



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, INDUSTRY & ENVIRONMENT

# Accreditation of volunteer wildlife rescue and rehabilitation service providers in NSW

A support document to the NSW Volunteer Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector Strategy 2020–2023



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# 1. Introduction

This document is designed to give the wildlife rehabilitation sector a better understanding of how the accreditation process will operate and what service providers will need to do to satisfy its requirements.

## 1.1 Background

Accreditation is a formal process for evaluating whether a provider of volunteer rescue and rehabilitation services is suitable to hold a Biodiversity Conservation Licence (licence) under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*.

The Independent Biodiversity Legislation Review Panel recommended in its 2014 report that providers of wildlife rescue and rehabilitation services should continue to be regulated and approved to operate through a system of accreditation. This recommendation was adopted by the Government and has now been enacted under the NSW *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (s.2.17) (The Act).

The intent is to have in place a quality assurance process for ensuring wildlife rehabilitation services are being provided in a consistent, reliable and credible manner in accordance with established standards. Accreditation will enable the Government to take a more strategic approach to the sector by setting consistent statewide standards of operation and monitoring adherence of service providers to those standards.

## 1.2 Benefits of accreditation

Accreditation will give greater certainty to the government and the community that services across the sector are being delivered in accordance with established standards. This is an improvement on current arrangements, where there are few sector-wide standards currently in place to help the Government assess the quality of services provided.

The expected benefits of accreditation will be:

- improved volunteer support, management and morale
- transferability of volunteer skills between providers
- stronger compliance with codes of practice
- better relations with volunteers, veterinary practices and government
- greater community recognition of service providers
- improved outcomes for sick and injured wildlife
- reduced red-tape for service providers.

## 1.3 Legislative and policy framework for accreditation

Section 2.17 of the Act provides for the Biodiversity Conservation Regulations (the Regulations) to make provision for the accreditation of providers of wildlife rehabilitation and rescue services. The National Parks and Wildlife Service will administer this first three-year period of transitional accreditation through its Rehabilitation of Protected Fauna Policy (the Policy) which will form the business rules for the scheme.

Successful applicants will continue to be issued with a licence which will enable them to undertake activities which would otherwise be offences under the Act relating to:

- 'harm animals', i.e. capture or euthanase sick, injured and orphaned animals

- 'liberate animals', i.e. release and relocate rehabilitated animals
- 'possess animals' which were taken in for rehabilitation purposes and/or are animals now deemed unsuitable for release and provide an education, scientific or companion animal function, and/or are surrendered or seized as part of a Government compliance operation
- identify animals, i.e. tag, band or microchip animals which were captured for rehabilitation purposes.

In addition, accreditation via the licence will also enable some providers to:

- import into or export out of New South Wales animals for rehabilitation
- harm, liberate and/or possess animals such as magpies, possums and reptiles to mitigate property damage and/or protect human safety.

Wildlife rehabilitation providers can continue to undertake their current activities under their existing licence until 31 December 2020.



## 2. Accreditation process

### 2.1 Requirement for accreditation

Volunteer-based organisations or individuals that organise and promote themselves as providers of a wildlife rescue and rehabilitation service on an ongoing basis will need to be accredited in order to be issued a licence.

Non-volunteer-based service providers such as commercial or government facilities will not require accreditation and continue to operate under a licence. These facilities include Taronga Conservation Society and Western Plains Zoo, Sea World, Dolphin Marine Magic, Sydney Sea Life Aquarium and John Morony Correctional Centre. Veterinary practitioners will also not require accreditation under this scheme.

The Biodiversity Conservation Regulation (s.2.15) provides for persons to possess an animal (except marine mammals and/or marine turtles) if they can establish:

- the animal was not capable of fending for itself, and
- the person notified the Secretary, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment in writing of their possession of the animal within three days after the animal came into the person's possession
- the person complied with any direction given to them by the Secretary, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

These provisions are intended to only provide a legal defence to individual members of the community who possess sick or injured animals on an **ad-hoc basis** to enable their transport to a wildlife rehabilitation provider or veterinary practitioner.

### 2.2 Obtaining accreditation

A call for applications for accreditation will be made once the final transitional accreditation standards and criteria have been adopted by the Department.

Priority assessment for accreditation will be given to **existing** wildlife rehabilitation groups and individuals who currently hold a licence. Once accreditation of existing groups is complete, Expressions of Interest (EOIs) for accreditation will also be accepted from **new** providers seeking to:

- operate in areas not serviced by an existing wildlife rehabilitation group
- establish a central facility for specialised species in any area.

There is no fee for applying for obtaining accreditation. Successful applicants will receive a certificate of accreditation and a licence with a minimum three-year term. The licence will be accompanied by:

- a map of their designated area of operation (where applicable)
- a list of conditions.

Accredited wildlife rehabilitation providers will have their licence details published on a public register (Biodiversity Conservation Act s.9.7). The Department will also retain contact details of providers on its website and provide details of their area of operation. The register will not disclose information which would contravene the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998.

## **2.3 Unsuccessful applications**

Any unsuccessful applicant will be notified and provided with a written statement of reasons for the decision. They will then be given a second opportunity to amend their application to address any issues identified in the written statement.

An applicant who has not met the requirements for accreditation and subsequently refused a licence has a right of appeal. Should a current provider be unsuccessful in their application for accreditation, the area currently serviced by the provider will be offered to another accredited provider.

### 3. Implementation of accreditation

New South Wales is the first jurisdiction to introduce accreditation of its volunteer wildlife rehabilitation providers and its implementation will impose change on the sector. Standards for the sector, particularly in key areas such as training, are yet to be developed and there is some inconsistency across the sector in how providers manage their operations.

To ensure there are no adverse impacts on service delivery the Department intends to implement a transitional approach to accreditation. Transitional accreditation will require wildlife rehabilitation providers to apply to the Department and demonstrate they meet the accreditation standards and criteria outlined in **Attachments 1, 2 and 3**.

The criteria for transitional accreditation will be based on existing Policy requirements and licence conditions and good management practices currently implemented across most of the sector. These transitional accreditation requirements are considered by the Department as the essential minimal requirements for providing wildlife rehabilitation services in New South Wales.

The Department intends to develop, with the peak body, consistent sector-wide operating standards within each of the six accreditation categories and will review the criteria and evidence requirements after this time.

Transitional accreditation will be for an initial three-year period until such time when operating standards for the sector can be refined in consultation with the sector and implemented in the Regulations. After three years providers will be invited to re-apply for accreditation. Accreditation renewal will occur every five years thereafter.



# Attachment 1 Transitional accreditation standards and assessment criteria

Accreditation will be assessed across the following six categories of service delivery:

1. Governance
2. Training and support
3. Standards of animal care
4. Service capacity
5. Record keeping
6. Veterinary services.

To obtain accreditation applicants must verify they can meet the accreditation criteria in each category. A checklist is provided in **Attachment 2 and Attachment 3**. The term 'wildlife rehabilitation provider' refers to both a wildlife rehabilitation group and an independent wildlife rehabilitator (i.e. a person currently licensed to operate as an individual wildlife provider).

## Governance

### Standard

The structures, activities and operations of a wildlife rescue and rehabilitation provider are in accordance with the principles of legal compliance, probity, transparency and accountability.

### Criteria

To satisfy the standard an applicant must verify the following:

- Wildlife rehabilitation group declares it is a legal entity that is either incorporated under the NSW Associations Incorporation Act 2009, a registered company limited by guarantee, or a registered company operating under the NSW *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*.
- Wildlife rehabilitation group declares it has a constitution that addresses each of the compulsory matters outlined in Schedule 1 of the Associations Incorporation Act.
- Wildlife rehabilitation group or independent wildlife rehabilitator declares it has current volunteer accident and public and products liability insurance coverage.
- Wildlife rehabilitation group has a current register of its leadership team including species coordinators. The register will include the name, role and contact details of each team member. The register and role descriptions for each leadership position must be available to members.
- Wildlife rehabilitation group has a current list of members, their contact details and their role in the group, e.g. Species Coordinator, regional team leader, mentor, animal authorities e.g. raptor, wombat, etc.
- Wildlife rehabilitation group or independent wildlife rehabilitator has a 'Code of Ethics for Wildlife Rehabilitators' which is readily available to its members or declares it will adopt the peak body Code of Ethics.
- Wildlife rehabilitation group has policies and procedures for:
  - conflict resolution or declares it will adopt the peak body conflict management guidelines
  - anti-bullying and harassment or declares it will adopt the peak body guidelines
  - work health and safety (WHS) of its members
  - reimbursement of out of pocket expenses for members.

- Wildlife rehabilitation group has a current register of members who have been vaccinated for Australian bat lyssavirus.
- Wildlife rehabilitation group has:
  - a 'code of conduct' for its leadership team and members, and/or
  - documentation that requires a member to certify their commitment to the group and its rules including compliance with Department standards and the conditions of accreditation. The declaration should include an agreement that the member will permit periodic inspection of their premises to ensure they meet Department standards.
- Wildlife rehabilitation group can demonstrate open and regular communication to its members about management decisions, its policy and procedures, training opportunities, and compliance with Department codes of practice and reporting requirements.

## Training and support

### Standard

Wildlife rehabilitation providers have a structured program of training and support in place that ensures wildlife rehabilitators are competent to perform their role effectively.

### Criteria

To satisfy the standard an applicant must verify the following:

- Wildlife rehabilitation group has a leadership team role responsible for coordinating and communicating training opportunities to members.
- Wildlife rehabilitation group has a structured training program for new members, rescuers and specialist animal carers in place that is current, documented, linked to Department regulatory requirements, and is competency-based.
- Wildlife rehabilitation provider declares that its current members (or themselves if they are an independent wildlife rehabilitator) are trained and competent to undertake their assigned role for the class of animal specified on their application for accreditation.
- Wildlife rehabilitation group has a current 'training register' that lists training courses successfully completed by its members or will undertake a census of members to complete a training register by December 2020.
- Wildlife rehabilitation group has induction training for new members that includes:
  - policy and procedures of the group
  - WHS requirements of the group
  - standards outlined in the relevant code(s) of practice for the rehabilitation of injured, sick and orphaned protected fauna and licence conditions that are relevant to the role.
- Wildlife rehabilitation group declares that its current members (or themselves if they are an independent wildlife rehabilitator) who undertake additional activities such as relocating possums or snakes are familiar with and will comply with Department regulatory requirements for the conduct of these activities.
- Wildlife rehabilitation group demonstrates ongoing support for its members through a mentor or buddy program.

## Standards of animal care

### Standard

Wildlife rehabilitation providers have a system of quality assurance for the management of animals in their care.

### Criteria

To satisfy the standard an applicant must verify the following:

- Wildlife rehabilitation group has one or more species coordinators. Animal Coordinators or equivalent and their role and responsibilities are clearly defined.
- Wildlife rehabilitation group or independent wildlife rehabilitator has access to Department codes of practice and any other relevant animal care resources and hygiene protocols that inform the quality of care provided to animals under their control.
- Wildlife rehabilitation group or independent wildlife rehabilitator declares that all persons participating in flying-fox rescue and rehabilitation are vaccinated for Australian bat lyssavirus.
- Wildlife rehabilitation group declares it undertakes periodic monitoring of its members' compliance with relevant codes of practice and existing licence conditions.

## Service capacity

### Standard

Wildlife rehabilitation providers demonstrate an efficient phone rescue service and capacity to effectively respond to calls for assistance.

### Criteria

To satisfy the standard an applicant must verify the following:

- Wildlife rehabilitation group has systems in place for efficiently and consistently managing and responding to incoming calls.
- Wildlife rehabilitation group has systems in place for managing risks around service capacity in the area they are seeking to deliver services.
- Wildlife rehabilitation group declares it has sufficient active members and resources to respond to an emergency request for animal rescue within 1–2 hours of a call (within daylight hours 9am–5pm) for 90% of calls received.

## Record keeping

### Standard

Wildlife rehabilitation providers have quality systems in place to ensure data integrity in reporting and have demonstrated compliance with Department reporting requirements.

### Criteria

To satisfy the standard an applicant must verify the following:

- Wildlife rehabilitation group has a commitment to quality data collection and record keeping processes.
- The data collection system and animal record forms meet data collection requirements.
- Reports have been submitted in accordance with their existing licence and codes of practice requirements for the last two years.

## **Veterinary services**

### **Standard**

Wildlife rehabilitation providers have systems in place for ensuring they engage with veterinary practitioners in a consistent, positive and ethical manner.

### **Criteria**

To satisfy the standard an applicant must verify the following:

- Wildlife rehabilitation group has documented procedures for volunteers who work with veterinary practices and these procedures are communicated to members.

## Attachment 2 Transitional accreditation supporting checklist for existing group

Evidence required to support a wildlife rehabilitation group's application for accreditation. Insert a tick and provide supporting documentation to verify your claim. No supporting documentation is needed for evidence requiring a 'tick only' and providers can self-assess these requirements. The Department will work with groups to verify the accuracy of applications. Additional documentation can be provided if you think this will support your application.

**Standard 1: The structures, activities and operations of a wildlife rescue and rehabilitation provider are in accordance with the principles of legal compliance, probity, transparency and accountability.**

	<b>Evidence demonstrating compliance with the standard. Supporting documentation where relevant will be sent to the Department contact officer</b>	<b>Evidence tick</b>	
1.1	Is the group incorporated under the <u>Associations Incorporation Act</u> , or is a registered company limited by guarantee or is a registered company operating under the <u>Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act</u> ?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	
1.2	Does the Constitution of the group address each of the compulsory matters outlined in Schedule 1 of the <i>Associations Incorporation Act</i> ?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	In progress
1.3	Does the group have a volunteer accident and public and product liability insurance?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	
1.4	Does the group have a register of leadership positions and role descriptions?		
1.5	Is the register of leadership positions and role descriptions accessible to members?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	
1.6	Does the group have a code of conduct for its leadership team and is the code available to members?		
1.7	Does the group maintain an up to date membership list?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	
1.8	Does the group have a code of ethics for its members or is willing to adopt the peak body's code of ethics?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	
1.9	Does the group have policy and procedures for conflict resolution or is willing to adopt the peak body's guidelines?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	
1.10	Does the group have policy and procedures for anti-bullying and harassment or is willing to adopt the peak body's policy?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	
1.11	Does the group have policy and procedures that describe the Work Health and Safety (WHS) requirements of members of the group?		
1.12	Does the group have policy and procedures that describe rules for when members will be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	
1.13	Are policy and procedures of the group made readily accessible to members?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	
1.14	Does the group have documentation outlining a new member's commitment to the group and agreement to its code of ethics, rules, policy and procedures?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	
1.15	Does the group use newsletters, social media, regular meetings, email or other forms of communication to provide members with leadership team decisions, meeting minutes, training opportunities, WHS reminders, Department standards reminders, peak body decisions?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	

**Standard 2: Wildlife rehabilitation providers have a structured program of training and support in place that ensures wildlife rehabilitators are competent to effectively perform their role.**

2.1	Does the group have a leadership role assigned to coordinating and communicating training opportunities to its members and is that role currently filled?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	
2.2	Is there a current training register available that lists the training group members have completed or will it be completed before 31 December 2020?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	In progress
2.3	Does the training program for new members include policy and procedures of the group, WHS requirements and Department Codes of Practice?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	
2.4	Does your group's training program for new members assess competency?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	
2.5	Are members of your group who perform specialist care for animals trained and assessed as competent to meet the standards in the Department Codes of Practice?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	
2.6	Does a person responsible for the euthanasia of animals by firearms hold a current firearms licence from the NSW Police Force and have they completed mandatory training requirements?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	
2.7	Does your group provide ongoing support through a mentor or buddy program?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	
2.8	Are all persons who catch and release possums familiar with and have access to <u>Department requirements</u> for the conduct of this activity?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	
2.9	Are all persons who capture and release snakes from a premise trained in snake handling, including first aid and familiar with the <u>Department hygiene protocol for the control of disease in captive snakes</u> ?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	

**Standard 3: Wildlife rehabilitation providers have a system of quality assurance for the management of animals in their care.**

3.1	Does the group have one or more species coordinators, animal coordinators or equivalent and is their role clearly defined and communicated to members?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	
3.2	Do members of your group who perform a rescue role have equipment that meets the requirements of the relevant Department Code of Practice?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	
3.3	Do members of your group who perform specialist care for animals have enclosures that meet the requirements of the relevant Code of Practice?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	
3.4	Does the group have a process for monitoring and enforcing member's compliance with Department Codes of Practice?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	
3.5	Does the group make documented animal care resources to its members?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	
3.6	Do you ensure only persons who have a current, effective vaccination against Australian Bat Lyssavirus undertake rescue and/or rehabilitate flying foxes and microbats?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	

**Standard 4: Wildlife rehabilitation providers demonstrate an efficient phone rescue service and capacity to effectively respond to calls for assistance.**

4.1	Does the group have a designated phone coordinator to manage phone rosters and standardise phone procedures?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	
4.2	Does the group provide training to its phone operators?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)	



4.3	Does the group have a phone manual and/or standard phone greetings and scripts for phone operators?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)
4.4	Does the group provide phone operators with a list of veterinary practitioners and identify their availability after hours?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)
4.5	Does the group have a procedure for redirecting calls to another provider when demand cannot be met?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)
4.6	Can the group declare it can provide an emergency rescue service within 1-2 hours of a request for assistance (within daylight hours 9am-5pm) for 90% of calls received?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)

**Standard 5: Wildlife rehabilitation providers have quality systems in place to ensure data integrity in reporting and have demonstrated compliance with reporting requirements.**

5.1	Does the group have a designated records officer or other specified person responsible for verifying records to be submitted to the Department?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)
5.2	Does the group have a standard procedure for managing records to be submitted to the Department?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)
5.3	Does the group use a data record sheet that conforms with the requirements of the Department standard template?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)
5.4	Have compulsory annual reports required under the Department Code of Practice and existing licence been submitted to the Department for the last two years?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)

**Standard 6: Wildlife rehabilitation providers have systems in place for ensuring they engage with veterinary practitioners in a consistent, structured and ethical manner.**

6.1	Does the group have procedures for working with veterinary practices and are these procedures communicated to members?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)
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## Attachment 3 Transitional accreditation supporting checklist for existing individuals

Evidence required to support an individual wildlife rehabilitation provider's application for accreditation. Insert a tick and provide supporting documentation to verify your claim. No supporting documentation is needed for evidence requiring a 'tick only' and providers can self-assess these requirements. The Department will work with the individual to verify the accuracy of applications. Additional documentation can be provided if you think this will support your application.

### Standard 1: The structures, activities and operations of a wildlife rehabilitation provider are in accordance with the principles of legal compliance, probity, transparency and accountability.

	Evidence demonstrating compliance with the standard. Supporting documentation where relevant will be sent to the Department contact officer	Evidence tick
1.1	Do you have volunteer accident and public and products liability insurance?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)
1.2	Do you have a code of ethics or are you willing to adopt the peak body's code of ethics?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)
1.3	Do you have measures to address Work Health and Safety (WHS) requirements?	

### Standard 2: Wildlife rehabilitation providers have a structured program of training and support in place that ensures wildlife rehabilitators are competent to effectively perform their role.

2.1	Please provide a list of training completed?	
2.2	Does the training undertaken include Department Codes of Practice?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)
2.3	Are you authorised for the euthanasia of animals by firearms? If so, do you hold a current firearms licence from the NSW Police Force and have you completed mandatory training requirements?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)
2.4	Do you catch and release possums? If so, are you familiar with and have access to <u>Department requirements</u> for the conduct of this activity?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)
2.5	Do you capture and release snakes from a premise? If so, are you trained in snake handling, including first aid and familiar with <u>hygiene protocol for the control of disease in captive snakes</u> ?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)

### Standard 3: Wildlife rehabilitation providers have a system of quality assurance for the management of animals in their care.

3.1	Do you have rescue equipment that meets the requirements of the relevant Code of Practice?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)
3.2	Do you have enclosures that meet the requirements of the relevant Code of Practice?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)
3.3	If you rescue and/or rehabilitate flying foxes and microbats, are you vaccinated against Australian Bat Lyssavirus? Please provide certificates.	

### Standard 4: Wildlife rehabilitation providers demonstrate an efficient phone rescue service and capacity to effectively respond to calls for assistance.

4.1	Do you have a procedure for redirecting calls to another provider when demand cannot be met?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)
4.2	Can you declare you can provide an emergency rescue service within 1-2 hours of a request for assistance (within daylight hours 9am-5pm) for 90% of calls received?	<input type="checkbox"/> (tick only)

### Standard 5: Wildlife rehabilitation providers have quality systems in place to ensure data integrity in reporting and have demonstrated compliance with Department reporting requirements.

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5.1 Do you use a data record sheet that conforms with the requirements of the standard template?  (tick only)

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5.2 Have annual reports required under the Code of Practice and existing licence been submitted to the Department for the last two years?  (tick only)

**Standard 6: Wildlife rehabilitation providers have systems in place for ensuring they engage with veterinary practitioners in a consistent, structured and ethical manner.**

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6.1 Do you have documented procedures for working with veterinary practices?  (tick only)

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