

S00150 – Bruce Shillingford

**Re: Comments / Discussion Paper / Wildlife Licensing reforms / Wildlife Trade Management licences / 4.3.2 - Catch and Release Possums**

To whom it may concern,

The recent discussion paper published by the department invites comments on proposed changes to Wildlife Licensing; below are my comments.

**\* Should licensing be retained in it's current form?**

I've held a NPWS licence to remove possums professionally since 1995 and obtained my first reptile licence in 1997. For the first ten years of my licence I was also a WIRES volunteer.

My view is that for the safety of wildlife the current licensing regime should be maintained (apart from minor changes).

In my experience householders don't have much of a clue when handling the removal of possums in a humane way. Most householders attempting to remove possums from within their buildings would be doing it only once, and mistakes can easily be made such that animals could be injured - e.g. animals digits/paws sticking through the bars of a cage being scraped or broken; the animal not being covered, thrashing about and injuring itself; or general rough handling of a trapped animal that leads to it being distressed. Sometimes only one cage is used in the process and mothers and joeys can be separated when one is removed from a roof cavity and the other is left behind.

Anecdotally, even pest controllers who hold wildlife licences (and should know better) have been known to leave trapped possums in or on roofs without food or water for many days; and sometimes possums trapped on roofs are also left for days without protection from the elements.

**\* Suggestion**

A householder should not be required to obtain an occupiers licence for the removal of a possum when a licensed removalist takes on the responsibility to remove an animal in accordance with NPWS regulations.

Note: Many possum removal situations involve crisis situations - where a possum might have fallen down a kitchen flue, chimney or void in a building and can't get out; the problem needs to be attended to immediately. In these circumstance there is no time for a householder to seek a one-off temporary licence to remove the possum, by the time it is issued the animal could be dead. What occupiers/householders need at this time is an experienced professional to help solve the problem. Likewise when possums cut power cables in buildings or engage in other destructive activities such as chewing through ceiling or walls.

#### **\* Victorian/ other State examples**

As for the Victorian example cited in the discussion paper is concerned. It might be that the department would like to choose a policy that is convenient for administration but the the primary concern should be with the welfare of the animals.

(Unfortunately, in Tasmania possums can be shot as a nuisance, or for their meat and fur.)

#### **\* About Possum Boxes**

I've noticed that in some of the department's literature it is suggested that the installation of a possum box will deter a possum from entering a roof. This is incorrect. If a possum can get into a roof cavity it will - a box will not discourage it from doing so. Where a possum box is of benefit (I have installed many hundreds of boxes) is in providing alternate accommodation for a possum after it has been removed from a roof (once any entry points into the roof have been sealed).

#### **\* Addendum: wildlife as pets**

Every now and then it is suggested that more NSW wildlife should be allowed to be kept as pets - it's a flawed proposition; it feeds into the notion of animals as 'toys'... something to be kept for the amusement of pet owners. The health and welfare of a native animal is a very complex issue. It's all to common for domesticated animals to

suffer neglect and abuse from pet owners - it would be more so for native wildlife if they were to be kept as pets.