

S00132 – Ben Harvey

To Whom it may concern,

I had planned on writing a long in-depth submission to the numerous codes that the dept wishes to impose on native animal keepers. However I will instead keep it briefer.

Licensing: I feel it is somewhat needed to have a licence system, but this system must allow the keeping of all Native animals! Granted there are a number of species that are simply not suited to the average person to keep as a pet, but there are thousands of species that are suitable and quite frankly need to be kept in captivity to ensure their survival. Licence fees should be removed altogether in my opinion as we are not here to be the money making machine for OEH or anyone else. In saying that yes I believe shop front/bricks & mortar petshops should pay a high licence fee for the ability to sell native animals.

No private individual should be made to pay for a licence that is required of a petshop no matter how many animals they breed and sell if they are keeping these animals (particularly reptiles and mammals) as pets. These animals can cost a large sum to keep and therefore it is only fair that the owner be able to try and recoup some of these costs through sales of offspring etc. whereas petshops are there purely for profit. They enter into the business fully knowing that there are overheads and other associated costs involved. As mentioned above there should be no real restrictions placed on what animals can be kept as pets, in other states the people have the ability to keep an array of mammals, birds and reptiles.

Trying to keep NSW keepers from accessing these already abundant animals that are successfully kept and bred in private collections is archaic and discriminatory. There is NO lawful reason to prevent the increase to the list of mammals that can be kept in NSW.

No animal welfare organisation such as RSPCA or WIRES should have a say in this at all, as we are not talking about removing wild living animals to keep as pets.

The claim that they are the ones that will have to deal with unwanted animals is null and void as this is conjecture on their behalf. A simple way to ensure that unwanted animals are not dumped or even potentially released into the wild is to advocate an avenue of free surrender establishments that will take these animals to rehome at no expense to the current owner, in fact you could make it a licence condition that any unwanted animal is handed to such a place like the breeder or petshop or other option. I head up a rescue organisation that facilitates the rehoming of unwanted animals through consultation with various other groups and private keepers where natives are involved.

If cat 1 licence is being removed I do hold concern for animals being taken from the wild, I feel the number of the species in this category definitely needs to be increased but I don't believe removing the licence altogether is the right call. But if it does go then so should the requirement to keep any records for all keepers. You can't say to

one group of keepers that they don't need to keep records because there is no licence system for the animal they keep and yet for the rest they need to keep records because they do have a licence class etc. Also what also needs to go is the ridiculous cage size requirements.

Private keepers are not Zoos or Wildlife parks who can build a reptile house to hold these enclosures etc. minimum cage sizing is simply not needed or at the very least should only be a guide. For example if I was to live in an apartment and have 1 spare room to house my reptiles in and I keep 2 scrub pythons and 2 lace monitors, then by the size requirements I cannot keep these animals there or I would have to move house. This again becomes a case of discrimination and also restricting free trade between states, because if I want to acquire another one of these species I cannot because of the size limitation.

In reality the majority of these reptiles kept in captivity do NOT need copious amounts of space, because they are not wild animals needing to move around their environment to meet the demands of food, water and heat or protection. Captive animals are provided everything needed so this negates the majority of their wild counterparts movement. Now I am not saying said Scrub python be kept in a shoebox sized tub however common sense must prevail. As long as the animal can move around, has a thermal gradient and area to hide then the basics of survival are met. I don't think we as keepers need to be dictated to about how to keep our animals.

On the subject of trade between states, I feel a move towards a similar system in place in Qld of the Movement advice is a better option then the current import/export permit system. Again we are not here to make OEH money.

Catch & release regarding reptiles, personally I think there needs to be a slowdown in the number of licences issued. Too many licensees are out simply to make money. As a licenced C&R holder I am often called to rescue and remove reptiles where the public have called other services and were told it would cost them over \$300+ to have the animal removed. My organisation is there to help both animals and the community and we do not charge a fee at all. Yes this is taxing on us however the welfare of the public and animals comes first.

To be honest I don't think these others should be able to charge such fees because it is basically allowing them to trade in protected fauna. As for the "required" proof of training, anyone can go to a weekend course and pay their money, gain a certificate and then apply for a C&R permit. Most of these people are again only going into the field to make money. Furthermore some of the courses out there are run by people with minimal experience themselves, but because they may have a certificate in TAE they can run such courses.

There are only 2 people I would ever recommend to hold these courses apart from myself and they are Neville Burns and John Mostyn, both of these men clearly tell each attendee that their training is the very basics of what is needed and that just because you may pass does not mean you have the skill and experience to go and deal with wild reptiles. It can even include some of the poor training that is being

handed down to Fire & Rescue NSW, Not that these guys should be dealing with animals at all especially reptiles. Firecomm often call us in directly, as sending a crew often takes an appliance and the crew off the road.

The licence period for those of us with experience in this field needs to be extended ideally indefinitely or at the very least 5-10 year blocks. New comers should be granted a 12 month permit first at which they sit a re-assessment or maybe have to do some experience with a number of other experience catchers first. Something that both ensures safe practices but also ensures that they are in it for the right reason.

In a nut shell, we need to be allowed to keep the animals we want to keep, wit in reason and that includes the majority of mammals and reptiles. I feel that Crocodiles need to be added to the species list as well but only for those of us with real world experience with them. I have been working with them for 20 years now and know how to keep them in captivity. In reality they are not for everyone and they are expensive to keep because of their natural requirements. Again they are kept by private keepers in other states without issue. I feel that OEH needs to focus more on the original intended role of the dept that being looking after the wildlife, National parks and our Heritage areas such as Windsor which is being destroyed by the corrupt government hell bent on wiping out our past and history. Also it would be good to see OEH actively objecting to the ridiculous amount of development taking place in the Western Sydney area which is wiping out habitat of our animals and allowing thousands to be killed on the roads every year because of human greed. Lastly getting involved more in eradicating feral cats etc. which are killing more native animals than any other cause.

Keeping native animals in captivity is the only way to ensure the survival of their individual species.