

Date: 19/4/2019

Re: Submission regarding

Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector Strategy National Parks and Wildlife Service Biodiversity and Wildlife Unit

To Who it May Concern,

I have been involved with Native Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation and am proud to have been able to aid and assist in the treatment and rehabilitation of many creatures over many years.

I have many years of experience as a Registered Nurse and have had the honour of volunteering my time and monetary donations to Southern Cross Wildlife Care founded by Doctor Howard Ralph and his fantastic team.

I have always had a love of all animals and believe in giving each and every creature a fair chance of treatment, care and rehabilitation.

Many times I have come across injured wildlife in my local area and have sought assistance from various bodies for treatment of injuries. Much to my horror and disgust I was given advise from these so called "Wildlife Care Groups" such as:

A kangaroo hit by a car with a broken leg : Get your husband to shoot it.

A Tawny Frogmouth with a broken wing : Take it to a vet and they will put it to sleep.

A baby wallaby taken from the pouch of a dead wallaby hit by a car : Wallaby's are common and it is too young to be raised and released.

Due to the negative responses I had received I linked up with Southern Cross Wildlife Care and found a service that is dedicated to the care and support of our native animals.

This service is unfunded by Governments and "Statutory Bodies" such as WIRES, NPAW, RSPCA, NATIVE ANIMAL TRUST etc. The service exists on donations and fund raising and volunteer staffing.

Dr Howard Ralph and his team are not only dedicated but hugely specialised and are able to assess and treat native animals in a controlled and appropriate environment to ensure the greatest chance of healing and recovery.

Due to the nature of native animals and the predators that usually cause them injury - man, dogs, cats, cars, general veterinary clinics are not ideal due to the level of noise eg barking dogs, calling cats, people talking, phones ringing, doors slamming etc. This sort of environment causes high levels of stress which inevitably affects the chances of recovery of native animals.

The Southern Cross Wildlife Care Clinic at Braidwood is a perfect example of a functioning Specialist Wildlife Care centre where native animals can get the care and medical intervention that is required to return them to optimal health and wellbeing.

Generally most native animals taken to general Veterinary clinics are treated at the end of a day due to paying customers have precedent over a native animal that is dropped off for care. I personally am happy to pay for veterinary services if the animal is treated immediately but not all people are able to do this. At times I have had to tell a vet to treat the animal immediately and that I will pay and wait for an assessment and treatment and I have had some vets tell me that they do not know how to treat a native animal.

This shows some of the importance of specialised Native Animal Hospitals or Clinic and definitely

Native Animal Specialists and Veterinarians and Nurses.

There are many people like myself who will willingly travel miles to do the right thing by these injured animals and who will take on the expense and time in caring for them until their rehabilitation and release.

There are many carers who have gained so much knowledge from Dr Ralph's expertise and his ability to train and educate carers and veterinary students in correct procedures, care and treatment of native animals, again without any financial assistance for his time and effort. His extensive knowledge and practical experience is invaluable for carers of native animals and the success of their recovery and rehabilitation.

Personally, one of the first animals I cared for was a tiny hairless wombat joey weighing only 154grams. At the time I made many trips from Newcastle to Sydney for treatment and advice with Dr Howard Ralph to enable this tiny creature to survive. After many long months she grew to a good size and eventually was rehabilitated and released but this would not have been possible without Dr Ralph's knowledge and dedication. As a carer I would not have been able to have raised this tiny creature to a successful release. The hours that went into her care and support were extensive for myself as well as Dr Ralph. This was done willingly and I felt so grateful to have been given the opportunity to successfully raise and release this young wombat.

I have also raised tiny koalas with the assistance of Dr Ralph and his team, raised and released native birds, phascogales (endangered species) and marsupials.

Dr Ralph has attended surgeries on birds and mammals that I have taken to him with high success rates leading to release after rehabilitation.

Many of these creatures would have been euthanased by local inexperienced veterinary practices.

I believe that we all have a responsibility to provide qualified care, treatment and support to all the native animals that are injured or orphaned due to the inadvertent decimation of native animal habitat and the huge impact we as human beings have on the survival of native animals species within this country.

To achieve this we require specialised, qualified and educated Veterinarians, veterinary nurses, volunteer carers and education throughout our communities.

Belinda Furlonger
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