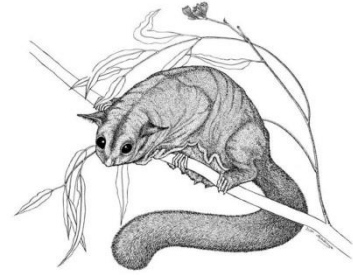


Northern Rivers Wildlife Carers

Caring for native animals in the Northern Rivers region since 1992

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Wednesday 10th April, 2019

Office of Environment & Heritage
Attn: Ron Haering

OEH NSW Volunteer Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector Strategy.

We note that our comments relate predominately to our areas of concern. We generally would like to acknowledge the amount of work that went into developing the strategy and appreciate the high standards of animal care and suggestions within it.

Volunteer support and culture

Improved standards of governance

- While we think adoption of the Volunteering Australia guidelines would be a high standard, as all members of NRWC are volunteers, not paid staff, we would need support from OEH to achieve this standard.
- We welcome OEH developing the welcome kit and associated video for new volunteers

Helping new leaders adjust to their role

- We would welcome online training resources for mentors, committee members and coordinators

Facilitating a unified peak body and new strategic agenda

- We would prefer one body representing all wildlife carers but if WIRES want to continue to operate independently from the rest of the groups then the only option would be to implement an advisory board.
- Participation from a wider demographic group – we have many younger people join and come to training days, however as these people predominately work full time or have children that have afternoon and weekend sport and other commitments, they tend to be limited in their capacity to care for animals, helping out with rescues only when they are able. This is why the demographic of active carers tends to be older women who have retired and have the time to take animals into care. It is simply a capacity issue that we consider is unlikely to change unfortunately.
- *Creating a list of trainers endorsed to deliver specialty species training to the sector and developing resources to help train new and inexperienced trainers within wildlife rehabilitation groups* – We would hope this doesn't exclude long term experienced carers from delivering training if they don't want to go through the trainer endorsement process?
- *Exploring opportunities to augment home-based care with enclosures built by wildlife rehabilitation providers on government or corporate owned land* – we have concerns regarding the security management of facilities on land that is not privately owned where access cannot be restricted and this should be carefully considered if this proposal is to proceed.

Promoting stronger compliance

- We would recommend that the audits you are requesting we carry out become part of the annual return/online reporting and perhaps have a set number, dependant on the number of volunteers?

Streamlined reporting and improved access to data

- We would like to see an app developed for carers to enter all the data for each animal in their care. This could have back of house access to species coordinators and group management committees and also be accessed by OEH, with all the information they need available in a current form. This would be good for showing trends like the lorikeet illness that has been occurring of late

Community awareness and recognition**A single wildlife rescue number**

- We can't see how this would work in our area with four individual groups.
- As far as road signage this would be very expensive to erect and maintain. Most people in times of an emergency reach for their mobile phone for help. IFAW has already produced an app for this exact purpose.

A more flexible policy framework

Retain its preference for services to be provided by groups but allow greater flexibility in where members of groups can reside. We will do this by allowing up to 20% of a group's members to reside outside their boundary without requiring a memorandum of understanding with the neighbouring group.

- We already have a number of members who reside outside our area. They are associate members who provide financial support and basically want to stay in touch with our group.
- We feel it would not be possible to mentor or monitor active carers or rescuers who live outside our area.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this feedback.

Yours faithfully

Cheryl Cochran
Secretary
Northern Rivers Wildlife Carers