

S00066 – Monica Wangman

To The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage,

Please accept this submission in response to your public consultation about the proposed changes to wildlife licences.

In a perfect world, all native Australian animals should be mostly in the wild. Realistically, people need to interact with animals for many reasons eg care and rehabilitation of injured animals such as carried out by WIRES and rescue groups, breeding programs through zoos, NGOs (eg Corroboree Frog programs) and universities, rescue or injured or lost animals needing short or long term care, quarantine and rehoming animals that can not be returned to the wild, companion animals and animals currently kept as pets. Animals must always be kept in appropriate housing of sufficient size, be well fed, cared for, and stimulated (to avoid boredom), according to their specific needs.

I have one pet Green Tree Frog, *Litoria caerulea* at the moment. She is over 12 years old. I may take on another *Lt caerulea* that is disabled, with Metabolic Bone Disease, due, I assume, to poor diet and care by a previous owner. I rarely see mistreated frogs. Most people I know love their pet Australian frogs and want them in comfortable and suitable enclosures, well fed and cared for.

The Frog and Tadpole Study Group of NSW (FATS) rescues frogs that accidentally come to Sydney via transport trucks, to markets, supermarkets, plant nurseries and fruit and vegetable shops. Once through quarantine and vet attention if required, they are adopted by FATS members with an amphibian licence. This gives great joy to many people. These pet frogs become ambassadors for the environment, not only to the family who adopt them but to the wider community who visit that household and see the pet frog. Some city folk in high density suburbs, rarely see native animals. Many young people who have been exposed to pet frogs or reptiles go on to have careers in zoology or a life interest in protecting the environment and habitats, such as bushcare workers.

Companion animals can play an important role in the well being of humans.

As long as native pets are appropriately housed, in reasonably sized enclosures, well fed, have a stimulating environment (eg especially if they are mammals etc), and kept healthy, there is no reason why people should not keep frogs or other native animals as pets.

Whilst FATS is not a frog keeper or trader group, many of us do have frogs as pets. My last Green Tree Frog "Matey" lived for 20 years. She may have lived longer had she not been accidentally exposed to bleach in a laundry (possibly weakening her organs) before I took over her care.

I support the keeping of frogs and other native animals in captivity, if the owners are responsible. No different from keeping cats, dogs and rabbits.

Most members of FATS would prefer to see frogs in the wild, rather than as a captive pet. FATS members who have captive frogs, often go to extraordinary lengths to create enclosure environments, space, shelter, clean water, live food, multivitamins and calcium supplements dusted on crickets, appropriate UV lighting and heat sources, cleaning enclosures, checking health and vet checks, for their pet. Cost is no deterrent. FATS discourage our members from breeding frogs. This should be left to zoos and other scientific authorised organisations.

FATS use frogs as an educational tool. We attend many environmental events at schools, museums and Council fairs, promoting frogs and their habitat as worthy of conservation and in need of research to halt the escalation of extinctions in Australia. Australia has a large number of fauna and flora species compared to the rest of the world. This is an attraction for tourism, as well as being a unique and diverse continent full of fauna and flora worthy of protection, especially through education, conservation, breeding programs, legislative protection for animals in the wild, funding and research.

FATS is a not for profit organisation. We would be severely affected if we had to pay large fees to perform all our voluntary work. None of us are paid. We carry out regular field trips. FATS have run a frog rescue service for nearly 20 years. In an era where many community group members are ageing and organisations financially failing, any rise in government fees or licences (to promote frogs or have them at events), prohibitive reporting and returns or restrictions to go on field trips to see frogs in the wild, could see the society eventually fold.

OEH needs to have legislation and policy that instils a sense of worth of frogs and other native animals in people, without prohibitive fees for not for profit and volunteer groups such as FATS, rescue groups and WIRES.

I am very concerned about the overreaction and unintentional impacts on animal keepers the changes in legislation will create. Certainly backyard breeders and commercial entities should be discouraged. But there is no logical reason to impose restrictive costs and paperwork on volunteer groups performing an important education and rescue role in society. Without organisations and people to care and fight for frogs, frogs will never be conserved and will be one of the first vertebrate groups to become extinct, followed by other native animals also facing extinction.