

New South Wales Wildlife Council

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Achieving optimum outcomes for Australian wildlife

The Hon. Robert J Debus MP
Minister for the Environment
Level 36 Governor Macquarie Tower
1 Farrer Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Minister

On the weekend of 15-16 October 2005 the inaugural meeting was held of the New South Wales Wildlife Council (NWC).

The Council has been formed to perform the functions of a peak body for the 26 groups and dozen or so individuals who are licensed under the New South Wales *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* to rescue sick, injured and orphaned fauna, rehabilitate them and release them back to the wild. Already the Council represents around 80% of the estimated 4000 wildlife rehabilitators across New South Wales.

The issue of native wildlife being kept without a licence was raised during the meeting (see National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Media Release – *NPWS warns against keeping native animals without a licence*, 3 March 2003 attached). The meeting was also made aware of a letter sent by WIRES, one of the represented groups, to Ms Lisa Corbyn, Director General of the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC), (6 January 2005, copy attached). The letter addressed the rule which permits members of the public to retain a sick, injured or orphaned native animal seven days before notifying the National Parks and Wildlife Service and complying with instructions regarding its future.

Ms Corbyn's letter in response (14 July 2005, copy attached) was discussed. It was the unanimous opinion of the Council that Ms Corbyn had been poorly advised in the framing of her response. Many hundreds of animals in New South Wales each year suffer and meet an unnecessary death due to this provision. The fact that members of the public are generally well meaning in their intent does not mitigate the results.

We note that the legislation was passed in 1974 prior to the formation of any wildlife rehabilitation groups, when only a few individuals had any knowledge of captive management and rehabilitation of wildlife for release back into the wild. The State now has in the vicinity of four thousand wildlife carers, many with advanced skills in wildlife rehabilitation. It is anachronistic to cling to legislation, designed under very different circumstances to those which now prevail.

There are few places in New South Wales where experienced wildlife rehabilitators are not available within hours (at the most) rather than days.

The NWC strongly supports a change in legislation to effect a 48-hour maximum holding period for members of the public who do not hold a current authority from DEC to rescue and care for wildlife. We suggest that the public is strongly encouraged to pass sick, injured and orphaned wildlife to authorised rehabilitators as soon as possible.

The Council unanimously considers this issue to be of such significance that it demands immediate attention. We therefore request that a small delegation drawn from the executive meet with you at a mutually convenient time to discuss the matter as well as the formation of the new Council.

Yours sincerely

Audrey Koosmen
Chair
.... November 2005

attach.

cc. Ms Lisa Corbyn, Director General
Department of Environment and Conservation

Mr Steve Coleman, Deputy CEO
RSPCA NSW