



New South Wales  
Wildlife Council Inc.

Issue # 3 — July 2008

# Wildlife Watch

Produced for people with an interest in wildlife rehabilitation and conservation in NSW

## Council Welcomes Government Funds

The NSW Wildlife Council's sustainability has been strengthened by an injection of funds from the NSW government.

The pledge by the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) to contribute \$20,000 a year for three years from 2007-8 until 2009-10 has now been matched by the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA). The combined annual contribution of \$40,000 will be used to meet the cost of insurance coverage for licensed rehabilitators; as well as assisting in the Council's administration and projects.

Unit, DECC. Towards the end of 2007 Ron proposed a performance-based funding arrangement between the Council and DECC. It was his introduction of the Council to the RTA's Biodiversity Environment Branch at the beginning of 2008 that paved the way for a very cordial meeting in February between Branch officers and Executive members.

Kevin Roberts, the RTA's Senior Environmental Specialist (Biodiversity) was invited to attend the Council's May meeting to present the agency's contribution for 2007-8. Ron was also invited.

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wildlife rehabilitation sector in New South Wales. "Council membership has expanded and significant progress is being made on a number of fronts, not least of which is fostering trust and co-operation between licensed groups to provide a unified and representative voice. The Council is starting to make its mark. This demonstration of support by wildlife rehabilitators and by government is particularly gratifying to those of us who have taken on the extra load of Council representation," she said



May Presentation: Left to right: Kevin Roberts, RTA, Audrey Koosmen, NWC, Ron Haering, DECC

Prime mover behind garnering support for the triennium funding initiative has been Ron Haering, Manager of the Wildlife Licensing and Management

In a short address, Kevin referred to the challenge of managing biodiversity in the various stages of the RTA's road projects. He said he hoped to work with the Council as a partner in helping to reduce the impact of roads on native fauna and foreshadowed the formulation of new

biodiversity guidelines in collaboration with DECC as a project in which the Council's involvement would be welcomed. "By providing financial support to the Council and its work for wildlife rehabilitators over the triennium, the RTA is acknowledging the valuable service it receives from the State's wildlife rehabilitation community," Kevin said.

In thanking Ron and Kevin and their respective agencies, Chair Audrey Koosmen said that she was extremely optimistic about the future of the voluntary

### Conflict Management Guidelines (CMG)

You are reminded that the CMG which have been adopted by the Council as the recommended guidelines for member groups can be downloaded from the website: [www.nwc.org.au](http://www.nwc.org.au)

Although it is not compulsory for members to formally adopt the guidelines, some have already indicated their intention to do so. All members are encouraged to have in place conflict management/disputes resolution procedures which are at least as thorough as the guidelines.

The website is well worth visiting in any case to catch up with the new look being developed by administrator, Steve Amesbury.

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## Rehabilitation Standards Progressing

A pivotal reason for the Council's formation was recognition that the development and implementation of professional standards for wildlife rehabilitation would result in improved welfare outcomes for native animals.

One of the key functions of the operational framework which has since been reinforced through the strategic planning process is the establishment of codes of practice and State/National standards for wildlife care.

The DECC has a policy on the rehabilitation of fauna which provides guidance on the licensing and management of wildlife rehabilitation individuals and groups in NSW. The stated purpose of the policy is to:

- Provide clear and consistent guidelines for DECC to develop and maintain a partnership with rehabilitation organisations;
- Ensure that rehabilitation groups and individuals are appropriately licensed and accountable for their activities;
- Provide guidelines and controls;
- Protect animal welfare and
- Meet conservation objectives

A more credible regulatory framework is essential for improved care of the State's native animals. The Council and DECC both acknowledge that the most effective way of developing, implementing and upholding wildlife rehabilitation standards is to work in partnership.

Since April a working group comprised of NWC members, DECC officers and

veterinarians has been meeting to progress a set of minimum standards for wildlife rehabilitation in NSW. A suite of standards has been identified and their content discussed.

The next step is to scope a brief which will guide an independent contractor in developing an agreed plan and processes involving extensive consultation with all stakeholders, to gather and record in a retrievable form existing material, formulate minimum standards and develop appropriate documentation.

The Council has lodged an expression of interest with the NSW Environmental Trust's Environmental Education Program 2008 for assessment by the Trust's Technical Committee. If successful, a more detailed application will be invited for assessment for funding assistance.

## Minister Consults on Priorities

Minister for Climate Change and the Environment, the Hon. Verity Firth MP and senior departmental officers met representatives of environmental groups from across NSW to discuss future environmental priorities in a two-hour forum held on 11 June 2008.



Verity Firth

Prior to kicking off proceedings the Minister demonstrated her conciliatory capabilities by inviting Colon Wilderness protestors to join the meeting. Minister Firth then addressed the gathering on a range of issues and how

she intends working with stakeholders. She also emphasized the extraordinary opportunity for state and federal collaboration that presently exists.

Following questions the Minister engaged further with those present by circulating and discussing issues one to one. Participants also

had the opportunity to return a questionnaire outlining their hopes for achievement within 12 months, the next three years and the next decade.

Chair Audrey Koosmen and Vice-Chair Stan Wood represented the Council. Both were very positive about the consultative initiative.

Audrey in particular was very pleased with the time given to her by the Minister and also by Lisa Corbyn, DECC's Director General and Sally Barnes, Deputy Director General, Parks & Wildlife Division and head of the National Parks & Wildlife Service.

A meeting to introduce the Council Executive to the Minister has been arranged for 14 July 2008.

## Wildlife and the Town Hall

The tension is mounting amongst those who take an interest in local government. Elections throughout NSW will be held on 13th September. The deadline for registering nominations is 13th August.

'So what' I hear you ask? Well, local government is an important part of the government of this country. It is the level that is closest to the people and the one that can have a big influence on the quality of our lives and of our environment.

Under the NSW Local Government Act

(1993), a council has the following charter:

- To properly manage, develop, protect, restore, enhance and conserve the environment of the area for which it is responsible, in a manner that is consistent with and promotes the principles of ecologically sustainable development.

The Act also requires a council to produce annual State of the Environment (SoE) reports. A comprehensive report must be completed every four years and, in between that period, annual supplementary reports.

Although the State is doing its best to

wrest the planning system from local government and the public for that matter, local environment plans (LEPs), development control plans (DCPs) are still instruments over which local government has control and it is responsible for ensuring that development applications are regulation compliant.

The importance of environment-sensitive, wildlife-friendly elected representatives in effective stewardship of the environment cannot be underestimated. It's up to all of us to actively work towards getting such individuals over the line in September.

## 2020 Summit Skirts Wildlife Issue

The Federal Government's recent planning exercise which sought to bring together some of the best brains from across the country to tackle the long term challenges confronting Australia's future, generated an enthusiasm for participation. A dedicated website was established to disseminate information about the Summit and public meetings were held to discuss the ten areas which had been identified for consideration. Thousands of individuals nominated for the privilege of being called to Canberra.

To wildlife rehabbers it was immediately apparent that nowhere was there specific reference to the environment and wildlife, not even under sustainability. A number of individuals made representation to the Prime Minister's office pointing out the apparent oversight.



Ilona Roberts, President of Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers on NSW's Far North Coast went a step further. After attending a regional 2020 discussion meeting she was still so concerned at the lack of reference to wildlife that she "threw a submission together" and delivered it to her local member just days before the Summit took place.

Below we have reproduced that part of Ilona's impassioned outpouring which states the basic issues. Unfortunately we do not have sufficient space to include her analysis of the voluntary nature of wildlife rehabilitation or the suggestions she put forward to address the appalling dilemma. If you would like to read the entire submission, go to the Council's website.

### 2020 from a wildlife carer's perspective.

Wildlife issues are directly connected to those of sustainability, water use, population growth, industrial practices and the economic management of the nation. In fact, almost every aspect of human existence and endeavour impacts on Australia's wildlife and its

habitat. Australia has a frightening record of species extinction and by 2020 more species will have disappeared. Activities which result in increased profits, expediency or convenience invariably have priority over any negative impact they have on the environment or on the animals which live in it. This needs to be acknowledged and turned around.

By now people are becoming aware that mining, forestry and agricultural practices have created serious problems for our river systems, our coastlines and semi-arid regions and for the native species which inhabit those regions. The community is belatedly starting to realize that what is happening in these areas will have a profound effect on their lives too. However, most people are ignorant of the native species which live in their own areas and have no idea of what the requirements of any species are, for existence.

There are less obvious impacts on our native flora and fauna than those of the above-mentioned activities. They receive little attention because they are not spectacular and are rarely considered newsworthy. Yet they continue unabated and contribute significantly to the overall, increasingly depressing, picture of what is happening to our native fauna.

—Habitat is legally and illegally destroyed to make way for roads, housing, airports or shopping centres, or simply to improve someone's view or to rid an area of a species considered a nuisance by those nearby. The result of this kind of activity is difficult to assess as often environmental impact studies are inadequately conducted or, in the case of illegal activity, absent.

—As well, millions of native animals each year are hit by motor vehicles or attacked by domestic pets and introduced species. They are trapped on barbed wire fences, in buildings, in shopping centres, in drains and entangled in fruit netting and fishing lines. They are poisoned deliberately or inad-

vertently. They are shot, electrocuted, chopped up by whipper-snippers or bashed with shovels. The second biggest killer of birds in Australia is window strike. Sometimes death is instantaneous for these creatures, but often is prolonged and agonizing.

—Of those millions of victims, there are survivors: the joey still alive by the roadside in its dead mother's pouch, the flying-fox alive after two days on a barbed wire fence, the pelican with a fish hook in its throat, the birds rescued from cats, the koala or possum surviving a dog attack, the carpet python alive after an encounter with a brush-cutter.

I have no idea of how many of these animals die because help never reaches them. It is something that I, as a wildlife rehabilitator, cannot allow myself to dwell upon. Of the animals which are rescued, at least 50% die subsequently from their injuries or because of the associated stress of capture and handling.

For the remainder, which number annually in the tens, if not hundreds, of thousands Australia wide, there are people who undertake to rescue and rehabilitate them and return them to the wild. Who give these creatures a second chance. They operate individually or in groups, according to the dictates of each State's regulations.

*Ilona then goes on to describe the work and circumstances of volunteer wildlife rehabilitators and to put forward suggestions which would address some of the difficulties and challenges faced by our wildlife and those who work to protect it.*

*On behalf of wildlife rehabbers across the country, Ilona, thank you for speaking out.*

### Flying Fox Fix

The 11,000 flying foxes that roost in Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens are again under scrutiny.

The Trust has formed a Steering Committee to develop a management plan to control numbers. Ilona Roberts is representing the Council.

## Queensland Stops Permits to Kill Flying Foxes

The fate of the Grey-headed Flying Fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*), took a turn for the better during May when the Queensland government announced it will no longer issue permits to destroy them.

The decision follows findings from that State's Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) that shooting Flying-Foxes is inhumane.

Andrew McNamara, Minister for Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation was quoted as saying "AWAC is an expert committee with members who



*Species in decline—but annual shooting permits still issued in NSW*

have experience in welfare - including the RSPCA - primary production, and Indigenous issues.....Like all mammals, flying foxes are sensitive to pain. They are often wounded rather than killed outright and are difficult to retrieve in the dark to be dealt with humanely if injured".

The NSW Wildlife Council has written to Minister Verity Firth, requesting that the

NSW Government immediately follows Queensland's example. We suggested that farmers and orchardists be educated about the conservation status and animal



*Grey-headed Flying Fox and young in flight*

welfare concerns associated with the species and encouraged to use non-lethal methods of protecting their crops.

The Council has also called for completion of the Grey-headed Flying-Fox Recovery Plan, which has been outstanding since 2006.

## Native Reptiles Planned as Pets

'Definitely not' I hear you say, but be prepared to be alarmed because Phil Koperberg, MP, Member for Blue Mountains, in his previous life as Minister for Climate Change and the Environment gave in-principle agreement to the sale of native reptiles in pet shops.



*Bearded Dragon - designer pet extraordinaire*

The NSW Wildlife Council opposes this position and calls on wildlife rehabilitators and concerned individuals who understand the value of our unique reptile community to also oppose it.

The cashed up pet shop industry has been working long and hard to get to this point. Whilst the agreement is contingent upon the development of an appropriate regulatory framework, DECC envisages completion within 12 to 18 months.

It is essential that Minister Firth be persuaded to reverse this ill advised decision. It is up to us to encourage her to do so. We should also be discussing this issue in our broader community to raise general awareness of the problems.

Over 60,000 dogs and cats are euthanased by the RSPCA alone each year, largely brought about by impulse buying. You don't need a degree to see what will be happening to our reptiles.

The Council is in the process of writing to the Minister and will seek support from other animal welfare organisations to endorse our view. Please take urgent action now, by writing to: -

The Hon. Verity Firth MP,  
Minister for Climate Change and the Environment,  
Level 33, Governor Macquarie Towers,  
1 Farrer Place, SYDNEY NSW 2000

## May Meetings

**Question:** Where do you hold a meeting of the office-less NWC Executive when the Chair lives in Blackalls Park (Newcastle), the Secretary lives in Newport (Sydney), the Treasurer lives in Bullaburra (Blue Mountains) and the Media Officer lives in Wyrallah (Lismore)?

**Answer:** In the capacious foyer of the DECC offices, Hurstville



*Surrounded by luggage, left to right: Julia McConnell (Treasurer), Audrey Koosmen (Chair), Lorraine Vass (Media Officer) and Sonja Elwood (Secretary) at work. Absent was Stan Wood (Vice Chair), holidaying on the Hawkesbury.*

The 10<sup>th</sup> ordinary meeting of the Council was held on the following day, 20 May

also at the DECC in Hurstville— but not in the foyer.

Twelve groups were represented around the table and Hunter Koala Preservation Society was linked by phone. One new member, the Pet Porpoise Pool Pty Ltd. (Coffs Harbour) was admitted to the Council, bringing membership to 24.

Minutes of Council meetings are available on the website.

## Editor's Corner

A few people need acknowledgement for their input into this issue of *Wildlife Watch*.

*Ilona Roberts* for agreeing to her 2020 Summit response being chopped and reproduced in part;  
*Julia McConnell* for her piece on the proposed sale of native reptiles as pets;  
*Frank Klimek* for his photo of the bearded dragon;  
*Steve Amesbury* for his clustered grey-headed flying fox photo and *Cheryl Cochran* for providing the in-flight shot which had been circulated on the FCCIN list.

Thanks to you all and also *Dan Lunney* for taking the photo of the Exec in DECC's foyer.