



New South Wales
Wildlife Council Inc.

Wildlife Watch

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

Accountable Partners

Since the mid-1980s wildlife rehabilitation in New South Wales has been undertaken predominantly by volunteers under licences issued by the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) to wildlife rehabilitation organizations.

The rationale behind licensing priority

tise, timely support and other assistance. This symbiosis will assist individuals to develop into competent and responsible rehabilitators of the State's fauna.

Although a draft wildlife rehabilitation policy was developed by the Department and implemented during the 1990s it was not until 1999, after more than a

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NSW Wildlife Rehabilitation Standards Committee (l to r): Ron Haering, DECC; Lorraine Vass, NWC; Graham Wilson, Biobrokers Pty Ltd; Sonja Elwood, NWC; Audrey Koosmen, NWC; Dan Lunney, DECC; Libby Hall, Taronga Wildlife Clinic; Julia McConnell, NWC; Stan Wood, NWC; Brendon Neilly, DECC. (Photographer, Steve Amesbury, NWC).

being given to groups is that they promote knowledge and education about conservation and will train, supervise and monitor their members. Members will be provided with access to exper-

decade of dealing and consulting with rehabilitation organizations that a policy was formally adopted. That policy, which was due for periodic review in 2005, is still in place, although the review has commenced.

they have always been accountable. Permitted to be in possession of a sick, injured or orphaned animal, they are privileged and entrusted with the care of a wild animal until it can be returned to the wild. The group to which they belong, the Department and the public, expects wildlife to be treated humanely. Whilst in rehabilitation an animal must receive prompt veterinary care, nourishment suitable to its needs in a clean and safe environment and be appropriately released in accordance with licensing requirements.

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The stated aim of fauna rehabilitation in the policy is *to contribute to the maintenance of biodiversity through the successful return of temporarily disadvantaged animals to their natural environments.*

It has never been sufficient for wildlife rehabilitators to be well intentioned;

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—from page 1 By and large the system of voluntary specialist wildlife rehabilitation organizations works very well. However, just as the Department faced and continues to face considerable difficulty in monitoring the activities of individual licensees, some groups struggle to maintain standards of care and compliance amongst minority elements of their organizations.

The NWC and the Department acknowledge that a credible regulatory framework is essential for improved care of the State's native animals. The minimum standards project currently underway will provide a very welcome step towards assessable compliance with a range of basic measures. Eventually minimum standards will form part of a package, including a code of ethics, policies, procedures, training, education and guidelines which together will comprise 'best practice' for wildlife rehabilitation in New South Wales.

Over the past twelve months the Depart-

ment's Wildlife Licensing and Management Unit (WLMU) has mapped licensees' operational areas and authorised rehabilitators. Recently it has clarified the procedures relating to the acquisition of and use of permanent care animals by licensed rehabilitators. Acknowledging inconsistency in the application of the rehabilitation policy and licence conditions, the Department has made its position clear:

"The retention of an animal in permanent care is not a decision to be taken lightly nor should it be considered as an alternative to euthanasia for animals that are not fit for release... You are advised that from the date of this letter [10 April 2008] the retention of an animal in permanent care must be approved through the WLMU. Any proposal to retain an animal in permanent care must be accompanied by a written application...."

Group and individual licensees have been requested to provide data on the

species and numbers of all protected fauna in permanent care as well as all animals in care for longer than 6 months from the date of rescue.

The Council welcomes the Department's accelerated interest in and support for the system of wildlife rehabilitation that it embraced nearly a quarter of a century ago. It acknowledges that outcomes from inconsistent application of policy, including licensing will require the good will of all parties to reach resolution.

The way forward for managing the State's wildlife, including the welfare of individual animals, rests in strengthening an equitable partnership between the voluntary rehabilitation sector and DECC which has legislative responsibility under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* for the protection of native fauna.

Collaborative review of the *Rehabilitation of Fauna Policy* is a good place to start.

The Volunteering Sector's Value for Rehabbers

Volunteering is big business in Australia. Over a quarter of the nation's population is engaged in voluntary work. Research shows that communities with a strong culture of volunteering are more cohesive and harmonious so all levels of government have a stake in encouraging vibrancy in the voluntary workforce.



Hon. Graham West.

The NSW Government established its volunteering portfolio to expand and diversify the State's voluntary capital and to recognise the extensive contribution that volunteers make to society. A Voluntary Unit has been established within the Department of Premier and Cabinet to drive the volunteering policy agenda. A volunteering roundtable was held in June 2007 and a series of forums initiated to provide a mechanism for broader consultation on issues and trends.

The first forum, Diversity and Volunteering was held in Campsie earlier this year. The recent forum, Growing the Volunteer Workforce in Developing Regional and Rural Communities, was co-hosted by the Minister for Volunteering and the Regional Communities Consultative Committee and held in Coffs Harbour.

The program schedule was shattered by the late arrival of the new Minister, the Hon. Graham West. A mere three days into the job, he made up for the delay by doing away with a prepared speech and relating his own experience as a volunteer, after which he threw open the floor to questions which he fielded in very impressive style.

The keynote address *Partnerships in Volunteering* was presented by Dr Jeni Warburton, Senior Research Fellow, Australasian Centre for Ageing, University of Queensland. Following a couple of other addresses, four case studies were presented, the intention being to workshop them and points learned from the addresses. Unfortunately the final session was truncated due to lack of time.

Agency bureaucrats and salaried coordinators of volunteers in the invited audience may well have outnumbered actual volunteers. The four case study presenters were all salaried. Of the volunteers who were present, uniformed males were the most conspicuous.

Having said that, attendance provided opportunity for peer recognition of wildlife rehabilitators in mainstream volun-

teering; opportunity to reinforce the Council's role to state government bureaucrats outside its normal sphere of operation; realization that a responsive government is driving better organization within the wider world of volunteering; that wildlife rehabilitation groups might benefit from learning more about the government's volunteering policies and programs as well as considered interaction with the volunteering sector.

A compelling footnote bound to resonate with wildlife rehabbers, is that the Federal Government through the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs' \$21 million *Volunteer Grants Program 2008*, is inviting eligible not-for-profit organizations to apply for up to \$5,000 to support the work of their volunteers by the purchase of small equipment and contributing to volunteers' fuel costs

The inclusion of fuel assistance is recognition by Government that the 40% rise in fuel costs over the past five years is adversely impacting volunteers' capacity to undertake voluntary work.

Guidelines and other information are available at www.fahcsia.gov.au Online applications close Friday 17 October 2008.

Rehabilitators and Research

Several wildlife rehabilitation groups have established fruitful partnerships with researchers over the years.

The Native Animal Trust Fund and DECC's Senior Research Scientist, Dr Dan Lunney's collaborative study of koalas following the 1994 fires in fragmented forest in Port Stephens is one such example.

Dr Kerryn Parry-Jones, a Research Officer in the University of Sydney's School of Biological Sciences, co-directs the Wambina Flying Fox Education and Rescue Centre which relies on the voluntary assistance of Wildlife Animal Rescue and Care (ARC) members.

The longest partnership between a rehab group and a research institution in NSW is that between the Koala Preservation Society of NSW and the University of Sydney Faculty of Veterinary Science. That partnership, founded on the School's disease laboratory work and the field investigations made possible by the Hospital's admissions, dates back 25 years when the Society's legendary founders, Jean and Max Starr and a

newly graduated vet, Paul Canfield, came together through a Port Macquarie veterinarian in the early 1980s.

Make Turtles Count

Australian Seabird Rescue has recently received funding to conduct a count of turtles present in the coastal waters of the Far North Coast and to monitor nesting activity.

Once turtle presence and numbers are documented, the group will be pressing the NSW Government to make Turtle Exclusion Devices (TEDs) mandatory in the State's prawn trawlers.

Faculty has built up a large database of koala diseases and deaths largely based on animals from Port Macquarie. The Society has assisted 14 people to obtain degrees in koala research and the joint work motivated establishment of the John Williamson Research Fund.

In August an Education Day was held by the Port Koala Hospital and Sydney University's Koala Infectious Diseases Research Group (KIDReG) to report on the Australian

Through the ensuing period the partnership has strengthened: new diseases impacting koalas have been discovered and advances made. Hundreds of papers have been published. The

Koalas Wired for Tracking

Lismore, on the Northern Rivers, is one of a handful of NSW towns to have retained its koala population.

Friends of the Koala, with the support of Southern Cross University and Lismore City Council has embarked on a radio-tracking project to research koala movement patterns, distribution and abundance, as well as monitoring post-release behaviour in an urban environment.

Scientific supervisor is Dr Ross Goldingay, Senior Lecturer in Wildlife Ecology at Southern Cross University (see photo bottom left).

Research Council (ARC) Linkage Project *Prevention and treatment of chlamydia and cryptococcosis*. The day was also a 'thank you' from KIDReG to the Koala Hospital's staff (and friends) for on-going assistance with the project's field investigations.

Perhaps because of his lengthy association with the Koala Hospital, Professor Canfield is a sincere champion of the important role that voluntary wildlife rehabilitation and rehabilitators have in research investigations. The wild animals we have under our care or to which we have access, as well as necropsies on deceased animals, provide the basis for fieldwork. Our opportunity for close, continuous observation of the animals in our care is vital for suggesting new lines of study.

Through the day, the interest shown by members of the team in the questions and comments made by rehabbers clearly demonstrated that Paul's respect for us has rubbed off.

Scientific research adds value to the work we do. We have all experienced the despondency brought on by an extended spate of euthanasias but some solace can be taken when we know that samples and records are being put to scientific use.

Cooperation between wildlife rehabilitation and research organizations works best in situations of shared ethics, agreed protocols and mutual respect. The lengthy and productive partnership between Port's Koala Hospital and Sydney Uni is testimony to the results that can be achieved.



Port Macquarie Koala Hospital's outside shelters



Friends of the Koala member, Rick Stewart, tracking Mathew, treated for conjunctivitis and released into his urban habitat.

Rehabber Publishing Project

Jodie Blackney, a young Victorian wildlife rehabber is well on the way to realizing her ambition of publishing a book on Australian wildlife rehabilitators.

Jodie has been soliciting stories from groups and individuals across the country. Most importantly, she has attracted a publisher, Avocado Press, which specializes in projects that support animal welfare.

As well as gaining wider recognition for

people who care for native wildlife, the project is aimed at raising funds for wildlife groups. Whether the project progresses will depend very much on attracting sufficient forward orders to underwrite an initial print run.

We understand that a table of contents and more information about estimated publication date, price and so forth, is imminent. Keep your ear to the ground through your group to place pre-paid orders.

The Facts about Member Insurance

The Voluntary Workers Personal Accident and Public and Products Liability insurance coverage negotiated by the Council for its members in 2006 and its success in securing payment of the premiums by the Department of Environment and Climate Change have reaped considerable savings to rehabilitation groups and to individual rehabbers.

Certificates of Currency and Client Coverage Summaries for 2008-9 have been forwarded to members. It is important to note that the policies are issued to the NSW Wildlife Council, Inc. The only person that the insurance broker is authorised to communicate with is the Council's Insurance Officer, Julia McConnell.

The procedure for lodging and processing an insurance claim is outlined here and is also available on the Council's website: www.nwc.org.au

- Incident reported to member group's responsible officer as soon as possible for assessment.
- If a *bona fides* claim, the responsible officer downloads the claim form from the website of AON Risk Services Australia Limited: www.aon.com.au
- Responsible officer completes the form and mails to the NWC Insurance Officer along with any relevant documentation to support the claim, (Insurance Officer's address: 70 Boronia Road, Bullaburra, 2784; phone: 02 4759 1698; email: snakey@pnc.com.au).
- Insurance Officer notifies the insurance broker that a claim is imminent
- Insurance Officer notifies the NWC Secretary that a claim has been received by the Council
- Insurance Officer makes two copies of the claim for NWC records and sends one to the Secretary
- Insurance Officer sends the claim to the insurance broker
- Insurance Officer liaises with the insurance broker and the member group's responsible officer as required
- Insurance Officer advises the Secretary when the claim is finalised

National Conference Roundup

Numbers were down a little for the 6th National Wildlife Rehabilitation Conference held recently in Canberra. Perhaps the prospect of winter in Canberra was a deterrent. Nothing could have been further from reality because it was a gloriously crisp, sunny week which showcased the national capital to perfection.



Steve and Lyn Amesbury busy on the Wildlife Friendly Fencing stall. Steve introduced the project on behalf of the Tolga Bat Hospital at the 2007 conference and delivered a progress report in Canberra. Wildlife rehabilitators, scientists and many landholders are getting behind the initiative as better information about the conditions in which the majority of injuries occur is becoming known.

Council webmaster, Steve Amesbury was a hardworking member of the Conference Organizing Committee. Steve has established something of a reputation by creating the videos used to introduce each day's sessions at most of the conferences held thus far. Regular conference-goers wonder what he is going to come up with next.

You can judge the quality of his work for yourself. A few weeks ago he put up one of the presentations on YouTube (see www.youtube.com and search for "Aussie Animals are Stronger").

Papers from the conference will be available at: www.nwrc.com.au (which also stores papers from previous years).

As yet there been no official announcement on the 7th National Wildlife Rehabilitation Conference. We understand there is possibility of it being hosted in Hobart in 2010.

Ministers on the Move

Ministerial delegations take some organizing. Securing an appointment usually involves emails and phone calls over several weeks. Availability of the Minister and Minister's staff is not the only issue. Appropriate departmental officers must be available as well.

The Minister's time is limited – usually to 30 minutes. Agreement on topics to be discussed must be reached and a brief prepared and forwarded in sufficient time for the Minister to receive briefing from the agency. Delegation members need to consider who and how topics will be introduced during the meeting.

The Council's Executive met with Minister Debus twice during 2006. We missed Minister Koperberg due to his office cancelling and failure to secure re-scheduling, despite our best efforts.

We met with Minister Firth in July, the issues discussed being the Council's need for secretariat assistance; consistency of departmental support in the regions; status of the in-house review of



NWC Executive members met with the Hon Verity Firth MP on 14 July 2008. l to r: Lorraine Vass (Media Officer), Sonja Elwood (Secretary), Minister Firth, Stan Wood (Vice Chair), Audrey Koosmen (Chair) and Julia McConnell (Treasurer).

DECC's Fauna Rehabilitation Policy; plans of management for wildlife in locked up areas; and the proposed inclusion of native reptiles in the pet trade.

Arrangements for meeting The Hon. Carmel Tebbutt, MP, the incoming Minister for Climate Change and the Environment, are in hand.

Editor's Corner

This is the final issue of *Wildlife Watch* for 2008. Thanks to all those who have assisted in getting the newsletter off the ground; in particular fellow Friends of the Koala member, Robin Dadswell, whose patience and desktop publishing skills I value enormously.

Vanessa Wilson has pointed out that the photo of the flying-fox with young in flight which appeared in July's *Wildlife Watch* was taken by Nick Edwards. Check out Nick's website at <http://etech.smugmug.com> to see more of his amazing photos.