



Northern Tablelands Wildlife Carers Inc.

Written Submission

Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector Strategy: Public consultation

Northern Tablelands Wildlife Carers Inc. provides the following comments on the Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector Strategy. These comments have been compiled by members of the NTWC Committee.

Comments on Focus Areas of the *Strategy for the volunteer wildlife rehabilitation sector*

Volunteer support and culture

Planned action

- Improve standards of governance
 - The proposed 'Welcome Kit' would be a useful development to ensure that new members are welcomed in a consistent manner. It would be helpful to include in the video an outline of how the OEH interacts with wildlife associations and the organisational structure that relates to the care of injured wildlife.
- Help new leaders adjust to their role
 - This would be a very useful tool, not only for new leaders but for existing leaders
- Attract younger participants to the sector
 - It is important to attract young people to our sector and this will help to address succession planning. However, further research into why younger participants may not be attracted to wildlife caring, will need to be identified.
 - While listed as a dot point on page 9 of the strategy's document, in the more expanded section on pages 12-13, there is no reference to this point.
- Facilitate a unified peak body and new strategic agenda
 - While a unified peak body may be desirable, as this has been the practice in the past, it is important to acknowledge the diversity that exists within the sector. An advisory board could provide a broader knowledge base, help guide wildlife care, and provide the input for the key initiatives for the partnership between the OEH and the board. In addition, the broader knowledge base represented on the advisory board, would act as a sound base for dealing with issues such as climate change and its impact on species existence.
- Improve the sector's access to funding
 - Over and above funding of 1.2 million as mentioned, an additional support to the services that carers provide would be to exempt or make possible a refunds scheme where volunteers can have GST exempted or refunded on purchases directly attributed to wildlife care eg: medications, medical supplies, feed, milk.

Expected outcomes

1. The sector has a positive culture and is buoyed by the intake of younger participants
2. Providers are well-represented by an effective support network
3. Volunteers have capacity to meet the demands of wildlife care

Standards of care and training

Planned action

- Standard induction and specialised species training for volunteers
 - The training for induction would require a certain degree of flexibility to take into account the environment within which the carer organisation operates.
 - Regional groups including NTWC find access to quality training costly to attend and therefore support for the provision of training or travel to training venues would be welcomed.
 - Standard training programs should not preclude the inclusion of specialists with unique expertise and knowledge from being supported or encouraged to present. In addition, funding for specialists to tour to regional areas should be supported by the OEH.
- Enhance mentor and species coordinator support
 - Training for mentors and species coordinators would be useful addition to wildlife caring organisations.
- Wildlife care training for vets and vet nurses
 - It is the experience of members in our group that there is a wide variation in the knowledge and skills of our vets and vet nurses in our region. This often seems to come down to interest or a lack of interest in native wildlife. Furthermore, it would appear that vet and vet nurse training courses only provide a scant covering of native wildlife anatomy, assessment and treatment.
- Update triage and treatment protocols
 - A shared platform providing the latest in triage and treatment protocols is well overdue.
- Create service provider access to standard compliance assessment tools and continue random audits

Expected outcomes

1. Volunteers are skilled and capable to meet minimum standards of care in the sector
2. Vets and vet nurses have the skills and resources to treat wildlife
3. The sector has access to tools for ensuring standards are adhered to

Knowledge and information access

Planned action

- Streamline reporting and improve access to data
 - Any improvement to streamline the capture of data is welcomed.
- Connect volunteers to other professional networks
 - A good idea!
- Conduct post release monitoring of rehabilitated animals
 - We agree with monitoring particularly for endangered or threatened species.

Expected outcomes

1. Data collected by volunteers is utilised for wildlife management and research purposes
2. Better understanding gained of the success of wildlife rehabilitation

Community awareness and recognition

Planned action

- Introduce a single wildlife rescue number
 - It will require well trained and informed staff handling calls as this has been problematic with the WIRES centralised call system due to the lack of local knowledge and specific species requirements.
- Guide community education about wildlife
 - This is a much-needed area to address as education about our wildlife is limited.
- Promote awareness about volunteer participation in wildlife rehabilitation
 - Likewise, promotion of what we do is welcomed.

Expected outcomes

1. Community access to rescue services is enhanced
2. Community recognition and appreciation of volunteers and native wildlife is improved

Government regulation and support

Planned action

- Introduce a system of accreditation for volunteer wildlife rehabilitation organisations
 - We are supportive of this move. However, one concern is that if the accreditation process is so complex, this may deter volunteers from becoming involved.

- Implement a more flexible policy framework
 - Providing specialist centres, such as the Southern Cross Wildlife Clinic in NSW, is much needed across the state.
- Provide ongoing strategic support services
 - Ongoing funding is crucial for the sector.

Expected outcomes

1. Services across the sector are consistent, reliable and in accordance with set standards
2. More effective regulation and support for the sector

In conclusion, while we are in general agreement across a number of the focus areas and between the planned actions and expected outcomes, there appears to be very little detail for procedure as to how the OEH will get from the planned actions to desired outcomes. As such, our group looks forward to participating in the ongoing development and implementation of this strategy.

Diane Hansford
President

On behalf of members of the NTWC Committee