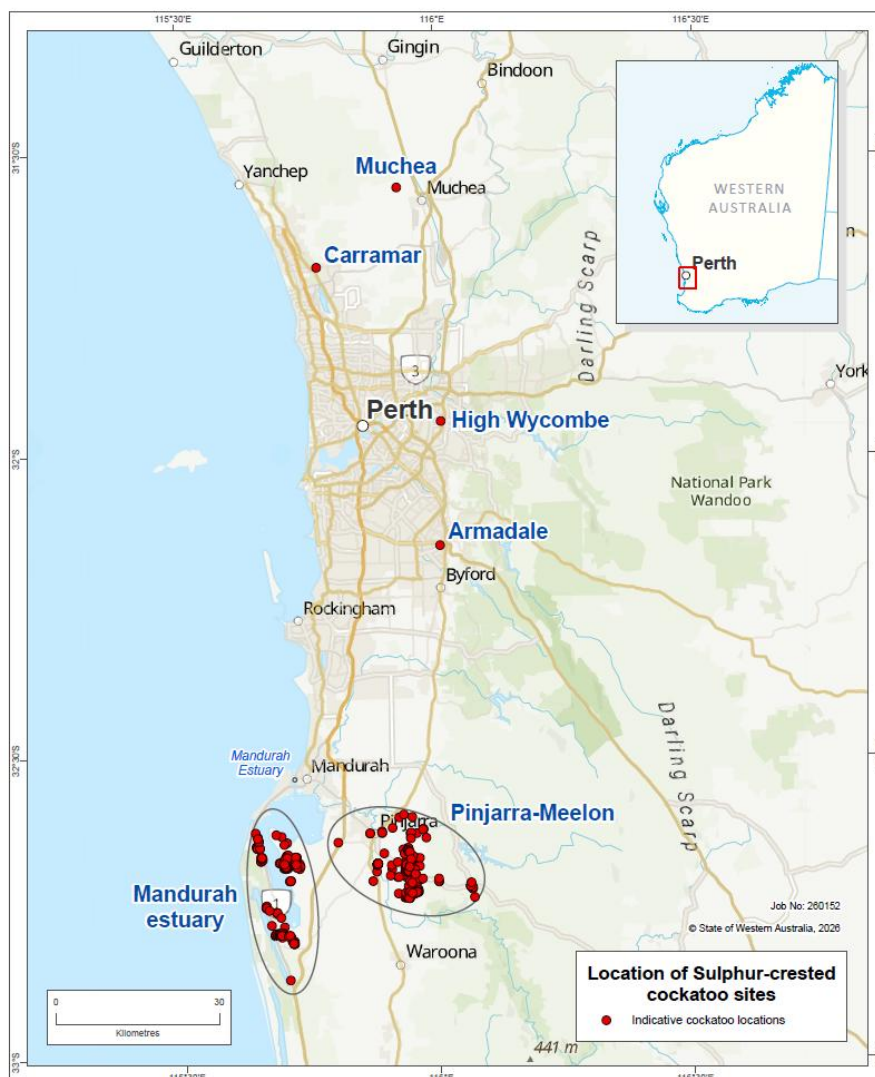


Figure 3 – Indicative location of sulphur-crested cockatoos outside their native range.

Table 1 – Current sulphur-crested cockatoo sites

Site	First detected	Description	Number of birds (estimate)	Expected eradication timeframe
Muchea	Late 1980's	Last control efforts were in 2025	1	2027
Carramar	2024	An aviary escapee	1	2027
Armadale	2023	An aviary escapee	1	2027
High Wycombe	2026	An aviary escapee	1	2027
Pinjarra/Meelon	1981	Last control efforts were in 2026	40-50	2031
Mandurah estuary (Point Grey/Lake Mealup/Lake Clifton)	1977	Last control efforts were in 2025	60-70	2035

Control methods

Netting

The most effective method for controlling the birds is using a bungee net to trap the birds when they are on the ground feeding (Figure 4). Pre-feeding, undertaken during the drier months, is required for several weeks, sometimes months prior to activating the bungee net trap. Birds caught with the net are euthanised humanely. Any non-target species caught are released immediately unharmed.

Firearms

Firearms are used to remove residual birds at roosting sites when bird numbers are low or the birds become net shy. All use of firearms is in alignment with the *Firearms Act 2024*.

Alpha-chloralose

Alpha-chloralose is a licenced poison, requiring a permit and used to control problem pigeons, sparrows and starlings. This substance is being considered for use on other pest birds, including cockatoos, and is considered humane as it produces a hypnotic effect by anaesthetising the brain of affected animals, after which, the birds can be euthanised humanely.

Surveillance

Several birds have been fitted with satellite trackers to assist DPIRD officers in understanding bird movements and detecting roost sites. This has revealed that the birds stay close to their original detection site but will often choose different roosting sites each night.

Surveillance cameras and acoustic recorders have also been utilised to monitor the birds' activities, assisting in determining the most effective areas for undertaking eradication activities, or detecting singular outlier birds that have become difficult to locate.



Figure 4 – Bungee netting set up for sulphur-crested cockatoo capture.

Quarantine inspections

Animal inspections are carried out at the border checkpoints, Eucla and Kununurra, and Perth domestic airport to monitor birds being brought in, ensuring they have the requisite bird keeping permits.

All activities are undertaken in accordance with the *Animal Welfare Act 2002*.

Actions

Action	Task
Review legislation	Review the declaration status for sulphur-crested cockatoos under the BAM Act.
Detect	Follow up on any public reported sightings of the birds to confirm identity and numbers and whether new escapees.
	Continue to improve public understanding on the difference between sulphur-crested cockatoos and local native corellas using various media platforms to increase accurate reporting of sulphur crested cockatoo sightings.
	Continue targeted communications around the Mandurah estuary area, via various media platforms, outlining the problem, program and seek assistance from the community in surveillance/reporting of the cockatoos.
	Use camera and acoustic tower surveillance technologies to assist in locating populations of the birds, in particular, at the Mandurah estuary site.
Improve bird keeping compliance and enforcement	Increase inspection and compliance of licenced bird keepers to reduce the risk of birds escaping captivity or being deliberately released in the future.
	Undertake trace investigations of detected escapees, if possible.
	Consider tagging/micro chipping as a requirement for keeping sulphur-crested cockatoos to determine the owner of escaped birds.
Control	Complete eradication activities for remaining birds at sites where single birds exist (e.g. Carramar, Armadale Muchea, and High Wycombe).
	Focus eradication activities at the Pinjarra/Meelon site as a priority.
	Learnings from eradication activities at Pinjarra/Meelon will be used to inform the approach taken at the Mandurah estuary site.
Improve technology	Continue to investigate and adopt alternative control methods.
Monitor	Continue to undertake regular surveillance (using visual, camera, and/or acoustic towers methods) for 2 years from last bird eradicated to ensure no further birds present.
Report	Provide an annual update on the current status of the Sulphur-crested cockatoo sites.
Declare area freedom	Declare sites free of sulphur-crested cockatoos if no further birds detected after 2 consecutive years of surveillance.