

NSW Volunteer Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector Strategy

Comments on Draft

Volunteer support and culture

A unified peak body representing all volunteer wildlife organisations in their interactions with government in relation to the listed objectives is laudable.

The draft paper is silent on how such a body would be funded and this needs to be resolved. The additional funding mentioned in your paper does not appear to be recurrent.

Nor is the composition and terms of reference for such a body discussed in detail. I am wondering if it is proposed that it will have some disciplinary functions over its volunteer organisations and/or their members?

Also, my view would be that some veterinary involvement in the peak body is essential.

Standards of care and training

The stated objectives and actions proposed are in my view unexceptionable, although the work required to develop minimum standards for training of volunteers across our diverse NSW species should not be underestimated.

Some species, for example bats and macropods, require a highly specialised, and often lengthy, approach to care and rehabilitation that might make difficult the setting of such minimum standards. Conversely, training in relation to small mammal rehabilitation can certainly lend itself to the suggested approach.

Much also depends on the nature and severity of the injury sustained.

I strongly agree with what is said about mentors/coordinators.

Knowledge and information access

Again, no quarrel whatsoever with what's said about more effective use of data on wildlife rehabilitation and release.

The importance of effective post-release monitoring cannot be overstated. Whilst there's great satisfaction for volunteers in rehabilitating and releasing injured or orphan wildlife, we simply don't know in most cases how successful our efforts have been in bringing about the long-term survival of the animals.

Funding for conducting some pilot studies of a range of species (especially, but not exclusively, birds) using electronic tracking devices would be an important step forward.

Community awareness and recognition

All laudable objectives.

I regularly volunteer to man the phones for the organisation of which I am a member, and a very common situation encountered is where a member of public has seen (or often merely *thinks* he/she has seen) a snake in an urban environment.

Difficulty can arise in such cases as the public appears to feel that one of our functions is to relocate the snake for them, even though there is no sign of trauma.

Awareness within the community that such a task is one for a professional snake-catcher should be promoted.

Government support and regulation

No real comment other than that the (non-recurrent) funding mentioned is going to have to be spread very thinly in order to achieve the stated objectives.

The institution of a single wildlife rescue number is a great idea, but it is unclear how it will operate in practice, especially in relation to how contact will be made with suitable rescuers once the single number is accessed by the public. This needs much more scoping.