

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS WITH NPWS PERSONNEL AT THE NWC GENERAL MEETING 48
– TUESDAY 15 MAY 2018
held at 43 Bridge Street, Hurstville**

There were 18 Representatives and Alternates present from 15 member groups. And National Parks & Wildlife Service representatives present were:

- Peter Stathis, Manager, Biodiversity and Wildlife, Conservation Section, Park Programs
- Robert Oliver, Manager, Wildlife Biodiversity Reforms
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- Bronwen van Jaarsveld, Project Officer, Wildlife Biodiversity Reforms

Peter Stathis spoke until 11.45 a.m. including question and answer sessions.

The BC Act Rehabilitation Sector Discussion paper is still with the CEO OEH. No publication date has been announced.

Peter appreciated there may be some concerns about the very recent Koala Strategy announcements coming out of the blue and the focus placed on koalas. The Koala Strategy is a response to a government report about declining populations of koalas across the state. We need to play the long game with a well-reasoned case to deliver results.

Aspects of the \$45 million funding announcement related to koala strategies will have offshoot benefits for more species, and koalas in some way are the Trojan horse for the whole sector. There will be \$1.4million for vet and vet nurse wildlife training, not just koalas. There is recognition that wildlife veterinary curricula need strengthening. Plans for a network of wildlife hospitals are at the concept stage and are not funded.

The Government is paying attention now to the sector and there is some respect for wildlife rehabilitation. Within the OEH there is a new team in place with new energy. There is \$2.6 million for 3 years to do a few things. This is just the beginning. We have now got the attention of Government and are beginning to see success. We believe we are in a good place to improve things for rehabilitation. There is better understanding of the needs, and continuing dialogue in government. Government will not be funding core operations – however there could be project money.

The One Call Number for wildlife rescue is a concept at this stage. It is planned to be one number that can be placed on road signs and take away the public uncertainty who to call. The one number will be a referral service to the correct number for actual wildlife rescues. It will not be a Call Centre nor is it intended to replace group numbers, rather to result in better outcomes and faster animal pick up or delivery. What will happen in areas where

there is overlap or multiple licensees is not yet known. There are dead zones where people don't know who or where to call.

Questions and comments on the single call number: Sydney Wildlife has some concerns. What consultation and explanation will be undertaken? e.g. if something is picked up in Blacktown what group would it go to? Sydney Wildlife or WIRES? Need marketing campaign – possibly multi-faceted via print, electronic, other means. We need to know what technology is available – instance given of technology not currently allowing a double-divert of incoming phone calls.

To plan for the single call number we need money first, and hire people to develop the concept so are looking at a 12-18 months' time frame. The aim is to get fastest service. Group's core practices need to be effective to do that. Questions asked about groups that do not provide an overnight rescue service.

Assessment/evaluation: Any new system will be assessed both in terms of the Call Forward function and the response from the sector. There is potential to be much more comprehensive and valuable in the future.

Suggestion that on divert there is a message "Thank you for calling 1300 Wild you are being diverted to the local licensed group".

It is clear we need a more strategic and cohesive sector with uniform training standards and sharing of resources.

Wildlife data from groups is getting to a shape that it can go into Bionet where it can inform government and planners. Without evidence you have nothing – data is the evidence. The NSW rehabilitation model is different from other states – PS believes it is better. More than 1/3 of Australia's rehabbers are in NSW.

Peter acknowledged Ron Haering's work.

Training standards for Koalas. A workshop will be held for developing standards for koala care with the aim for consistent standards between groups.

Marine Wildlife – some money is available to help work better responding to whale and other marine events – ORRCA and Australian Seabird Rescue.

Other jurisdictions are interested to know how NSW is proceeding with rehab accreditation and will be watching closely.

Compassion fatigue – has anyone done any work on it? Not sure if there is an understanding at whole of government level and it is something we will take aboard. Funding? Sydney Wildlife advises it uses Macquarie University for counseling, funded by MU. Recent survey paper by Bruce Englefield mentioned.

Rehabilitator Survey. A limited number of a confidential Executive summary report was distributed at the meeting. Each group surveyed should expect to receive their individual reports within 3 weeks.

Future group evaluations – could be done between 3 to 10 year intervals. This survey establishes a baseline to inform future processes.

ROBERT OLIVER:

- Final draft proposals on changes to management of non-releasables animals will be circulated to stakeholders in late May for a 2 week review period.
- A further stakeholder meeting will be convened in June or July to discuss revised options for management of unwanted, abandoned and seized native animal pets.

*M. Ryan
Secretary
18-5-2018*