

NSW Wildlife Council, Inc.

General Meeting Number 18

Saturday 28 August 2010 at 9.36am

The Centre
14 Frances Street, Randwick, Sydney

MINUTES

1. Meeting open and Welcome

1.1 Present: Audrey Koosmen (Chair) NATF; Stan Wood (Vice Chair) WIRES; Shirley Lack (Secretary and Insurance Officer) NARG, Julia McConnell (Treasurer) IGL, Lorraine Vass (Minute Secretary) FOK, Marny Bonner ASR, Philip Machin NARG (Alt.), Ian Gowanloch SONA, John Gorham FAWNA, Georgie Whaley NRWC, Coralie Tarlinton Wildcare Qbn, Greg Tarlinton, Wildcare Qbn (Alt.), Shona Lorigan ORRCA (Alt.), Brian Chetwynd NTWC, Andrew Burton Wildlife Aid, Ilona Roberts TVWC, Helen Kennedy, Sydney Wildlife (Alt.) from 10.20am.

1.2 Apologies: Gwen Parry-Jones Wildlife ARC, Jan Brazel Wildlife ARC (Alt.); Page Sinclair Pet Porpoise Pool; Jill Taylor HKPS; Denise Singleton RRANA; Peter Daniels Corrective Services NSW Wildlife Care Centre, John Meany NANA, James Fitzgerald LAOKO, John Mostyn IGL (Alt.)

1.3 Guests in attendance:

1pm to speak on the *Rehabilitation of Protected Fauna Policy* and other issues of mutual interest: Sally Barnes (Deputy D-G DECCW and Director Parks & Wildlife Group); and Daniel Van Dyk (Project Officer, Major Programs Unit, Protected Areas Policy & Programs Branch).

2pm to present *Biodiversity Guidelines: Protecting Biodiversity During Construction and Maintenance of RTA Project*: Kevin Roberts, Senior Environmental Specialist, Biodiversity, Environment Branch, Roads & Traffic Authority and Josie Stokes, Environmental Officer, Biodiversity, Environment Branch, Roads & Traffic Authority.

2. Register of Proxies None

3. Confirmation of Minutes of General Meeting no. 17 held 20 May 2010 (circulated by email) **Brian Chetwynd** moved and **Shona Lorigan** seconded that the draft Minutes be accepted as read and confirmed. **Carried.**

3.1. Business arising

3.1.1 Meeting with the Hon. Frank Sartor, MP Minister for Climate Change and the Environment

The tentative arrangement for a July appointment did not proceed and no further date has been confirmed with Ministerial staff.

In view of the March 2011 scheduling of the elections, there was some discussion favouring the timeliness of approaching the Shadow spokesperson for the Environment, Catherine Cusack, MLC.

Action: The Executive to decide on the most appropriate course of action for introducing the Council to the present Minister and the Shadow spokesperson.

3.1.2 Meeting with DPII: NSW Wildlife State Emergency – NWC Capability & Major Incident Response

The proposed meeting with DII has yet to be arranged. Member groups' preparedness for dealing with wildlife affected by natural disasters is not developed uniformly across the State.

The suggestion was made to write to the The Hon Steve Whan, whose portfolio includes responsibility for Emergency Services, introducing the Council and to request a meeting with him.

Action: The Secretary, in consultation with the Chair to draft a letter to The Hon Steve Whan, Minister for Primary Industries, Emergency Services and Rural Affairs, requesting a meeting with him to discuss matters of mutual interest and benefit including Council members' involvement in and preparedness for dealing with wildlife affected by natural disasters.

3.1.3 Review of Council's consideration of a statewide database (Minute Secretary's background summary circulated by email)

In regard to WIRES' database, Stan Wood reported that take-up by WIRES' branches was variable and that in 2008-9 records numbered 50,000.

Comments from various members included:

- Necessity for consistency
- Necessity for sufficient species detail
- Alternative software platforms to Microsoft more readily available
- Cost of management and maintenance
- Government (i.e. DECCW) responsibility
- Possibility of persuading government to developing a pilot based on Koala

There was general agreement to adjourn the discussion for referral to Deputy D-G Sally Barnes later in the meeting.

3.1.4 Memorandums of Understanding [DECCW; RTA] – Progress

The RTA has offered to forward a MoU template for the Executive's consideration. Nothing has been received from DECCW.

Action: Executive to continue working with both agencies to develop MoUs.

3.1.5 Account Signatories

The Treasurer confirmed that Shirley Lack had been added to the list of authorized signatories to the Council's bank account and that Lorraine Vass had been dropped from the list.

3.1.6 National Parks Foundation (and decision regarding the Foundation's request to display the Council's logo on their website)

The Chair thanked John Meany for his research on the National Parks Foundation's purpose, credentials etc. which was presented to the meeting in his absence.

Lorraine Vass moved and **Stan Wood seconded** that the Council agrees to the Foundation's request to use the Council's logo on its website. **Carried.**

Action: Webmaster to forward Council's logo to the Foundation.

3.1.7 Review of NWC Position Descriptions

The Executive recommends adding to the Position Descriptions an introductory clause on the responsibilities for Council membership to include:

- timely advice to the Secretary of representative and alternative
- due notice of intention to change representative or alternate
- selection of representative to take account of the Council's need for:
 - continuity (i.e. 12 month commitment from AGM to AGM)
 - out of session electronic communication (i.e. computer access)
 - attendance at meetings (in person or by teleconference)

Inclusion of a clause to enable secondment was also recommended.

The Committee may, where considered in the best interest of the Council and with majority approval, appoint a non-Council member to carry out a specific project or role on behalf of the Council.

In this regard attention was drawn to clause 22 of the Constitution: **Delegation by executive to sub-committee** which appears to give the executive authority to appoint sub-committees consisting of members of the Council or *such persons as a majority of the executive thinks fit*.

Coralie Tarlinton moved and **John Gorham** seconded adoption of the Executive's recommendations. **Carried**

It was agreed that the next review of the Constitution will include the responsibilities of member groups and their representatives on the Council.

Action: Secretary to note that the next review of the Constitution will include the responsibilities of member groups and their representatives on the Council.

3.1.8 Reptiles – Sales in Pet Shops and Quarantine Issues

Julia reported that she had drafted the submission to the Manager, Wildlife Licensing & Management Unit suggesting the formation of a working party of relevant stakeholders to address reptile quarantine but had not forwarded it. She noted that preliminary investigations are being carried out by agencies including the Australian Wildlife Health Network.

Julia's letter to Minister Sartor in which she had expressed the Council's concern that the Code of Practice and regulatory framework for the sale of reptiles in pet

shops would not be sufficient safeguard against the potential risks inherent in the proposal, has not been acknowledged.

There was agreement that the Council should write a follow-up letter to Minister Sartor, strongly stating the Council's preferred position of no sale and the supporting reasons. The letter should also address the regulatory framework in the event that the government will proceed with the in-principle agreement previously given by Minister Koperberg.

Action: Julia McConnell and Stan Wood to prepare the letter.

3.1.9 Control of feral animals in the National Park Estate (*Game and Feral Animal Control Amendment Bill 2009*)

Ian reported that he had spoken to a local NPWS Ranger who had explained the issues around recreational shooters being given licence to be part of the DECCW response to the massive problem of feral animal control.

There was agreement that the Council and the alliance of environmental groups opposing the Bill must remain vigilant. Lorraine mentioned that Shadow spokesperson Catherine Cusack had participated in a public forum in 2009 on the Bill which had been jointly sponsored by the Nature Conservation Council of NSW and the Environmental Defender's Office, Northern Rivers.

The Council's position on the *Game and Feral Animal Control Amendment Bill 2009* will be included in the briefs for the proposed discussions with the Minister and the Shadow Spokesperson.

Action: see above (agenda item 3.1.1)

3.1.10 Ratification of Council Membership on the NSW Kangaroo Management Advisory Panel

The Secretary confirmed that the Council's nomination of John Gorham as representative and James Fitzgerald, alternate had been forwarded by the deadline.

It was noted that 2007-9 membership of the Advisory Panel comprised representation from the NSW Farmers Federation, Rural Lands Protection Board State Council, Department of Primary Industries, Pastoralists' Association of West Darling, Kangaroo Industries Association of Australia, Inc., Australian Game Meat Producers' Association, Australian Veterinary Association (NSW Division), RSPCA, Dubbo Field Naturalists and Conservation Society, Inc., Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia, Inc., DECC, NSW Kangaroo Harvesters' Association and an Aboriginal Community Organisation.

3.1.11 Outstanding Actions from March meeting

The Insurance Officer will distribute the Incident Report Form.

4. Reports

4.1. Treasurer's Report (two sets of financials circulated by email)

4.1.1 Statement of Accounts

Julia pointed out that the accounts presented are for the first month of the current financial year, July. A statement balance of \$60,574.40 was noted.

The budget provides \$15,000 for activities associated with the Strategic Plan

4.1.2 Approval for Expenses Reimbursements

Andrew Burton moved and **Georgie Whaley** seconded that claims for reimbursements to be lodged by Marny Bonner, Julia McConnell, Shirley Lack, Ian Gowanloch, Brian Chetwynd, Lorraine Vass, John Gorham, Georgie Whaley, and Ilona Roberts and payments to the Centre for Volunteering, The Centre, Randwick, Feedback Café and Catering, Nature Conservation Council of NSW, and the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Ltd., plus a small gift and Certificate of Appreciation for the Council's honorary auditor, Ron Witham be approved for payment. **Carried.**

Actions: Claimants to submit claim forms ASAP.

Chair to arrange preparation of a Certificate of Appreciation for Ron Witham and post together with a small gift of a pen.

4.2 Insurance Officer's Report

Shirley reported that an incident report had been received on 24 August from WIRES regarding a member's broken ankle.

4.3 Media Officer's Report

The position is currently vacant.

4.4. Revenue Officer's Report

The position is currently vacant

4.5 Nature Conservation Council of NSW (NCC) Report

Lorraine flagged notice of the NCC's Annual Conference and Environment Awards 2010 to be held on Saturday 30 October and Sunday 31 October and the call for lodgement of motions by Friday 17 September 2010.

It was agreed to prepare motions on the following issues:

Flying foxes and orchards (Ilona Roberts/Stan Wood)

Koala conservation (Lorraine Vass)]

Sale of Reptiles (Julia McConnell, Stan Wood with input from Helen Kennedy, Andrew Burton)

Shona Lorigan moved and **Shirley Lack** seconded that Lorraine Vass be the Council's delegate and that costs associated with her attendance over two days be met. **Carried**

Actions: Authors to draft and circulate motions and background remarks by 15 September.

Lorraine to contact Suzanne Medway (WPSA) regarding their intentions to lodge motions and to forward NWC motions to NCC by 17 September.

Lorraine also reported briefly on a NCC sponsored evening Koala Forum proposal to be held in Sydney. She suggested the Council write to the NCC's new CEO, Pepe Clarke, inviting him to speak at one of the Council's 2011 meetings.

Action: Subject to the Executive's agreement, Lorraine to invite Pepe Clark to address the Council's February 2011 meeting.

4.6 Secretary's Report (including significant correspondence)

The Secretary read out a list of the major items of in-coming correspondence.

5. General Business

5.1 Commercial Kangaroo Harvesting (FAWNA)

John Gorham introduced the draft position statements he had circulated 6 July and 23 August 2010 reiterating the importance of an agreed position should the Council's nomination for membership of the Advisory Panel be accepted.

John's work was commended and given in-principle support. Further information and comments should be fed back to him by 30 September in order that the position statement can be finalized and re-circulated with a view for ratification at the November meeting.

Matter arising: Brian Chetwynd moved and **Shirley Lack** seconded that in the event of the Council's application for representation on the NSW Kangaroo Management Advisory Panel being denied that the Council writes immediately to the Minister pointing out the importance of the Panel's balanced membership and requesting a meeting and simultaneously prepares a media release on the matter. **Carried**

It was agreed that membership of the Panel would entail significant support as any Council nominee could expect to be a minority and dissenting voice.

Actions: Should the Council's application for representation on the NSW Kangaroo Management Advisory Panel be denied, The Secretary writes immediately to the Minister pointing out the importance of the Panel's balanced membership and requesting a meeting, and The Media Officer simultaneously prepares a media release on the matter.

The meeting adjourned for lunch followed by the presentations of guests from DECCW and the RTA.

The Chair welcomed DECCW's Deputy Director-General and Director, Parks and Wildlife Group, Sally Barnes and Dr Daniel Van Dyk, Project Officer, Major Programs Unit, Protected Areas Policy & Programs Branch.

After acknowledging the emerging Newcastle oil-spill incident Sally reiterated the Department's interest in maintaining a dialogue with the Council and its appreciation of the role that voluntary rehabilitators play in raising public awareness of the plight of animals in nature. The wildlife and related issues she chose to share with the meeting were:

1. Using the example of the Wild About Whales program she outlined how different quarters of the community are being engaged and how input is being gathered through social networking tools such as Twitter and Facebook.
2. Parks & Wildlife Group Restructure from 18 to 14 regions, commenting that whilst she expects her regional managers to be engaging with wildlife rehabbers, if they're not then rehabbers need to engage with their Regional Managers.
3. Creation on 1 July 2010 of the Red Gum National Park in the Riverina.
4. The findings of the Victorian Royal Commission on Bushfires which will inevitably result in Increased fire reduction on public land in NSW;.
5. National Parks and Wildlife Amendment (Sustainable Tourism) Bill 2010 – seeks to clarify existing conditions in parks and introduces constraints.

6. The *Draft Rehabilitation of Protected Fauna Policy* which is nearly finalised maintains existing policy in regard to group boundaries and will encourage increased use of memorandums of understanding between groups to enable a desirable level of flexibility.
7. The *Draft Code of practice for Injured, Sick and Orphaned Protected Fauna* is presently being reviewed by DII to ensure it complies with the National Animal Welfare Strategy and is expected to be finalised and released by the end of the year.
8. Review has commenced of *Koala Care in NSW: Guidelines and Conditions*.

In response to a question about DECCW's role in the Council's pursuit of a shared database, the Ms Barnes announced that the Department is presently considering its requirements to enable full reporting on the status of 'critters across NSW'. There is acknowledgement that they are not 'hoovering-up' trends. They need to identify what is needed and whether there are datasets. The project is not yet fully scoped but there may be opportunity for involvement, e.g. the feasibility of adopting and adapting the WIRES database for use by all groups.

Phil raised the matter of DECCW's *Volunteer Policy and Procedures* and reimbursement of out of pocket expenses by referring to the Impact Statement developed by the Council which estimated the value of wildlife rehabilitators' voluntary effort at \$50m annually.

It appears that there are two types of volunteers. Those recruited directly by DECCW to assist in the delivery of specified programs e.g. volunteers who conduct tours of the Byron Bay Lighthouse, and those 'third party' volunteers such as licensed wildlife rehabilitation groups.

Ms Barnes acknowledged that wildlife rehabilitation groups had been around a long time and may have dropped out of sight for some Regional Managers. Although the State Plan is seeking to increase volunteerism the only funding source is through existing programs.

She agreed that the memorandum of understanding needs to be progressed.

The Chair thanked both Sally and Daniel for the opportunity to get an update on wildlife issues and to exchange ideas about how to move wildlife rehabilitation in NSW forward.

The team of Kevin Roberts, Senior Environmental Specialist, and Josie Stokes, Environmental Officer, Biodiversity, Environment Branch, RTA was introduced. Their major responsibility over the past three years has been to develop and introduce RTA staff to ***Biodiversity Guidelines: Protecting and Managing Biodiversity During Construction and Maintenance of RTA Project.***

The RTA acknowledges that building new roads involves clearing land with consequential habitat loss and creation of barriers to faunal movement (although mention was also made that out west, the road verges can significantly enhance very limited habitat).

Increased expectations for minimal or at least reduced habitat loss from both the community and from regulators has motivated the development of Guidelines whose purpose is to identify and address risks at an early stage.

They are made up of ten guides:

- Pre-clearing Flora and Fauna Surveys
- Exclusion Zones
- Re-establishment of native Vegetation

- Clearing of Vegetation and Removal of Bushrock
- Re-use of Woody Debris and Bushrock
- Weed Management
- Pathogens
- Nest Boxes
- Fauna Management and Handling
- Aquatic Habitat and Riparian Zones
- Wildlife Connectivity Guidelines also deal with landscape-scale impacts – genetic testing is being undertaken to check whether measures such as the koala bridges at Bonville are making any difference in mitigating barrier impacts

The Guidelines are nearing finalization and will become part of the contractual/tendering process for RTA-controlled roads (not necessarily those managed by local government).

Approximate \$1m is presently being spent on monitoring projects such as the squirrel glider crossings on the Hume Highway and the roadside fencing of the Wakehurst Parkway in order to justify expenditure for such measures on other existing roads.

The complex issue of effective road signage was raised – Julia suggested a mobile electronic roadside option that might be trialled at Bonville.

Some of the projects and ways in which Kevin and Josie see the RTA Working with the Council include:

Development of a Central phone: 1800 WILDLIFE – perhaps road specific?

Foster linkages with the Roadside Environment Committee which, in collaboration with the CMA and local government is responsible for developing Roadside Vegetation Plans

The Environment Branch being a pathway for discussing issues of concern with Council members.

The relationship which has developed during the first three years of support (which is coming to an end) is valued and will develop further in the years to come.

Audrey thanked Kevin and Josie for their presentation, making the point that relations with the RTA are sometimes uneasy and therefore opportunity to discuss ideas and matters of concern was very much appreciated..

The meeting resumed at 4.07pm with the announcement that eight birds had been brought in from the oil-spill through the combined efforts of DECCW, NATF, ASR and WIRES Central Coast. The oil was permeating an international wetlands reserve.

5.2 Proposal of National Body for Wildlife Care - Foreshadowed Motion (emailed 13/14 July 2010)

That the NWC Chair contact the persons identified as State contacts and request that the proponents put together a document which outlines the proposal, outlines the underlying need for a national Body; sets out what the Body's charter might be; and what advantages such an organization might bring, as opposed to making use of existing bodies and forums.

Moved: John Meany (NANA); Seconded: Lorraine Vass (FOK)

Stan Wood moved and **Brian Chetwynd** seconded that the Council write to the State

contacts (and copy to DECCW Deputy D-G, Sally Barnes) indicating its willingness to join a Steering Committee to form a national body, pointing out its experience of meeting costs and encouraging participation over the Council's own life and also seeking further information about recent developments including the Australian Wildlife Rehabilitation Conference Incorporated and its constitutional objectives. **Carried.**

Action: Lorraine to draft and circulate letter for approval; forward to Secretary for posting.

5.3 Draft Rehabilitation of Protected Fauna Policy

Notice of Motion (NARG)

The NWC inform DECCW that the following objectives should be considered in developing NSW wildlife rehabilitation policy:

- *To increase and enhance the wildlife rehabilitation capability in NSW.*
- *To introduce rehabilitation models that are flexible to allow for differing circumstances.*
- *To retain and increase the number of volunteers.*
- *To simplify administration.*
- *To promote regional cooperation between wildlife groups, IGLs, PWG and DECCW staff.*
- *To develop and implement a sensible compliance regime."*

Phil Machin introduced the motion by expounding on the opportunity presented by the periodic review of the *Rehabilitation of Protected Fauna Policy* for the Council to develop and feed in to DECCW for future consideration over-arching strategic objectives, if not during the current review then in a future one.

Stan agreed that these were aspirational objectives that were deserving of support. He asked Phil to expand on the second dot point. Phil's response was along the lines of the present model resulting in a patchwork which is not covering the whole state. He envisaged future consideration of a more regional model.

Shirley Lack moved and **Georgie Whaley** seconded that the Council supports future policy development which sets out to:

- *Increase and enhance the wildlife rehabilitation capability in NSW;*
- *Consider rehabilitation models that accommodate flexibility for differing circumstance;*
- *Retain, encourage and increase the number of volunteers;*
- *Simplify administration;*
- *Promote regional cooperation between wildlife groups, IGLs, PWG and DECCW staff; and*
- *Develop and implement a practicable and reasonable compliance regime."*

Carried

Action: Phil to draft a letter to the Deputy D-G thanking her for attending the meeting and including the motion.

5.4 Grey-Headed Flying Fox - Shooting Licences (See Gwen Parry-Jones' email, 16 August 2010)

Ilona Roberts moved and **Coralie Tarlinton** seconded that the Council prepare a letter requesting a detailed response to the measures in place for the 2010/2011 season and demanding that wildlife rehabilitation groups be given access to those orchards where orphaned babies are evident so these animals can be raised and released. **Carried.**

5.5 Companion Animals Act and Local Government

Julia reported that she had written to the Minister for Local Government, The Hon Barbara Perry MP seeking membership of the Companion Animals Advisory Committee but had received no response.

5.6 Koala 'Standards' Meeting: 14 August 2010 (incl. 2010 NSW Community Wildlife Survey)

Lorraine reported briefly on the meeting which was attended by representatives of NATF, WIRES (Mid North Coast Branch), the Koala Preservation Society of NSW, Koalas in Care, and Friends of the Koala.

DECCW is following up the 2006 postal, map-based Community Wildlife Survey with a web-based one. They are keen to attract more responses from individuals and asked groups to remind their members to participate by logging on to

<http://www.conservationresearch.com.au/WildlifeSurvey.html?id=12055>

Action: Lorraine to email Community Wildlife Survey link to list

5.7 Sale of Squirrels

Julia tabled a cutting from the Sun Herald, 1 August 2010, *Pet squirrels...we must be nuts*. The article claims that hand-reared northern palm squirrels are being sold in Sydney pet shops for more than \$1,200, yet they are regarded by the Federal Government's National Vertebrate Pests Committee as an 'extreme threat'.

Action: Helen Kennedy undertook to investigate further and circulate a report to the discussion line.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 Associations Incorporation Act 2009 and Associations Incorporation Regulation 2010

Lorraine referred to the Fact Sheet, *Changes to association legislation* distributed by the Office of Fair Trading, outlining the most important changes which came into effect on 1 July 2010:

- (1) An association's 'rules' will now be called its 'constitution'. A 'model constitution' is set out in the regulation, however an association's rules will comply with the new Act until changed.
- (2) An association's constitution may provide for a postal ballot to pass any kind of resolution.
- (3) Meetings at more than one venue using technology that allows members in different places to participate may be permitted by a constitution.
- (4) Associations are no longer required to hold an AGM in each calendar year, but must still hold one within six months of the end of the financial year.
- (5) Associations need to set out their financial year in their constitution, which can be up to a maximum of 18 months.
- (6) The official address can be the association's premises, the public officer's residence, or place of business or employment., but must still be in NSW.
- (7) A common seal is no longer required to execute documents. Instead associations can have documents signed by two of their authorized signatories. The public officer will be an authorized signatory by virtue of that office.
- (8) Tier 2 associations with gross annual receipts of less than \$250,000 or current assets of less than \$500,000 will only need to lodge an annual summary of their financial affairs.
- (9) Committee members and office bearers must disclose any potential conflict of interest; must not use their position or information for a dishonest purpose and must hand over any documents of the association within 14 days after ceasing to hold office.

After some discussion about the pros and cons of an 18-month financial year it was decided to retain the current twelve month July to June reporting period.

6.2 Single phone-number scheme

Stan Wood and Julia McConnell attended an information gathering meeting with DECCW, RSPCA, and RTA on 21 July 2010 to discuss the matter of a single number for animal (not just wildlife) related matters.

A business case had been prepared by RSPCA NSW but the cost estimate of \$500,000 was prohibitive. The RTA is still interested in canvassing ideas about options and costings. The conservative cost for a call centre is between \$60,000 and \$100,000 per annum.

7. Future Meeting Dates

Held over for discussion at the AGM.

8. Close of Meeting

5ish