



TASMANIAN WILDLIFE REHABILITATION SECTOR

Strategy & Action Plan

2022/24

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Acknowledgment of Country.

The groups and individuals who comprise Tasmania's wildlife rehabilitation sector acknowledge and pay respects to the original and continuing custodians of this island's land, waters and wildlife, collectively known as the palawa people of lutruwita (Tasmania).



Foreword

The Black Summer bushfires of 2019-20 had a devastating impact on Australian wildlife, the notion of three billion animals killed or displaced is almost impossible to comprehend. It thrust our native fauna into the spotlight, prompting an outpouring of horror, despair and support in equal measure, unifying the country in its desire to do something ... anything ... to help.

As devastating as these events were, they also highlighted the incredible efforts of a tireless workforce dedicated to injured and orphaned animals, raising the profile of the wildlife rehabilitation sector nationally.

Here in Tasmania, the Wildlife State, passionate and dedicated members of our community have toiled for decades in the service of our unique and iconic creatures, unsung and unrelenting.

There are:

- Rescuers, who voluntarily give their time to retrieve and transport wildlife safely to a veterinary hospital or experienced wildlife rehabilitator;
- Veterinarians, who provide privately funded professional veterinary services and veterinary hospital infrastructure for the medical and surgical treatment, and play a crucial role in alleviating their pain and suffering and meeting animal welfare requirements for the State;
- Wildlife hospitals, full of highly skilled, passionate people, working in partnership with wildlife rehabilitators to increase the numbers of animals returned to the wild; and
- Wildlife rehabilitators, who voluntarily invest their hearts, their souls, their time and their physical resources to give wildlife a second chance at a freedom.

Wildlife rehabilitation is a specialised, complex, and sometimes long-term process which aims to mimic what occurs in nature. It requires a truly singular dedication. The rehabilitation process is resource intensive, particularly when it comes to the time invested in each animal. Many smaller animals require round-the-clock care, which can mean sacrificing sleep and social engagements, as well as a significant area of homes and backyards

Wildlife rehabilitators, who undertake a large proportion of the voluntary work within the sector, must master and continually refine a myriad of specialised techniques to give wildlife the best chance possible to survive and thrive in the wild.

This much-anticipated, community-led Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2024 has been developed by the sector and will be owned by the sector. And we owe a huge debt of gratitude to all who took time away from their busy rehabilitation schedules to contribute to its development.

It is ambitious, yes, but it is no less than Tasmania's wildlife and those who care for them deserve. For the Strategy to be a success it needs the commitment and partnership of the wildlife carers, the broader sector, government and the Tasmanian Community. It is an opportunity for the sector to galvanise and achieve transformational change, forging a path for all who come after, to guide, to inspire, to support and to unite in saving our magnificent animals.

Thank you on behalf of our wildlife.

The Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector Strategy Coordinating Body

Who developed the Strategy and Action Plan?

The Coordinating Body

The Coordinating Body was convened in April 2021 for the purpose of developing a community-owned and led Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector Strategy.

Members of the Coordinating Body were nominated, based on a skills matrix, by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (formally DPIPWE) and included key stakeholders from the sector. Coordinating Body members generously volunteered their time to engage with, and consider feedback from, the sector, to prepare this Strategy and Action Plan.

The Coordinating Body members are listed in the following table:

| Name | Affiliation | Name | Affiliation |
|-------------------------|--|--------------------|--|
| Lisa Schimanski (Chair) | Volunteering Tasmania | Leanne Taylor | WIRES (NSW) |
| Ben Goodsir | Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (Formerly DPIPWE) | Lyndell Whyte | Tasmanian Wildlife Rehabilitation Council (TWRC) |
| Carolyn Avery | Tasmanian Emergency Animal Management (TEAM) | Sally-Anne Richter | Australian Veterinary Association (AVA), Tasmania Branch |
| Greg Irons | Bonorong Wildlife Sanctuary | Sharon Smith | Wildcare Tasmania |
| Honey McClay | Advanced Wildlife Rehabilitator, Mentor, Advisor and Educator | Tering Davies | Thylacine lutruwita Wildlife Hospital |

The Department

The Department provided secretariat support to the Coordinating Body and also engaged WLF Accounting and Advisory on behalf of the Coordinating Body, to design and undertake sector consultation for the purposes of developing this Strategy.

In the 2021-22 State Budget the Government committed \$115,000 per year to facilitate the provision of care and services for injured and orphaned wildlife across the State. Part of this funding has been used to develop this Strategy.

For more information on how the Strategy was developed refer to the Appendices.

Our Vision For The Future.

Our Vision is for Tasmania to be the “Wildlife State”, with experts in wildlife wellbeing, rehabilitation and protection and a passionate community that values and cares about wildlife.

Strategy & Action Plan

The Strategy is based on six (6) Key Elements. These Key Elements are the focus of the Action Plan and will enable us to achieve our Vision. The meaning of each element is explained in the Glossary. Successful outcomes for each element are described in the diagram below.

As the Department (not the wildlife sector) is responsible for Wildlife Emergency Management, this topic is addressed separately at the end of this document.

O U R V I S I O N

Tasmania is the “Wildlife State”, with experts in wildlife wellbeing, rehabilitation and protection and a passionate community that values and cares about wildlife



Guiding Principles – How We Will Work Together

As part of the process to develop our *Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2024*, members of the wildlife rehabilitation sector developed a set of 'Guiding Principles', based on the things that help us work together successfully to achieve good outcomes for each other and the wildlife for which we care.

These Guiding Principles have been adopted as part of our *Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2024* to guide how we will work together, and with people from outside the sector, as we strive to execute the Action Plan and realise our Vision.

The Guiding Principles will be used as the starting point to develop a Code of Conduct for the sector within the first 3-6 months.



Tasmania's Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector

The people who make up Tasmania's wildlife rehabilitation sector are passionate about and committed to caring for our native wildlife.

As at November 2021, it is estimated that there are around 1,000 volunteer wildlife rescuers and 280 wildlife rehabilitators in Tasmania, many of whom have provided these services for decades. The largest rescue service in Tasmania, Bonorong Wildlife Rescue, received almost 14,000 calls in 2020. Of these, around 1,500 animals were placed into care with wildlife rehabilitators. Additionally, whilst data is limited, it is estimated that veterinarians and veterinary practices around Tasmania provide thousands of hours of free treatment and advice in relation to injured and orphaned wildlife each year.

Many wildlife volunteers, through formal training and their years of experience, have developed in-depth knowledge about caring for our native wildlife. In addition, volunteers – wildlife rescuers, rehabilitators and professionals, contribute to the wildlife rehabilitation process in many significant ways, for example; mentoring other rehabilitators, educating their local communities, participating in the development of training, guidelines and other resources, and coordinating with each other to ensure effective services for wildlife in their region and across the state. By applying and sharing their knowledge to care for Tasmania's native wildlife and teaching and supporting others to do so, our wildlife volunteers contribute significantly to the Tasmanian community and our natural environment.

The Coordinating Body and the Department extend their deepest gratitude to the dedicated members of Tasmania's wildlife rehabilitation sector.



Why Do We Need a Strategy & Action Plan?

During the consultation process, we heard that many wildlife rehabilitators are feeling exhausted and burned out. The sector as a whole is very vulnerable, and at risk of losing a large number of experienced rehabilitators unless several longstanding issues are urgently addressed.

It is essential we make changes to provide our dedicated volunteers with the necessary practical support to continue their important work. There is a pressing need for:

- **Improved coordination and placement of wildlife:**
It is critical that injured and orphaned wildlife are placed with appropriately skilled carers as quickly as possible.
- **Affordable and accessible training:** The lack of appropriate and accessible training means that rehabilitators can feel distressed and anxious if they don't have the necessary skills to care for wildlife, and wildlife may suffer.
- **Access to veterinary treatment and advice:** Many volunteers have limited or no means to access wildlife veterinary services for the animals in their care due to logistical and/or financial limitations.
- **Mentors:** There is a small pool of experienced rehabilitators who make themselves available as mentors for less experienced rehabilitators, however these rehabilitators are being overwhelmed by the large number of volunteers contacting them for support. More mentors need to be recruited and more training is required to teach experienced rehabilitators the additional skills they need to be effective, supportive mentors, including refresher training to ensure that mentors' rehabilitation skills are up to date.
- **Peer support:** Peer support networks are required across the state with only a handful of these effective networks available for wildlife volunteers. In other parts of Australia, volunteer networks are organised based on geography and/or particular species, enabling volunteers to share knowledge and resources and seek support when needed.
- **Financial support for volunteers:** Most wildlife volunteers personally bear the costs of feed, materials for enclosures and other items needed to support injured and orphaned wildlife in their care.
- **Appropriate behaviour and conflict resolution:** The sector has not yet established expected standards of behaviour and communication.
- **Resourcing for the sector:** Physical, practical and financial resources are needed to ensure the continued success of the sector.

The wildlife rehabilitation sector must have appropriate resources and support. This document outlines urgent actions that will be taken to address these needs, and subsequent actions we will take to build a stronger, sustainable sector for the future. See *appendix 2* for more information on sector consultation.



What Are We Hoping To Achieve?

The *Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2024* is underpinned at every point by wildlife welfare and the need to build a strong foundation for wildlife rehabilitation in Tasmania. Wildlife rehabilitation is made up of two aspects, people and wildlife, and therefore the Strategy and Action Plan has two key aims:

- To better support our skilled, capable volunteers and our communities; and
- To safeguard the health, welfare and wellbeing of Tasmania's native wildlife, now and into the future.

This *Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2024* is the first ever strategic plan developed by the wildlife rehabilitation sector in Tasmania. At this stage, it is predominately and necessarily people-centric, addressing issues the sector considers most urgent at this current time (see previous section for more information). In giving the sector and its rehabilitators the resources and the tools to provide the highest level of care, the best outcomes for wildlife will be achieved.

Throughout this process, Tasmania's wildlife remain at the forefront, and supporting the kind and generous people who rehabilitate our unique animals will undoubtedly have positive flow-on effects. Over time, as the urgent issues are resolved, future wildlife rehabilitation sector strategic planning will likely transition to being wildlife-centric in nature.



What is a Strategy & Action Plan?

The *Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2024* is for those already involved in wildlife rescue and rehabilitation. It explains how we will more effectively organise ourselves and provide appropriate guidance, funding, resourcing, training, coordination and other support to ensure the welfare of Tasmanian native wildlife.

The *Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2024* also provides information for people who are not currently involved in, but who would like to support, the protection, rescue and rehabilitation of injured and orphaned wildlife in Tasmania. This document highlights opportunities for people and organisations to participate, including through volunteering, partnerships, philanthropy or in-kind support.

Action Plan

The Action Plan lists and prioritises the steps we will take in relation to each of the key elements:

- Guidance, Funding & Resourcing
- Recruitment, Retention & Succession Planning
- Wildlife Rehabilitation Coordination
- Volunteer Support & Culture
- Standards of Care & Training
- Community Engagement

We have prioritised these actions as follows:

NOW

Urgent actions to address immediate needs

To be achieved within 3-6 months

NEXT

Actions to build a strong foundation for the sector

To be achieved within 6-12 months

LATER

Actions once foundations are in place

To be achieved within 2-3 years

Who Will Do It?

The Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2024 is a community-led strategy, developed with and by people in the wildlife rehabilitation sector contributing their time, sharing ideas and working together. Similarly, the Action Plan will be undertaken by people in the wildlife rehabilitation sector working together to share our knowledge, skills and ideas.

The Coordinating Body, established to develop this Strategy, will continue for a short period of time to commence implementation of the Action Plan - with a key focus on establishing an appropriate, permanent, statewide Guidance and Implementation Body (see appendix 3 for more information).

Once the statewide Guidance and Implementation Body is established, it will take over the role of leading and coordinating the implementation of the Action Plan, including securing the necessary funding and resources.

“We recognise that the best outcomes for wildlife in Tasmania hinge on this process. We need to work together to make it work.”

- Community Engagement workshop, Key messages to Coordinating Body



How will we do it?

Achieving our vision requires all Tasmanians to value wildlife and many can assist in implementing the Strategy in various ways.

The Guidance and Implementation Body will build relationships and work with people and organisations across the State who can provide expertise, funding, practical assistance and other resources. We will need to work within various constraints (such as legislative requirements) but are committed to making improvements when and where we can.

Implementation of the Action Plan will be supported by resources provided by member organisations of the Implementation Body, including the Department, and external stakeholders where necessary.

The Implementation Body will also work to build relationships with people and organisations outside the wildlife rehabilitation sector who can assist us with expertise, funding, practical assistance, and other resources.

It is important to note that there are limitations to the changes that can be made during the implementation of the Action Plan. Examples of this are: the need to adhere to legislative requirements, and to work within the parameters set by private businesses.

We recognise that changes take time and energy to develop and implement, and that the sector has already undergone several major changes in recent years. We will need to support each other as we work together to implement the *Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2024*.



Can we really do all this in three years?

Our *Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2024* is deliberately ambitious. We will do our best to achieve all of the identified outcomes and actions. The pace of achievement will, however, depend on our ability as a sector to attract the support and resources we need.

As 2024 approaches, we will measure our progress against the Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2024 and identify the next set of priorities to continue working towards achieving our long-term vision.

Now: Urgent Actions to Address Immediate Needs – 3 - 6 Months

The Interim Implementation Body will lead and coordinate the implementation of the following urgent ('Now') actions, in the first half of 2022 - with a focus on establishing an appropriate, permanent, statewide Guidance and Implementation Body.

| Key Elements | Action Plan |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Guidance, Funding & Resourcing | Statewide guidance & implementation body Decide on the appropriate legal structure for the statewide guidance and implementation body to lead and coordinate the Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2024. |
| | Funding and resourcing gap analysis In consultation with the wildlife rehabilitation sector, identify, prioritise and quantify funding and resourcing needs for wildlife rehabilitators and the sector. Analyse existing sources, levels and reliability of funding and resources to identify the gap between existing and required funding and resourcing, and options to address these. |
| Volunteer Support & Culture | Expected behaviour and accountability Using the Guiding Principles as a starting point, develop a Code of Conduct for the sector. Identify available options for a best practice conflict resolution process that could be adapted to meet the needs of the sector. |
| | Clarity of roles – first steps Develop and publish Role Descriptions. |
| | Peer support and networking Create peer support processes for sharing of knowledge and debriefing. |
| Wildlife Rehabilitation Coordination | Statewide coordination – first steps Continue to improve the structure and processes for statewide coordination of wildlife rehabilitation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to communicate with all parties to clarify the process from Rescue to Treatment, Rehabilitation and Release; • Create regional/local layers of support; and • Continue to improve communication processes between coordinators and volunteers, and between coordinators and the Department. Work with the Department to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve monitoring of placements; and • Review the placement process (12 months post-implementation). |
| | Access to veterinary treatment Engage with veterinarians and veterinary nurses ('veterinary sector'): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of wildlife issues and establish relations; • Understand what veterinary resources are available in different parts of Tasmania; • Identify and understand any challenges in relation to the veterinary sector providing treatment to or advice regarding injured/orphaned wildlife; and • Create processes to enable rescuers and rehabilitators statewide to access veterinary advice and treatment for injured and orphaned wildlife. |

Now: Urgent Actions to Address Immediate Needs – 3 - 6 Months (Continued)

| Key Elements | Action Plan |
|------------------------------|---|
| Standards of Care & Training | <p>Start developing a training strategic plan that addresses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training needs for different roles in the sector, including: rehabilitators, mentors, coordinators, vets and educators; • Clear training pathways to progress between roles/Tiers; • Improved affordability and access to training, including options for online delivery, and processes to ensure training resources are accessible to people with limited literacy; • Improved processes to recognise prior training and experience; • Veterinary sector-led training in advanced rehabilitation techniques; • Training to support future leaders within the sector to develop skills and experience in volunteer management, stakeholder/community engagement, grant funding and other leadership skills; • Processes to coordinate, plan and deliver training for the sector; • Processes to monitor and manage quality and consistency of training; and • Processes to update training materials to reflect new knowledge and/or changes to best practice. |
| | <p>Train more mentors</p> <p>Recruit, train, support and retain more mentors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit additional mentors to support volunteers; • Adopt/adapt existing training modules to teach mentors the skills needed to be a supportive and effective mentor; • Review the <i>Mentoring Guidelines</i> (DPIPWE 2018); and • Provide support for mentors, including resources, their own mentor and ways to get help or advice when needed. |
| | <p>Match mentors to rehabilitators</p> <p>Create a process to allocate a mentor with appropriate training and experience to support each volunteer in their role</p> |
| Community Engagement | <p>Community engagement – first steps</p> <p>Stakeholder mapping – Identify different groups within the community that can contribute to the protection, rescue and rehabilitation of injured and orphaned wildlife in Tasmania.</p> <p>Identify and commence engagement with highest priority groups.</p> <p>Media engagement – Engage with media to build the profile of and attract support/resources for the sector, including public launch of this <i>Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2024</i>.</p> |

Next: Actions to Build a Strong Foundation – 6-12 Months

In the second half of 2022, the Interim Implementation Body will transition to the permanent statewide guidance and implementation body, to continue to lead and coordinate the *Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2024*.

| Key Elements | Action Plan |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Guidance, Funding & Resourcing | Transition to statewide guidance & implementation body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish the statewide guidance and implementation body. Handover from Coordinating Body to statewide guidance and implementation body. |
| | Sustainable funding and resourcing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a strategy/plan for sustainable funding and resourcing that identifies options and how the statewide guidance and implementation body will seek to access: Potential sources of long-term funding, including government, philanthropic organisations, grant programs and fundraising; Potential sources of income, such as fee-for-service arrangements, levies on activities that create risks to wildlife, merchandise etc; Partnerships with wildlife or environmental charities that can allocate and/or raise funds for the Tasmanian wildlife rehabilitation sector; Donations of physical resources, time and/or expertise (human resources), and access to facilities and/or equipment; Commence partnerships with landowners/land managers to enable access to release sites; and Implement the funding and resourcing strategy. |
| | Financial accountability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create processes to ensure that the statewide guidance and implementation body: Complies with financial reporting laws; and Is accountable to the sector for the management of funding and resources. |
| | Work health and safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate processes to address the physical and psychological health and safety of volunteers and other people when they are working in the wildlife rehabilitation sector. Facilitate access to appropriate insurance cover for wildlife volunteers. |
| | Volunteer management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and recruit to a role that focusses on the needs of our volunteers. |
| Volunteer Support & Culture | Expected behaviour and accountability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt a conflict resolution process for the sector. |
| | Clarity of roles – continued <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in consultation and provide input to the Department's wildlife emergency management arrangements. |
| Wildlife Rehabilitation Coordination | Statewide coordination – next steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to improve our processes for statewide coordination of wildlife rehabilitation: Create sub-networks, such as a temporary/respite care network, species-specific networks and Tier-level groups; Continue to improve processes for matching animals to rehabilitators who have the appropriate permit (skills and experience), taking into account the number of animals they are already looking after (capacity to care); Begin creating processes to arrange release sites, including links with landowners; Establishing a regular review process for the entire system from rescue to release to ensure standards are being met and maintained; and Establish a complaint resolution process to identify systemic issues and resolve these, prioritising continuous improvement. |

Next: Actions to Build a Strong Foundation – 6-12 Months (Continued)

| Key Elements | Action Plan |
|--|---|
| Standards of Care & Training | <p>Training consistent with Standards of Care</p> <p>Adopt and adapt existing training materials to ensure that new and existing rehabilitators have access to affordable training that is appropriate to the Tasmanian context.</p> <p>Continue to apply the Best Practice Guidelines for Wildlife Rehabilitation.</p> |
| | <p>Access to training – first steps</p> <p>First steps to implement the <i>Training Strategic Plan</i> – Identify and adopt/adapt online training resources that are available, relevant and appropriate.</p> |
| | <p>Minimum training requirements</p> <p>Develop and publish uniform training requirements for roles within the sector, including rescuers, rehabilitators, mentors and coordinators.</p> <p>Develop and implement a training framework to ensure all wildlife sector training meets a defined minimum standard.</p> |
| | <p>Veterinary sector</p> <p>Engage with the veterinary sector to identify current capabilities, knowledge gaps and training needs among veterinarians and veterinary nurses.</p> <p>Find ways to meet identified needs.</p> |
| Recruitment, Retention & Succession Planning | <p>Start developing a wildlife rehabilitation sector workforce plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop objectives for recruitment, retention and succession planning, including options such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A central recruitment portal with enrolment forms/information; ✓ Clear pathways to progress through rescuer, rehabilitator, mentor, coordinator and leadership roles; • Develop a plan to achieve those objectives; and • Develop a feedback process to ensure the sustainability of the sector in the future. |
| Community Engagement | <p>Community engagement plan – next steps</p> <p>Use the stakeholder map to develop a community engagement plan that identifies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How each of the identified community groups can support the implementation of this strategy – that is, the purpose of engaging with them; • Potential benefits for the group in engaging with the wildlife rehabilitation sector; and • Strategies to engage with each group. |

Later: Actions Once Foundations Are in Place – 2023 & 2024

Once the foundations are in place, the statewide guidance and implementation body will guide the implementation of the remaining actions.

| Key Elements | Action Plan |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Guidance, Funding & Resourcing | <p>Continue to implement the funding and resourcing strategy.</p> <p>Create processes for collecting, monitoring and publishing data about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amounts and sources of funding and resourcing received by the wildlife rehabilitation sector, and how these contributions have been used; and • Progress in relation to the <i>Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2024</i>. |
| | <p>Create processes to support the wildlife rehabilitation sector to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate and cooperate; • Reduce duplication of effort; • Share resources; • Participate in and be informed about decision-making in relation to the sector; and • Minimise and resolve conflict. |
| | <p>Identify and approach suitable individuals and/or organisations to be the patron(s) and/or ambassador(s) for the sector.</p> <p>Contribute to policy development and reform in relation to rescue and rehabilitation of injured and orphaned wildlife.</p> |
| | <p>In 2024, review progress against the Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2024 and develop an updated strategy for 2025 and beyond!</p> |
| Volunteer Support & Culture | <p>Create an effective and supportive network for all wildlife rescuers, rehabilitators, mentors and organisations identified and operating within Tasmania.</p> <p>Organise local/regional workshops to enable wildlife volunteers to meet each other, learn new skills and share their knowledge and experience.</p> |
| | <p>Create processes for collecting, monitoring and publishing data about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The time, skills, resources and other things that the wildlife rehabilitation sector contributes to the Tasmanian community; • Time, skills and other resources contributed by the veterinary sector to support wildlife treatment and rehabilitation; • Costs incurred by wildlife volunteers; and • The total value of contributions made by the wildlife rehabilitation sector. |
| | <p>Recognise the commitment and efforts of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers, mentors and leaders; • People who provide in-kind support, such as veterinary services or access to land for release; and • Other people who contribute to or support the sector. <p>Promote and celebrate the value and efforts of wildlife volunteers to the public.</p> |

Later: Actions Once Foundations Are in Place – 2023 & 2024 (Continued)

| Key Elements | Action Plan |
|--|---|
| Wildlife Rehabilitation Coordination | <p>Information-sharing</p> <p>Create a platform for rehabilitation support, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant information; • Physical resources available including feed, enclosures, other materials; • Release sites; and • Relevant scientific research. |
| | <p>Record-keeping, data collection & evidence-based approach:</p> <p>Improve processes for record-keeping and data collection about injured and orphaned wildlife, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forms for collecting and sharing information; • Database of wildlife placements, with updates about placement changes, rehabilitation progress and outcomes; • Data for veterinary practitioners about wildlife treatment outcomes and survival rates; • Number and type of animals rescued and how rescued (public/wildlife sector); and • Data about the frequency and causes of injured and orphaned wildlife in Tasmania. <p>When designing the record-keeping and data collection processes, the statewide guidance and implementation body will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with researchers so that data can be used for research to build our evidence base; and • Make sure that the data does not include the personal information of wildlife volunteers. |
| Standards of Care & Training | <p>Access to quality, appropriate training for all roles</p> <p>Implement the <i>Training Strategic Plan</i>.</p> |
| | <p>Building the evidence base</p> <p>In line with the <i>Community Engagement Plan</i>, work with research institutions on a strategy to build a stronger evidence base for the Tasmanian wildlife rehabilitation sector. Key areas for research include veterinary treatment, rehabilitation techniques and post-release outcomes.</p> |
| | <p>Standards of Care</p> <p>Over time, and as the evidence base improves, use the Best Practice Guidelines for Wildlife Rehabilitation as the starting point to develop evidence-based Standards of Care.</p> |
| | <p>Record-keeping, data collection & evidence-based approach: Standards of Care & Training</p> <p>Create processes for collecting and monitoring anonymised data about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training needs; • Training delivery; • Training outcomes; and • Compliance with Standards of Care. |
| | <p>Provide feedback about enforcement mechanisms</p> <p>Participate in reviews and consultation by the Department about laws, processes and/or enforcement in relation to wildlife permits and welfare standards</p> |
| Recruitment, Retention & Succession Planning | <p>Wildlife sector workforce</p> <p>Implement the Wildlife Sector Volunteer Workforce Strategic Plan.</p> |
| | <p>Record-keeping, data collection & evidence-based approach</p> <p>Create processes for collecting, monitoring and publishing data about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and retention; • Induction and mentoring; • Number, roles, skills, location and other relevant data about volunteers; and • Actual and expected changes from recruitment, retirement and other exits. |

Later: Actions Once Foundations Are in Place – 2023 & 2024 (Continued)

| Key Elements | Action Plan |
|----------------------|---|
| Community Engagement | Community engagement Continue to implement the <i>Community Engagement Plan</i> . |
| | Public awareness campaign Based on the Community Engagement Plan, develop a public awareness campaign, considering options such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to publish information and resources about the sector, how people can prevent injury to wildlife and basic skills to rescue injured and orphaned wildlife; • Highlighting our work using data collected by the statewide guidance and implementation body to demonstrate the impact and value of the sector; • Creating processes to inform members of the public about outcomes for animals they have found or rescued; • Sharing stories of injured and orphaned wildlife and the people involved in their rescue, treatment, rehabilitation & release; • Developing community education programs on wildlife and their welfare, with a particular focus on schools; • Identifying issues that involve wildlife and their welfare and develop advocacy programs and campaigns around these; and/or • Creating a recognisable identity for wildlife volunteers, such as an identity card or high-vis vest. |



Tasmania's Wildlife

Tasmania has a diverse collection of Australian wildlife, including species endemic to the island.

Many Tasmanians are passionate about our wildlife, recognising the iconic role it plays in making the state a truly extraordinary place. As such they have a strong desire to be involved in the preservation and conservation of the natural environment for the sake of the animals that call it home, and for future generations to enjoy.

In addition, this primal and pristine landscape is an integral part of the Tasmanian identity that attracts many visitors to the state every year. Crucially, Tasmania's island status, with fewer introduced predators and a relatively large amount of intact habitat, also means it is home to many species which have become extinct, or on the verge of extinction, on mainland Australia, making this tiny island at the bottom of the world a critical refuge for many species.

The key groups of wildlife supported by the wildlife rehabilitation sector in Tasmania are mammals, birds and reptiles.



Mammals

Like most of Australia's mammals, many Tasmanian mammals are *marsupials* (pouched mammals). Marsupials are remarkable for their method of reproduction, such as the production of very tiny young which complete their development in a pouch.

Tasmania's mammals include the three largest surviving marsupial predators – the Tasmanian devil, the spotted-tailed quoll and the Eastern quoll.

Tasmania has many unique mammals found nowhere else in the world, including the pademelon, bettong and long-tailed mouse.

Tasmania is also home to two *monotremes* (egg-laying mammals): the short-beaked echidna and the platypus.



Birds

Tasmania's bird life includes 12 species of bird which are found nowhere else on Earth (ie. endemic birds). These include the remarkable Tasmanian native hen and the threatened forty-spotted pardalote.

There are also several species which are endemic at the subspecies level, such as the threatened wedge-tail eagle.

Tasmania also has several species known as 'breeding endemics'. These birds breed only in Tasmania then migrate to mainland Australia outside the breeding season. The endangered orange-bellied parrot and swift parrot are two such species.



Reptiles

Tasmania has 18 species of lizard, seven of which exist only in Tasmania.

There are three species of snakes found in Tasmania: tiger, lowland copperhead and white-lipped.



“In Tasmania, the main reasons wildlife require rehabilitation are road trauma, domestic animal attacks (cats and dogs), and disease”.

Causes of Injured and Orphaned Wildlife in Tasmania

Interactions between humans and wildlife can have detrimental impacts for wildlife, and the community feels a strong moral and ethical responsibility to assist when injured and orphaned wildlife are encountered.

In Tasmania, the main reasons wildlife require rehabilitation are road trauma, domestic animal attacks (cats and dogs), and disease.¹

Who Provides Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation in Tasmania?

The people who make up Tasmania’s wildlife rehabilitation sector are passionate about and committed to caring for our native wildlife. Many individuals, groups and organisations contribute to the prevention, rescue, treatment, rehabilitation and release of injured and orphaned wildlife. These include:

- Members of the public who find and rescue injured and orphaned wildlife;
- Volunteer wildlife rescuers and rehabilitators, who are responsible for retrieving, caring for, rehabilitating and/or releasing injured and orphaned wildlife;
- Wildlife rescue and rehabilitation organisations, including specialist wildlife rehabilitation facilities, wildlife parks and zoos and wildlife rescue & rehabilitation organisations;
- Veterinarians, private veterinary clinics and veterinary hospitals (private and not-for-profit), some of which provide treatment services for wildlife pro bono (free of charge); and
- The Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (‘the Department’).

1. Heathcote et al (2019), ‘Citizen reporting of wildlife interactions can improve impact-reduction programs and support wildlife carers’, Wildlife Research, <https://www.publish.csiro.au/wr/WR18127>.

Wildlife Emergency Management



Wildlife, like humans, are vulnerable to the effects of natural and man-made disasters. The need to develop wildlife emergency management arrangements for Tasmania was highlighted at a sector workshop held in March 2021 and by some survey respondents.

In contrast to the community-led actions in this document, wildlife emergency management arrangements will be led by the Department, who are the lead agency for 'wildlife and animal welfare in emergencies' under the Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements.

The Department acknowledges the need to develop and implement appropriate arrangements and will consult with the sector when developing wildlife emergency management arrangements for Tasmania.

It is understood that the Department is intending to develop a bushfire emergency management framework in 2022. It is anticipated that the arrangements will make clear how and when it is safe for the sector to assist in the response and recovery of wildlife in emergency situations. Those in the sector who wish to assist with emergency response should seek direction through this process.

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania

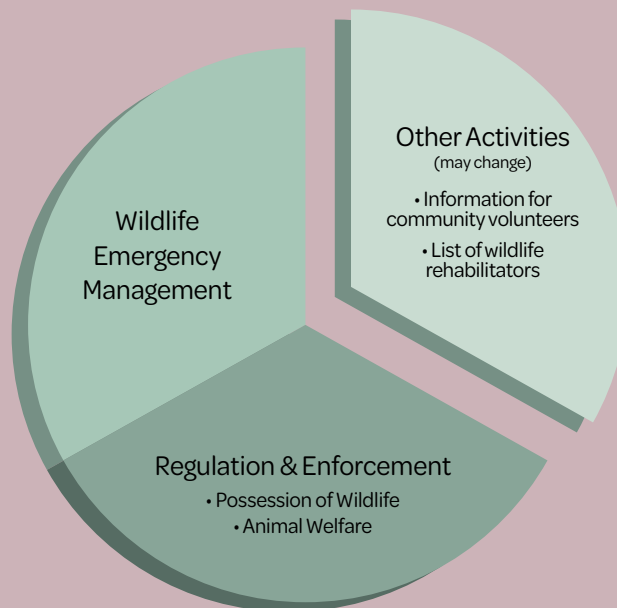
(Formerly DPIPWE)

In addition to developing and implementing the Wildlife Emergency Management arrangements, the Department will continue to perform its roles in relation to:

- Regulating the possession of wildlife, including issuing permits to wildlife rehabilitators; and
- Regulating and enforcing animal welfare in relation to injured and orphaned wildlife.

Initially, the Department will continue its current activities of providing information and guidelines to help volunteers understand their role and responsibilities and maintaining a list of registered wildlife rehabilitators.

As implementation of the Action Plan begins, the Department's role in relation to these activities may change.



The role of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania in wildlife rehabilitation.

1. Glossary

This section explains the meaning of important expressions used in the *Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2024*.

| Expression | Meaning |
|--|---|
| Community Engagement | How the sector interacts and collaborates with the broader community on the topic of injured and orphaned wildlife. |
| Emergency management | <p>Emergency management is defined in section 3 of the Tasmanian Emergency Management Act 2006 as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) <i>the planning, organisation, coordination and implementation of measures that are necessary or desirable to prevent, mitigate, respond to, resist, adapt to, overcome and recover from an emergency; or</i> (b) <i>the planning, organisation, coordination and implementation of civil defence measures; or</i> (c) <i>the conduct of, or participation in, research and training for any measures specified in paragraph (a) or (b); or</i> (d) <i>the development of policy and procedures relating to any measures or actions specified in paragraph (a), (b) or (c).</i> |
| Guidance, Funding and Resourcing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance refers to the governance/structure of the sector. The term 'Guidance' was chosen as it was more accessible to the sector. • Funding and resourcing' refers to the money and human resources (paid and unpaid) needed to implement the Strategy and Action Plan. |
| Recruitment, Retention & Succession Planning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The way wildlife rehabilitators are brought into to the sector (Recruitment); • The way wildlife rehabilitators continue on as a rehabilitator (Retention); and • How we plan for other people to take on existing sector roles in the future (Succession Planning). |
| Standards of Care & Training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The techniques used to treat injured and orphaned wildlife (in the case of veterinarians); • The techniques used to rehabilitate injured and orphaned wildlife (in the case of rehabilitators); and • How those techniques are taught or passed on. • Standards of Care must adhere to legislation |
| Volunteer Support & Culture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The values and behaviours of the sector; and • How our community volunteers are supported to undertake their roles within the sector. |
| Wildlife Emergency Management | <p>Page 57 of the <i>Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements</i> includes arrangements for 'Wildlife and animal welfare in emergencies'. The Natural Heritage division of the Department is the lead Government agency for these situations, supported by Biosecurity Tasmania, municipal Councils and 'community groups'.</p> <p>For an explanation of the type of 'arrangements', see the definition of 'Emergency Management' above.</p> |
| Wildlife Rehabilitation Coordination | How the sector coordinates the rescue, veterinary treatment, rehabilitation and release of injured and orphaned wildlife. |

2. How We Developed our Strategy & Action Plan

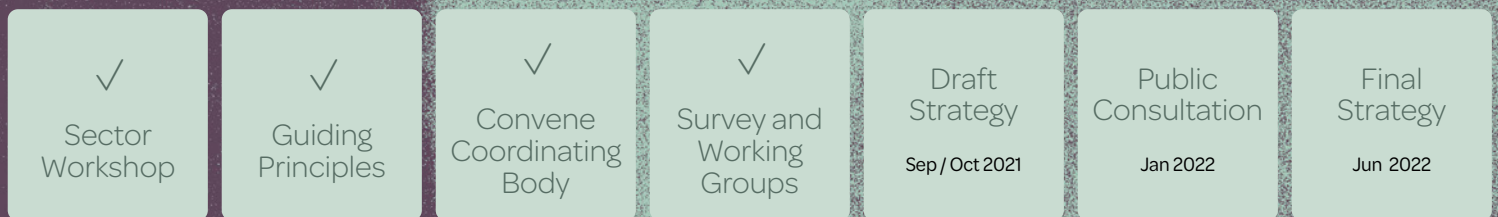
The Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2024 has been developed by members of the wildlife rehabilitation sector.

All elements of the wildlife rehabilitation sector and all regions of Tasmania were represented during the process to develop this document. Thank you to all participants - your time, energy and ideas have been invaluable.

What was the process for developing the Strategy and Action Plan?

The process is illustrated in the following diagram.

Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector Strategy Timeline



Sector Workshop: A wildlife rehabilitation sector workshop was convened by the Department in March 2021. The workshop identified the key Focus Areas and the need for clarity about governance, funding and emergency management arrangements. The workshop also developed 'Guiding Principles' for the development of the strategy.

Convene Coordinating Body: Following that workshop, the Department established a Coordinating Body to lead the development of this document.

The Department engaged WLF Accounting & Advisory as independent consultants, working under the direction of the Coordinating Body, to facilitate consultation with people in the sector and to draft the *Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2024*.

2. How We Developed our Strategy & Action Plan (Continued)

Survey: An online survey was distributed to all registered wildlife rehabilitators and other individuals and organisations on the Department's mailing list and was further distributed by those individuals and organisations. Support was provided by members of the Coordinating Body to enable individuals with limited digital access or skills to access and complete the survey. A report summarising the survey results was provided to everyone on the Department's mailing list and is available on the Department's website.

More than two-thirds of respondents (103) identified as an 'individual wildlife rehabilitator'. The themes identified in the survey responses were considered as part of the Focus Area workshops.

Working Groups: A series of five (5) workshops addressing each of the Focus Areas was held in the north, north-west and south of the state, led by an independent facilitator from WLF. Everyone in the sector was invited to attend and participate in the workshops. The outcomes from those workshops are summarised in the Workshop Reports which were provided to everyone on the Department's mailing list and is available on the Department's website.

A total of 40 people participated in the workshops around the state, of whom 25 participated in one workshop, 13 participated in 2 - 4 workshops, and two people participated in all five workshops.

Draft Strategy: The Coordinating Body agreed to use the workshop outcomes as the basis to develop this *Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2024*.

Public Consultation: The draft *Strategy & Action Plan* was published for consultation from 22 December 2021 – 31 January 2022. During this time, people could provide written feedback about the draft. The Coordinating Body also convened three online forums where people could receive information about the draft *Strategy & Action Plan*, ask questions and provide feedback about the draft.

Final Strategy: The Coordinating Body considered all of the feedback before issuing this finalised version of the *Vision & Strategic Action* in June 2022.

2. How We Developed our Strategy & Action Plan (Continued)

What was the process for developing the Strategy and Action Plan?

Throughout the process, there was a lot of common ground about the following priorities for the sector:

- We need to create an effective statewide guidance and implementation body to lead our sector and unify our efforts.
- A statewide guidance and implementation body will also be able to work with people and organisations outside the sector to secure additional resources and funding.
- We need to ensure our dedicated wildlife volunteers receive appropriate training, mentoring, physical resources and other practical support.
- There is a pressing need to recruit and retain more volunteers within the sector, both to care for the increasing numbers of animals being rescued and maintain rescue and rehabilitation services as older volunteers retire.
- We need to improve our arrangements for coordinating the timely placement of injured and orphaned wildlife with volunteers who have appropriate training, resources and support.
- We must continue our work to develop agreed, evidence-based standards for treatment, care, rehabilitation and release of wildlife, with accountability and enforcement of standards.
- There is an ongoing need to provide accessible, consistent training and education for volunteers, the veterinary sector and the broader community.
- Building community awareness about and engagement with the sector are important to assist in protecting wildlife, seeking help for injured and orphaned wildlife and increasing recruitment of new volunteers.
- We need more record-keeping, data collection and analysis and information-sharing to help us to learn and improve.
- Finally, we need to ensure that the Tasmanian community is aware of and celebrates the significant efforts and contribution of our wildlife volunteers.

3. Creating a Statewide Guidance and Implementation Body

Establishing a skills-based statewide guidance and implementation body for the wildlife rehabilitation sector is a critical first step towards achieving the *Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2024*.

Throughout the consultation process, the wildlife rehabilitation sector consistently highlighted the need to create an overarching, statewide body to:

- provide strategic direction and guide efforts across the sector;
- engage with a range of community stakeholders and form supportive partnerships; and
- identify, negotiate and secure funding and resources.

The statewide guidance and implementation body will have overall responsibility for:

- guiding the implementation of the *Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2024*;
- developing and executing plans for funding, resourcing and stakeholder engagement;
- building partnerships and engaging with key stakeholders to secure the funding, resources and other support needed to execute the Action Plan;
- fundraising, or making formal agreements with other organisations that fundraise on behalf of the Tasmanian wildlife rehabilitation sector, and managing these financial resources;
- identifying people and organisations who can assist in delivering the Action Plan, and guiding their combined efforts;
- addressing health and safety for wildlife rehabilitation sector volunteers, including access to appropriate insurance coverage; and
- being a point of contact for government, media and other organisations in relation to Tasmania's wildlife rehabilitation sector.

Notes:



TASMANIAN WILDLIFE REHABILITATION SECTOR

Strategy & Action Plan