

Christie Jarrett - submission

Strategic Support

1. Protection for release sites

As a licensed wildlife carer with a rural, bush property, I would like to ensure that my release site has protection from culling licences.

In recognition of all of the work wildlife carers do for free – for NPWS, Police, the community and government. The least that can be provided is some surety that the animals we are expected to rehabilitate and release are protected.

This should be an absolutely minimum. I have recently been impacted by a new neighbour moving into our area and the animals I have released over the years becoming victim to shooting.

This neighbour was given this license with no thought to the nearby release site, one of the only safe sites remaining in our large region.

It is morally and ethically wrong that this should be done with no thought to educate the public or support the carers that help NPWS all the time.

2. Funding for vets

Native animals are owned by the Crown, and expecting veterinarians to fund the treatment of native animals is not fair. I believe there should be funding available for vets to source when they can prove they have worked with a wildlife carer to secure the best treatment for an animal. In my group this is currently paid for by my groups extensive and time-consuming fundraising activities.

3. Employee Assistance Program

Rescuing and caring for native animals can be extremely traumatic. We experience suffering and cruelty on a daily basis and have no access to mental health supports through our group – WIRES. I think this should absolutely be provided.

I think that licenced wildlife carers should have access to specialised mental health supports of some kind.

4. Accreditation vs licensing

I am concerned that changing the term from licensing to accreditation will mean removing protections for native animals – which seems to be occurring at the Government level.

Native animals need the legal protection of solid laws, and people employed who are willing to investigate and enforce infringement of these laws. This currently does not happen in our region. In fact, it is actively discouraged.

5. Metro vs Regional

As a busy regional/rural Branch we struggle to be recognised in our wildlife group – WIRES' strategic decisions.

With now 28 branches and the majority of members in the metropolitan area, we struggle with metro focused decisions being made that cause our rural based members to leave, or become disengaged.

For example, our xMatters rescue system is based on internet access or mobile phone coverage, which can be quite limited in some of our areas. It also means some of our older members without mobile phones, no longer participate in rescues. These people are often retired and have more time to participate. This leaves a massive hole in our ability to attend and cover rescues.

Another example is that a lot of our call sheet tracking and species courses are now online – which means people need computers or internet access or at least some familiarity with computers. This also cuts out some of our most available and willing volunteers.

We need options for both the technology literate and those who are not, to participate.

Recruitment and Retention of volunteers

6. Background checks for/of wildlife carers

Sitting on the Branch Management Committee of our branch for some time, it has become apparent that members come to WIRES or wildlife care with no background checks performed.

We regularly deal with people who suffer mental health conditions, which are not necessarily a terrible thing, but when they become stressed due to difficulties with rescues, animals and other members, they can get worse and animals and other members can suffer.

I believe that if we checked these details before admitting a new member into a group, we could manage this situation a lot better.

For example, a mental health condition may not stop you from caring, but you may not be asked to go and attend stressful rescues.

I don't know how this can be addressed completely, but I do believe background checks to check for past cruelty cases, animal hoarding or criminal activity would be a good start.

Standards of care and training

7. Training

I absolutely support more extensive and advanced training be provided for specialist carers. I am a specialised macropod carer and have done the macropod course now numerous times. It has not changed and in some instances the training is now outdated. Keeping this up to date is the job of volunteers, which is not feasible in the long term.

8. Housing of animals

Inspections of the housing and keeping of animals needs to be conducted by fair and impartial people. I believe this is not currently done, to the detriment of the animals. For example, there have been cases where animals have been kept in close proximity to domestic pets. This noise would absolutely inhibit the rehabilitation of any native animal.

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