

30 June 2025

emailed to: pf2050discussion@doc.govt.nz

SUBMISSION TO DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION ON PREDATOR FREE 2050 STRATEGY REVIEW DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

Thank you for the opportunity to present this submission on the Predator Free 2050 Strategy (the Strategy) review discussion document.

People are drawn to New Zealand and to the Queenstown Lakes district (QLD or the district) to live, visit and recreate because of its spectacular natural environment. The natural ecosystems and biodiversity within the district not only have intrinsic value, but are also critical both for community wellbeing and to the visitor economy. QLD has an engaged community, passionate about preserving and protecting the outstanding environment.

In 2019, Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) declared a climate and ecological emergency and released its first Climate Action Plan. In June 2022, QLDC released its second action plan, the Climate and Biodiversity Plan 2022-2025, which highlighted the importance of addressing the dual crises together. QLDC recently released its draft Climate and Biodiversity Plan 2025-2028 for public feedback, which places Te Taiao (the natural world) at the centre of the plan, and focuses on “accelerating transformation through partnership”.

QLDC understands that the purpose of this consultation is to seek input on the Predator Free 2050 Strategy for the next five years, in particular the 2030 goals and the national target predator species list.

QLDC is generally supportive of the strategy’s goals but would like to see greater ambition in some key areas.

For example, under Focus Area 1, the goal is to increase community participation in predator control by 25%. QLDC considers that this should be more ambitious, for example increased to 50%. Regardless of the percentage increase sought, achieving this will not be possible without increased support and funding from multiple sources, including central government. In light of the recent disestablishment of Predator Free 2050 Ltd., it is important that central government clearly outlines its continued commitment, role and funding responsibilities in delivering the Predator Free 2050 Strategy.

QLDC does not support the proposal to retain the current national target species list that doesn’t include feral cats.

QLDC’s Draft Climate and Biodiversity Plan 2025-2028 has an action around cat management. Key initiatives will include analysis of options, policy interventions, education and targeted actions to mitigate the harm feral cats cause to native species. With the recent release of takahē in the Greenstone Valley in 2024 and the Rees Valley in 2025¹, and populations of threatened fauna such as kea, black-fronted tern, rock wren, Otago skink, kārearea, orange spotted gecko and long tailed bat² at risk of further decline, the district cannot delay targeting of feral cats.

Whilst the technology to effectively eradicate feral cats as a pest species is constantly evolving, including them on the Predator Free 2050 target species list will encourage innovation to address this challenge. The focus of previous predator free strategies on particular predator species, rather than the complete suite of predators, has limited progress towards achieving the biodiversity outcomes sought.

¹ <https://www.doc.govt.nz/news/media-releases/2025-media-releases/takahe-released-to-grow-wild-population/>

² <https://southernlakessanctuary.org.nz/the-sanctuary/biodiversity/>

QLDC calls for more investment into predator trapping and monitoring

QLDC's draft Climate and Biodiversity Plan 2025-2028 also includes an action to support innovation in predator trapping and species monitoring. QLDC would like to see similar support at a national level, given the urgency of action required to safeguard the progress that has been achieved to date, let alone what is needed to move forward and achieve the Predator Free 2050 goals.

QLDC would not like to be heard at any hearings that result from this consultation process.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'M. D. M. Morss'.

Michelle Morss
General Manager Strategy and Policy