Activity 7: how can we address this crisis?

Explain to students that at Arid Recovery the ecologists are exploring two main options for dealing with this ecological crisis.

1) The use of fenced reserves in which introduced species would be removed and native animals reintroduced. These fenced areas then act as refuges for native species. These animals can leave through one-way gates.

2) The reintroduction of dingoes to parts of the arid zone where there are none, and actions to ensure adequate numbers in other areas. The continued use of rabbit biocontrols but reliance on the cascading impacts of dingoes to regulate the ecosystem instead of fenced reserves.

Students have been exploring some of the research that is taking place at Arid Recovery that is informing this debate. Students could either produce work arguing one of these positions (such as essay, report, newspaper article, video, presentation), or it could be a class discussion or debate. Either way, have the students draw up a table (see below) and go through their notes from this unit to pull out relevant information. This will help them to extract relevant information and summarise the arguments on both sides. The table below has been filled out with example answers, though students may get different answers.

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| **Impact on**  | **Fenced reserves** | **Dingo reintroduction** |
| **Producers** | *Helps plants in the reserve areas* | *Might not help plants because rabbit numbers increase; on the other hand, kangaroo numbers decrease which would help plants* |
| **Consumers** | *Small native mammals so far have not survived once they have left the reserve* | *Small native mammals increase with dingoes* |
| **Mesopedators**  | *Fox numbers don’t decline outside reserves. In reserves no foxes at all benefits natives* | *Fox numbers would decline, quolls may survive if reintroduced (based on the fact that quolls and dingoes coexisted for a long time)* |
| **Apex predators**  | *Could be introduced into fenced reserves* |  |
| **Abiotic factors** |  | *Could be other benefits that we don’t even know about yet, as we saw in the wolf film* |
| **Farmers** | *Might prefer this as no dingoes, but more foxes* | *Fear that dingoes will kill livestock. Lower fox numbers might benefit farmers* |
| **Cost**  | *Extremely high cost limits the number of reserves that are possible*  | *Low cost* |