

Dumut and Adelong Times

AND BATLOW DISTRICT NEWS

Friday, October 6, 2017

\$1.40 Inc. GST

NPWS budget cuts affecting wild dogs

Frances Vinall

The National Parks and Wildlife Service has been under a storm of criticism from local farmers for not funding a full-time pest controller around Goobarragandra, Talbingo, and Gilmore.

Landholders have lost dozens of lambs and sheep to wild dogs this season who are coming in from Kosciuszko National Park, and they insist it's NPWS's responsibility to manage the dogs with trappers in the park.

However, Public Service Associ-

ation Organiser Latu Sailosi said National Parks can only work with the funding they are given from the state government.

"There have been declining resources and funding provided by the state government to NPWS," he said.

"This critical funding allows NPWS to provide support for strategic landscape programs, including wild dogs management.

"At a time when NSW is in surplus, and with relatively stable economic conditions, it is an unanswered question why the

NSW Government has slashed the NPWS 2016/17 and 2017/18 budget by \$121 million."

The Public Service Association said a range of services that directly affect farmers have been chipped away by funding cuts, including noxious weed identification and control, response to invertebrate species such as the Australian Plague Locust, and fire-fighting capability.

A restructure overseen by the Berejiklian government called 'Future Parks' is likely to exacerbate the problem, Mr Sailosi said.

"Whole specialist sections or groups will be redundant including pest management officers," he said.

"NPWS capacity to fight fires, noxious weed, wild dogs and pest animal management programs are critical reduced. These programs contain high risks components, but are designed to protect our biosecurity assets that include the agriculture and horticulture industry sectors.

"NPWS require more funding not less, so it can maintain its specialist pest management officers

to deliver effective programs in rural communities."

In September, Labor Environmental Spokesperson Penny Sharpe took the government to task in a senate estimates hearing on the loss of 49 park rangers - 20 per cent of total ranger staff - since the Coalition came to power.

However, an Office of Environment and Heritage (which encompasses NPWS) spokesperson has said that the removal of corporate costs accounted for the lower budget figures.