



# Strategic Plan

## Context

The survival in the wild of the world's largest carnivorous marsupial, the Tasmanian devil (*Sarcophilus harrisi*), is threatened. The Tasmanian devil population has been in continuous decline since the mid-1990s due to the ravages of Devil Facial Tumour Disease (DFTD) which is characterised by gross lesions around the mouth, head and neck.

The scientific consensus is that DFTD is a transmissible cancer. Death by starvation and breakdown of bodily functions appears to occur in every case, usually within a year. The persistence of the disease at low population densities suggests that extinction of the devil in its natural range will occur. The Australian community is determined to do everything possible to prevent this from happening. Many people around the world share this goal.

As a direct result of DFTD, the Tasmanian devil now is listed as Endangered under Tasmanian and national legislation.

The work needed to save the Tasmanian devil is urgent and offers tremendous scope for collaboration and contribution. The Save the Tasmanian Devil Program provides the means for the Australian and Tasmanian Governments, the University of Tasmania, charitable trusts and other collaborators and contributors to work together in an integrated way to address the threat presented by DFTD.

## Vision

An enduring and ecologically functional population of Tasmanian devils in the wild in Tasmania.

## Objectives

1. Maintain the genetic diversity of the Tasmanian devil population.
2. Maintain the Tasmanian devil population in the wild.
3. Manage the ecological impacts of a reduced Tasmanian devil population over its natural range.

## Strategies

### Maintain genetic diversity of Tasmanian devil populations

1. Understand DFTD transmission and develop and implement husbandry and management practices to minimise transmission risk.
2. Understand the genetic diversity of the Tasmanian devil population.
3. Understand the nature of DFTD and its relationship with the genome and the biology of the Tasmanian devil throughout the natural range of the species.
4. Develop and implement a comprehensive [insurance population strategy](#).



### **Maintain Tasmanian devil populations in the wild**

1. Understand the progression and impact of DFTD on the wild Tasmanian devil population.
2. Develop and implement measures to suppress DFTD in the wild Tasmanian devil population.
3. Identify potentially resistant genomes and manage the Tasmanian devil population to favour the persistence of those genomes.
4. Develop and apply vaccines and treatments for DFTD.
5. Build an insurance population to levels which will allow reintroduction of Tasmanian devils into their natural range

### **Manage the ecological impacts of reduced Tasmanian devil populations in their natural range**

1. Understand the ecological consequences of a reduced Tasmanian devil population over the natural range.
2. Develop and implement management strategies to minimise negative impacts, including those associated with feral predator populations such as cats and foxes.
3. Minimise the loss of diversity of the organisms associated with Tasmanian devils, including commensal, symbiotic and parasitic flora and fauna, by understanding their nature, diversity and variability and by maintaining wild populations of devils with a full natural suite of associated organisms.

### **Principles**

1. Understanding of DFTD should be in order to inform disease management actions rather than as an end in itself.
2. Understanding should be based on sound science and peer review.
3. Effective collaboration should be encouraged and facilitated so that tasks are undertaken by those best suited to them.
4. Attention and resources should be focussed on those tasks with the best prospects of contributing to saving the devil.
5. The Tasmanian and world community should be kept informed of progress and those who can assist should be engaged.
6. Actions should be consistent with, and guided by, a statutory Tasmanian Devil Recovery Plan.



## Implementation

The core activity of the Save the Tasmanian Devil Program is funded by the Australian and Tasmanian Governments and is overseen by a Steering Committee involving Government stakeholders, the University of Tasmania, non-government stakeholders and experts. The core activity provides a nucleus about which collaborators are making valuable contributions. There is significant potential to further develop collaboration and contribution to the Program. A statutory threatened species Recovery Plan and specific strategies such as the Strategic Framework for the Insurance population and Scientific Research Strategy support this plan. These documents are reviewed and revised as circumstances change and adopted once endorsed by the Steering Committee. Implementation of the core activity of the Program will be detailed in the Save The Tasmanian Devil Program Business Plan 2008-2013.