

2024-2025 PREDATOR MONITORING

Covalent Lithium

ecoscape

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2024-2025 Predator Monitoring
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This document should be cited as 'Ecoscape (Australia) Pty Ltd (2025) *2024-2025 Predator Monitoring*, prepared for Covalent Lithium

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SUMMARY

Ecoscope was engaged by Covalent Lithium in 2024 to provide the following services for the project:

- collate images of introduced predator species and activity from camera-monitored Malleefowl mounds and annual Chuditch monitoring cameras
- collect data on introduced predators that may be captured during Chuditch trapping events (annual monitoring or pre-clearance trapping)
- collate data based on the Covalent site Fauna Register and data from feral predator trapping events.

This monitoring program was developed to be in accordance with condition 3-1 (4) of Ministerial Statement (MS) 1199.

The results of the monitoring and review of the recorded images of introduced predators captured on camera between 2019 to 2024-25 has provided an indication of the level of introduced predator abundance within the project Development Envelope (DE) and adjacent undisturbed areas.

Twelve Cats sightings were recorded in 2019-20; seven in 2020-21; 10 in 2021-22, 16 in 2022-23, 13 in 2023-24, and 21 in 2024-25, indicating a persistent level of Cat presence within and close to the DE. There were 13 records of Wild Dog during 2023-24. These records represent a significant ($p < 0.001$) increase in the number of Cat and Dog events in the 2024-25 monitoring period. A single Fox was recorded in 2024-25 compared to three occasions during 2023-24.

To provide introduced predator abundance data, we recommend the following aspects are monitored annually:

- continue trail camera monitoring during the egg incubation season (September to January) of all Malleefowl mounds that have been identified as Annual monitored mounds, within and adjacent to the DE
- maintain a register of introduced predator sightings within a fauna database and report annually on number and location
- collate image data and report on status of all monitored mounds annually.

1 INTRODUCTION

Covalent Lithium is developing the Earl Grey Lithium Project (EGLP) located at Mt Holland which will include the construction and operation of a fully integrated mine, concentrator, and refinery in Western Australia. The project is centred on the Earl Grey hard-rock lithium deposit located 105 km south of Southern Cross in Western Australia and approximately 500 km east of Perth. It is owned by a 50-50 joint venture (JV) between subsidiaries of Wesfarmers Pty Ltd (WES:ASX) and Sociedad Química y Minera de Chile S.A. (SQM: NYSE). Covalent is the manager for the JV and is responsible for the development and operation of the project.

The survey area includes the habitats of two conservation-listed fauna species, the Malleefowl (*Leipoa ocellata*) and the Chuditch (*Dasyurus geoffroii*). Both species are listed as vulnerable (VU) under both the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and the Western Australian *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* and are considered as Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES).

Monitoring of Malleefowl mounds was undertaken during the mound building and egg laying summer season of October 2024 to March 2025. Trail cameras were deployed on mounds to capture activity of Malleefowl and other fauna species including introduced predators.

1.1 PROJECT SCOPE

Ecoscope was engaged to provide the following:

- the number and spatial location of introduced predators from the monitoring of known Malleefowl mounds, and other sources
- a temporal spatial distribution of recorded introduced predators.

1.2 SURVEY AREA

1.2.1 REGIONAL LOCATION

The survey area is in the Shire of Yilgarn in the Goldfields region of Western Australia, about 100km south of Southern Cross. The Development Envelope (DE) is within the Great Western Woodlands (GWW) and is approximately 1,984 ha in extent (**Map 1**). The GWW is a 16 million hectare area extending from the wheatbelt to the edge of the deserts and is the largest intact area of Mediterranean Woodland on earth (DEC 2010). The GWW includes open eucalypt woodlands (63%), Mallee eucalypt woodlands, shrublands and grasslands (Fox, Mcnee & Douglas 2016). Less common habitats in the GWW include granite outcrops, banded ironstone formations, salt lakes and freshwater wetlands (Fox, Mcnee & Douglas 2016).

The DE is in the Southern Cross Subregion of the Coolgardie Bioregion of the Interim Biogeographic Regionalism for Australia (IBRA) classification system (Government & Energy 2017). The dominant land-uses in this bioregion are Crown Reserves and Unallocated Crown Land (66.7%), grazing on native pastures (17%), conservation (11.5%) and dryland agriculture (2.3%) (Cowan, Graham & McKenzie 2001a). The greenstone hills, alluvial valleys and broad plains of calcareous earths support diverse eucalypt woodlands. The uplands support Mallee woodlands and scrub-heaths on sandplains, gravelly sandplains and lateritic breakaways, chains of salt lakes with dwarf shrublands of samphire occur in the valleys (Cowan, Graham & McKenzie 2001b).

1.2.2 COVALENT LITHIUM ENVIRONMENTAL APPROVALS

The monitoring of introduced predators is required by Covalent's EGLP approval conditions as outlined in MS 1199 and described in more detailed in the *EGLP Terrestrial Fauna Environmental Management Plan* (TFEMP) (Covalent 2022).

Condition 3-4-1 (4) in MS 1199 requires that Covalent minimises proposal-related direct or adverse indirect impacts to Malleefowl from feral animals within the DE.

The key TFEMP objectives are to:

- minimise project-related direct or adverse indirect impacts to Malleefowl from feral animals in the DE by controlling feral animals within and a round (3 km buffer) the DE
- minimise the potential risk of a decline of Malleefowl and Chuditch populations due to predation from introduced predator fauna.

2 METHOD

2.1.1 TRAIL CAMERA MONITORING

The 2024-25 predator monitoring deployed 62 cameras across Malleefowl and Chuditch monitoring sites from which predator data was gathered (4,176 camera nights). Camera Locations are listed in **Appendix 1** and shown on **Map 1**.

2.1.1.1 Malleefowl Monitoring

For Malleefowl monitoring, trail cameras were positioned at mounds within and adjacent to the DE. They were mounted on brackets attached to star pickets installed close to the mound and high enough off the ground to view the interior of the mound (**Image 1**).

The cameras were deployed annually from October to March.



Image 1: Monitored mound showing location of post and camera

2.1.1.2 Chuditch Monitoring

For the Chuditch monitoring, 38 trail cameras were deployed for 6 nights in July 2024 as part of the annual monitoring. Cameras were spaced at 500 m intervals, with a camera located between each cage trap. Eighteen cameras were located at the impact site (within the DE) and 20 at the control site (Jilbadji Nature Reserve).

2.1.1.3 Image Review

Images from the trail cameras were downloaded for review and collation of species recorded.

Recorded images of introduced predators were reviewed to determine areas of activity. This was achieved by logging the number of activity events recorded by each camera. An activity event is defined as an image, or group of images, separated by at least 2 hours.

2.1.2 COVALENT FAUNA REGISTER

Covalent maintains a register of fauna sightings by their staff and contractors, the *Covalent Lithium Fauna Sightings and Deaths Register*, known as the 'Fauna Register'. Such records are incorporated into the following results.

3 RESULTS

3.1 INTRODUCED PREDATOR MONITORING

Monitoring effort over time is expressed as total camera nights and is provided in **Table 1**. The difference in camera nights is directly related to the number of Malleefowl mounds being monitored, i.e. the 50 mounds in 2019-20 included "5 Year" and "Annual" mounds whereas the 24 mounds in 2024-25 were the Annual mounds only, plus the cameras used for Chuditch monitoring. The mean "total camera nights" is 3,987 nights.

Table 1: Monitoring effort

Year	Malleefowl monitoring		Chuditch monitoring		Total camera nights
	No. cameras	No. nights per camera	No. of cameras	No. of nights per camera	
2019-20	50	92	-	-	4,600
2020-21	41	99	-	-	4,059
2021-22	23	113	-	-	2,599
2022-23	30	145	60	5	4,650
2023-24	27	131	60	5	3,837
2024-25	24	166*	38	5	4,176

*mean number of nights

The results of the introduced predator monitoring for each of the 6 years (2019-2025) are summarised in **Table 2**. The location of introduced predator events for the 2024-25 monitoring period are indicated on map **Map 1** with the total introduced predator events (2019-2025) shown on **Map 5**.

Twenty-four Malleefowl mounds were monitored in 2024-25 (8 inside the DE and 16 outside) (**Map 1**), capturing eleven Wild Dog/Dingo ('Dog'), ten Feral Cat ('Cat'), and one European Fox ('Fox') events. Chuditch monitoring cameras detected an additional two Cat events within the DE (**Map 1**). Another cat was trapped in a cage trap during the 2024-25 Chuditch monitoring program, also within the DE. The Covalent Fauna Register reported an additional two Dog sightings and nine Cat sightings within the DE. In total this represents the highest numbers of Dog and Cat events since the monitoring program began in 2019.

Table 2: Number of introduced predator events recorded

Year	Dog	Cat	Fox	Total
2019-20	1	12	0	13
2020-21	1	7	0	8
2021-22	0	10	2	12
2022-23*	3	16	0	19
2023-24*	1	13	3	17
2024-25*	13	21	1	35

*includes records from Chuditch monitoring, LOM survey (2022 only) and Covalent Fauna Register

3.1.1 DATA REVIEW

Interrogation of the raw data indicates that 27 individual Malleefowl mounds had introduced predator visitations recorded between 2019-20 and 2024-25 (**Table 5** in **Appendix One**). This data is spatially displayed on **Map 1-5**.

The total number of predator events from 2023-24 to 2024-25 monitoring periods has increased by 18 events (51.4%). **Figure 1** shows the relationship of introduced predator events between species and years across all monitoring methods.

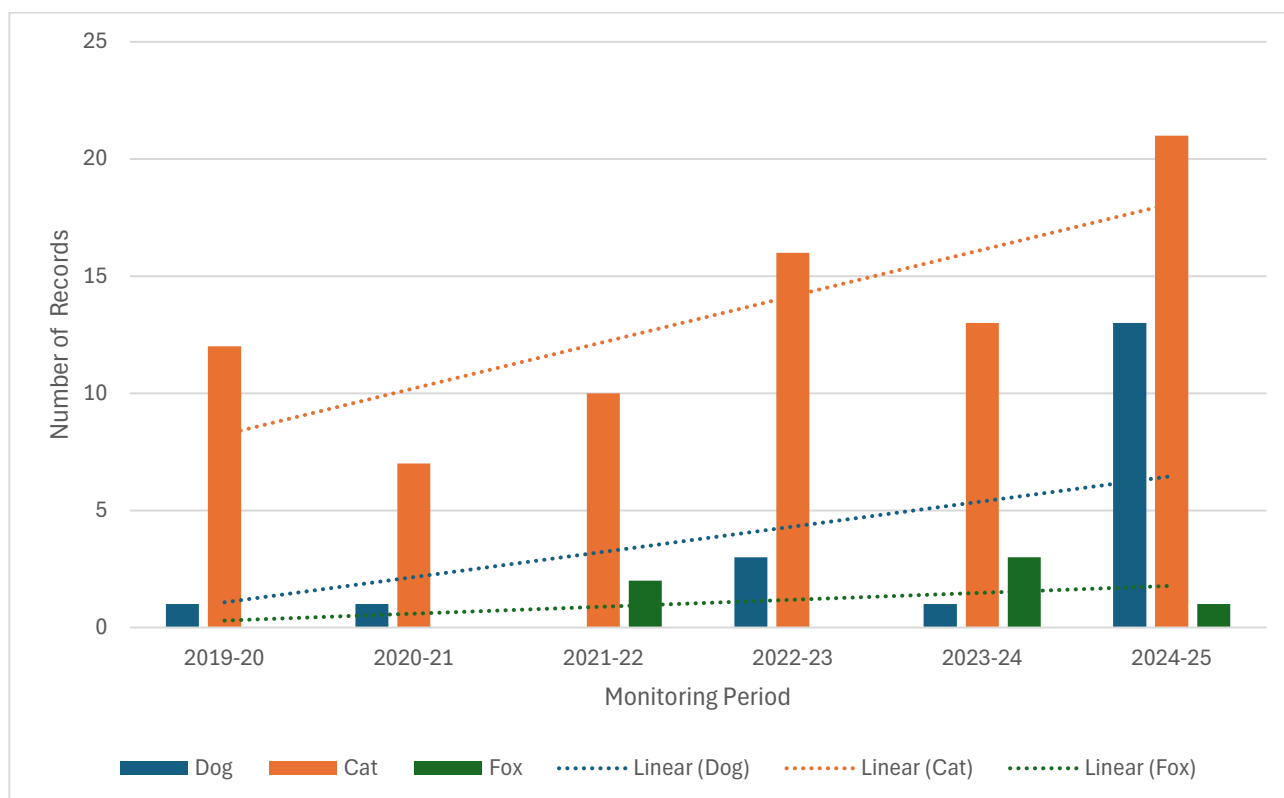


Figure 1: Introduced predator recorded events by year

To assess whether observed detections in 2024–25 were significantly different from previous years, non-parametric bootstrap resampling was performed using R (R Core Team 2025). Bootstrap analysis makes inferences about a population by repeatedly resampling a set of sample data and then modelling the data to create an inferred population distribution (Reimann, Filzmoser & Garrett 2008). For each species (Dog, Cat, and Fox), and for the combined total, the five prior years of data were resampled with replacement 10,000 times to generate a distribution of mean values. The observed 2024–25 detection was then compared to this distribution to calculate a bootstrap p -value, defined as the proportion of resampled means greater than or equal to the 2024–25 value.

As shown in **Figure 2**, the bootstrap distributions are plotted as histograms, with the 2024–25 value indicated by a red dashed line. For both Dog and Cat detections, the 2024–25 values are significantly higher than expected under the null distribution derived from previous years ($p < 0.001$). The combined detection total also exceeded historical expectations ($p < 0.001$), suggesting a meaningful increase in overall activity. In contrast, the Fox detection value for 2024–25 was not significantly different from the bootstrap distribution ($p = 0.58$), suggesting no change from prior years.

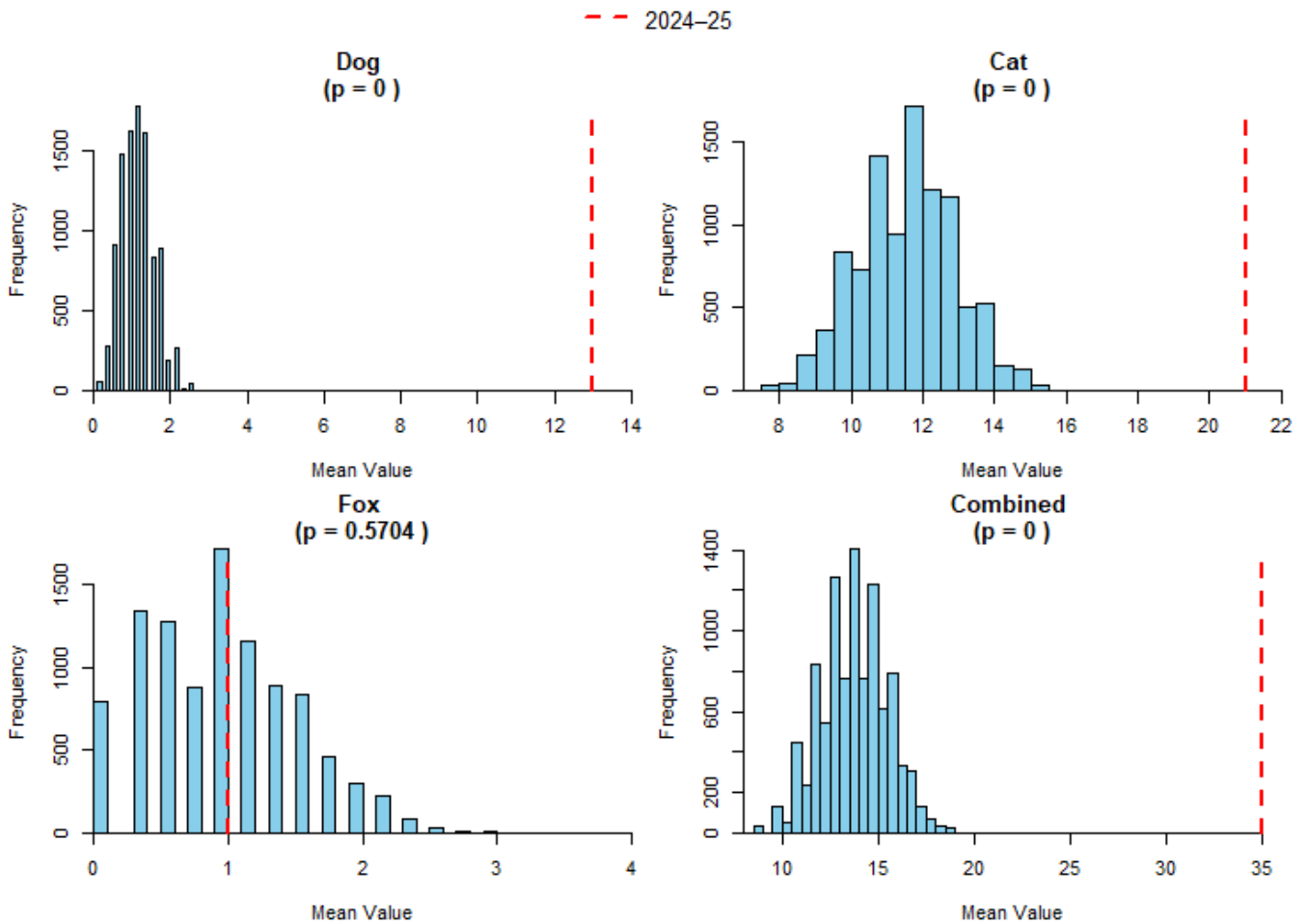


Figure 2: Bootstrap distributions of the 2019-2024 data versus the 2024-25 data (red dashed line).

Dogs were recorded at Malleefowl mound MM101 during 2024-25 (e.g. **Image 2**).



Image 2: Dogs recorded at MM101 (active)

Cats were recorded by trail cameras at eight Malleefowl mounds in 2024-25 (e.g. **Image 2**).



Image 3: Cat recorded at mound MM42 (inactive)

A single fox was recorded at Malleefowl mound MM11 during 2024-25 (e.g. **Image 3**).



Image 4: Fox recorded at MM11 (inactive)

4 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1.1 INTRODUCED PREDATORS (2024-25 MONITORING)

Camera monitoring effort during the 2024-25 monitoring period was similar to that of the previous monitoring periods (**Table 1**), with the number of total trap nights for 2024-25 within 5% of the mean total number of trap nights for all monitoring periods combined.

Over the 2024-25 period of trail camera monitoring, Cat visits were recorded at eight different Malleefowl mounds. Six of these mounds (MM17, MM24, MM77, MM79, MM82, and MM101) are outside the DE and the two others (MM42 and MM62) inside the DE (**Table 5 in Appendix One, Map 1**). Cameras deployed for the Chuditch monitoring detected two Cat events and one 4.16 kg male Cat was captured in a wire trap, all of which occurred within the DE. As all Cats have similar tabby markings it is not possible to identify the number of individuals with certainty, however the presence of kittens (MM24, MM77, and MM82) in 2024-25 indicates a potentially increasing population. Statistically, it was found that the number of Cat detections during the 2024-25 monitoring period are significantly higher than expected under the null distribution derived from previous years ($p < 0.001$).

Thirteen Dog events were recorded during the 2024-25 monitoring period; these records are predominantly due to three individuals which were recorded on 11 occasions at MM101. The remaining two Dog records are within the DE and are likely the same individuals that were recorded on MM101. For the 2024-25 monitoring period, Dog detections are significantly higher than expected under the null distribution derived from previous years ($p < 0.001$); however, this can be attributed to the multiple records of the three dogs recorded at MM101.

A single Fox was recorded visiting MM11 (inside the DE) during the 2024-25 monitoring period. Fox detection value for 2024–25 was not significantly different from the bootstrap distribution ($p = 0.58$), suggesting no change from prior years. Spatially, all Fox records occur within 5 km of each other to the north-east of the DE, with five of the six records occurring within 3.5 km of each other. This suggests that there is likely a single resident Fox in this area.

It was not possible to determine predator abundance from the results. However, the spatial distribution suggests at least 3-4 individual Cats, one Fox and three Dogs are present within the surveyed area (**Map 2-5**). This is a conservative estimate and predator numbers may be higher. Potential Cat numbers, within and outside the DE, may also be increasing based on number of kittens recorded on trail cameras and in the Covalent Fauna Register.

4.1.2 2025 FIRE

In January of 2025, a major fire impacted approximately 100,000 ha of vegetation adjacent to the Project boundary, with an estimated 500 ha of vegetation impacted within the Project boundary. As part of the bushfire recovery plan, Covalent personnel are expediting an intensive introduced predator control program using lures and *Eradicat*® baits that are monitored by trail cameras. *Eradicat*® baits have been shown to have low effectiveness and are often removed by non-target species (Wayne et al. 2024); however, given the paucity of prey species post-fire, this predator control program may be more effective than previous programs, with a higher uptake of baits.

4.1.3 ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE EARLY RESPONSE TRIGGER

An assessment against the early response triggers as outlined in the EGLP TFEMP (Covalent 2022) is discussed below:

Table 3: Assessment against early response trigger

Trigger	Response
Minimise the risk of a decline in Malleefowl/Chuditch populations due to predation from introduced fauna. A 25% increase in introduced predators (fox or cat) sightings (opportunistic sightings and remote camera) over two consecutive years.	<p>Table 2 summarises feral predator sightings since monitoring commencement.</p> <p>Dog detections have increased (>25%) in 2024-25, however this can be attributed to multiple detections of three dogs at one Malleefowl mound.</p> <p>Cat detections increased (>25%) in 2024-25, this was found to be significantly higher than expected under the null distribution derived from previous years ($p < 0.001$). Therefore, feral predator control focussing on Cats should be prioritised, although the methods used may require revision to be more effective.</p> <p>Fox detections have not increased when compared to previous monitoring periods.</p>

4.1.4 ASSESSMENT AGAINST TRIGGER/THRESHOLD CRITERIA

An assessment against the trigger and threshold criteria as outlined in the EGLP TFEMP (Covalent 2022) is discussed below:

Table 4: Assessment against trigger/threshold criteria

Criteria	Response
<p>Trigger Criteria</p> <p>Chuditch – A 25% decrease at impact sites in female abundance for two consecutive monitoring events</p> <p>Malleefowl – A 25% decrease in the estimated local population number (based on temporal analysis) over a consecutive 2-year period.</p>	<p>The trigger and threshold criteria were formulated to address condition of MS1199 to protect Malleefowl and Chuditch populations within and adjacent to the DE.</p> <p>For a more detailed discussion of trigger and threshold criteria refer to the annual monitoring reports for Chuditch and Malleefowl (Ecoscape 2024, 2025), though they are not exceeded for either species. Therefore, it can be assumed that feral predator control is adequate.</p>
<p>Threshold criteria</p> <p>Chuditch – A 50% decrease at impact sites in female abundance for two consecutive monitoring events</p> <p>Malleefowl – A project related 50% decrease in the estimated local population (based on temporal analysis) over a consecutive 2-year period.</p>	

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Monitoring of mounds both within and outside of the DE as well as other opportunistic sightings provides an insight on the number of introduced predators that are a potential impact/threat to the suite of native fauna species, especially conservation-listed species at the EGLP site.

To provide introduced predator abundance data the following recommendations are made for annual monitoring:

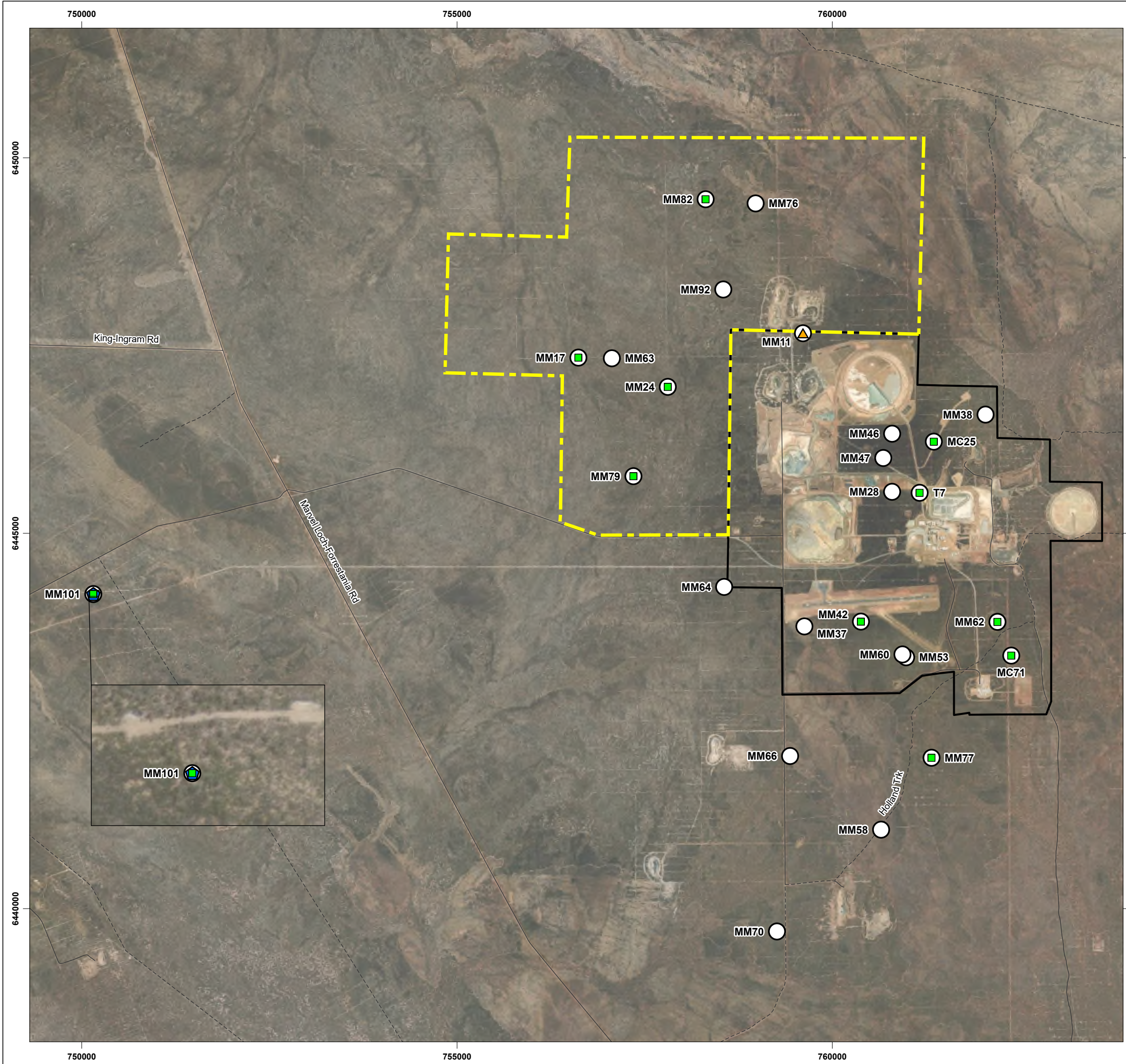
- Trail camera monitoring during the egg incubation season for 2025-26 (September to January) of all Malleefowl mounds that have been identified as ANNUAL, within and adjacent to the DE
- Maintain database of introduced predator sightings within a Fauna Sightings and Deaths register and report annually on number and location
- Collate and report on records of sightings of feral predators and images captured on cameras at the monitored mounds, and elsewhere

- Continue the feral predator control program; with a focus on Cats but consideration should be given to target other species i.e. Dogs and Foxes to minimise a potential threat from them.
- Consider conducting the feral animal control (Feral Cat trapping and baiting) prior to and/or during the Malleefowl breeding period.
- Consider recording if baits are taken or ignored during the feral animal control activities to determine effectiveness, including using trail cameras at baiting sites to determine which species are attracted to and/or consuming baits.
- Investigate the use of Felixers™, these have been trialled at other sites with Malleefowl and Chuditch present (e.g. Hallet al. 2022; Rickards et al. 2023).
- Continued predator monitoring post-fire.

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MAPS



LEGEND

- Life of Mine Survey Area
- Development Envelope
- Monitoring Location 2024-2025

Predators

- Cat
- Dog
- Fox
- Minor Road
- Track

DATA SOURCES:
 SOURCE DATA: MONITORING AND PREDATOR LOCATIONS (ECOSCAPE 2024 AND 2025) AND ROADS SIMPLIFIED (LGATE-195) (LANDGATE 2025).
 BASEMAP: ESRI WORLD IMAGERY (MAXAR 2023)
 SERVICE LAYERS: ESRI WORLD IMAGERY (MAXAR 2023)



MONITORING LOCATIONS
COVALENT PREDATOR MONITORING
2024-2025



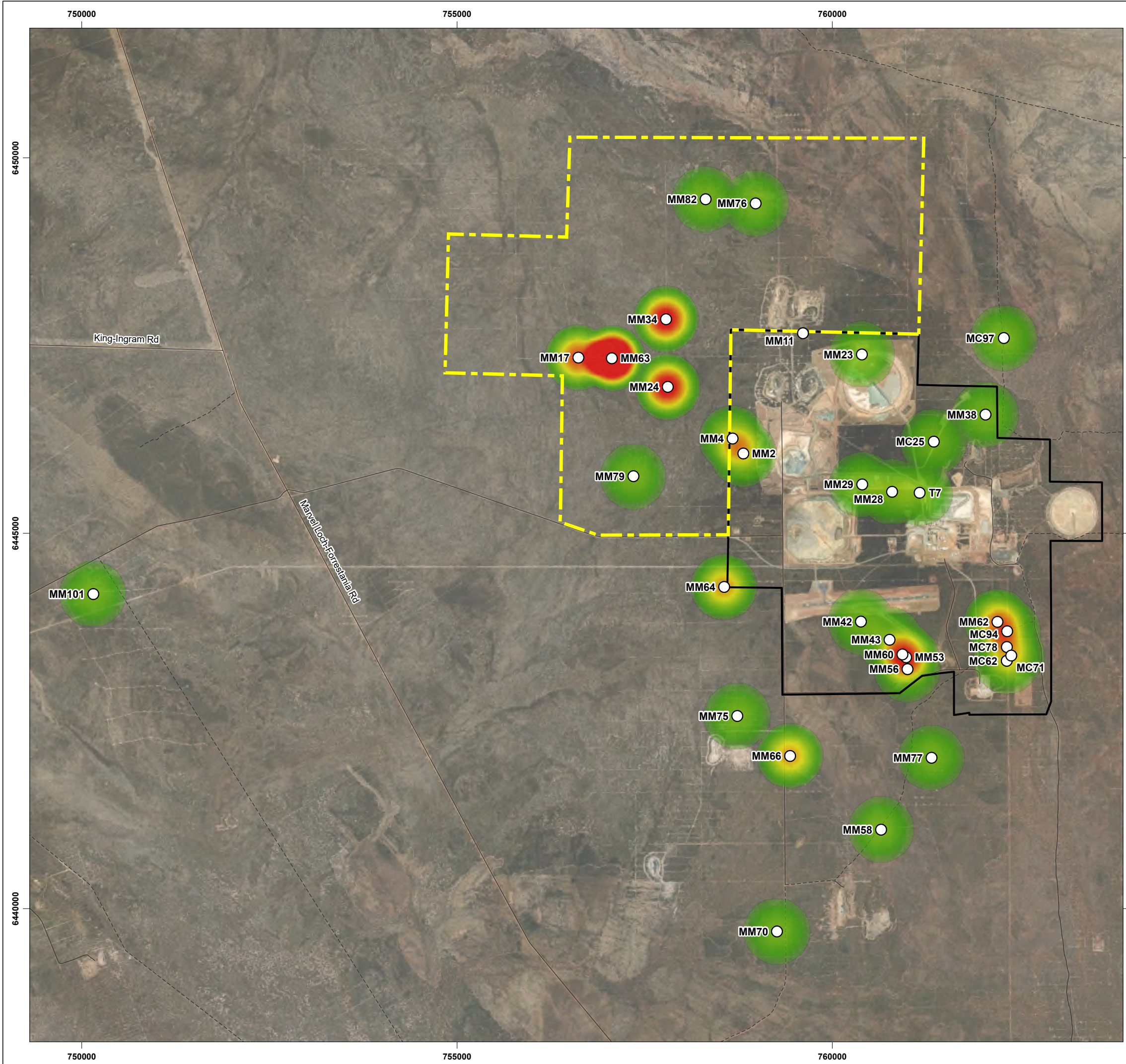
COORDINATE SYSTEM: GDA 1994 MGA ZONE 50
 PROJECTION: TRANSVERSE MERCATOR
 DATUM: GDA 1994
 UNITS: METER

SCALE: 1:50,000 @ A3

PROJECT NO: 4934-24

REV	AUTHOR	APPROVED	DATE
0	NW	RH	26/06/2025

MAP
01



LEGEND

- Life of Mine Survey Area
- Development Envelope
- Monitoring Location
- Minor Road
- Track

Total Cats

DATA SOURCES:
 SOURCE DATA: MONITORING AND PREDATOR LOCATIONS (ECOSCAPE 2019-2025) AND ROADS SIMPLIFIED (LGATE-195) (LANDGATE 2025).
 BASEMAP: ESRI WORLD IMAGERY (MAXAR 2023)
 SERVICE LAYERS: ESRI WORLD IMAGERY (MAXAR 2023)



**TOTAL PREDATOR - CATS
 HEAT MAP
 2019-2025**

**COVALENT PREDATOR MONITORING
 2024-2025**



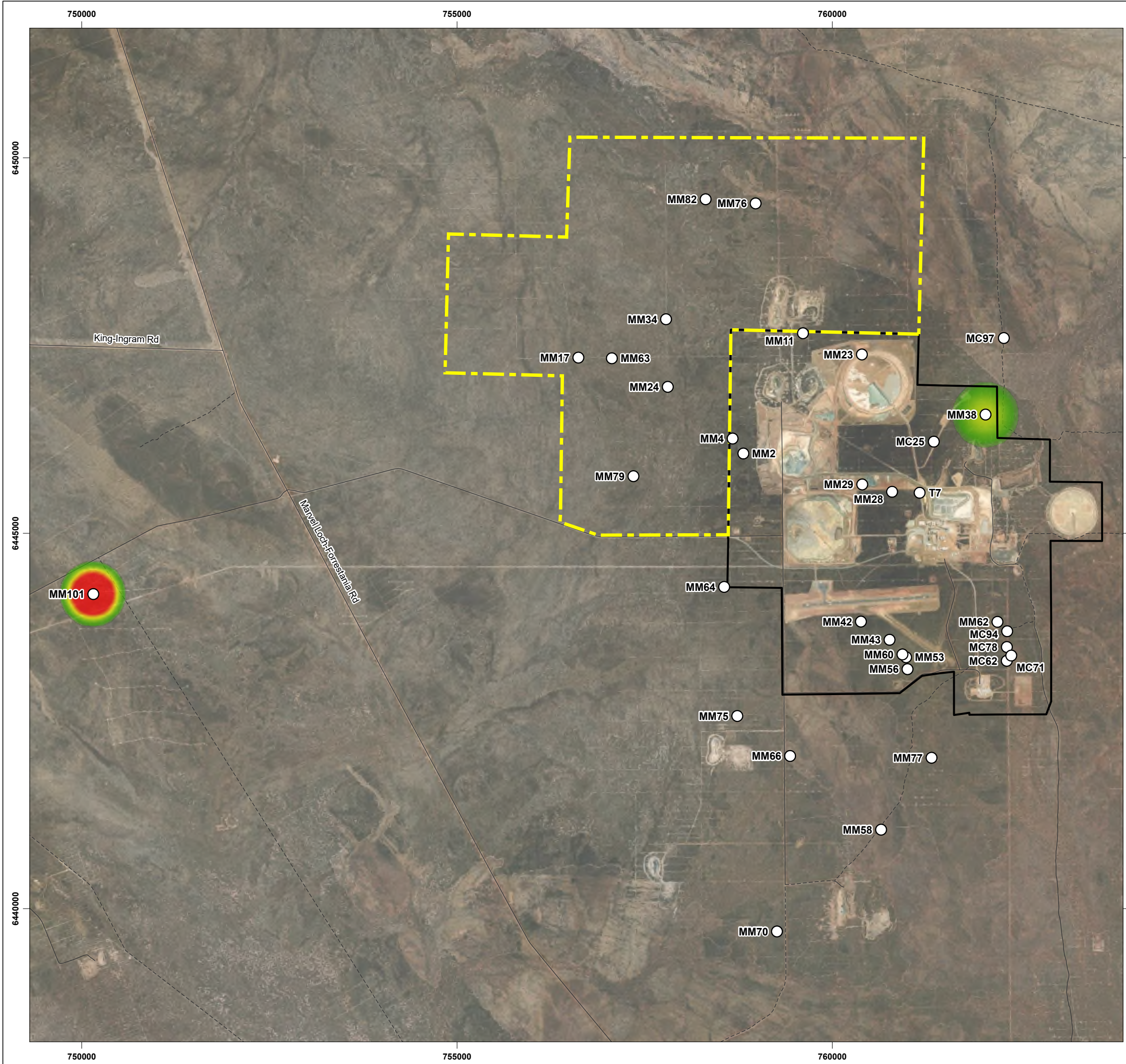
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 DATUM: GDA 1994
 UNITS: METER

SCALE: 1:50,000 @ A3






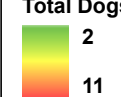
PROJECT NO: 4934-24

REV	AUTHOR	APPROVED	DATE
0	NW	RH	26/06/2025

**MAP
02**



LEGEND

-  Life of Mine Survey Area
 -  Development Envelope
 -  Monitoring Location
 -  Minor Road
 -  Track
- Total Dogs**
- 

DATA SOURCES:
 SOURCE DATA: MONITORING AND PREDATOR LOCATIONS (ECOSCAPE 2019-2025) AND ROADS SIMPLIFIED (LGATE-195) (LANDGATE 2025).
 BASEMAP: ESRI WORLD IMAGERY (MAXAR 2023)
 SERVICE LAYERS: ESRI WORLD IMAGERY (MAXAR 2023)

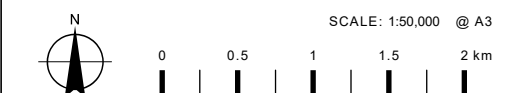


**TOTAL PREDATOR - DOGS
 HEAT MAP
 2019-2025**

**COVALENT PREDATOR MONITORING
 2024-2025**

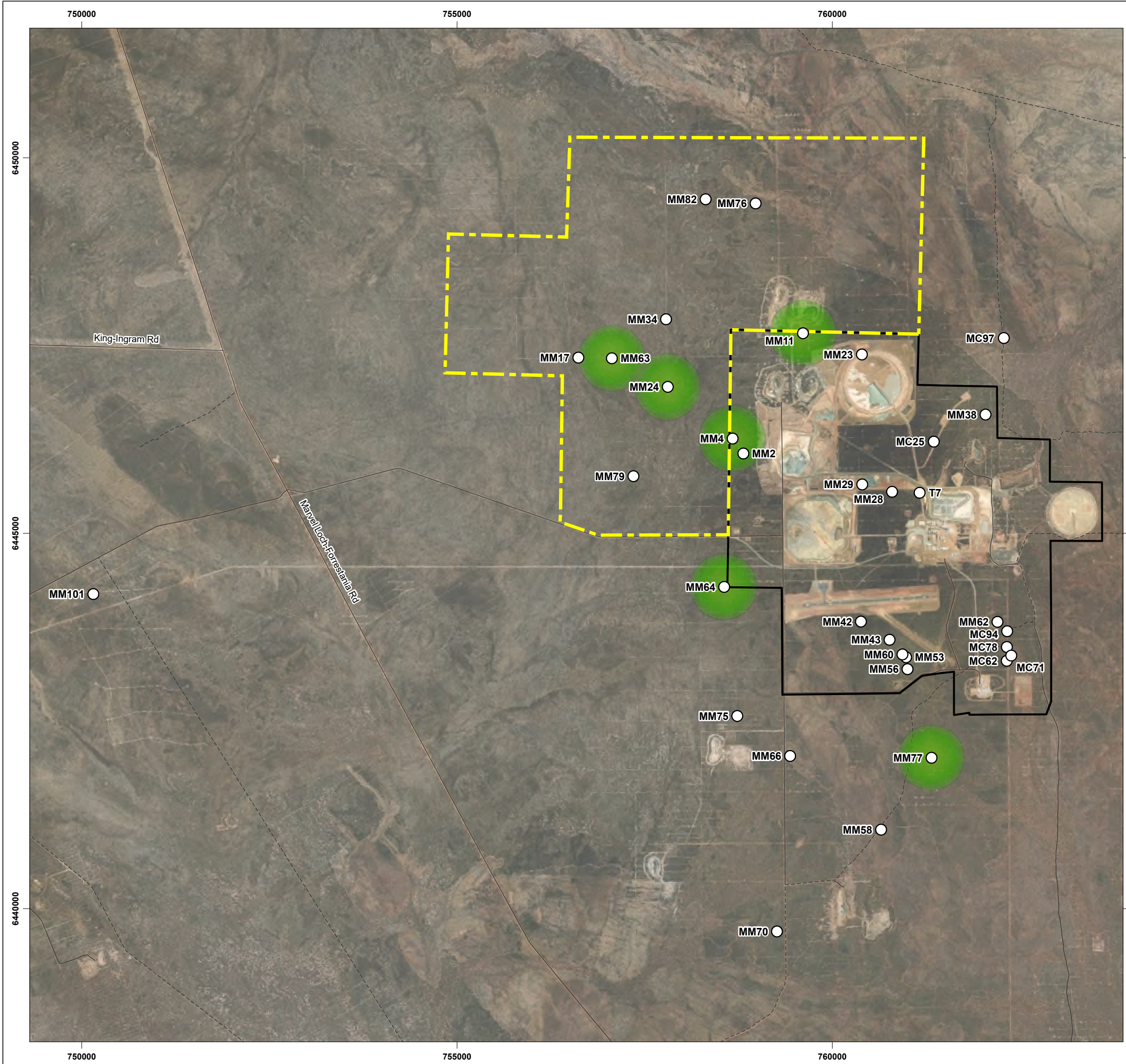


COORDINATE SYSTEM: GDA 1994 MGA ZONE 50
 PROJECTION: TRANSVERSE MERCATOR
 DATUM: GDA 1994
 UNITS: METER



REV	AUTHOR	APPROVED	DATE
0	NW	RH	26/06/2025

**MAP
 03**



LEGEND

- Life of Mine Survey Area
- Development Envelope
- Monitoring Location
- Minor Road
- Track

Total Fox

1

DATA SOURCES:
 SOURCE DATA: MONITORING AND PREDATOR LOCATIONS (ECOSCAPE 2019-2025) AND ROADS SIMPLIFIED (LGATE-195) (LANDGATE 2025).
 BASEMAP: ESRI WORLD IMAGERY (MAXAR 2023)
 SERVICE LAYERS: ESRI WORLD IMAGERY (MAXAR 2023)



**TOTAL PREDATOR - FOX
 HEAT MAP
 2019-2025**

**COVALENT PREDATOR MONITORING
 2024-2025**



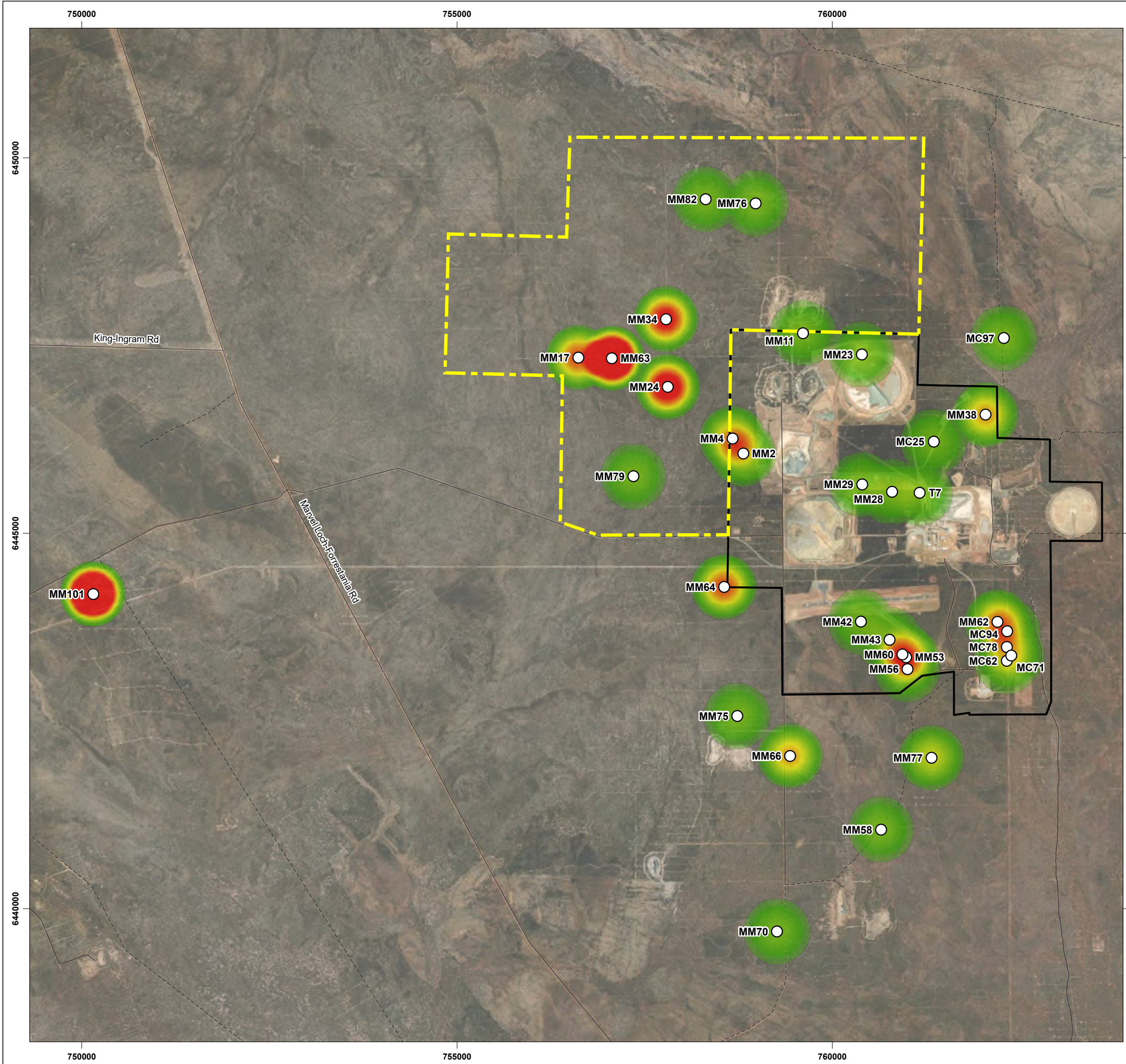
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 DATUM: GDA 1994
 UNITS: METER

SCALE: 1:50,000 @ A3

PROJECT NO: 4934-24

REV	AUTHOR	APPROVED	DATE
0	NW	RH	26/06/2025

**MAP
04**



LEGEND

- Life of Mine Survey Area
- Development Envelope
- Monitoring Location
- Minor Road
- Track

Total Predators

DATA SOURCES:
 SOURCE DATA: MONITORING AND PREDATOR LOCATIONS (ECOSCAPE 2019-2025) AND ROADS SIMPLIFIED (LGATE-195) (LANDGATE 2025).
 BASEMAP: ESRI WORLD IMAGERY (MAXAR 2023)
 SERVICE LAYERS: ESRI WORLD IMAGERY (MAXAR 2023)



**TOTAL PREDATORS
HEAT MAP
2019-2025**

**COVALENT PREDATOR MONITORING
2024-2025**



COORDINATE SYSTEM: GDA 1994 MGA ZONE 50
 PROJECTION: TRANSVERSE MERCATOR
 DATUM: GDA 1994
 UNITS: METER

SCALE: 1:50,000 @ A3

PROJECT NO:	4934-24		
REV	AUTHOR	APPROVED	DATE
0	NW	RH	26/06/2025

**MAP
05**

