

S00082 – Alicia Perritt

Thank you for the chance to add my voice to the proposed reforms for wildlife licensing.

These changes affect me in a number of ways which is why I would to have my say through my numerous roles.

Role 1: I am a reptile keeper with a few lizards and snakes. I love my reptiles and enjoy having them as pets. I feel that keeping reptiles as pets are better options for many people as they are relatively clean, easy to keep in a small area (a tank versus a whole back-yard) and much easier to have while a renter as many landlords are ok with reptile pets. I also am happy that my pets don't ruin the natural environment around me by chasing kangaroos, barking at night, or stalking and eating local bird and lizards. I am glad that so many people are keeping reptiles as pets now and I think the proposed changes will help more people enjoy the companionship of reptiles. I also feel there will be a number of people that will get lizards and snakes as pets because they are "cool" and will make impulse buys which will result in more animals being housed in non-appropriate conditions or being released in to the wild when the owners become bored by their pet. I think that many things in this country are being over-regulated but I also don't want to become so complacent that we go down the path that America has chosen and have the issues with ferals and released pets they have there. I think a happy medium is a good way to go, though I don't personally feel that having 16 species of exempt animals is going to be the way to go. I look forward to seeing the review that will happen in 3 years time and hope that my fears are unwarranted.

Role 2: I currently have my application in to DPI to become a Mobile Exhibitor. This is something I have been keeping on the backburner for a number of years and the time is now ripe for me to continue with this business idea. I want to encourage and educate children all over my local region to appreciate our native wildlife. I think by changing the minds of our youth we will have a more conscientious population growing up that will help conserve the environment, including the scary aspects of it such as snakes and bats which are normally looked upon with fear. One change in the licensing that I would like to see that would make life a lot easier for me is import/export licenses to the Australian Capital Territory. I live on the outskirts of Canberra and a large client base of mine would potentially be ACT schools and residents. I currently would need to apply for a \$30 license to take my animals over the border to a show. An hour later I would need a separate \$30 license to bring them back across state lines to bring my animals home (we live about 5kms from the border of the ACT by the way). This is quite ridiculous and I would be writing to you and looking into an exemption anyway for this situation but if the laws were to become relaxed it may make this easier and potentially actually give me the potential needed to get my business up and going.

Role 3: I am Reptile Coordinator for Wildcare, which is a wildlife rehabilitation group based in Queanbeyan. We already get a number of people asking us for help with their sick pet reptiles and I fear this might increase with more incompetent reptile owners having easy access to reptiles. We also come across escaped, lost, or released pets which struggle to survive in the wild and end up coming in to care emancipated due to not understanding how

to find food for themselves. I feel about 50/50 on this issue as I actually find many fully wild reptiles do great in care due to their placid nature and love being hand-fed. I also find captive bred reptiles that easily revert back to nature and could and do easily live wild and free. It really depends on their individual personalities and I don't like to blanket categorise all species. I do have to say though, that I would like the licensing laws to relax so that if an owner of an exempt reptile decides to do the right thing and hand in their pet to us instead of releasing it, at least it would be a lot easier to rehome instead of going through NPWS for the ballot system which I assume saves a lot of time and effort on everyone's part.

Role 4: I am a venomous snake handler and do catch and release for Wildcare. I think the current licenses in place for that are adequate and do not need to change. I do think it needs to be advertised more that harming a native animal is against the law, including snakes. Too often I come across the saying, "The only good snake is a dead snake" and I am working hard to educate people on our local species so they can be safe from them but also appreciate their place in the environment.

Role 5: Wildlife carer - I mostly do reptiles, but in the past have raised Eastern Grey Joeys, possums, bats, and many bird species. We live in an area with a lot of Eastern Grey Kangaroos and I commonly get phrases parroted back to me about how they are becoming a pest etc. As I studied ecology, zoology, and wildlife biology for my university degree, I am dubious to agree with these superficial observations that are advertised by the ACT government in support of their annual kangaroo culls. I was surprised to learn that over 200,000 macropods were harmed under NSW licenses last year, most of which were the eastern greys. As I want to look at the big picture and not just advocate one side over another, I do feel that having unrestricted licenses for kangaroo harvesting is not a good option as it opens a mentality that these animals are expendable. No matter what, they are still animals that suffer pain and by changing your wording you change public view of these animals from protected native animal to "pest."

Flying-Fox camps: I have recently become a bat carer and have been learning and reading about bats. I am sad to learn how city councils are displacing flying fox camps and exacerbate the problem from one area into a different area, which leads the bats to stress and not have as many safe havens to stay in. Because of the displacement, heat stress events happen more often in which thousands of pups are dropped to the ground and usually die. I was sad to learn that NSW gave 5 licenses for that last year. I also am appalled that licenses to shoot flying foxes are even still being given! Please, no more! I am happy for the wildlife netting scheme to continue and I hope farmers can figure out better ways to live with their wildlife, including the fruit bats.

Ok I think that is all. I hope my intentions were understandable and that the new licensing reforms will work in the future. Good luck and I look forward to seeing any changes that may be included.