

OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENT & HERITAGE

# Review of the NSW Volunteer Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector

An evidence base for guiding  
future reform



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## Executive summary

This review of the volunteer wildlife rehabilitation sector provides a unique insight into the people and range of services given to the rescue and care of sick and injured free-living native animals in New South Wales. It was undertaken to guide the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) in its development of a NSW Volunteer Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector Strategy – a three-year plan to improve wildlife rehabilitation services in New South Wales.

The findings presented are the culmination of extensive engagement with the sector and represent the first thorough assessment of volunteer wildlife rehabilitation services in Australia. It includes the results of detailed surveys of the volunteers and other contributors to the sector including veterinarians and veterinary nurses and the peak body for wildlife rehabilitators.

We also report on a detailed evaluation of services given by volunteer wildlife rehabilitation providers. It was carried out to satisfy our existing policy commitments and inform future investment in strategic services and the development of benchmarks for accreditation of the sector as required under the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016.

OEH now has a better understanding of the significant contribution the volunteer wildlife rehabilitation sector and veterinary professionals make to wildlife care and to the Government's broader objectives for conservation and the environment. We also have a stronger appreciation of the difficult challenges that can adversely impact the management of volunteers, the standard of animal care and the delivery of services to the community. Many examples of good practice were found in the review, in addition to an overall high level of compliance with the Government's standards of care.

OEH would like to thank all the volunteers, veterinary professionals and support staff for your input to this review and the service and contribution you give to animal welfare and environment protection outcomes.

We are pleased to have been able to shed light on the work of the sector in New South Wales so it is better understood by the community and government.

I invite you now to read this support document *Review of the NSW Volunteer Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector – An evidence base for guiding future reform* and send your feedback to [npws.bwt@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:npws.bwt@environment.nsw.gov.au) by **12 April 2019**.

**Anthony Lean**  
**Chief Executive**  
**Office of Environment and Heritage**



# Outline of contents

The structure of this review and the issues covered are briefly summarised here.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 1 explains the rationale for the review, its scope and purpose. It describes the legislative and policy framework underpinning the wildlife rehabilitation sector and changes intended for its regulation into the future.

## Chapter 2: Profile of the NSW volunteer wildlife rehabilitation sector

Chapter 2 introduces the people who participate in the sector, what they do and the challenges they face. It includes the findings from our survey into the demographics of the sector and the type of services its volunteers provide the community.

## Chapter 3: Contribution of wildlife rehabilitation services to the community

Chapter 3 reports on 16 years of summary data collected about the animals volunteers rescue. It outlines the time and financial resources given by volunteers and estimates the value of their service. The many other social and economic benefits the sector provides to government and the community are identified.

## Chapter 4: Services supporting wildlife rehabilitators

Chapter 4 describes the services given by other important participants in the sector. It reports on the peak body for wildlife rehabilitators, the NSW Wildlife Council (NWC), and its effectiveness as a provider of whole of sector services. We assess feedback on the Government, i.e. the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), and relay suggestions for enhancing support.

There is also a section about veterinary professionals. It discusses the issues veterinarians and veterinary nurses and their support staff face and their views about the work performed by wildlife rehabilitation providers. An estimate is given of the financial contribution of veterinary practices to the treatment of free-living wildlife.

## Chapter 5: Evaluation of services by the sector

Chapter 5 evaluates the services of wildlife rehabilitation providers in five key areas of management – governance, training and mentoring, standards of care, service capacity, and record keeping. These key areas, in our view, are essential for ensuring group viability, volunteer support and management, service provision and animal welfare.

We describe the findings of our discussions with volunteer wildlife rehabilitation organisation Executive Committees and the views of their volunteers about their service. We identify examples we consider represent good practice in volunteer management and service delivery and use these to form the basis for a new system of accreditation for the sector

(refer to the support document *Accreditation of Volunteer Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Service Providers in New South Wales*).

We also briefly report on the outcomes of a compliance audit against our codes of practice for injured, sick and orphaned fauna. A full report is provided in the support document *Wildlife Rehabilitation Compliance Audit*.

## **Appendices**

Evidence supporting the outcomes of this report is provided in the appendices. It includes selected data from the wildlife rehabilitation sector survey and veterinary services survey.

Volunteer wildlife rehabilitators and veterinary practitioners make a valuable contribution to our community

**5,600**

Number of volunteer fauna rehabilitators in NSW

**104,000**

Average number of animals rescued each year

(over the past 4 years)

**\$27m**

Minimum value of volunteers' annual contribution each year

(people who responded to the survey)

**\$1.8m**

Minimum value of free veterinary services to wildlife each year

**898**

Average number of volunteering hours per person in the past year

(people who responded to our survey)

**64%**

Said volunteering had a positive effect on their mental health

(people who responded to our survey)



# Key findings

The results of this report are drawn from expert analysis and extensive stakeholder input. It reflects the outcomes of meetings with wildlife rehabilitation providers<sup>1</sup> and surveys of the peak body, volunteer wildlife rehabilitators and veterinary professionals.

About 970 people responded to our volunteer wildlife rehabilitation survey (17% of the sector). Responses were received from 26 wildlife rehabilitation groups (93% of total) and 17 individuals (85% of individual licence holders). In total, 151 veterinary professionals answered our veterinary services survey from 73 veterinary practices and wildlife hospitals. Also, 23 past and present members gave input to the peak body survey. We interviewed 24 wildlife rehabilitation groups and one individual licence holder. Key findings include:

## Overall

The volunteer wildlife rehabilitation sector provides an invaluable service to the community that should be better appreciated, coordinated and supported to ensure it can meet future demands and expectations.

## Profile of the NSW wildlife rehabilitation sector (Chapter 2)

1. In New South Wales, there are over 5600 people who participate in wildlife rehabilitation. Volunteer involvement in the sector is similar in age and gender composition to those reported in other countries, but less balanced when compared to other forms of volunteering combined.
2. Wildlife rehabilitators are skilled volunteers who have diverse roles and responsibilities. The groups they represent perform a variety of functions that contribute to the Government's chain of services for natural resource management in New South Wales.
3. Home-based care is the main form of service provided by the sector. This is augmented by support from central facilities and a specialist marine mammal rescue service. The recruitment and retention of home-based carers is likely to be challenged in the medium to long-term by changing social demographics. Where possible, more centrally-based wildlife rehabilitation facilities should be encouraged and integrated within the current NSW model.

## Challenges faced (Section 2.5)

4. Leadership succession planning, finding and keeping volunteers, lack of funding and strategic support, issues related to volunteer burnout, and conflict and expectation management, were reported as important issues for the sector.

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<sup>1</sup> *Wildlife rehabilitation providers* refers to both wildlife rehabilitation organisations (groups) and individual licence holders.

## **Contribution volunteers make (Chapter 3)**

5. More than 1,000,000 native animals have been rescued by volunteers since the year 2000. They represent about 104,000 animals on average each year over the last four years across 800 species. About a third have been rehabilitated and returned to nature. These records can provide valuable information to wildlife managers and threatened species conservation programs.
6. The annual value of services contributed by volunteer wildlife rehabilitators who responded to our survey is about \$27 million. The true value is likely to far exceed this figure.
7. Wildlife rehabilitation organisations respond to over 180,000 calls from the community each year. They provide important free advice and education service in addition to their core function of animal rescue and rehabilitation. They add value to government services at their own expense.

## **NSW Wildlife Council (Section 4.2)**

8. Almost half the respondents to our survey said they did not know what the peak body did or is meant to do; however, its key achievements were acknowledged and appreciated.
9. The sector indicated the peak body needs to be more representative of other stakeholders in the sector. It also thought that it should be a stronger advocate, more strategic in outlook and sufficient resources to meet its objectives.

## **Veterinary professionals (Section 4.3)**

10. \$1.8 million dollars in free services and products for 21,000 free-living native animals were supplied by the veterinary practices and wildlife hospitals who responded to our survey. The total contribution from the veterinary sector in New South Wales is likely to be much higher.
11. Lack of time and facilities, staff knowledge, resources and cost of treatment were identified as key constraints affecting the delivery of veterinary services to wildlife rehabilitation.
12. Veterinarians and veterinary nurses told us that most aspects of their formal education were not very useful for dealing with the various facets of free-living wildlife care. Fewer than half reported attending professional development training about these animals.
13. Two-thirds of veterinary staff said they did not receive or make complaints about their local volunteer wildlife rehabilitation provider. The most common complaints received were about volunteer response times and the behaviour of group leaders and/or their members.
14. Most wildlife rehabilitators reported being satisfied with the services provided by veterinarians; however, only about 50% agreed their local veterinary practice understood native animal treatment and triage protocols.

## **Government support (Section 4.4)**

15. Only 25% of volunteers said they were satisfied with the support given by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). Nearly half said they were dissatisfied or didn't know what support NPWS provides for wildlife rehabilitators.
16. The wildlife rehabilitation sector is yet to fully realise its potential for gaining access to funding from government, non-government and corporate environmental funding

streams. The sector would benefit from additional support including targeted financial assistance to help it meet growing demand for wildlife rescue and rehabilitation services.

17. The sector indicated that NPWS needs to invest more in improving standards and give more support and appreciation to volunteers.

## **Evaluation of service delivery (Chapter 5)**

18. We found numerous examples of good practice by wildlife rehabilitation groups in how they manage and support their volunteers. The sector overall would benefit from increased resources to help improve their leadership skills and the overall quality and effectiveness of their governance practices.
19. Most volunteers said their initial and specialist training was useful. Volunteers also sought greater consistency in training standards across the sector, more rigour in assessing competency and more opportunity to continue developing skills.
20. Volunteers rate the skill and knowledge of trainers as their most important consideration when deciding what training to do. However, the sector does not currently have an endorsed list of specialised species trainers, minimum trainer qualifications or a standard training curriculum.
21. Mentors and buddies are a highly valued, but limited resource in wildlife rehabilitation. About 80% of volunteers said better mentoring and support was important to them.
22. We found a high level of compliance with our standards of care against our audit. Volunteers identified a need for more monitoring and enforcement of standards by their groups and government. There is also a need to review and update the animal triage and treatment protocols that are used by the sector.
23. The sector indicated it wants greater connectivity with veterinary and scientific professionals to help them keep in touch with advances in best practice.
24. Managing service capacity, including meeting demand for assistance within each group's area of operation, was identified as a challenge for the sector. There is also significant duplication of cost and effort and potential confusion in the community about who to call to attend to wildlife rescues.
25. Most wildlife rehabilitation providers have in place an animal record keeping system that maintains data integrity from point of rescue to fate. There were variations in data quality and some providers are behind in their reporting obligations. Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) needs to lead a review of its report templates. This will improve data quality and consistency across all providers and improve the usefulness of data for conservation planning purposes.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 In this chapter

- Context and objectives of this review.
- Who we consulted with and the process that was undertaken.
- Statutory framework here and in other jurisdictions.

## 1.2 Purpose of the review

This review was undertaken to inform the Government of the measures needed to strategically support the delivery of wildlife rehabilitation services into the future.

Facilitating more effective wildlife care through strategic partnerships with wildlife rehabilitation providers was a key recommendation of the NSW Independent Biodiversity Legislation Panel's 2014 review into biodiversity legislation in New South Wales<sup>2</sup>. The Panel in its report concluded that the sector should continue to be regulated by the Government through a system of accreditation, rather than by licensing individual wildlife care providers.

The outcomes of this review are intended to help inform the pathway to future accreditation and identify measures that can provide ongoing strategic support to the sector as outlined in the NSW Volunteer Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector Strategy (the Strategy).

The review also provided the opportunity for OEH to fulfil our commitments under the OEH Rehabilitation of Protected Fauna Policy (the OEH Policy) by assessing the adequacy of services by each group, and give the sector some feedback on its compliance with our codes of practice for injured, sick and orphaned fauna (codes of practice) and existing licence conditions.

## 1.3 Process undertaken

The consultation process sought to maximise opportunities for the sector to have a say and canvass its ideas for future improvement.

The review has been a five-phase process:

**Phase one:** We undertook an independent audit of a representative sample of authorised volunteer wildlife rehabilitators across all providers. The purpose of the audit was to identify areas of non-compliance with our codes of practice and licence conditions and to gain an understanding of the reasons that might be driving this non-compliance. The audit findings are provided as a support document to the Strategy.

**Phase two** involved consultation with the sector's peak body – the NSW Wildlife Council, (NWC) which represents most wildlife rehabilitation providers and over half of the volunteers involved with wildlife care in New South Wales (Appendix A).

Our aim was to assess the effectiveness of the peak body as a provider of 'whole of sector' support services and to seek its members' advice about what is needed to help strategically improve on-ground delivery of services for all wildlife rehabilitation providers into the future.

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<sup>2</sup> Byron N, Craik W, Keniry J and Possingham H 2014, *A review of biodiversity legislation in NSW: Final Report*, Independent Biodiversity Legislation Review Panel.

**Phase three** involved face to face consultations with Executive Committee members from 24 wildlife rehabilitation groups and one individual licence holder not aligned with a group.

Executive Committee members were asked to provide documentation about the systems they have in place for managing their groups in areas such as governance, training and mentoring, standards of care, service capacity and record keeping.

We also sought their views about the challenges they face, the work of the NWC, local veterinary practices and their government regulator, NPWS. Our aim was to assess the current capacity of the sector to deliver wildlife rehabilitation services to the community, identify emerging gaps, and explore ways to help support their work.

**Phase four:** We undertook an online survey of volunteers. We asked about their contribution to wildlife rehabilitation, why they participate, what they think their group does well and what needs to improve. The survey provided us with a unique insight into a dedicated, passionate and under-appreciated sector of our community.

**Phase five:** We also surveyed veterinary professionals including veterinarians and veterinary nurses and their support staff. The online survey canvassed their thoughts about the capacity of the veterinary sector to treat sick and injured free-living wildlife and their interactions with their local wildlife rehabilitation providers. Our aim was to better understand the contribution of this critically important part of the sector and to seek their views about how services could be improved.

## 1.4 NSW legislative and policy settings

The NSW Government has introduced new legislation that will replace the current system of licensing wildlife rehabilitation providers, with a system of accreditation. This review informs that process.

Wildlife rehabilitation is considered a specialised activity that involves the capture, handling, treatment and at times euthanasia of sick, injured and orphaned free-living native animals. To do this work, people currently require approval in the form of a licence from OEH issued under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*.

Under the OEH Policy, the preferred approach is for wildlife rehabilitators to be aligned with a group that has been granted a licence to operate within a specified geographic area. There are currently 31 licensed groups in New South Wales and they cover about 92% of the State (Appendices A, B). The largest group in New South Wales is the NSW Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service Inc. (WIRES) which has over 2500 members.

Licences are granted only on a 'need for services' basis and prospective groups must satisfy certain application criteria including that the group is incorporated, has insurance protection and at least 20 members who intend to be active rehabilitators. Members must reside within the group's geographic boundary, which is specified on the licence.

In some instances, people have also been granted a licence to operate as an individual wildlife rehabilitator, independent of a group. There are about 20 individual wildlife rehabilitators in New South Wales, all of whom were issued their licences prior to the introduction of the current OEH Policy. New individual licences can be issued in areas where a group does not currently operate, although OEH's preference is to issue licences to groups.

These services are augmented by a number of central facilities, some of which are jointly licensed by OEH and the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) (under the *Exhibited Animals Protection Act 1986*) to undertake (in separate areas) both wildlife rehabilitation and exhibition to the public (Appendix A). Some of these facilities, such as the Taronga and Western Plains zoos, have wildlife hospitals. One other government facility, the John Morony Correctional Centre, also provides a wildlife rehabilitation service.



All participants in the wildlife rehabilitation sector must comply with certain standards for the care of native animals under their control. These standards are outlined in the OEH Policy, codes of practice and licence, and specify minimum requirements for the welfare of animals under their control, training of members and keeping and submission of records. The setting of training curricula and individual training of members is the responsibility of each group.

In 2016, the NSW Government introduced new legislation that will change the way wildlife rehabilitators are regulated. The Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 replaces the current need for a licence with a system of accreditation of providers of 'wildlife rehabilitation and rescue services'. OEH intends to transition groups toward accreditation from July 2019.

Veterinarians, with the assistance of veterinary nurses, also perform a critical role in the treatment and rehabilitation of native animals and work closely with the sector. Veterinary services are regulated under the Veterinary Practice Act 2003 and Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979.

## 1.5 Wildlife rehabilitation in other jurisdictions

Most state jurisdictions have common elements in how they regulate wildlife rehabilitation. Some are investing in strategic services such as a single wildlife rescue call number, standardised training and wildlife hospitals. A few have generous competitive grant schemes to help support volunteers.

There are no national laws that apply to wildlife rehabilitation. All states and territories are responsible for regulation within their own jurisdictions (Appendix C). Also, there is no system of accreditation for wildlife rehabilitation providers currently in place anywhere in Australia.

How wildlife rehabilitation is regulated in each jurisdiction differs depending on its respective legislative and policy framework and other factors such as its historical longevity, scale of community participation and volume of animals requiring care.

What most jurisdictions have in common are:

- Statutory provisions for regulating participation in wildlife rehabilitation. Most jurisdictions require some form of permit or authority. This may be granted to individuals or groups.
- Separation of responsibility for strategic support and law enforcement by government and delivery of on-ground services by the individual wildlife rehabilitator or group. In some states, strategic services are also provided by a peak body.
- Implementation of codes of practice or minimum standard guidelines by the government to protect animal welfare.

Some jurisdictions have recognised the challenges associated with the wildlife rehabilitation sector, particularly with respect to improving service capacity and consistency in quality of care, and have implemented measures to help the sector manage those risks:

- **Single wildlife rescue call number:** Queensland, Victoria and to a lesser extent Western Australia (WA) have established a single call number for wildlife rescues. In Queensland, this is managed by Queensland RSPCA, in Victoria by Wildlife Victoria Inc. (an organisation independent of government) and in WA via the WA Parks and Wildlife Service's Wildcare Helpline.

These services are supplementary to existing phone numbers used by authorised carers and are intended to give the community more certainty about who to call when they see wildlife in distress.

- **Supplementary rescue support:** Wildlife Victoria Inc. and RSPCA Queensland provide rescue services that supplement those provided by wildlife rehabilitation groups.

These services give the sector more capacity to attend to rescues promptly and consequently increase the potential for injured wildlife to be rehabilitated and released.

- **Standardised training:** WA, Victoria and to a degree Queensland provide standardised sector-wide training in some form. The WA Parks and Wildlife Service holds a training course for people seeking to be registered with it as wildlife rehabilitators. The training covers the WA standards. Wildlife Victoria Inc. provides training for its phone support staff and rescue volunteers, and Queensland RSPCA also provides training to its rescue volunteers.

Standardised training gives the sector and government more certainty that native wildlife is being cared for in accordance with minimum standards.

- **Dedicated wildlife hospitals:** Queensland also has a few dedicated wildlife hospitals, e.g. Currumbin Wildlife Hospital and the RSPCA Wildlife Hospital, which provide a high quality of care and veterinary support. Currumbin also aids NSW wildlife rehabilitation groups.
- **RSPCA involvement:** The RSPCA in Queensland and to a lesser extent South Australia supplement native animal rescue services. Queensland RSPCA operates an extensive rescue service including statewide coordination of phone services and training of its 'wildlife hero' volunteers. Greater collaboration with agencies such as the RSPCA can lead to better animal welfare and post-release viability outcomes.
- **Grants schemes:** Victoria and some local government areas in Queensland provide generous competitive grant schemes for volunteers in the sector (Section 4.4).

Strategic support for the sector in New South Wales, Victoria, WA, Queensland and Tasmania is also augmented by non-government peak bodies. A discussion of these services, particularly those provided by the NWC is provided in Section 4.2.

## 2. Profile of the NSW volunteer wildlife rehabilitation sector

### 2.1 In this chapter

- The people who volunteer, including their motives, nature of work and challenges faced.
- Where and how the work is undertaken.

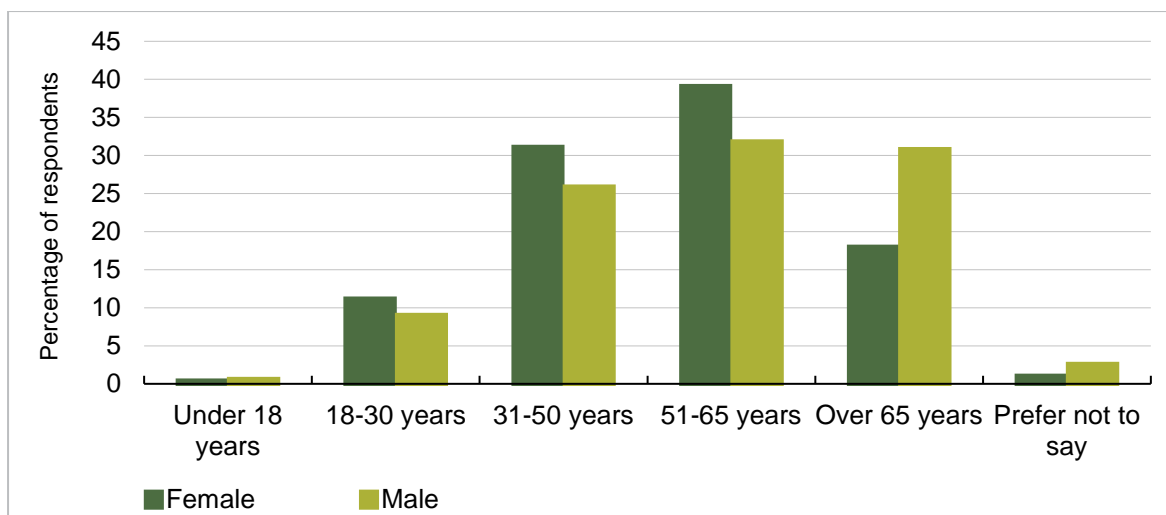
### 2.2 Participation in the sector

In New South Wales there are over 5600 people who participate in wildlife rehabilitation. Volunteer involvement in the sector is similar in age and gender composition to those reported in other countries, but less balanced when compared to other forms of volunteering combined.

- In New South Wales, there are over 5600 people who participate in wildlife rehabilitation ([Appendix A](#)). They represent about a third<sup>3</sup> of wildlife rehabilitation volunteers operating in Australia.
- Most respondents (67%; n=964) were between 31 and 65 years of age and the age class of greatest involvement was 51–65 years (Figure 1).
- More than half were over 50, and 20% were over 65.
- Only 11% were under the age of 30.
- Most were female (79%), of which 70% were between 31 and 65 years of age (Figure 1). A higher proportion of male respondents were aged over 50 (62%).
- Over 65 was the only age class where there was a higher proportion of male (31%) to female (18%) respondents.
- Most respondents (75%) were born in Australia and 94% spoke English as a first language.

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<sup>3</sup> Englefield, B, Starling, M, and McGreevy, P 2018, A review of roadkill rescue: who cares for the mental, physical and financial welfare of Australian Wildlife Carers, *Wildlife Research*, vol.45, pp.103–118.



**Figure 1** Percentage participation in wildlife rehabilitation by gender and age (n=964)

We compared the demographic information from people who responded to our survey to all volunteering pursuits combined (Table 1). Volunteer participation in wildlife rehabilitation is similar in age and gender composition to that reported in other countries (Kidd et al. 1996<sup>4</sup>; Dubois 2003<sup>5</sup>) and among NSW environmental volunteers more generally (Deakin University 2017<sup>6</sup>), but less balanced when compared to other forms of volunteering combined.

**Table 1** Comparison of demographic data for volunteer wildlife rehabilitators compared to all forms of volunteering combined

Key parameter	Volunteer wildlife rehabilitators	All volunteers in Australia <sup>@</sup>
Age class of greatest involvement	51–65 years	35–44 years
Volunteers by gender	79% women / 21% men	54% women / 46% men
Participation by young people	<31 years (11%)	<35 years (32%)
Employed full-time / part-time	29% full-time / 19% part-time	41% full-time / 26% part-time
Born in Australia	75%	74%
English as a first language	94% (first language)	85% (main language spoken at home)
Tertiary or vocational education qualifications	75%	69%
Couple only / live by myself	45% / 17%	27% / 10%
Why people volunteer	Help native animals 91%	Help others / community 64%

<sup>4</sup> Kidd AE, Kidd RM and Zasloff RL 1996, Characteristics and motives of volunteers in wildlife rehabilitation, *Psychological Reports*, vol.79, pp.227–234.

<sup>5</sup> Dubois S 2003, 'A survey of wildlife rehabilitation goals, impediments, issues and success in British Columbia, Canada', Master of Science Thesis, University of British Columbia, 2003, pp.106.

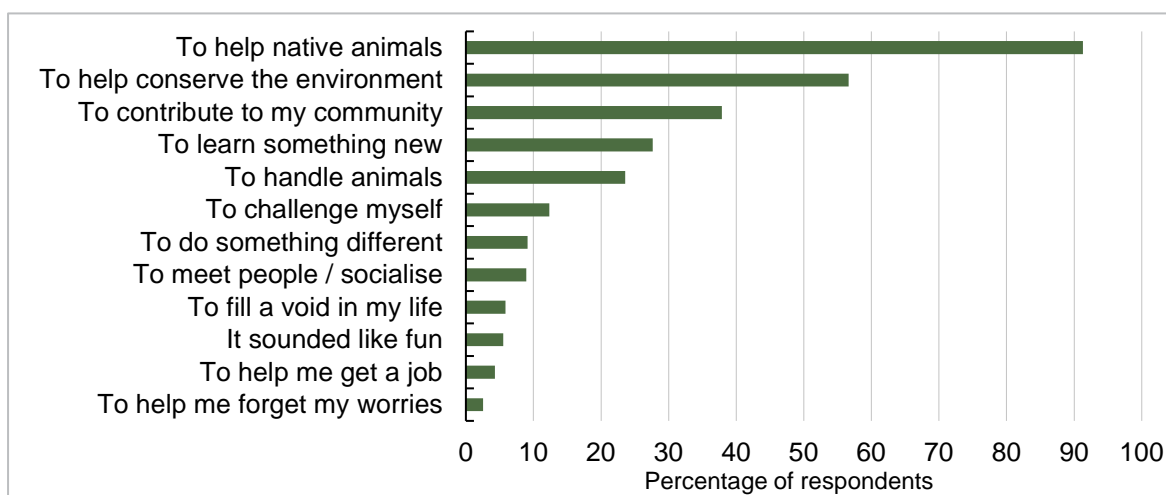
<sup>6</sup> Deakin University 2017, 'Integrated Environmental Volunteering Initiative', Final Research Report, unpublished report, NSW Government.

Key parameter	Volunteer wildlife rehabilitators	All volunteers in Australia <sup>@</sup>
(most common reasons)	Help conserve the environment 57%	Personal satisfaction 57%
Annual income	60% earn <\$50,000	Not available
Participation length	9 years (median 6 years)	Not available

Volunteer survey responses represent approximately 17% of people involved in wildlife rehabilitation in New South Wales. @ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015<sup>7</sup>.

Recruitment into the sector of younger people, men and those from culturally diverse backgrounds is lower compared to other volunteering pursuits (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015; Volunteering Australia 2015; Deakin University 2017) and pathways for greater involvement of these groups should be explored.

People who volunteer in the sector are highly motivated by helping native animals and the environment and less inclined to participate for reasons of personal satisfaction (Figure 2). They make considerable sacrifices in time and resources to maintain their involvement in the sector, for about nine years on average. A summary of demographic data collected in the survey is provided in [Appendix D](#).



**Figure 2** Reasons for being a volunteer wildlife rehabilitator (n=908)

### 2.3 The nature of wildlife rehabilitation

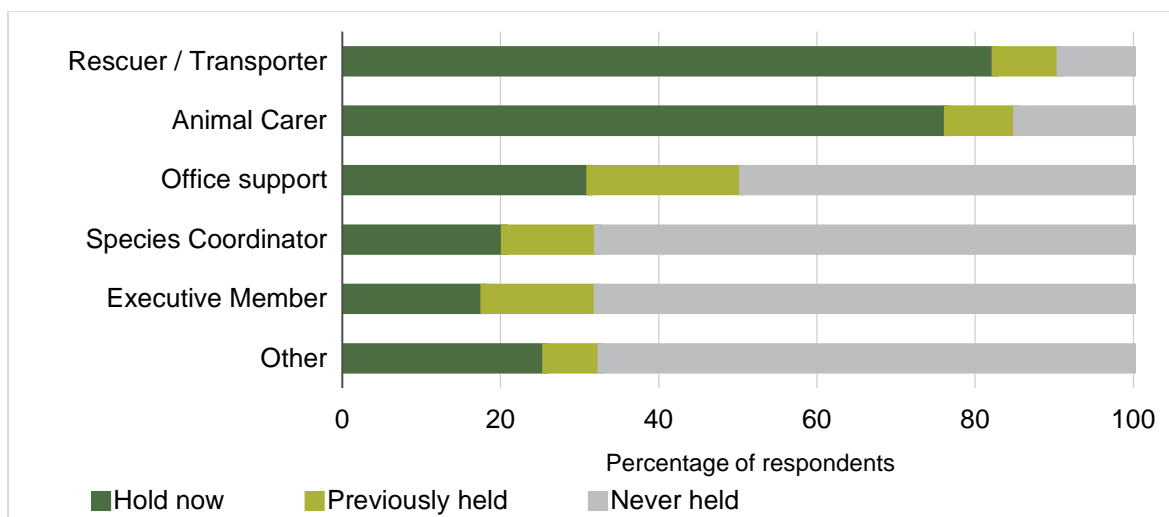
Wildlife rehabilitators are skilled volunteers who have diverse roles and responsibilities. The groups they represent perform a variety of functions that contribute to the Government’s chain of services for natural resource management in New South Wales.

The main roles we identified within a wildlife rehabilitation group are: ‘Executive Committee member’; ‘Species Coordinator’; ‘Animal Carer’; ‘Rescuer’; and ‘Office Support’. There are also a range of ‘Other’ miscellaneous support roles.

The most popular roles reported were those of a Rescuer and Animal Carer (Figure 3). Most people initially join as a Rescuer and with experience and further training progress to an Animal Carer, which accords with their reasons for being a wildlife rehabilitator. Fewer people participate in leadership roles such as Executive Committee member, Species Coordinator and Office Support. Many people do multiple roles at the same time.

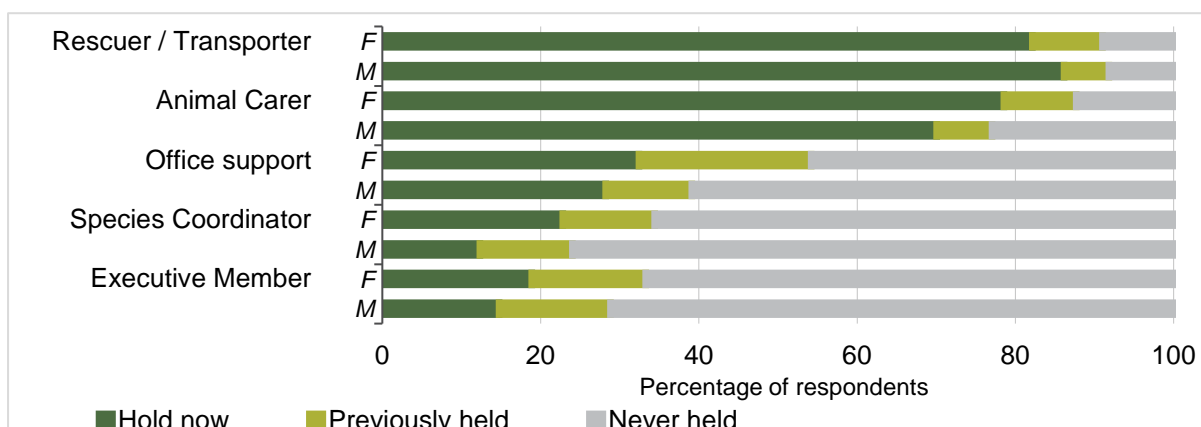
<sup>7</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015, *General Social Survey: Summary Results, 2014*.





**Figure 3 Percentage participation in wildlife rehabilitation roles** (n=757–766; n is role dependent)

Women tend to be slightly more active in time demanding roles such as Species Coordinator, Animal Carer and Office Support, while men participate most as Rescuers (Figure 4). Executive roles are generally equally shared.



**Figure 4 Comparison of percentage participation by women (F) and men (M) in key roles** (F n=601; M n=159)

**Executive Committee members** are responsible for implementing the group’s constitution. They comprise office bearers such as the President and Public Officer, and ordinary committee roles such as training officer, publicity officer and newsletter officer. In some small groups one person may take on multiple roles. Vacancies in roles are not uncommon.

The **Animal or Species Coordinator** is a key position within a group. They are the designated wildlife champions of groups, who lead the delivery of care, give advice, mentor, help make tough decisions and ensure the OEH codes of practice are complied with. Nearly all groups will have at least one Animal or Species Coordinator.

**Rescuers and Animal Carers** are active and important participants in day to day operations. Rescuers are often the first ones to encounter an animal in distress and transport it to either a veterinary practice for assessment and treatment, or to an Animal Carer for rehabilitation and hopefully eventual release.

These volunteers also provide other important unpaid services. They catch and release venomous snakes from people’s homes; they temporarily house and maintain native animals seized by the Government or help find the owners of lost pets. These essential and stressful roles can require long hours and involve significant financial input ([Chapter 3](#)).



## 2.4 Modes of operation

Home-based care is the main form of service provided by the sector. This is augmented by support from central facilities and a specialist marine mammal rescue service. The recruitment and retention of home-based carers is likely to be challenged in the medium to long-term by changing social demographics. Where possible, more centrally-based wildlife rehabilitation facilities should be encouraged and integrated within the current NSW model.

**Home-based** care is the primary mode of operation for most NSW wildlife rehabilitation groups and all independently licensed individuals. Volunteers mostly work within their group's network of Species Coordinators, Animal Carers and Rescuers. They are dispersed throughout a group's licensed geographic area. A challenge for home-based groups is effectively coordinating the management, training and monitoring of their volunteers and the delivery of rescue services across large geographic areas.

Changes to social demographics in Australia such as declining rates of home ownership and increasing family participation in the workforce (Australian Institute of Family Studies 2013)<sup>10</sup> are likely to structurally impact recruitment of home-based volunteers in New South Wales in the medium to long-term.

**Central facility:** Nine facilities provide wildlife rehabilitation services from a central location. Some facilities focus their effort on a single species such as koalas or species groups like macropods, flying-foxes or marine fauna.

Central facilities require high initial capital investment, but once complete provide a single coordinated point of contact for all volunteers. They also provide a space for community education and open opportunities for government funding and private sponsorship. A few facilities operate their own wildlife hospital.

**Rescue only:** One group (ORRCA) provides a highly coordinated 'rescue only' service for marine mammal species such as dolphins and whales and operates across a few state jurisdictions. The service also includes release of animals and the taking of samples from deceased animals for research purposes. They also help train OEH staff.

## 2.5 The challenges of wildlife rehabilitation

Leadership succession planning, finding and keeping volunteers, lack of funding and strategic support, and issues related to volunteer burnout, conflict and expectation management were reported as important issues for the sector.

We asked the sector about what is important to them (Appendix E) and the types of challenges they face running a wildlife rehabilitation group and participating as individual volunteers. We found some similarities to other volunteering pursuits<sup>11</sup>; however, the nature of wildlife rescue and rehabilitation and the significant personal commitment made by volunteers brings some unique challenges.

**Succession planning:** About 70% of survey respondents said that leadership succession planning was 'Very' to 'Extremely' important to them. Some group leaders were concerned that fewer people are interested in taking on their roles, which they said could eventually result in the group fragmenting. Some groups have commenced planning for the succession

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<sup>10</sup> Australian Institute of Family Studies 2013, *Parents working out work*, Australian Family Trends No. 1, Author Jennifer Baxter, Commonwealth of Australia, pp.1–10.

<sup>11</sup> Volunteering Australia 2011, *National Survey of Volunteering Issues*, Volunteering Australia, Melbourne VIC, [www.volunteeringaustralia.org/publications\\_list/publications-national-survey-of-volunteering-issues/](http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/publications_list/publications-national-survey-of-volunteering-issues/).

of their current leaders, others are simply waiting for someone with new energy to come along and get involved.

**Volunteer recruitment and retention:** Nearly 90% of respondents said finding and keeping new volunteers was 'Very' to 'Extremely' important to them. Across the sector some wildlife rehabilitation groups have reported increases in membership while others, particularly in western NSW, expressed concern about attracting new volunteers.

Some group leaders advised they were not particularly interested in finding new members as their main concern was 'looking after the animals'. However, they did express frustration about the number of animals in their care and their ability to keep up with demand.

In Sections 2.2 and 2.4 we highlighted the age and gender balance of the sector and changes to social demographics that could be limiting recruitment. In addition, there is a perception that wildlife rehabilitation is a niche activity and not a legitimate part of broader environmental volunteering objectives. The sector should explore strategies for increasing participation in wildlife rehabilitation and opportunities for diversifying roles available to new members and aligning itself closer to other non-government land management organisations such as Landcare.

Fluctuations in annual volunteer membership of up to 25% occur in the sector. Factors reported as contributing to poor retention levels include a prohibitive time and cost burden, conflict and bullying within the group, and burnout. These are discussed below.

**Lack of funds:** About 96% of wildlife rehabilitation volunteers reported incurring expenses in the year prior to the survey, which is high when compared to volunteers across all volunteering sectors in Australia<sup>12</sup> ([Chapter 3](#)).

The sector essentially operates on the goodwill of its volunteers, community fundraising activities and small financial donations from government and the local community. These funds are used to pay for the phone, subsidise veterinary and food expenses, animal enclosures to meet code of practice standards, and other administrative and maintenance costs.

Some groups are endorsed by the Australian Tax Office (ATO) as deductible gift recipients and/or are registered charities with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). Groups are also not well advised or equipped to apply for funds and the sector has not previously been strategic in its funding bids. Funding, if available, is often project-based and not geared towards helping volunteers meet operational expenses. The sector would benefit from coordinated advice about their financial affairs and assistance with applying for funds from government and the private sector.

**Managing conflict:** Like most volunteer organisations, the sector can be affected by personal conflict and disputes within and between groups. This erodes volunteer morale and diverts considerable energy away from core business. In some instances, it has significantly impacted the capacity of the group to service its local area and has led to a splintering of resources.

Most groups and the NWC have guidelines and procedures for managing conflict; however, volunteers generally consider their groups to be not very effective at managing conflict ([Section 5.2](#)). Developing clear guidelines for resolving conflict in the sector was a recommendation of the 2014 Independent Biodiversity Legislation Review Panel<sup>13</sup>.

**Volunteer burnout:** Only 64% of respondents said volunteering in the sector benefited their mental health. Rescuers and Animal Carers are exposed to many animals in distress. They

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<sup>12</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015, *General Social Survey: Summary Results, 2014*.

<sup>13</sup> Byron N, Craik W, Keniry J and Possingham H (2014), *A review of biodiversity legislation in NSW: Final Report*, Independent Biodiversity Legislation Review Panel.

volunteer to help animals and the environment but become disheartened by the ongoing procession of animals requiring treatment and euthanasia. At certain times of year there can be large numbers of animals requiring rescue.

Some volunteers take on too many animals and report having no time for holidays or receive no recognition for their efforts. Some groups have provided resources to support their volunteers. Consideration should be given to developing these resources into a sector-wide support program.

**Hazards:** Volunteers in the sector are often exposed to risk. Long hours, driving at night to attend to rescues, encounters with dangerous, distressed and venomous animals, risk of injury and disease are common hazards experienced by Rescuers and Animal Carers. Only about half (56%) of the volunteers who responded to our survey said their group manages their health and safety very well. Sector-wide standards would help ensure volunteers are made aware and protected against risks associated with wildlife rehabilitation (Section 5.2).

**Acknowledgement and expectation management:** About 85% of volunteers told us that it was 'Very' to 'Extremely' important to them that the community better understands that they are volunteers and limited in their capacity. Wildlife rehabilitators take on a high sense of personal responsibility for native animals and feel frustrated and stressed when they cannot meet the high demands placed on them. Similarly, they feel that government does not appreciate their work and imposes stringent standards which are expensive to implement, without providing any support or funding assistance.

**Diminishing release sites:** Finding suitable places to release rehabilitated animals is becoming a concern for the sector. Although there are standards in place for when, where and how to release a rehabilitated animal, there is general agreement that habitat fragmentation, loss of habitat connectivity and other human related threats are decreasing animals' chances of successful release. Post-release monitoring of animals was also identified as one way to check how well released rehabilitated animals, for example chlamydia treated koalas, are surviving back in the wild.

### **Some more views from the sector about its challenges and aspirations:**

My life is not my own – the demands are huge – sometimes it is extremely daunting. I am referred to as the glue that binds it all together – but I would really like a succession option going forward – but it just doesn't seem likely in the short-term.  
(Wildlife rehabilitator)

It is very rewarding seeing animals responding to your care. However, the downside is the emotional drain to see animals with horrendous injuries, failing to respond to care.  
(Wildlife rehabilitator)

There will be a serious shortage of wildlife rehabilitators in the next 10–20 years due to the ageing of rehabilitators and the relatively few younger people who come into the groups.  
(Executive Committee member)

I have found it extremely expensive and very time consuming. The cost of food and equipment is high and ongoing. It is also very stressful.  
(Wildlife rehabilitator)

It should be understood that wildlife rehabilitators are volunteers who are doing a difficult and sometimes dangerous job, frequently by themselves and with little help financial or otherwise from any authority.  
(Executive Committee member)

There is a lack of release sites – more work needed to develop this.  
(Wildlife rehabilitator)



### 3. Contribution of wildlife rehabilitation services to the community

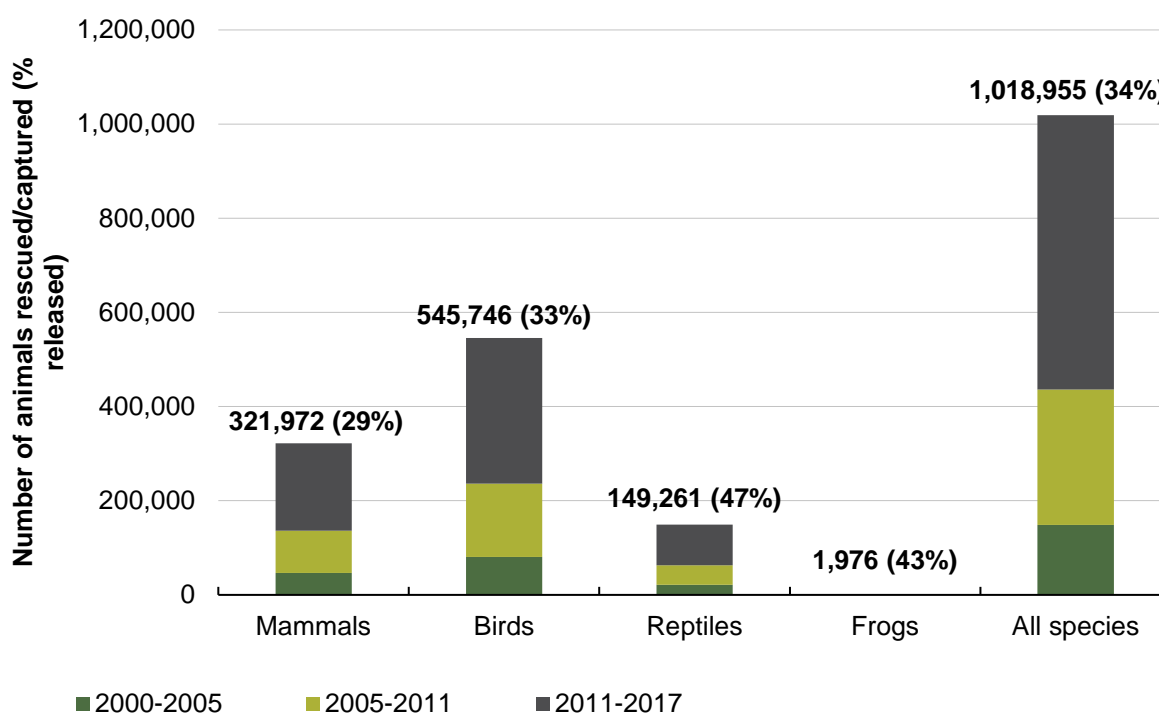
#### 3.1 In this chapter

- The number of native animals rescued and rehabilitated by volunteers.
- Time and financial resources given by volunteers to native wildlife rehabilitation.
- Environmental, economic and social value of the sector.

#### 3.2 Native animals encountered by the sector

More than 1,000,000 native animals have been rescued by volunteers since the year 2000. They represent about 104,000 animals on average each year over the last four years across 800 species. About a third have been rehabilitated and returned to nature. These records can provide valuable information to wildlife managers and threatened species conservation programs.

Each year OEH collects data from wildlife rehabilitation providers about both the animals they rescue and the outcomes of their efforts to rehabilitate and release them back to nature (Figure 6).



**Figure 6** Numbers of animals rescued and percentage rehabilitated and released by volunteer wildlife rehabilitators from financial year 2000–2017 (excludes 2007–08)

The average number of animals reported rescued by volunteers is enormous and growing (Table 2). Over the last four years the average has increased to about 104,000 rescues each year. The large increase from 2009 can partly be attributed to more rigorous reporting by the sector. Rescues comprise mostly common and widespread species but also include

threatened species such as koalas, grey headed flying-foxes, marine turtles and whales ([Appendix F](#)).

Birds represent nearly a third of animals rescued. The top five species of animal rescued by the sector are the common ringtail possum, rainbow lorikeet and common brushtail possum, Australian magpie and eastern grey kangaroo. They account for about 30% of all records since 2010–11 (OEH unpublished data).

About one-third of all animals rescued are rehabilitated and released. Reptiles are the class of animal most successfully released, possibly because a number of these rescues involve relocating healthy animals from people’s homes rather than responding to trauma cases.

**Table 2 Average number of reported rescues since 2000–01 financial year**

Year class	Average number of rescues
July 2000 – June 2004	30,584
July 2004 – June 2009	37,272
July 2009 – June 2013	82,859
July 2013 – June 2017	104,024

Note: Excludes 2007–08

Tribe and Brown (2000)<sup>14</sup> reported the yearly average from 1995–1999 to be about 49,000.

Volunteers can provide valuable information about the likely cause and location of an individual animal’s injuries or illness including commonly reported things such as vehicle strike, dog attack and disease. More importantly, they can also give an early indication of emerging threatening processes operating across the broader landscape. In the context of threatened species management this information can be a valuable tool for helping land managers design and implement targeted conservation programs<sup>15</sup>. Post-release monitoring of animals has been identified by researchers as an important action to assess the success of rehabilitated and released animals<sup>16,17</sup>.

Our records are vital to prove what impact we have on wildlife.

(Wildlife rehabilitator)

### 3.3 Value of wildlife rehabilitation services

The annual value of services contributed by volunteer wildlife rehabilitators who responded to our survey is about \$27 million. The true value is likely to far exceed this figure.

We asked the sector about the time and financial resources they contribute to wildlife rehabilitation. We received responses from about 842 volunteers, i.e. 15% of volunteers involved in the sector ([Appendix G](#)).

<sup>14</sup> Tribe A and Brown PR 2000, The role of wildlife rescue groups in the care and rehabilitation of Australian fauna, *Human Dimensions of Wildlife*, vol.5, no.2, pp.69–85.

<sup>15</sup> Griffith JE, Dhand NK, Krockenberger MB and Higgins D 2013, A retrospective study of admission trends of koalas to a rehabilitation facility over 30 years, *Journal of Wildlife Diseases*, vol.49, no.1, pp.18–23.

<sup>16</sup> Guy AJ and Banks P 2011, A survey of current rehabilitation practices for native mammals in eastern Australia, *Australian Mammalogy*, vol.34, no.1, pp.108–118.

<sup>17</sup> Burton E and Tribe A 2016, The rescue and rehabilitation of koalas in southeast Queensland, *Animals*, vol.6, no.9, 56.

## How much time does the sector give to wildlife rehabilitation?

- The total number of volunteer hours reported was 755,754.
- This equates to an average of 898 volunteer hours per volunteer in the past 12 months (median hours were 365 or seven hours/week). This exceeds the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2015) average hourly contribution of 128 hours or 2.5 hours/week across all volunteering pursuits.
- About 63% of wildlife rehabilitation volunteers do more than 200 hours work per year. This compares to 19% of all volunteers from all sectors across Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015).
- Animal Carers reported spending on average 28 hours each week on wildlife rehabilitation (median was 15 hours), Species Coordinators 14 hours (median five hours), and Rescuers/ Transporters six hours (median three hours) (survey response varied from 240–685).

## What is the financial contribution of its volunteers?

- 96% of volunteer wildlife rehabilitators incurred expenses in the year prior to the survey. This is well above the 53% of all volunteers, reported from all sectors across Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015).
- Total personal annual expenditure estimated by volunteers was \$2,626,572. This equates to an average of \$3123 per person (median value was \$500) (Figure 7).
- Animal Carers and Rescuers/Transporters reported the highest average annual expenditure of about \$4000 and \$3700 respectively.
- Each volunteer reported spending on average \$24,030 (n=838) during their whole time as a wildlife rehabilitator (median value was \$3000).
- About \$20 million in total has been spent to date by all wildlife rehabilitation volunteers who participated in the survey, i.e. approximately \$2500 annually per person.

## What is the estimated value of their contribution?

- About \$27 million in time and expenses was contributed in the last 12 months by the 15% of the wildlife rehabilitation sector who responded to our survey<sup>18</sup>. This value is likely to be an underestimate of the total contribution given by the sector<sup>19</sup>.

We compared our findings to previous estimates made by the NWC and WIRES, whose membership represents about 45% of the sector:

- The NWC estimated the annual cost of wildlife rehabilitation by the sector to be approximately \$11 million<sup>20</sup>. This figure included volunteer time at \$20 per hour when the estimate was prepared in 2009.
- WIRES estimated its volunteers spend about 243,576 hours each year rescuing, rehabilitating and supporting local volunteers in its branches<sup>21</sup>. This equates to about \$7.8 million in volunteer time at \$32 per hour and does not include out of pocket or other running expenses.

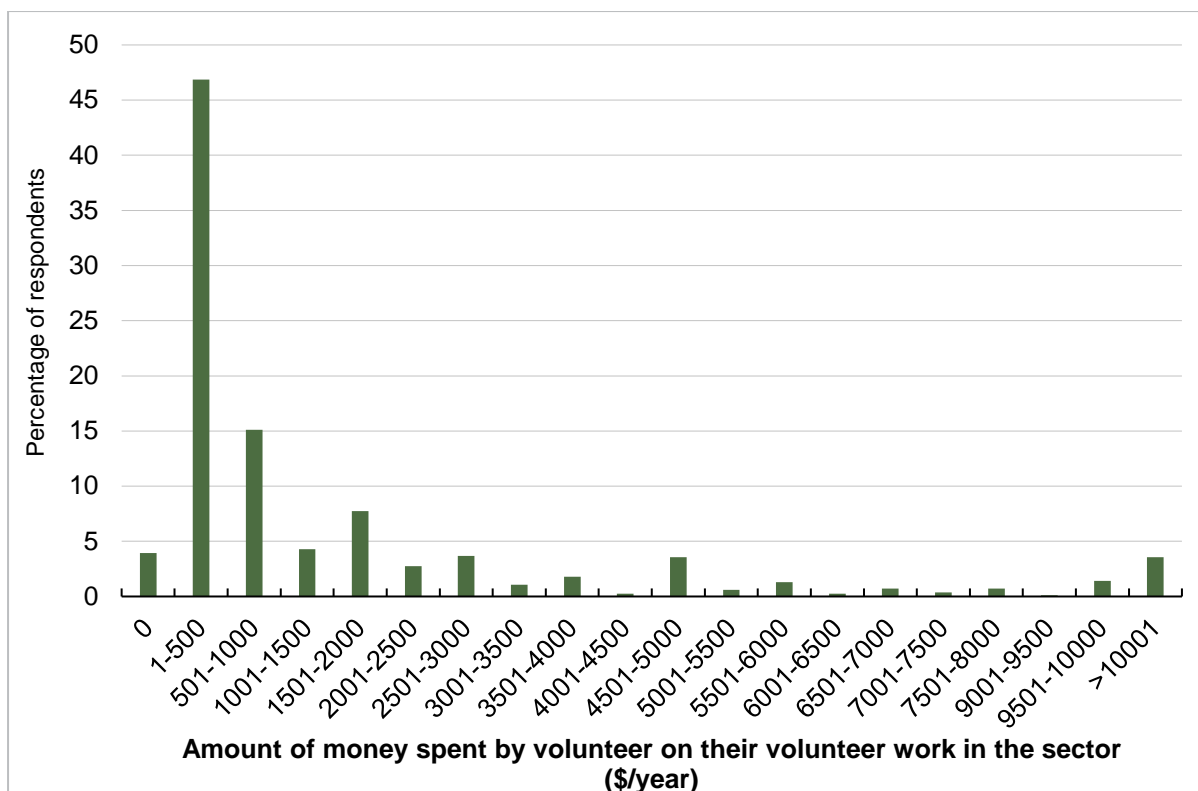
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<sup>18</sup> Value of volunteer time is based on an hourly rate of \$32, which is a Consumer Price Index adjusted version of a 2010 Industry Standard used by Volunteering Australia and derived from [Economic Value of Volunteering in South Australia \(2011\)](#). We multiplied the hourly rate by total volunteer hours plus total volunteer expenditure.

<sup>19</sup> Shannon I 2017, 'Estimating Population Values from NPWS 2017 Wildlife Carer Survey', unpublished report.

<sup>20</sup> NSW Wildlife Council 2009, unpublished data.

<sup>21</sup> Leanne Taylor, CEO Wildlife Information and Rescue Service (WIRES), pers. comm. (21/04/2016).



**Figure 7 Expenditure on wildlife rehabilitation by the sector over the past 12 months (n=841)**

### What other benefits does the wildlife rehabilitation sector provide?

Volunteer wildlife rehabilitation organisations respond to over 180,000 calls from the community each year. They provide an important free advice and education service in addition to their core function of animal rescue and rehabilitation. They add value to government services at their own expense.

#### Value to wildlife:

- Alleviates the suffering of native animals in distress and saves the lives of animals that can be released back to the wild.
- Helps protect local habitats and the environment and contributes to conservation of native animal populations including threatened species.

#### Value to self:

- Promotes the health and wellbeing of participants and creates community connectivity.
- Facilitates continual learning through ongoing training and exposure to professional bodies such as veterinary practitioners and research institutions.

#### Value to the community:

- Responds to over 180,000<sup>22</sup> calls for assistance each year. WIRES alone receives more than 150,000 calls each year.<sup>23</sup>
- Increases opportunities for communities to get involved in looking after their environment.

<sup>22</sup> Data reported is a gross estimate based on responses from most wildlife rehabilitation groups in New South Wales

<sup>23</sup> Leanne Taylor, CEO WIRES, pers. comm. (02/06/2017).

- Contributes to local business through the purchasing of food, equipment, fuel and other goods and services.
- Provides free services such as snake and possum relocation and advice about wildlife.

**Value to government:**

- Responds to community expectations that native animals in distress will be rescued.
- Trains OEH staff in marine mammal rescue at subsidised rates.
- Houses and helps dispose of exotic, seized and unwanted native animals at no cost.
- Helps capture and relocate native animals for Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) from habitat cleared for road infrastructure projects<sup>24</sup>.
- Enhances the Government's capacity to deal with wildlife emergencies such as fire, marine mammal strandings, oil spills, flying-fox heat events and disease outbreaks. ORRCA reports spending about \$48,000 on marine mammal incident preparedness, (excluding personal expenses) in addition to \$9000 each year on its emergency phone system<sup>25</sup>. Hunter Wildlife (NATF) spent \$10,000 on the establishment of an oil spill disaster response kit and pay an additional \$3500 each year in ongoing maintenance expenses<sup>26</sup>.
- Contributes to avoided costs to the health system by improving the physical and mental wellbeing of volunteers<sup>27</sup>.

We are not just animal huggers to be taken for granted. We do make a difference to the animals, to conservation and help the community. (Wildlife rehabilitator)

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<sup>24</sup> Roads and Traffic Authority 2011, *Biodiversity Guidelines: Protecting and managing biodiversity on RTA projects*, RTA Environment Branch.

<sup>25</sup> Shona Lorigan, ORRCA, pers. comm. (29/01/2018).

<sup>26</sup> Audrey Koosman, Native Animal Trust Fund, pers. comm. (31/05/2017).

<sup>27</sup> Lum TY and Lightfoot E 2005, The effects of volunteering on the physical and mental health of older people, *Research on Ageing*, vol.25, no.1, pp.31–35.



## 4. Services supporting wildlife rehabilitators

### 4.1 In this chapter

- Other important participants in the sector such as the NSW Wildlife Council, veterinary practitioners and government.
- An assessment of their effectiveness and opportunities for improvement.

### 4.2 NSW Wildlife Council

The NSW Wildlife Council Inc. (NWC) is the peak body that represents 25 wildlife rehabilitation providers in New South Wales, i.e. approximately 55% of the volunteers who participate in the sector.

The NWC was established with the help of the Government to provide a strong unified and coordinated voice for wildlife rehabilitation volunteers on behalf of the whole sector, in areas such as policy, animal care standards and disaster relief.

Formed in 2005, the NWC is independent of government and its stated mission is to achieve optimal outcomes for Australian wildlife. It has an elected Chair and management committee. Key objectives from its Constitution are to:

- act as the peak representative body for licensed wildlife rehabilitators in New South Wales
- foster the sharing of resources among rehabilitators
- collect, assemble and disseminate accurate information about all aspects of wildlife rescue and rehabilitation
- develop standards for the sector including codes of practice for wildlife and training of rehabilitators
- work for the interests and needs of wildlife rehabilitators.

Membership is open to all wildlife rehabilitation groups and individual licence holders. Representatives and their alternates are endorsed by their member group. Meetings may be attended by more than one member of a group, but voting is limited to one vote per licence.

At the time of its formation, WIRES, which represents about 2600 volunteers (nearly 45% of the sector) was a member of the peak body and its Chair was elected as the inaugural Vice-Chairman. WIRES resigned its membership in 2012.

OEH and RMS provide \$50,000 in total annual funding to the peak body (Section 4.4). It receives no other private funding and does not charge a membership fee.

#### How effective has the NSW Wildlife Council been for the sector?

Almost half the respondents to our survey said they did not know what the peak body did or is meant to do; however, its key achievements were acknowledged and appreciated by the sector.

We asked past and present members of the NWC for a score on how effective the peak body has been for the sector.

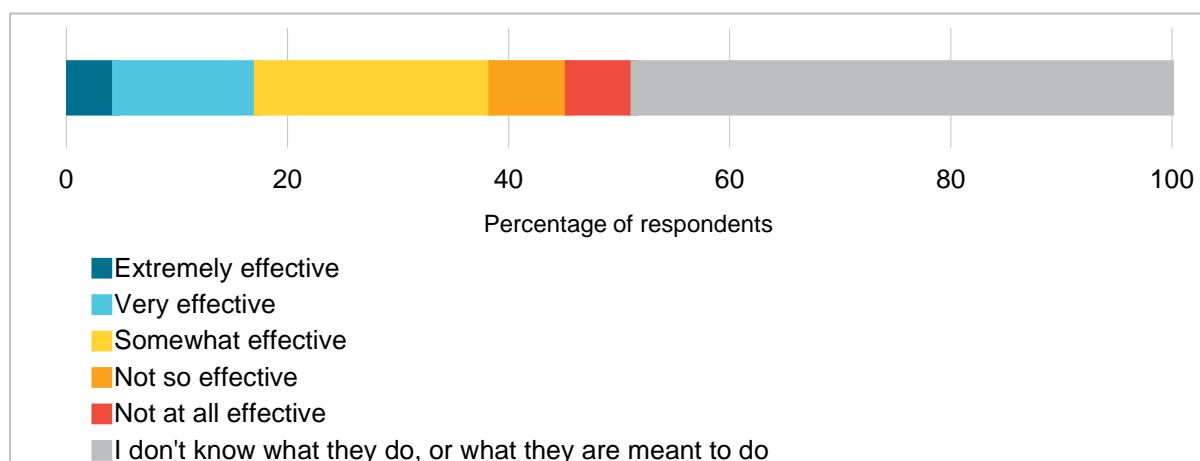
- 5/10 was the overall median score; current members scored effectiveness higher (7/10) than past members (2.5/10). Only half of the current membership of the NWC provided us with answers to our survey.

We also asked wildlife rehabilitation group Executive Committee members to score the effectiveness of the NWC across a range of functions.

- 6/10 was the median score Executive Committee members gave the peak body for sector coordination, advocacy and standard setting. Improving funding opportunities for the sector scored 2.5/10.

We surveyed volunteers who are members of groups currently represented by the peak body about the overall effectiveness of the NWC.

- Only 17% of volunteer wildlife rehabilitators said the peak body was ‘Very’ to ‘Extremely’ effective (Figure 8).
- Nearly 50% told us they did not know what the peak body did or is meant to do.



**Figure 8** Percentage responses from volunteer wildlife rehabilitators to ‘How effective is the NSW Wildlife Council?’ (n=405)

Volunteers were also asked how good the NWC was at providing a range of services to their members (Figure 9).

- About 23% of respondents reported the NWC as ‘Very’ to ‘Extremely’ good at ‘improving standards for native animal rescue and rehabilitation’. It was the highest response to all service options in the survey. The positive response reflects the effort put towards developing codes of practice for the sector.
- Only about 15% of volunteers said the peak body was ‘Very’ to ‘Extremely’ good in other key areas such as being an effective advocate, fostering better relationships between groups and licensed individuals, and improving overall strategic capacity and delivery of services across the sector.
- Finding funding opportunities from the private sector was the service volunteers identified as least good with nearly 20% of respondents stating the NWC was ‘Not so good’ to ‘Not good at all’ in this area.
- More than 50% of respondents to the volunteer survey indicated they did not know how effective the peak body was at any of the actions we listed.

Sorry I don't know what they (NSW Wildlife Council) do, or what they are meant to do.  
(Wildlife rehabilitator)

### What have been its achievements?

We asked about the achievements of the NWC. Responses included:

- provides an opportunity to share and network with other groups in the sector
- has been a voice to government on wildlife rehabilitation issues

- successfully advocated on behalf of its members for public liability insurance premiums
- successfully collaborated with OEH to develop minimum standards for native animals, including koalas, wombats, flying-foxes and birds of prey, and gave emergency assistance to the sector during a flying-fox heat stress event
- helped develop policies for its members around conflict management, bullying and harassment, and use of firearms
- provides small grants to wildlife rehabilitators to help with purchases of equipment or building new animal enclosures.

I feel NWC has helped to improve wildlife care in NSW by bringing together all players in the sector and also brought a better working relationship with OEH/NPWS.  
(Peak body member)



**Figure 9** Percentage responses from volunteer wildlife rehabilitators to ‘How good is the NSW Wildlife Council at the following?’ (n=403)

### What could be done to improve peak body services?

The sector indicated the peak body needs to be more representative of other stakeholders in the sector. It also indicated that it should be a stronger advocate, more strategic in outlook and sufficiently resourced to meet its objectives.

We asked all participants in the sector about what could be done to improve peak body services.

- **Be more representative:** The departure of WIRES has effectively halved sector representation on the peak body. This has undermined the ability of the NWC to meet its core objectives and has made government efforts to consult with the sector less efficient. A key strategic objective should be to unite the sector and have a peak body that represents all wildlife rehabilitation providers.

- **Improve governance arrangements:** There was concern that the current governance model including voting arrangements was not representative of the balance of the sector. It was suggested that a different model of governance be adopted that incorporated external organisations such as the Australian Veterinary Association and RSPCA and operated as a Board.
- **Advocate and show strong leadership:** There is a perception that the leadership team of the NWC have not been successful stewards for the sector and lack the skills and professionalism to meet the demands of a peak body. Succession planning and training for future leadership roles was encouraged. A professional CEO and high-profile patron for the sector was suggested.
- **Work on sector-wide strategic issues and initiatives:** Key areas identified were the development of training standards, enhancing the efficiency of groups and the capacity of their members, tackling current sector-wide challenges and exploring opportunities to connect with other professional wildlife and veterinary networks.
- **More core funding and paid assistance:** All members of the NWC are volunteers who also contribute significant amounts of time to their own group. The sourcing of sufficient core funding to employ a part-time staff member was considered essential to helping the peak body progress its strategic agenda.
- **Improve participation of members:** There was a view that some members are unable to, or do not have the capacity to contribute effectively to the work of the peak body. Some members rarely attend meetings or report the outcomes of meetings to their Executive or membership.
- **Tell us who you are and come visit:** Some volunteers suggested the peak body hold occasional meetings in regional areas to promote their work and listen to the issues volunteers face in remote locations. Only half of the NWC members promote the peak body on their website.

#### **Some more views from the sector about the peak body:**

I feel the best outcome would be for the NWC to remain, WIRES encouraged to return and work with the council and broaden the terms of reference allowing other stake holders ... to join the NWC this would give an even balance of representation to the NWC while bringing on board people with expertise that the NWC do not have at this time. (Peak body member)

NWC represent a very large number of volunteers who have a huge amount of experience. We could do an even better job with WIRES on board. (Peak body member)

For the NWC to take on any project of substance would require outside grants and without a paid person to take on such a task as securing funding the NWC will remain as it is. (Peak body member)

The NWC is ill-equipped to meet these objectives in its current form. NWC needs to improve its skills and governance structure to allow it to become more strategic and proactive. (Wildlife rehabilitator)

Members do not bring the views of their group to meetings, they bring their own instead. They also don't bring back views. (Wildlife rehabilitator)

## 4.3 Veterinary professionals

Veterinary services for free-living native animals are mostly provided by privately run veterinary practices<sup>28</sup>. Additional support is also given by wildlife hospitals attached to zoos, fauna parks and aquariums and in certain locations RSPCA veterinary hospitals.

We undertook a survey of NSW veterinary professionals and asked about the services they provide, their training and working relationship with the volunteer wildlife rehabilitation sector ([Appendix H](#)). We had 151 responses from 74 veterinarians, 66 veterinary nurses, two veterinary students and nine other support staff.

### What services do veterinary practices provide the sector?

\$1.8 million dollars in free services and products for 21,000 free-living native animals were supplied by the veterinary practices and wildlife hospitals who responded to our survey. The total contribution from the veterinary sector in New South Wales is likely to be much higher.

**We asked a person nominated by the veterinary practice to tell us about the services they provide to wildlife rehabilitation. About 70 practices responded:**

- Nearly all told us their practice gives some form of service for free-living native animals.
- More than 90% said their practice provides initial assessment, treatment and euthanasia (in-house) services and will accept and hold animals until they are picked up by a volunteer wildlife rehabilitator. Nearly 60% also help release rehabilitated animals back to the wild.
- About 21,000 animals are received by private veterinary practices and wildlife hospitals each year (average was 295).
- More than 50% of the animals received are birds, 16% are possums and gliders, and 13% are reptiles.
- About 70% of animals brought into the practice were by members of the public.
- On average 89% of animals are dealt with by a veterinarian, 23% by a veterinary nurse and 14% by a veterinary student or other staff member.
- About 26% of practices said they will assess an animal immediately, 50% said within three hours and 21% within the day.

### What is the estimated value of veterinary services to wildlife?

- Over 90% of practices that responded to our survey said they provide at least one type of service free of charge or pro-bono. The most common free services included initial assessment, euthanasia (in-house) and temporary holding of animals.
- About 37% of responding practices said they charge for the cost of materials including medicines and X-rays.
- Veterinary professionals say they spent an average of 168 hours over the past 12 months doing work related to free-living native animals.
- The estimated total financial value of all free services and products contributed by private veterinary practices and wildlife hospitals that responded to the survey is about \$1.8 million.

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<sup>28</sup> There were 683 registered veterinary practices and about 3600 registered veterinary practitioners operating in New South Wales in 2016: Veterinary Practices Board of NSW Annual Report (June 2016).

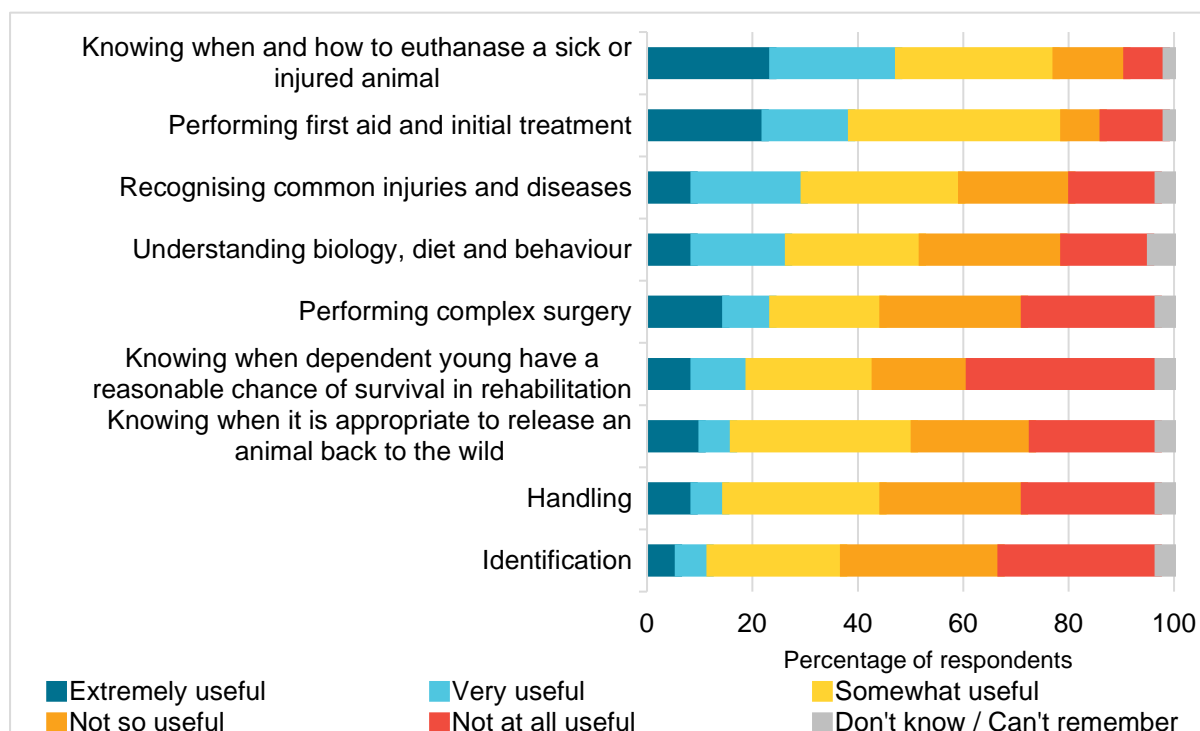




## Is the formal training of veterinary professionals useful for dealing with wildlife?

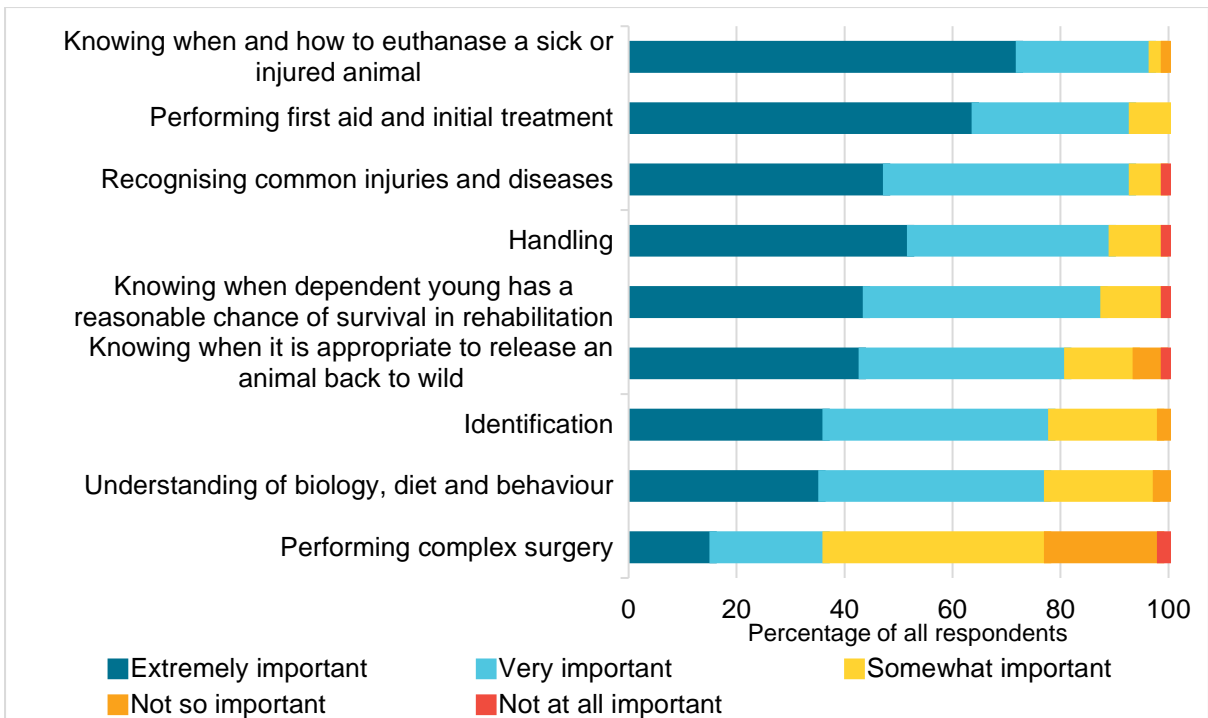
Veterinarians and veterinary nurses told us that most aspects of their formal course of education were not very useful for dealing with free-living wildlife.

- Less than 50% of veterinarians said their formal education was 'Very' to 'Extremely' useful at teaching any of the skills listed below in Figure 11. Areas where their formal education was identified as least useful were identification and handling of animals; knowing when it is appropriate to release an animal back to the wild; and knowing when dependent young have a reasonable chance of survival.



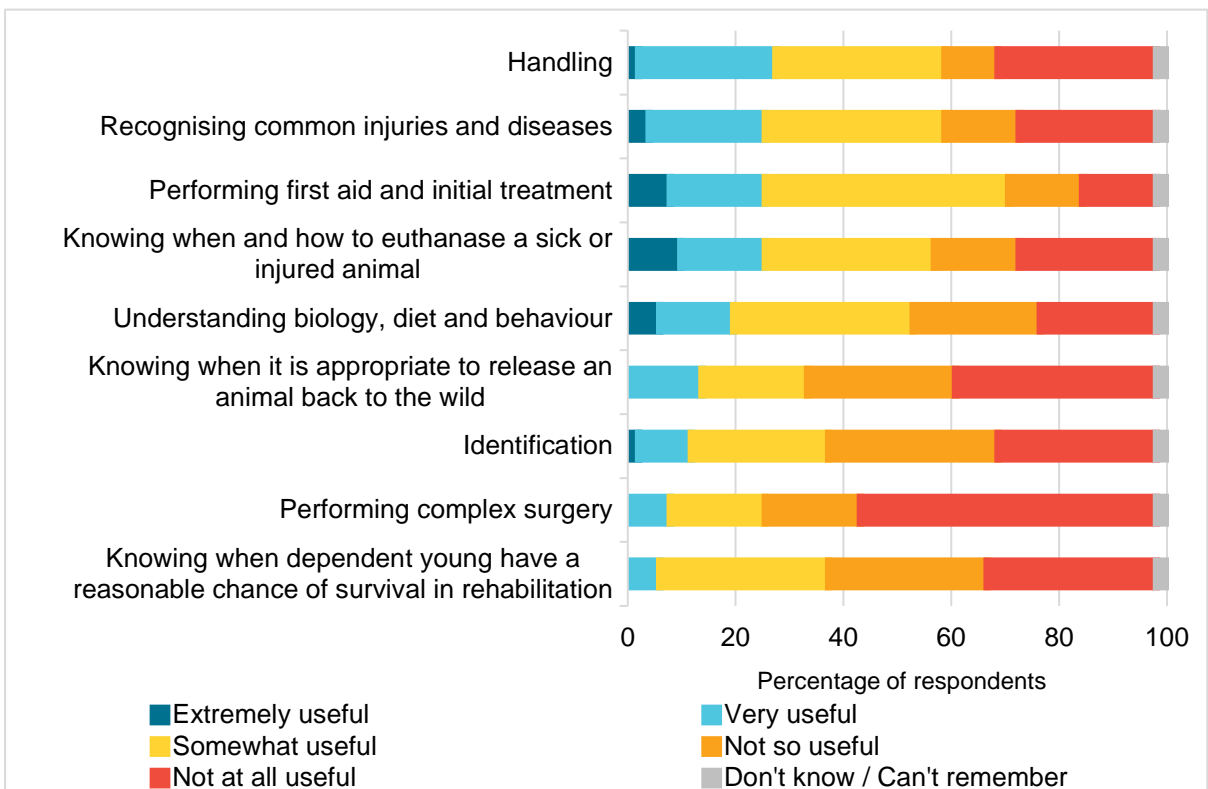
**Figure 11** Percentage responses of veterinarians to whether their formal course of education in veterinary science was useful at teaching the above skills (n=67)

- Apart from complex surgery, most veterinarians (>65%) thought the above skills were at least 'Very' important to have in relation to working with free-living animals (Figure 12). The most important skills identified were knowing when and how to euthanase a sick or injured animal; performing first aid and initial treatment; and recognising common injuries and diseases.



**Figure 12 Percentage responses of veterinarians to ‘How important do you think it is for veterinary professionals to have the following skills in relation to free-living native animals?’ (n=70)**

- Less than 30% of veterinary nurses reported their formal training to be at least very useful in any of the skills specified below (Figure 13). The most important skills were identification and handling and understanding diet, biology and behaviour of animals.



**Figure 13 Percentage responses of veterinary nurses to whether their formal course of veterinary nursing education was useful at teaching the above skills (n=51)**

## Are professional development opportunities useful?

Less than half of all veterinary professionals who responded to our survey attended professional development training on free-living wildlife.

- About 53% of veterinarians and 32% of veterinary nurses reported attending any professional development activities relating to free-living wildlife such as seminars, conferences and short courses.
- About 40% of veterinarians and 27% of veterinary nurses have received training from a volunteer wildlife rehabilitation organisation.
- Nearly all training had been with WIRES, Sydney Metropolitan Wildlife Services (SMWS), Australian Seabird Rescue or the Koala Hospital. Several practitioners reported having a greater sense of mutual understanding with the sector after this training.
- Veterinary practitioners nominated identification and handling, husbandry practices, disease identification and treatment protocols as useful areas for future professional development.

If vets were better equipped with more consistent clinical knowledge it would be easier to make appropriate decisions for the greater good and welfare of the species.  
(Veterinarian).

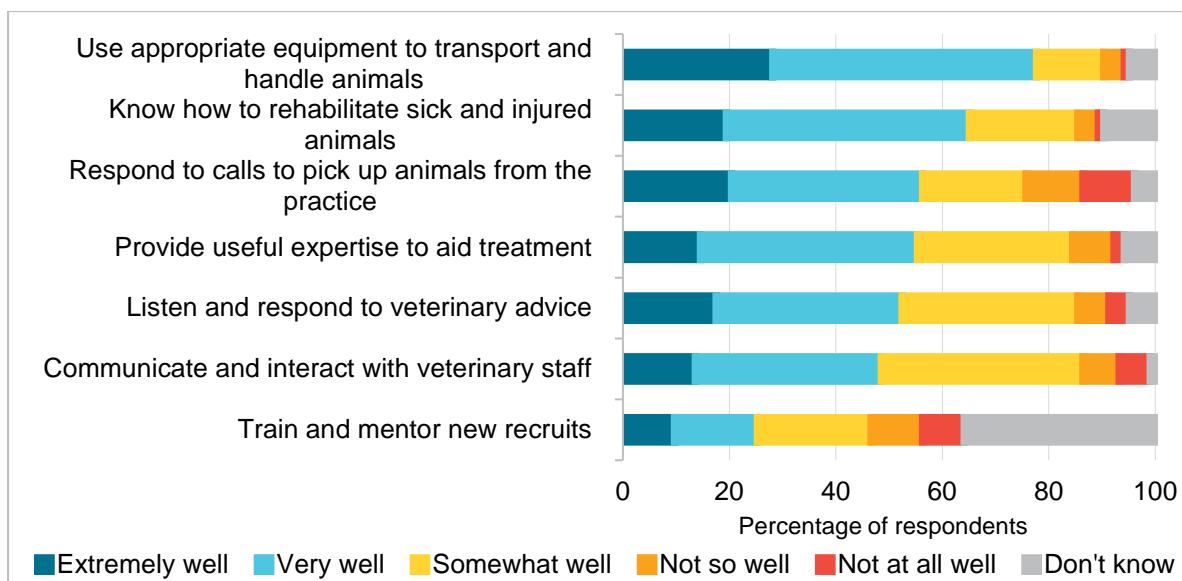
## What do veterinary staff think about wildlife rehabilitation providers?

Two-thirds of veterinary staff said they did not receive or make complaints about their local volunteer wildlife rehabilitation provider. The most common complaints received were about volunteer response times and the behaviour of group leaders and/or their members.

### We wanted to know what veterinary practitioners think about volunteer wildlife rehabilitators.

- Over 60% of veterinary staff did not receive or make complaints about their local wildlife rehabilitation provider. About 23% of complaints received were related to poor response times to animal collection/rescue. Another frequent cause of complaint (28%) was about poor behaviour from group leaders (11%) or their members (17%).
- We asked about the quality of service given by their local wildlife rehabilitation provider (Figure 14). About 78% said their provider uses appropriate equipment to transport and handle animals 'Very' to 'Extremely' well.
- About 65% said wildlife rehabilitators know how to rehabilitate sick and injured animals 'Very' to 'Extremely' well.
- However, only about 50% said wildlife rehabilitators listen and respond to veterinary advice and communicate with veterinary staff at least 'Very' well.

We have so many fantastic carers. We have come across a few newer carers that have unrealistic expectations and don't take on our advice, but I wonder if this has to do with lack of experience.  
(Veterinarian)



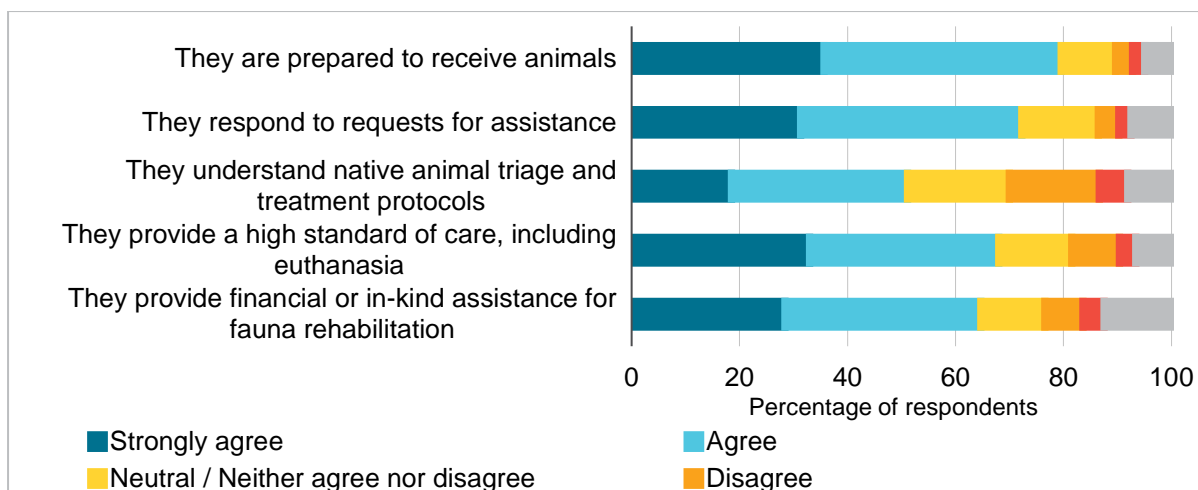
**Figure 14** Percentage responses from veterinary practitioners to ‘How well does your local wildlife rehabilitation provider do the following?’ (n=103)

### What do wildlife rehabilitation providers think about their local veterinary staff?

Most wildlife rehabilitators reported being satisfied with the services provided by veterinarians. Only about 50% agreed their local veterinary practice understood native animal treatment and triage protocols.

#### We also asked the volunteers about their local veterinary practitioners.

- About 66% said they were ‘Satisfied’ to ‘Very Satisfied’ with the services provided by their local veterinarian, about 16% said they were ‘Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’ and 12% ‘Dissatisfied to Very dissatisfied’.
- When asked about specific services their local veterinary practice provides (Figure 15), nearly 80% of respondents said they ‘Agree to Strongly Agree’ that their local veterinarian was prepared to receive animals and 72% said the same for ‘they respond to requests for assistance’.



**Figure 15 Percentage responses from wildlife rehabilitators to statements about their local veterinary practice** (n=665)

- Only about 50% agreed their local practice understood native animal triage and treatment protocols.

#### Wildlife rehabilitation groups also reported:

- They will actively select a veterinary practice they can work with and avoid those that show little interest or capacity to help with free-living native animals.
- Some veterinary practices, particularly in regional areas, have limited capacity or refuse to treat free-living wildlife or charge full-price consultation fees to discourage them.
- Some veterinarians are not appropriately vaccinated against certain wildlife diseases such as lyssavirus and do not have the skills to handle or restrain venomous reptiles.
- They spend from a few hundred up to \$15,000 each year on veterinary products such as X-rays and drugs, excluding additional funds contributed by individual volunteers<sup>31</sup>. One group reported spending more than \$35,000 in the previous 12 months on veterinary services and products including medications, X-rays, euthanasia and consultation fees.
- The AVA (Australian Veterinary Association) or bodies regulating veterinary practices should have in place policies that guide veterinary involvement with free-living wildlife.

Some vets are not familiar with native animals and we don't take our animals to them. (Wildlife rehabilitator)

#### Managing the relationship with veterinary practices

We found several examples of good practice by wildlife rehabilitation providers in how they foster and manage their interactions with veterinary practitioners:

- They have policies for their members on how to positively engage with veterinary practices.
- Their training includes a section on dealing with their local veterinary practice.
- Their Species Coordinator is used as a gateway for members' access to the local practice.
- They make an appointment with the practice prior to arriving with non-urgent cases.

<sup>31</sup> NSW Wildlife Council 2009, unpublished data.

- Local veterinary practitioners are invited to general meetings and training courses. SMWS provides a well-regarded two-day training course for veterinary students on veterinary care for native animals.
- They ensure their phone operators have contact details for local veterinary practices including those that operate after hours.
- They provide regular feedback and acknowledgement to their local practice.
- Clear reimbursement guidelines are in place for their members' veterinary expenses.

Overall, wildlife rehabilitation groups that have a structured and reciprocal relationship in place with their local practice are more likely to benefit from the services the practice can provide.

#### **Some more views about the veterinary sector:**

At the end of the day it's all about developing and maintaining personal relationships with vets. (Group Executive member)

Access to a vet practice is limited as the Forbes practice is 100 kilometres away. They open two days a week in Condobolin but do not have imaging or surgical capacity. (Wildlife rehabilitator)

We need standards of care with clear directives ...All this needs to be documented and readily available...A very tall order me thinks cause in our practice our wildlife manual has been pieced together over many years and is still so totally incomplete. (Veterinarian)

## **4.4 Government support**

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) within OEH is responsible for the regulation of the wildlife rehabilitation sector. The role of NPWS as outlined in the OEH Policy is to partner with the sector in the implementation of a strategic framework that promotes the delivery of efficient and effective on-ground wildlife care services. Key deliverables of the OEH Policy are to:

- administer and issue renewal of licences
- develop minimum standards for the consistent operation of the sector, including standards of care and release, use of unreleasable animals and record keeping
- undertake periodic assessment of services by wildlife rehabilitation providers
- assist with training and compliance inspections.

### **How satisfied is the sector with NPWS?**

Only 25% of volunteers said they were satisfied with the support given by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Nearly half said they were dissatisfied or didn't know what support NPWS provides for wildlife rehabilitators.

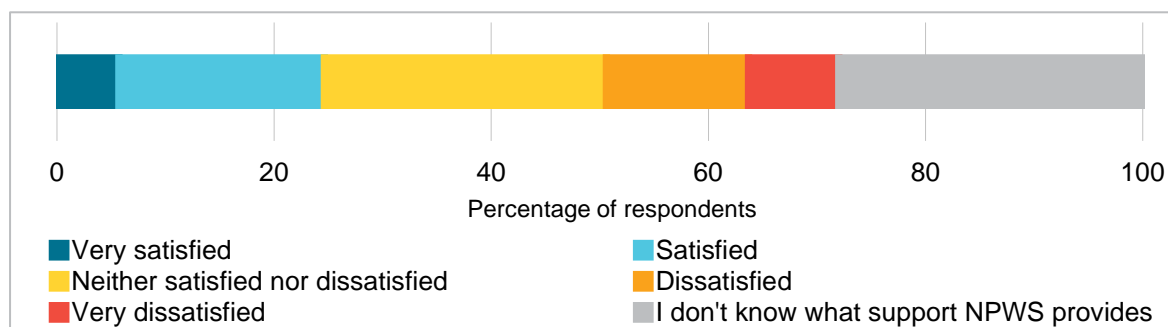
#### **We asked Group Executive Committees to score the support NPWS provides their group.**

- 7/10 was the median score. Most groups stated they now have much less engagement with local NPWS staff in areas such as marine incident response, training, service assessments and compliance inspections.

We also surveyed volunteers to assess their level of satisfaction with NPWS.



- Less than 25% of respondents reported being ‘Satisfied to Very Satisfied’ with the support provided by NPWS. Nearly half said they were dissatisfied or didn’t know what support NPWS provides for wildlife rehabilitators (Figure 16).



**Figure 16** Level of satisfaction of volunteer wildlife rehabilitators with NPWS (n=650)

### NPWS funding

NPWS provides funding to some local wildlife rehabilitation providers; however, it is not coordinated or targeted towards any defined strategic or operational objectives.

Some NPWS regions give funding, in the form of donations, and in-kind assistance to some wildlife rehabilitation providers within their area of responsibility (Table 3). Over a three-year period to 2016, 14 wildlife rehabilitation groups have received approximately \$98,000 (Appendix I). Funding has generally been to coastal groups north of Sydney. Some providers, including individual licence holders, have never received any funding assistance from NPWS.

**Table 3** NPWS grants to wildlife rehabilitation providers over three financial years to 2016<sup>32</sup>

Year	Amount	Number of providers
2015–16	\$33,889	12
2014–15	\$40,554	12
2013–14	\$23,564	7
<b>Total (average/year)</b>	<b>\$98,007 (\$32,669)</b>	

The sector has expressed concern that the current NPWS funding model is ad-hoc and not linked to any strategic or operational objectives such as:

- helping the sector adapt to and comply with OEH code of practice standards
- helping ensure the safety and wellbeing of volunteers
- compensation for housing, maintaining and helping dispose of exotic, seized or otherwise unwanted animals on behalf of NPWS
- preparedness for terrestrial wildlife emergency and marine mammal strandings.

NPWS does give the NWC an annual grant of \$25,000 to pay for public liability insurance for its members, which is matched by RMS. The NPWS component services public liability insurance premium fees for peak body members. NPWS also provides accommodation and

<sup>32</sup> Published data from Office of Environment and Heritage annual reports.

catering for peak body meetings from time to time. It also provided \$20,000 in sponsorship to the 2018 Australian Wildlife Rehabilitation Conference.

### Other funding sources

The wildlife rehabilitation sector is yet to fully realise its potential for gaining access to funding from other government, non-government and corporate funding streams. The sector would benefit from additional support including targeted financial assistance to help it meet growing demand for wildlife rescue and rehabilitation services.

The NSW Environmental Trust (the Trust) is an independent statutory body that provides funding to a range of community organisations for projects that rehabilitate or regenerate the environment, or promote environmental education and sustainability.

Over the last three years to 2016, the Trust has given wildlife rehabilitation providers \$416,361 to undertake projects within its environmental education, lead environmental community group, and restoration and rehabilitation funding streams (Table 4). Funds have been awarded to four groups (Appendix I). There have been no successful multi-group applications from the sector.

**Table 4 Environmental Trust grants given to wildlife rehabilitation providers over three financial years<sup>33</sup>**

Year	Funding stream	Amount
2015–16	Lead Environmental Community Group	\$117,900
2015–16	Restoration and Rehabilitation	\$99,200
2015–16	Environmental Education	\$76,621
2013–14	Environmental Education	\$53,140
2013–14	Lead Environmental Community Group	\$69,500
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$416,361</b>

The Trust does not have a dedicated funding stream for the wildlife rehabilitation sector; however, it has funded applications from wildlife rehabilitation providers who can effectively align their work to broader natural resource management (NRM) objectives.

Opportunities for funding would be enhanced if there was greater collaboration within the sector and with other organisations such as Landcare, and a broader range of funding opportunities was explored with other government, non-government and corporate funding sources.

Friends of Koala have been successful in getting an Environmental Trust Community Education Grant for a project 'Koala Watch: community-led koala recovery-Northern Rivers'. It is envisaged that this three-year project will see a greater community involvement in the future of our koalas. (Wildlife rehabilitator)

### Government funding in other jurisdictions

Victoria and to a lesser extent the Queensland Government have in place a structured competitive grants scheme which is well received by the wildlife rehabilitation sector in those states.

<sup>33</sup> Published data from the Environmental Trust website.

### We compared NSW funding programs for wildlife rehabilitation with those of other states (Table 5):

- **Victoria** is the only state to have an annual competitive grants scheme to support on-ground delivery of wildlife rehabilitation services across its jurisdiction. The program has been in operation nine years and is open to all wildlife shelters and foster carers. It provides funding for rescue equipment, personal protective clothing, training, general infrastructure and veterinary assistance and supplies.
- **Queensland** does not have a state annual grants program. Funding is provided on a strategic basis to the RSPCA, or on a project-by-project basis. Brisbane City Council and some other councils do have dedicated competitive grants programs for wildlife rehabilitators within their local government areas.
- **South Australia (SA), Western Australia (WA) and Tasmania** do not provide funds to wildlife rehabilitation providers unless it is for species projects; however, these states may have other volunteer grants programs that are open to wildlife rehabilitation.

**Table 5 Comparison of dedicated funding programs for wildlife rehabilitation providers in other states**

State	Funding	Comment	Amount
Victoria	Yes	Annual wildlife rehabilitator grants program	\$170,000 (\$2,000/applicant)
Queensland	Yes	Annual Local Government funding of wildlife rehabilitation providers	\$55,000 (2016–17)
		State Government assistance to RSPCA for strategic wildlife program	\$132,000 (2016)
		State Government assistance to targeted providers, e.g. Cassowary rehabilitation centre	\$50,000 (2016)
		Species projects, e.g. Koala rescue and rehabilitation	\$800,000 over four years (closed 2015)
WA	No	N/A	
SA	No	N/A	
Tasmania	Yes	Special projects only, e.g. Management of Wombat Mange	\$3,000 (2017)

### What can NPWS do to improve its services?

The sector indicated that NPWS needs to invest more in improving standards and give more support and appreciation to volunteers.

### We asked what can be done to improve government support for the sector:

- **Advocate for us and acknowledge the work we do:** Many volunteers feel that NPWS does not value their contribution or provide enough support, particularly during wildlife emergencies. Overall, volunteers expressed a strong desire for the Government to better promote the sector and take a more collaborative approach to its engagement with the peak body and service providers.
- **Develop strategic tools and systems to support us:** Stronger standards were identified as very important to the sector. Survey respondents want the NSW

Government to invest more in developing standards and systems that can improve service delivery across the sector.

- **Provide more funding and/or access to funding streams:** Access to more funding opportunities, greater equity in the allocation of NPWS grants to the sector and reimbursement for the costs of implementing NPWS policies were issues raised by volunteers.
- **Better manage environmental threats:** The sector is aware that many native animals requiring rescue are threatened by landscape related problems such as habitat loss and fragmentation, biosecurity, feral animals and climate change. The Government through its legislation and policies is considered both the vector for these threats and the solution.

A greater emphasis on the creation of wildlife corridors and community education were pointed out as ways to help mitigate the impact of these threats.

- **Make sure everyone is doing the right thing:** Group Executives want NPWS to provide more help with monitoring compliance against the codes of practice. Increased NPWS visibility was identified as a way of helping groups leverage the compliance of their members.
- **Provide more access to release sites:** Finding appropriate release sites and post-release monitoring were identified as challenges for the sector and threats to the successful release of animals.

#### **Some more views from the sector about NPWS:**

Recognise the commitment, skills, time and funds carers put in to wildlife rescue and care. More actively communicate with carer groups. (Wildlife rehabilitator)

As NPWS was the body responsible for development of the Rehabilitation Code it should be providing licensed groups with the wherewithal to adapt to Code requirements. (Wildlife rehabilitator)

## 5. Evaluation of services by the sector

### 5.1 In this chapter

- Assessment of wildlife rehabilitation providers in five key areas – governance, training, standards of care, service capacity and record keeping.
- Where we found examples of good practice.

### 5.2 Governance of wildlife rehabilitation groups

Good governance practices enable an organisation to function effectively and competently meet its legal and operational requirements. The leadership team<sup>34</sup> of a wildlife rehabilitation group is responsible for putting in place the rules, structures and processes needed to satisfy these requirements and support the ongoing involvement of their volunteers.

Here we discuss the outcomes of our face to face consultations with the leadership teams of wildlife rehabilitation groups and report on the governance arrangements they have put in place<sup>35</sup>. We also report on what volunteers themselves thought about their leaders, including their level of satisfaction with aspects of the group's governance arrangements. Supporting survey data is provided in [Appendix J](#).

When evaluating this section, we recognised that the level of governance implemented needs to be fit for purpose, i.e. it must accord with a wildlife rehabilitation group's size and management structure.

#### Are systems of governance in the sector up to standard?

We found numerous examples of good practice by wildlife rehabilitation groups in how they manage and support their volunteers. The sector overall would benefit from increased resources to help improve the skills of their leaders and the overall quality and effectiveness of their governance practices.

#### **We asked Group Executives to provide evidence of the systems they have put into place to manage their volunteers.**

Our aim was to find examples of good practice in governance across the sector in several key areas relevant to wildlife rehabilitation and its future accreditation. We adapted Volunteering Australia's [National Standards for Volunteer Involvement](#) to help inform this process. One or more groups had the following in place.

#### **Leadership and management**

- A [Model constitution](#) was in place that was compliant with the compulsory requirements of the NSW Department of Fair Trading. Only one group was found to no longer be incorporated under the [Associations Incorporation Act, which was contrary to OEH](#)

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<sup>34</sup> Across the sector, the structure of the leadership team varies from the Board and representative Branch model adopted by two of the largest groups, to the single Executive Management Committee model the remaining groups use.

<sup>35</sup> We did not assess governance processes necessary to meet [NSW Fair Trading](#) financial requirements under the [Associations Incorporation Act 2009](#), those required by the [Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission](#) or the [Australian Tax Office](#).

**Policy.** The best constitutions were those that were fit for purpose, i.e. relevant to the activity of wildlife rehabilitation. Some groups also made available to their members a second plain English version of their constitution.

- **Leaders trained in governance.** Over half of the people who are or have previously been a member of an Executive Committee have received training in leadership, management or governance. We found only one group to provide onboard governance training to their leadership team members. Most group leaders told us they would benefit from some additional support in this area.
- **A Deputy was assigned to key management committee roles** to help mentor aspiring leaders.
- **Fixed terms were adopted for management committee positions** to ensure these skills are rotated among other group members.
- **Policy and procedures** were in place that were clearly documented and easy to access. Some groups included these as by-laws or explicitly linked their policy and procedures document to their constitution.
- **A code of conduct for committee members** and rules for managing conflicts of interest among committee members were in place.
- **A code of ethics** was adopted for the conduct of wildlife rehabilitation. Many groups have their own code in place or refer to the NWC code.
- **Collaboration with other groups.** A few groups have formal memorandums of understanding (MOU) in place with other groups. Many groups, particularly those with overlapping boundaries, have informal agreements for managing animals, sharing training and other resources. Some groups reported having poor relations with other groups or had refused the offer of an MOU.
- **Transparency** around committee members, their role and contact numbers. Some groups provide their volunteers with a description of the assigned roles and responsibilities of their committee members. They also had in place a register of current members including contact details, authority type, training credentials and if relevant, vaccination details.

### **Volunteer engagement**

- **Clear rules of engagement** that clearly articulated the rules of the association. At least two groups include a 'right to care' clause in their constitution.
- **Member declaration process.** Some groups had an application and renewal form that required members to declare they understood the objectives and rules of the group.
- **Volunteer induction.** Most groups provide some form of induction to their members. This is often incorporated into their compulsory initial training. Some groups also provide their members with an induction manual which includes all relevant policy and procedures, forms and guidance material.
- **A code of conduct for members.** Several groups provide their members with clear direction as to what is expected of them in the form of a code of conduct.
- **A copy of the OEH licence and codes of practice.** Most groups provide their members with access to the OEH licence and codes to ensure they are aware of their legislative responsibilities; however, we found only 50% of groups complied with the requirement to explicitly state certain OEH licence conditions on their authority cards.
- **Transparent expense claim processes** were in place that give clear instructions to members about how and what they can claim as expenses.
- **Open communications.** Several groups regularly communicate by email and/or newsletter/Facebook about upcoming events, meeting outcomes, training courses, animal statistics and other relevant information to keep them up to date.



## Workplace safety and wellbeing

- **The group's constitution** makes explicit commitments to workplace safety and wellbeing (WHS).
- **Provision of insurance for personal injury and safety.** All groups have coverage either through the peak body or their own insurance policies.
- **Policies and procedures for WHS including safe work statements.** Several groups provide specific guidance on essential personal protective equipment, safe conduct of rescues, potential high-risk species, zoonotic diseases and parasites. The quality and content of these policies varies between groups.
- **Policies and procedures for resolving disputes.** Several groups have developed plain English guidelines to help manage disputes and bullying. Other groups use the NWC guidelines or generic processes outlined in their constitution.
- **WHS training.** Many groups train members in WHS. Only a few groups assess competency and there are no minimum WHS standards across the sector.
- **Sign in and incident report forms.** At least one group has a formal process in place for reporting WHS incidents. Another group has a volunteer sign-in form where they identify any pre-existing illnesses or potential risks to health and safety.
- **Access to counselling and support for volunteers.** At least one group has in place a subsidised volunteer support service.
- **Requirement for inoculation** against flying-fox Australian bat lyssavirus. Most groups require volunteers who rescue and care for bats to be inoculated and maintain a register of vaccinated members.

## Volunteer recognition

- **Acknowledgement of their volunteers.** Many groups recognise the work of their volunteers in newsletters or other forms of social media. One group also has an annual award program in place for recognition of service. Some groups provide certificates for successful completion of training courses.

## Continuous improvement

- **A strategic and/or operational plan** that identifies and prioritises key actions. At least three groups had some form of planning process in place. We found this helped them to respond to potential risks to their service capacity and attract funding opportunities.
- **A process for seeking volunteer feedback.** At least two groups had undertaken recent detailed surveys of their membership.
- **Documentation that is periodically reviewed.** Several groups regularly review and update their important documents and implement version control.

## Volunteer training and development

This is covered in [Section 5.3, Training and mentoring](#).

Create a better understanding of good corporate governance which would lead to more trust, respect and support for all members. I don't know if this is possible. But at least raise the bar/expectation. Provide yearly reviews and training of the executive members to keep them on track, help them deal with the issues.

(Wildlife rehabilitator)

## What did wildlife rehabilitators tell us about their group’s leadership and governance procedures?

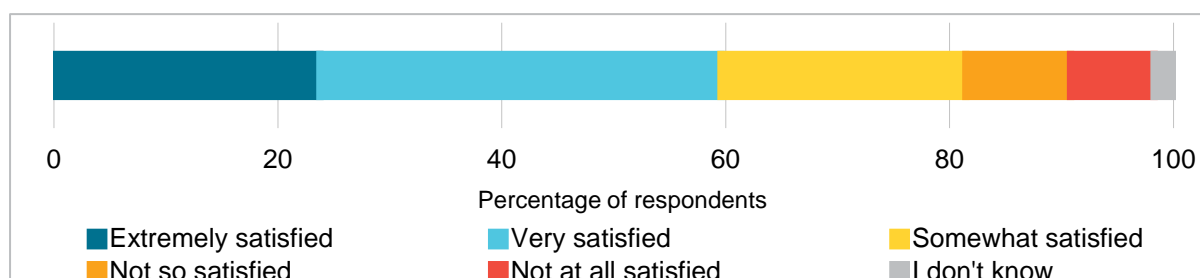
### Volunteer leadership

We asked leaders about themselves and their thoughts about the governance of their groups. We found:

- They are experienced people, having on average about 13 years’ service as volunteers. This was three years longer than the whole of sector average of nine years.
- They come from diverse employment backgrounds and bring a valuable range of skills to their respective groups.
- Some leaders report their main focus is on animal care and report volunteer management to be a burden or secondary consideration.
- 59% of the respondents who completed leadership, management or executive training said it was ‘Very’ or ‘Extremely’ useful.
- Some Species Coordinators and mentors said they were not well prepared or given any form of induction prior to taking on the role.

### We wanted to better understand volunteers’ views about the leadership of their group:

- About 60% of respondents said they were ‘Very’ to ‘Extremely’ satisfied with their group’s leaders; 22% were ‘Somewhat satisfied’; and nearly 17% were dissatisfied (Figure 17).
- Overall, a quarter (24%) said leadership and internal communication could be greatly improved. This was less than the response from Executive Committee members (29%) and Species Coordinators (35%).



**Figure 17** Percentage responses to ‘How satisfied are you with the overall leadership of your group?’ (n=695)

As an executive member, I feel that my new role should be monitored, and training provided for me to understand what is really required of me.  
(Group Executive Member)

### We asked volunteers about other aspects of their group’s management.

#### Volunteer management

- Less than half (44%) of survey respondents said they were at least ‘Very’ familiar with their group’s constitution or thought it ‘Very’ useful.
- About 54% said their group meetings are run at least ‘Very’ well.
- Over 60% also agreed that their management committee listens to their opinions; 19% were neutral and 10% disagreed.

- 58% said their group was at least ‘Very’ effective at managing its resources; 21% said ‘Somewhat’ effective; 8% not effective and; 13% did not know how effectively their group used its resources.
- Nearly 55% said their group works with other wildlife rehabilitation groups ‘Very’ to ‘Extremely’ well; 17% ‘Somewhat well’; about 7% ‘Not’ well and; 22% said they did not know.
- Regarding financial services, only 25% felt their group was ‘Very’ to ‘Extremely’ good at financially supporting them and 32% said the same about the group’s financial planning abilities. Only 40% agreed their group was at least ‘Very’ good at fundraising.

### Volunteer engagement

- About 90% agreed that as a volunteer they clearly understood what was expected of them.
- 67% agreed that their group’s volunteers work well with each other.
- More than 60% said they feel ‘Very’ to ‘Extremely’ comfortable voicing their disagreement or concerns to group management.
- However, only about 40% agreed that responsibilities are shared fairly among members of their group; while 31% disagreed. Perceived bias was cited by volunteers as a contributing reason for conflict between members.

### Workplace safety and wellbeing

- Only 56% told us their group was ‘Very’ to ‘Extremely’ good at looking after the health and safety of their members; 22% said they were ‘Somewhat Good’ and 10% said they were ‘Not so good or Not at all Good’.

### Conflict management

- Nearly 25% told us their group did not handle conflict between members or between members and the executive well. More than a third said they did not know how well their group managed conflict (Figure 18).
- Also, only 25% told us their group dealt with members who broke the rules ‘Very’ to ‘Extremely’ well, 14% said ‘Somewhat well’ and 22% ‘Not so well’ or ‘Not well at all’. More than a third did not know.

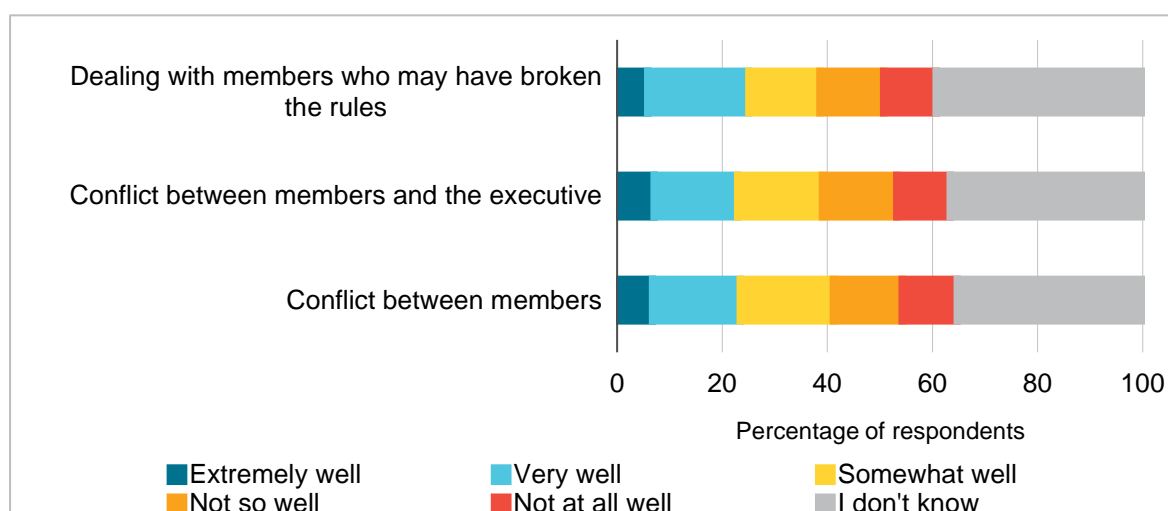


Figure 18 Percentage responses to ‘How well does your group manage conflict?’ (n=671)

Dealing with the dysfunctional people in my branch leads to lots of stress. The constant bickering between carers is preventing me from doing more.  
(Wildlife rehabilitator)

### 5.3 Training and mentoring

In this section we assess training and mentoring as it relates to maintaining standards of animal care as required under the [OEH licence](#) including our [codes of practice](#).

We ask about the people training volunteers. We report volunteer's views on the usefulness of the training they receive and identify areas of good practice in the sector. We also look at mentoring and supervision of volunteers. A summary of the data is provided in [Appendix J](#).

#### Who is delivering training to the wildlife rehabilitation sector?

Volunteers rate the skill and knowledge of trainers as their most important consideration when deciding what training to do. However, the sector does not currently have an endorsed list of specialised species trainers, minimum trainer qualifications or a standard training curriculum.

#### We asked about the people groups use to deliver their training

Our purpose was to understand who was providing training to the sector, their level of experience and qualifications. We found that:

- About 96% of volunteer wildlife rehabilitators rate the 'skill and knowledge of trainers' to be 'Very' to 'Extremely' important to them when deciding what training to do. It was the most important reason selected in our survey. Next most important (93%) was 'the opportunity to learn something new'.
- Senior members of groups usually deliver introductory training to new volunteers. Specialist species training is delivered by a relatively small pool of skilled wildlife rehabilitators or veterinary practitioners. Some of these people train to their own standards and curriculum.
- There are no sector-wide minimum qualifications for trainers of wildlife rehabilitators. People are often chosen based on reputation within the sector.
- There is no sector-wide endorsed list of trainers available to wildlife rehabilitation groups that outlines their area of expertise, experience and fees (if any).
- NPWS staff rarely participate in training although they are required to under [OEH Policy](#). Executive Group members expressed a strong desire for staff to attend their training courses and speak about compliance with its codes of practice.

Several volunteers we asked were very complimentary about the skill and experience of some specialist trainers in the sector, particularly those involved with koalas, macropods, wombats and marine animals. Other people wanted more consistency in the standard of trainers and training overall.

The trainers I have been trained by are highly qualified and experienced. They are very commanding. (They) are very professional and well organised. But they lack the support (manuals out of date and lacking practical information).  
(Wildlife rehabilitator)

We need better trainers. In 12 years I have had the same person doing the training saying the same thing each time, so we don't learn anything, but we have to do it if we wish to continue caring.  
(Wildlife rehabilitator)

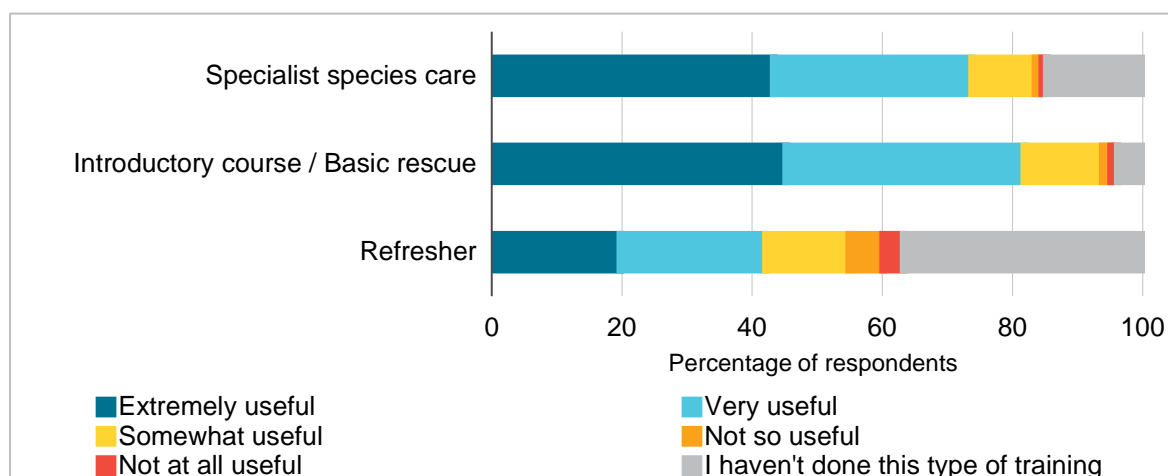
## How useful is the training provided to wildlife rehabilitators?

Volunteers reported finding their initial and specialist training useful. They also sought greater consistency in training standards across the sector, more rigour in assessing competency and more opportunity to continue developing skills.

### We asked about the usefulness of training programs and evidence of good practice

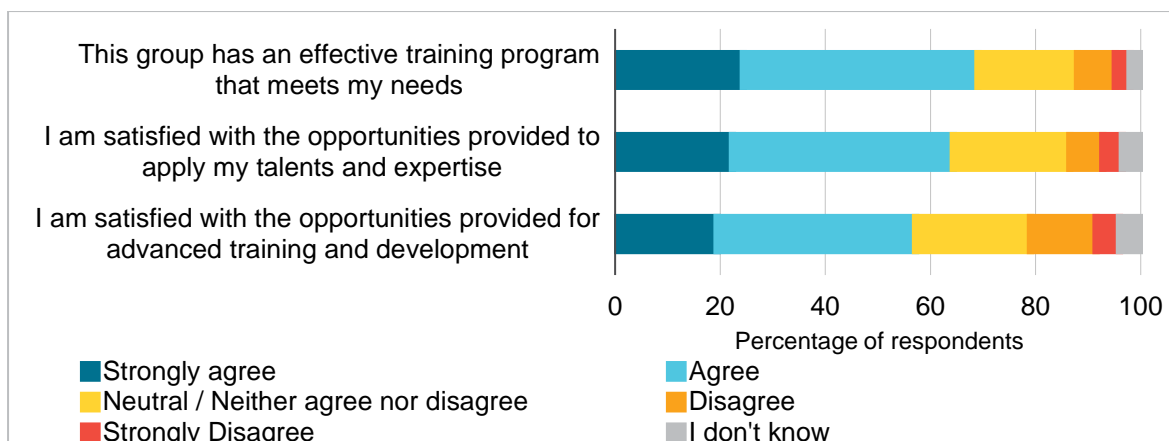
Our aim was to identify opportunities for future improvement. We found the following:

- 8/10 was the median score group Executives gave their training programs.
- About 85% of survey respondents who completed this type of training told us their 'Introductory/Basic' rescue course was 'Very' to 'Extremely' useful and 87% gave the same response for their 'Specialist Species' care course (Figure 19). Less than 5% said their training was 'Not so useful' or 'Not at all useful'.
- Some respondents found their 'Refresher' training to be repetitive and did not meet their needs.



**Figure 19 Percentage responses to 'How useful were your Introductory, Specialist Species Care and Refresher courses?' (n=698; 697 and 694 respectively)**

- Overall, 69% thought that their group had an effective training program that met their needs. Nearly 30% were neutral or disagreed (Figure 20).
- However, 57% of group members told us they were satisfied with the opportunities provided for advanced training and development.
- 72% of respondents said standardised training across the sector was 'Very' to 'Extremely' important to them. About 16% said it was 'Somewhat important' and 10% did not think it was important.



**Figure 20 Percentage responses to the question about training and development opportunities in groups (n=696)**

### We had discussions with Group Executives and asked about their training programs

Overall, we found evidence of good practice in training by one or more groups. Groups that demonstrated good practice in training had a structured program in place that was current, well documented, linked to learning outcomes including regulatory requirements and was competency-based.

- They had a dedicated education/training officer whose role was to coordinate and communicate training course opportunities to their membership.
- They provided regular training opportunities for new and existing members.
- There was mandatory induction training for all new members prior to commencement of service. This did not occur in some small groups where training was not readily available. In these groups a new member was initially buddied up with a senior person until training became available.
- Induction training had identified learning outcomes:
  - about the group and its policy and procedures
  - OEH licence and codes of practice
  - challenges of volunteering in the sector
  - species identification, initial assessment, rescue, handling and transport
  - interacting with the local vet
  - workplace safety and wellbeing
  - record keeping and documentation.
- The group used a training manual and/or online training resources.
- There was a combination of written and/or practical assessments of competency as required by the OEH code of practice. Some groups preferred a more practical approach to assessing competency and felt the OEH code was too restrictive.
- Training success was acknowledged in some form, such as a training certificate.
- There was a current training register.

Our training is thorough and has an assessment component. We also ensure our members are competent by having a dedicated senior backup member assigned to each incident to assist members. This has two benefits our members feel part of a much bigger team which gives them confidence and enables constant in-field evaluation.  
(Group Executive member)



## **We made some sector-wide observations about training**

- Training content and assessment of competency varied between groups.
- The balance of structured training to on the job training varied between groups, most notably between central facility and home-based care groups.
- There is no shared schedule of training events, or online training resources available to the sector.
- There is little or no transferability of training credentials between wildlife rehabilitation groups although some groups organise shared specialist species training.
- There is no training pathway available for members who wish to participate in the sector in ways other than direct contact with animals.
- There are few sector-wide opportunities for ongoing professional development of wildlife rehabilitators.
- The cost of training varies considerably between groups. This also applies to external training programs such as Bush Fire Awareness (BFA); for example, regional wildlife rehabilitation providers receive BFA training for free, whereas members of Sydney-based groups are required to pay \$15 per head.

There is considerable room for improvement with training standards. However, this is no fault of the organisation rather a lack of standardised training across the board by appropriately qualified trainers. (Wildlife rehabilitator)

## **How satisfied is the sector with its mentoring and supervisory programs?**

Mentors and buddies are a highly valued, but limited resource in wildlife rehabilitation. About 80% of volunteers said better mentoring and support was important to them.

An essential component of a volunteer's ongoing development is the support provided by a suitable mentor<sup>36</sup>. A mentor or buddy will help integrate a new member into the group and improve their knowledge and skills, so they can become more competent wildlife rehabilitators.

## **We asked Group Executives about their mentoring programs**

Our aim was to better understand if and how mentors were being used and what issues they were experiencing. We found one or more groups to demonstrate good practice in the following ways.

- They have a dedicated volunteer support role within the group.
- The role of the mentor was clearly defined by the Executive Management Committee.
- A prospective mentor's suitability for the role was assessed by the Executive Management Committee.
- A structured program of mentoring exists that enables the mentor to objectively assess the competency of a new wildlife rehabilitator and record their progress.
- The mentoring process was linked to a probationary period for new volunteers. Some groups also align their group's authority renewal process with this process.

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<sup>36</sup> Turnbull D 2007, 'Mentoring new carers – a species type of education', *National Wildlife Rehabilitation Conference Proceedings 2007, Fremantle, Australia*, Australian Wildlife Rehabilitator Conference.

- The process for resolving disputes between a mentor and a new wildlife rehabilitator was clear and made available to all parties.

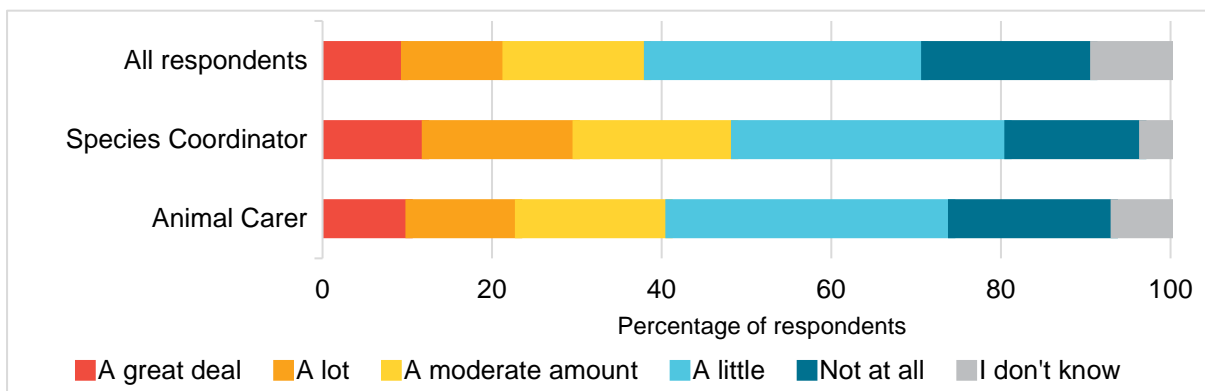
**Group Executives told us about some issues that hamper mentoring**

- There was a lack of senior volunteers to adequately resource their mentoring program. All groups like the concept, but some find it hard to get sufficient people to participate. Some mentoring is done by selected Animal Carers, but shortages require Species Coordinators to do this role.
- The geographic size of some groups prevents active involvement of mentors due to the time and cost involved with travel. One group has tried to manage this problem by dividing their area into regions for ease of management. New member mentors are allocated to each region. Others mix phone support with occasional visits.

The training of carers and the standards that are provided are very good. The follow through with new members is a problem as many inexperienced carers are told to ‘do your best’.  
(Group Executive Member)

**We asked volunteers how satisfied they were with their group’s mentoring and supervisory programs**

- 60% of respondents told us they were ‘Very’ to ‘Extremely’ satisfied with the mentoring and supervision they were given, 24% said they were ‘Somewhat satisfied’ and 14% were ‘Not so satisfied or Not at all satisfied.’
- 22% said their group’s mentoring and supervision needed to improve ‘A great deal to A lot’, 17% said ‘A moderate amount’ and about 53% said ‘A Little to Not at all’. A higher percentage of Species Coordinators thought improvements were necessary (Figure 21).
- Overall, 80% said that better mentoring and support for members was ‘Very’ to ‘Extremely’ important to them; only 3% said it was not important.



**Figure 21 Percentage responses to ‘How much does your group need to improve its supervision and mentoring?’** (Survey responses: All respondents 695, Species Coordinators 214, Animal Carers 558) Species Coordinators and Animal Carers are those people who are or who have previously reported being in those roles.

Satisfaction and engagement of members relies on quality support and mentoring.  
(Wildlife rehabilitator)

Better support and mentoring of members (is needed) to ensure increased compliance with standards and hence better outcomes for native animals.  
(Wildlife rehabilitator)

## 5.4 Standards of care

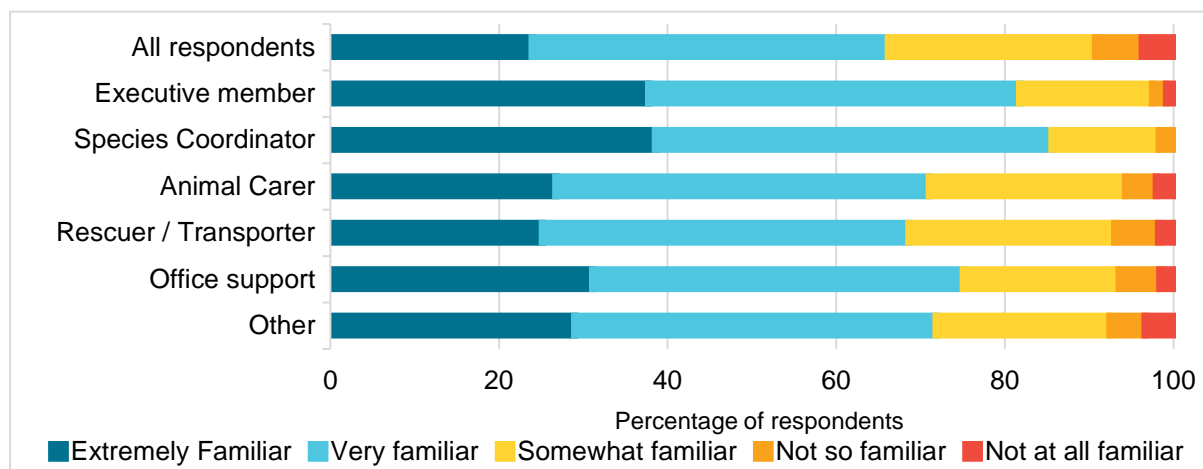
Here we report on the outcomes of an assessment we undertook of the sector’s compliance with our codes of practice and licence conditions. We also give feedback on what the sector said about the standards in their own groups. A summary of data is given in Appendix J.

Overall, we found a high level of compliance with our standards of care against our audit. Volunteers identified a need for more monitoring and enforcement of standards by their groups and government. There is also a need to review and update the animal triage and treatment protocols used by the sector.

### How familiar is the sector with existing animal care standards?

#### We asked the sector to tell us how familiar they were with our codes and licence conditions

- Only 66% of respondents to our survey said they were ‘Very’ to ‘Extremely’ familiar with the codes of practice; 63% gave the same response for OEH licence conditions; about 25% said they were ‘Somewhat familiar’ with these standards.
- More than 80% of Executive Members and Species Coordinators were ‘Very’ to ‘Extremely’ familiar with our codes and licence conditions, compared to 71% of Animal Carers and 68% of Rescuer/Transporters (Figure 22).
- Less than 10% of volunteers in all roles said they were ‘Not so familiar’ or ‘Not at all familiar’ with the standards.



**Figure 22 Percentage responses to ‘How familiar are you with the OEH codes of practice?’**  
(Survey responses: All respondents 757, Executive Member 241, Species Coordinator 236, Animal Carer 632, Rescuer/Transporter 672).

#### We found several examples of good practice in how groups make their members aware of the importance of our standards

- Explicit statements were included in their constitution, membership forms, codes of conduct and policy and procedures.
- They provided copies of the OEH codes and licence to members.
- Groups placed excerpts of the codes of practice in their quarterly newsletters and links on their website or Facebook page.
- They integrated the requirements of the codes in their own animal care documentation.

Members need to be informed of the importance of OEH rehab policies, the necessity to comply with these, and educated on how to comply. (Wildlife rehabilitator)

## What is the quality of care given by wildlife rehabilitators?

### We undertook a compliance audit of wildlife rehabilitators against the codes of practice

Fifty-four volunteers were audited. An independent auditor undertook 51 of these audits and NPWS did three. All groups, (except facilities jointly licensed by the DPI and NPWS) were represented in the audit as were five individual licence holders. Participants were selected by their groups, given a prior copy of the audit template and told when the audit would be undertaken.

Overall, we found a high level of compliance across the sector. There were four elements of the codes of practice where we found examples of non-compliance:

- **Enclosure sizes:** 12% of volunteers had enclosures that were smaller than code standards. These volunteers mostly lived in urban areas. They told us that cost, space and council planning regulations affected their ability to comply.
- **Exposure to pets:** 25% had enclosures that allowed rehabilitating native animals to see domestic pets.
- **Housing:** 64% of carers who worked with flying-foxes and birds did not have double doors – although they used shade cloth to achieve a similar outcome.
- **Training:** None of the individual licence holders audited undertook regular refresher training.

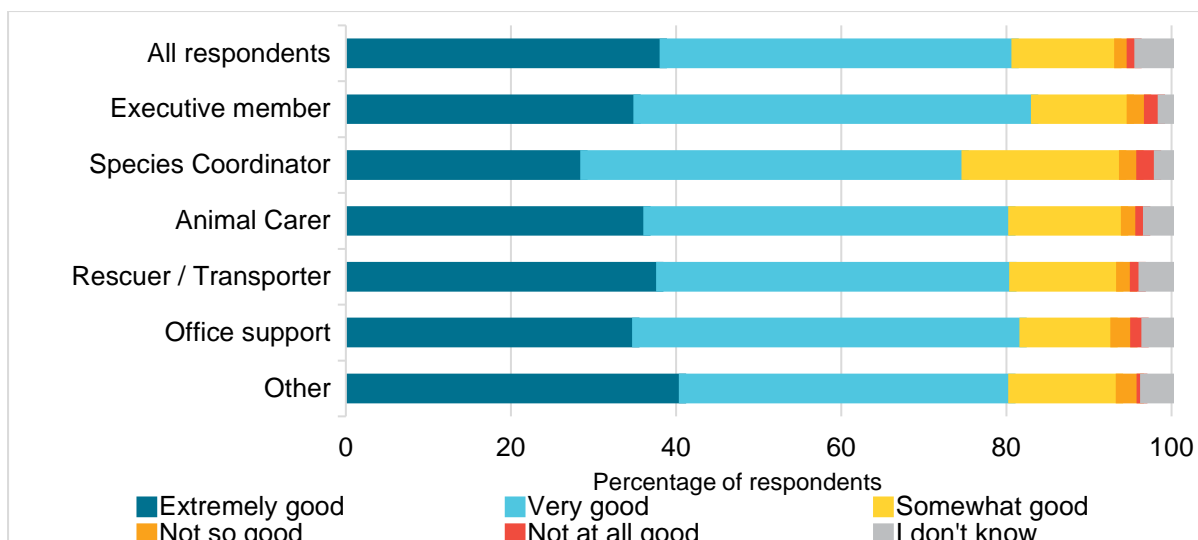
The outcome of the audit indicates that among the wildlife carers inspected there is a generally high level of compliance with the requirements of their licenses, the policy and the relevant codes of practice. (Tim Stubbs, WolfPeak<sup>37</sup>)

### We asked about the quality of care in their groups

- 8.4/10 was the median score Group Executives rated their group's standards of care.
- About 80% of volunteers who responded to our survey rated their group's quality of care as 'Very' to 'Extremely' good; 12% said 'Somewhat good'.
- This compares to 75% of Species Coordinators, 80% of Animal Carers and 81% of Rescuer/Transporters (Figure 23).
- Only 5% of respondents across all roles thought their groups were 'Not so good' or 'Not good at all' at providing high quality animal care.
- 68% of volunteers did not think that the group needed to improve its standards of care; 11% thought improvement was required a moderate amount; 10% thought 'A lot' or 'A great deal' of improvement was required.
- This compares to 64% of Species Coordinators and 68% of Animal Carers; however, 16% of Species Coordinators told us that standards did need to improve 'A lot' to 'A great deal'.

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<sup>37</sup> WolfPeak 2016, 'Wildlife Rehabilitation Compliance Audit', unpublished report prepared for NPWS.



**Figure 23 Percentage responses by role to 'How good is your group at providing high quality animal care?'** (Survey responses: All respondents 739, Executive Member 241, Species Coordinator 236, Animal Carer 631, Rescuer/Transporter 671)

**We found many examples of good practice by groups in creating capacity for their members to maintain high standards of care**

- An extensive range of very detailed animal triage and treatment protocols was available for use by members. We found many of these resources to be impressive; however, we did note some duplication of effort and inconsistency in content, detail and currency of some of these resources.
- Detailed daily animal care record sheets and admission protocols were required for incoming animals.
- Training and guidelines were available to humanely euthanase animals with firearms.
- Staff hygiene protocols were in place to prevent disease transmission.
- Protocols existed for the management of suspected diseased animals and exotic reptiles.

The group does its best to uphold the standard of care of injured or orphaned wildlife. It has strong and dedicated leaders who have been long standing members of the group and who communicate well with each other and other group members.  
(Wildlife rehabilitator)

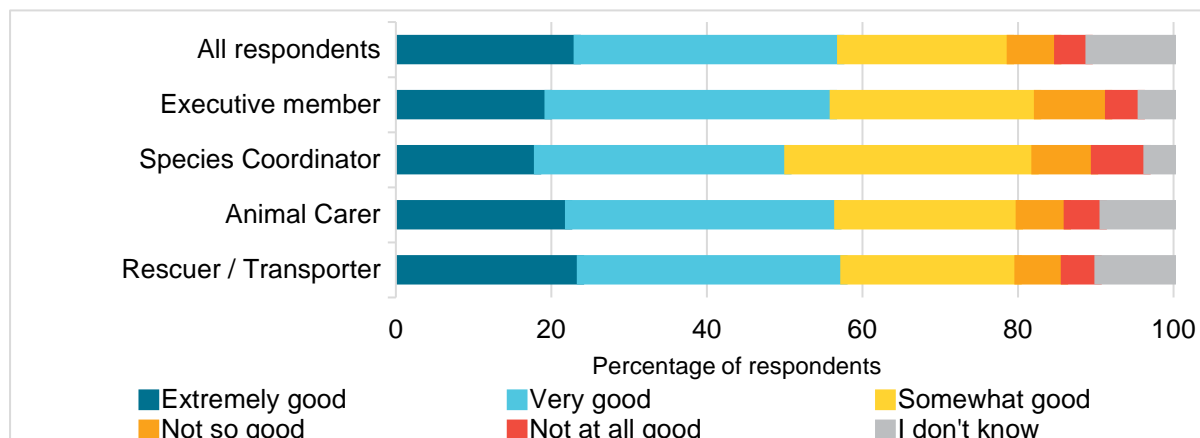
**How good is the sector at monitoring compliance against OEH standards?**

Although most groups have systems in place for monitoring and ensuring compliance against standards, there is a need for further improvement.

**We asked how good groups were at monitoring levels of animal care and if they thought their group was good at ensuring members complied with OEH standards**

- Over 60% of all respondents said their group was 'Very' to 'Extremely' good at monitoring the level of animal care; 19% said 'Somewhat good' and 12% 'Not so good' or 'Not good at all'.
- This compares to a lower percentage of Species Coordinators (55%) and Animal Carers (61%).

- 57% of all respondents said their group is ‘Very’ to ‘Extremely’ good at ensuring members comply with the codes of practice; 22% thought the group was ‘Somewhat good’ and 10% said ‘Not so good’ or ‘Not good at all’.
- A lower percentage of Species Coordinators (50%) thought their group was at least very good. A higher percentage (15%) also said it was not good (Figure 24).



**Figure 24 Percentage responses by role to ‘How good is your group at ensuring members comply with OEH codes?’** (Survey responses: All respondents 738, Executive Member 240, Species Coordinator 236, Animal Carer 630, Rescuer/Transporter 670)

(We need) More intensive training and monitoring new and existing wildlife carers to make sure they are giving the right care to wildlife. Follow up on carers, checking records and animals. (Wildlife rehabilitator)

### **We were told about some challenges the sector has with monitoring and enforcing standards**

- Some Species Coordinators need to improve their communication skills and give more help to members wanting to improve their standards of care.
- Remote locations, access to private property and lack of time can be significant impediments to undertaking regular compliance monitoring.
- Conflict and disagreements about the standards such as when to euthanase and release animals. This can result in volunteers becoming isolated and more susceptible to poor practices such as hoarding and non-reporting of animals in their care.

The species coordinators, should try to make time to visit the facilities of carers so they become fully aware what is available at each carer’s facility. This would also provide an opportunity for coordinators and carers to address any concerns and exchange ideas in an informal environment. (Wildlife rehabilitator)

### **We found some groups, in addition to good training and mentoring programs, had the following systems in place to help reduce the potential for conflict**

- Roles and responsibilities of group members including Species Coordinators were well defined.
- Plain English policy and procedure statements were in place for all facets of their operation.
- Species Coordinators were selected for their strong communication and supervisory skills as well as having a sound knowledge of care requirements.



- There were caps on the number of animals a carer can have at any one time to help reduce volunteer burnout.
- There were periodic audits of Animal Carers including stocktakes of animals in hand.
- The group used a collaborative approach to solve difficult care issues rather than leave it solely to the Species Coordinator and carer.
- The group provided refresher training and/or some form of ongoing professional development for their members.
- The group had collaborative and positive relationships with local vets.

Generally, from what I see, most members who rescue have a fairly high standard. Our branch sends our emails to communicate, has monthly meetings and has social events to meet other members.  
(Wildlife rehabilitator)

### What can OEH do to improve animal care standards?

The sector indicated it wants greater connectivity with veterinary and scientific professionals to help them keep in touch with improvements in best practice. They also want the Government to help monitor compliance and enforcement of its standards.

#### We asked the sector to tell us what we could do to improve animal care standards

- **Undertake a periodic review of the codes of practice:** Group Executives also told us that the codes of practice were generally satisfactory, but in need of periodic review.
- **Connect the sector with veterinary and other wildlife professionals:** The sector can feel isolated from the veterinary profession and other wildlife specialists and wants the Government to help it keep in touch with advances in animal welfare and conservation biology.
- **Keep a presence in compliance and enforcement:** The sector also had strong views about the Government's ongoing role in compliance and enforcement of its standards. Several groups reported that their only form of leverage in these instances was to request an OEH audit.

(NPWS) Be a lot more responsive in terms of providing advice... investigating complaints and monitoring compliance with its codes of practice.  
(Wildlife rehabilitator)

## 5.5 Service capacity

Government and the community have an expectation that calls for assistance will be promptly actioned, and that advice given is consistent across the sector. The [OEH Policy](#) has criteria for assessing service provision. These include assessing:

- effectiveness of local wildlife rehabilitators at responding to wildlife incidents
- emerging gaps in service provision with respect to certain species
- complaints about wildlife rehabilitation services made by members of the public.

In this section, we report on service provision across the sector. We asked group Executives about the systems they have set up to respond to wildlife incidents and their capacity to meet demand. We also provide feedback on the views of volunteers about the standard of service provided by their local wildlife rehabilitation provider ([Appendix J](#)).

## How effective is the sector at responding to calls for assistance?

Managing service capacity, including meeting demand for assistance within each group's area of operation, was identified as a challenge for the sector. There is also significant duplication of cost and effort and potential confusion in the community about who to call to attend to wildlife rescues.

### We asked the sector about their phone and rescue response services

Our purpose was to better understand how the sector manages these services and what constraints it is operating under. We found:

- At least 180,000 calls for assistance are made to the sector each year.
- Call volume ranges from 1–10 calls a day for small groups, to 800 calls a day to WIRES, the largest wildlife rehabilitation provider<sup>38</sup> and is strongly influenced by season and weather events.
- Nearly all wildlife rehabilitation providers operate and pay for their own exclusive phone service. Reported annual phone expenses vary from about \$2500 for a small to medium sized group to more than \$600,000 for WIRES<sup>39</sup> (inclusive of staff salaries for 2015).
- Many groups have their own branded road signage displaying their phone numbers.
- Phone and rescue services are generally contained within the geographic areas where groups are licensed to operate.
- The community can access an online application<sup>40</sup> to help find a local wildlife rehabilitation provider. Some groups provide their own 'app'.
- Most wildlife rehabilitation groups said they provide a 24-hour seven day a week rescue service and capacity to organise the rescue of animal within 1–2 hours of a call from a member of the public (in daylight hours).
- Providers use a phone service that is commensurate with the size of their membership; for example, two of the largest wildlife rehabilitation providers manage incoming calls via a sophisticated fixed call centre. Smaller groups may use a landline number which diverts to a volunteer's home or mobile phone or share use of a single mobile phone.

### We asked the sector to rate their phone services

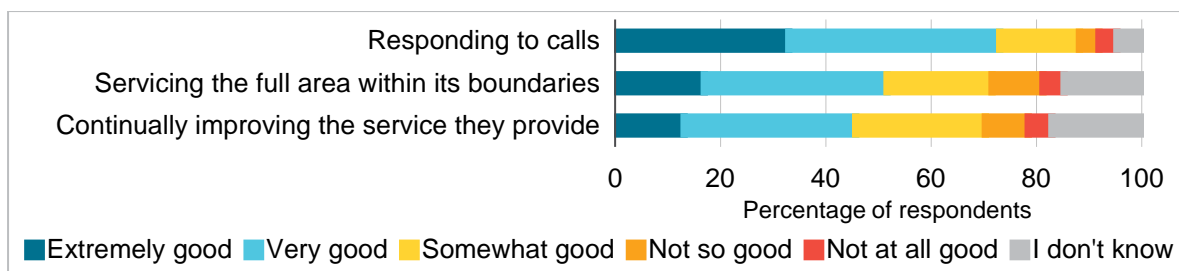
- 9/10 was the median score Group Executives gave their phone response services.
- 73% of respondents to our survey said their group was 'Very' to 'Extremely' good at responding to calls for assistance; a further 15% told us 'Somewhat good' and 7% said 'Not so good' to 'Not good at all'; 5% said they did not know (Figure 25).
- Only 52% said their group was at least very good at servicing the full area within its boundaries; 20% said 'Somewhat good' and 14% 'Not so good' or 'Not good at all'; 15% said they did not know (Figure 25).
- Less than half said their group was 'Very' to 'Extremely' good at continually improving their service.
- We received several complaints from groups about other providers in their area who they say were not responding to calls or transferring calls long after they were made.

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<sup>38</sup> Leanne Taylor, CEO WIRES, pers. comm. (22/04/2016)

<sup>39</sup> Leanne Taylor, CEO WIRES, pers. comm. (22/04/2016)

<sup>40</sup> International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) online rescue application developed for the NSW Wildlife Council



**Figure 25** Percentage responses to ‘How good is your group at “responding to calls” and “servicing the full area within its boundary”?’ (n=652)

I know there are not many volunteers in my area and I am likely to constantly get calls outside of my availability times because the phone operators are desperate. Also, when I used to work as a phone operator, it could be very stressful as there were not enough volunteers to call. (Wildlife rehabilitator)

### **We found one or more groups demonstrated good practice in how they manage their phone and rescue response service**

- Groups made use of sophisticated phone technology that can track call progress, find Rescuers based on their availability and geographic proximity to the animal, and capture report data from the point of call.
- There was a designated phone coordinator to help manage phone rosters and standardise response procedures.
- Training for phone operators was mandatory.
- Groups had a phone manual that includes standard greetings, scripts for responding to common calls, the process for organising rescues, contact details of local vets and advice for dealing with difficult callers.
- There was a phone number that was shared between two groups. We found one example of two groups who use the one phone number. This has helped reduce phone expenses and improved service coordination. Some other groups have arrangements in place to redirect callers to another group when a Rescuer cannot be found.
- Centrelink benefit/allowance recipients were used as supplementary phone operators. We found one group to be registered with Centrelink as a Community Volunteer Organisation, enabling benefit recipients to undertake volunteer work with them.
- Some groups have arrangements in place with other groups to redirect calls when they cannot meet demand or if they involve a specialist species such as a koala or bird of prey.
- There was a link to the online International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) provider search application from the provider’s website. We found less than half the groups give access to the IFAW application from their website.

### **Constraints that can affect a group’s ability to service its full geographic area include:**

- having a monopoly over a certain geographic area but insufficient active members to meet demand
- having a very large geographic area but their members are clustered in one or two locations
- being crippled by internal governance issues leading to low volunteer retention and volunteer morale
- having a lack of suitably trained species specialists or facilities for animals which a group is licensed to rehabilitate

- red-tape restrictions in the import and export of animals. This affects the ability of groups to rapidly move animals to interstate wildlife hospital facilities such as Currumbin Wildlife Hospital
- red-tape restrictions around where volunteers can live and which group they can join.  
There is no capacity to deliver services as the membership is small and little attempt is made to rectify this. (Wildlife rehabilitator)

### **We found some groups demonstrated good practice in how they managed risks around service capacity**

- They have a strategic or operational plan in place that monitors and supports long-term retention of their members.
- They monitor and map the distribution of their members across their service area and target recruitment in areas where there are emerging service gaps.
- They actively engage and cooperate with other groups in their area either in the form of an MOU or less formal relationship. This was mostly evident in areas where a speciality species group or facility overlapped with a generalist species group.

### **We asked if more flexibility is needed regarding areas where groups can operate**

- More flexibility around which group a volunteer can choose was a low priority for volunteers who responded to our survey. Only 45% said it was 'Very' to 'Extremely' important to them, 20% said 'Somewhat important' and 35% said 'Not so important' or 'Not at all important' or they did not know.
- Some Group Executives told us the OEH Policy of requiring their members to reside within the group's geographic boundary and not readily granting new licences in areas where existing groups already operate is impacting volunteer numbers in certain areas and affecting service delivery.
- We were told the negative effect of the current Policy is most prevalent in areas where a single group operates, and internal conflict is impacting volunteer retention and morale.
- However, other groups told us that permitting members to reside outside a group's boundary and granting new licences without some form of policy constraint will adversely fragment the sector and make existing groups less viable and identifiable in their local communities.

If groups are fragmented, it is unclear how the interaction with the public will be managed. Who will the public call, and how will the calls be managed.

(Group Executive)

## **5.6 Record keeping and reporting outcomes**

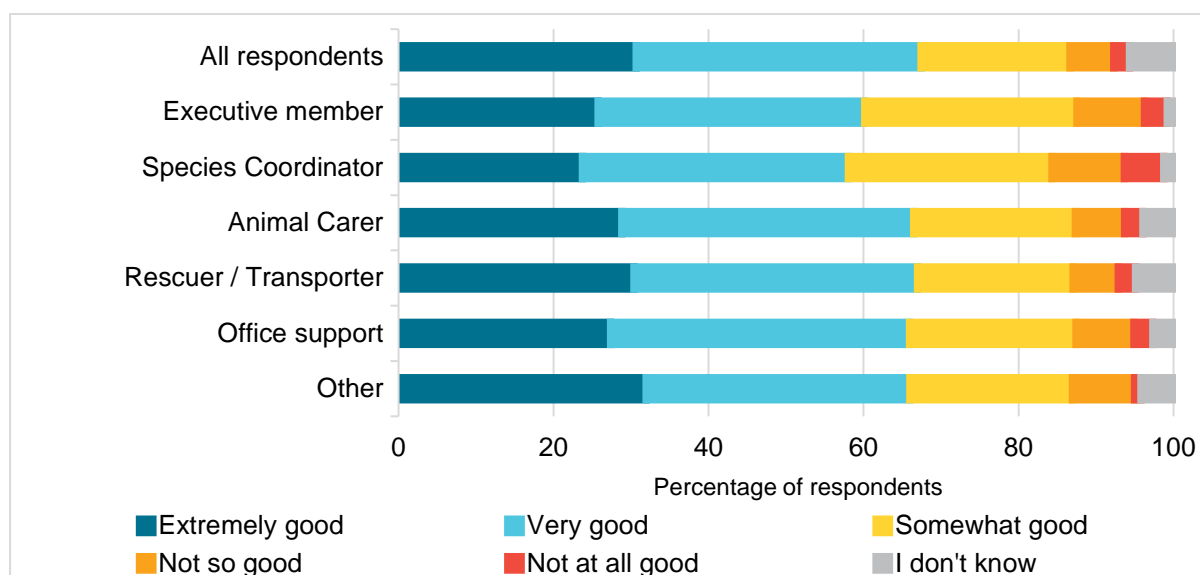
We assessed how well wildlife rehabilitation providers maintain records as required under their licence and code of practice. We also asked about the report templates OEH asks the sector to complete each year.

Most wildlife rehabilitation providers have in place an animal record keeping system that maintains data integrity from point of rescue to fate. There were variations in data quality and some providers are behind in their reporting obligations.

### **We asked wildlife rehabilitation groups about their processes for collecting and maintaining data for OEH and compared their responses to the volunteers**

Our aim was to assess the commitment of groups to keeping records and the integrity of the systems they have put into place.

- 9/10 was the median score Group Executives gave their record keeping management.
- Nearly 68% of all respondents to our survey said their group's record keeping was 'Very' to 'Extremely' good; about 20% said 'Somewhat good' and 8% 'Not so good' to 'Not good at all'; 6% said they did not know (Figure 26).
- Species Coordinators were less positive with only 58% stating their group's record keeping was at least 'Very' good.



**Figure 26 Percentage responses to 'How good is your group at animal record keeping?'**  
 (Survey responses: All respondents 740, Executive member 241, Species Coordinator 236, Animal Carer 632, Rescuer / Transporter 672, Office support 373)

**We found examples of good practice by wildlife rehabilitation providers in their commitment to record keeping**

- They had a constitution that recognises the importance of collecting data about the animals they rescue and advocating its value and use for management and research purposes.
- Their policy and procedures included specific reference to OEH reporting requirements.
- An identified person(s) was responsible for coordinating and overseeing data compilation and quality.
- Their membership form and/or code of ethics explicitly states members' obligations in record keeping.
- They had a training program that incorporates and assesses competency against OEH reporting requirements.
- They collated data on their website and/or in their newsletters that communicates the number and nature of rescues undertaken to their members and the community.

**We also found examples of record keeping systems which support strong data integrity from time of initial rescue call to animal fate**

- There was a web-based data reporting tool that is closely aligned with OEH data capture requirements and is integrated within the group's phone system.

- OEH report templates were placed on a file sharing service such as Dropbox and were made available to all members at the same time.
- A backup of data was done periodically in case it is corrupted or lost.

**Providers less able to do this were at least able to show:**

- They had a data capture process that was efficient, consistently applied by members, and capable of identifying and tracking the transfer of each animal.
- Their animal record forms closely matched OEH requirements.
- Records were subject to periodic internal review by Species Coordinators or senior members to verify accuracy.

**Poor examples of record keeping were those providers who:**

- created data collection sheets in non-OEH format
- had their Animal Carers submit report forms in paper format to a third person at the end of each year without oversight by a species or animal coordinator
- required the third person to reinterpret the data and transcribe it into the OEH template
- reported high numbers of volunteers who did not submit reports.

I love helping out in our local group as an IT person. As well as being part of the management committee I also help with the records system and maintaining the website and keeping members in touch with electronic notifications of important information through Mailchimp. (Wildlife rehabilitator)

**We undertook an audit of the reports lodged with OEH over a four-year period from 2013–14 to 2016–17**

We found that most wildlife rehabilitation providers complied with their reporting obligations. For example, in 2016–17, 93% of wildlife rehabilitation groups and 88% of individual licence holders submitted reports. However, there are a small number of groups who have failed to comply with this requirement for two or more consecutive years.

**We assessed the content of data submitted by wildlife rehabilitation providers in terms of how well it complied with the format provided in the standard OEH templates**

We found some marked variability in how data fields were interpreted by wildlife rehabilitation providers. These problems have had an impact on data quality and the compilation of NSW data for use by other wildlife professionals.

Common issues included:

- lack of consistency with the use of species names and inability to specifically report on most threatened species
- variations and overlaps in the interpretation of key report fields such as 'Encounter Type' which is impacting our understanding of the cause of animals coming into rehabilitation
- high volumes of 'unknown' and 'unclassified' encounters and fates, also affecting our ability to report on cause of encounter; for example, nearly 60% of records submitted since 2010 could not be attributed to an encounter type (OEH unpublished data)
- multiple individuals listed as one entry
- missing data and data in the incorrect format.



Data quality issues are partly due to the templates provided by OEH (see below); however, they also reflect variability in how providers collect, and report rescues and animals coming into care. Greater consistency in data quality is needed across the sector.

### How well is OEH maintaining its record keeping templates?

OEH (NPWS) needs to lead a review of its standards for data collection and reporting protocols for the sector. This will improve data quality and consistency across all providers and improve the usefulness of data for conservation planning purposes.

OEH is responsible for establishing minimum data collection standards across the sector and has outlined these requirements in its code of practice and licence. It also maintains standard report templates and oversees collating and reporting on data trends across the whole sector.

OEH has not reviewed its key 'detailed report' data template (in Excel format) since 2012, which has exacerbated the data quality issues identified above. This has hampered data collation and trend analysis and prevented OEH from providing the sector with feedback about the outcomes of their work across New South Wales.

OEH does not require providers to enter data directly into its OEH Atlas of Wildlife – the whole of government system for wildlife sightings – and is at present partly prevented from doing this by not requiring accurate location data from providers (an exception being marine animal strandings). This has resulted in only minimal data being incorporated into the Atlas of Wildlife, which is limiting its use for environmental assessment, research and conservation purposes.

(NPWS) providing a simplified reporting system that all wildlife groups universally used for collection ...would be a great asset. (Wildlife rehabilitator)

## 6. Review of the OEH Policy

A review of current policy on wildlife rehabilitation services is needed to align with the introduction of accreditation for providers. Proposed amendments should focus on promoting a more effective regional delivery model for services.

OEH has a Rehabilitation of Protected Fauna Policy, which provides the framework for regulation of the sector in New South Wales. The Policy outlines the criteria and process for licensing new providers, how services must be conducted and the role of government in engaging with the sector.

This review and the proposed accreditation of wildlife rehabilitation providers being introduced with the new Biodiversity Conservation Act will necessitate changes to the Policy. Key elements of the Policy and recommendations for change, if any, are provided below for comment by the sector (Table 6).

**Table 6 Proposed changes to the OEH Rehabilitation of Protected Fauna Policy**

Policy element	Recommendation
The licence	Regulation of wildlife rehabilitation providers will transition from a licence to a system of accreditation. Existing licence conditions will be reviewed and form part of the ongoing conditions of accreditation.
Licence issue	The current 'call for applications' process should be retained. It provides for a clear and transparent process for prospective wildlife rehabilitation groups to seek accreditation in an area vacated by an existing group.
New licence criteria	Current licence application criteria will be replaced by accreditation criteria.
Granting new licences in areas already occupied by a group	<p>The principle of not granting a new group access to geographic areas already occupied by an existing home-based group should be retained in the medium term until the recommendations in this report around standardisation and capacity building have been implemented. This is to ensure that groups retain their local community profile and do not splinter and compete for finite resources.</p> <p>Greater flexibility around which group a person can join was not identified as a high priority for the sector (<u>Section 5.5</u>); however, it is apparent that in some areas occupied by a single group there are challenges with service delivery. It will be a requirement of accreditation that groups use their best endeavours to guarantee certain services to the community, otherwise they risk losing accreditation.</p> <p>We acknowledge that in some single group areas there are ongoing governance issues impacting members. These will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis in the short to medium term.</p> <p>The boundaries of groups will also be reviewed to ensure they are commensurate with current mail, local government and/or NPWS administrative location descriptions.</p>
Approval for central facilities or wildlife hospitals	<p>In-principle support is given however for new or existing providers who operate from a central facility and who can provide services for specialist species. This could include existing facilities licensed by DPI under the <u>Exhibited Animals Protection Act</u>.</p> <p>Expertise provided by these facilities can augment and complement current resources and lead to an easing of pressure on other providers.</p>

Policy element	Recommendation
Restriction on where members of groups can reside	<p>Providers are not restricted on where they can rescue; however, members must reside within the geographic boundary of their group, unless there is an MOU in place with a surrounding group.</p> <p>The principle of maintaining core membership within a group's geographic area should be retained; however, the existing terms of the MOU and the reluctance of some groups to enter MOUs has restricted the potential for stronger regional partnerships between providers.</p> <p>The current Policy should change to allow up to 20% of a group's members to reside outside their geographic boundary in an adjacent unoccupied or occupied area without requiring an MOU to be in place. Future accreditation will require the Executive Committee of each group to monitor and document training and compliance records of these members and flag them on their membership list.</p> <p>The geographic area of operation of providers should be amended to follow standard government administrative boundaries. Some existing boundaries are overly complex or are poorly defined.</p>
Memorandums of understanding	<p>MOUs should continue to be pursued by providers as they show a strong willingness to cooperate with surrounding groups; however, the terms of MOUs should be expanded to encompass stronger regional delivery of services and sharing of resources. Individual licence holders can be included within the scope of an MOU.</p> <p>Groups with MOUs will be supported by OEH in grant and sponsorship applications.</p>
Licensing individual wildlife rehabilitators	<p>The principle of granting approval to individual wildlife rehabilitators to operate only in unserved geographic areas should be retained. Existing licence holders will be required to apply for accreditation.</p> <p>It is proposed to permit individual licence holders to include their partner on the licence, if that person lives at the same address and they can demonstrate they are competent to perform their role.</p>
Approval for facilities already licensed by DPI	<p>Retain existing Policy requirements permitting approval.</p>
Animal care and release	<p>Compliance with government standards for the care of animals will be a requirement of accreditation.</p>
'Unreleasable' native animals	<p>Criteria for keeping of permanent care animals, particularly rules around ballot requirements, will be reviewed to ensure current procedures are clear, transparent and pragmatic.</p>
'Dispute management'	<p>The principle of OEH not mediating in disputes related to internal management should be retained. OEH will require groups to have in place systems for managing disputes as part of their accreditation. OEH and the peak body will help to give leaders of groups more capability to manage disputes. OEH will seek advice from the NSW Ombudsman about best practice procedures for fairly and equitably responding to conflict within and between groups.</p>
Compliance inspections	<p>Replace the requirement for triennial regional assessment of services and audits with a program of randomly targeted compliance inspections.</p>

## Appendices

### Appendix A List of wildlife rehabilitation providers in New South Wales

	Name	Type of operation	Number of members#	Area of coverage (km <sup>2</sup> )
✓	Australian Seabird Rescue	Facility (Ballina) Home-based branches	125	Coastal NSW
	Cabramatta Creek Flying-Fox Committee	Home-based (majority rescue)	4*	N/A
✓	Dolphin Marine Magic	Facility (Joint DPI/OEH licence)	N/A	N/A
✓	For Australian Wildlife Needing Aid – FAWNA	Home-based	193	17,462
✓	Friends of Koala	Facility/some home-based	83	11,083
✓	John Morony Correctional Centre	Facility	N/A	N/A
	Kangaroo Protection Cooperative	Facility	3	1,655
✓	Koala Preservation Society	Facility/some home-based (Joint DPI/NPWS licence)	22	N/A
✓	Koalas in Care	Home-based	3	8,459
	Ku-ring-gai Bat Conservation Society	Facility	6	N/A
✓	Looking after our Kosciuszko Orphans LAOKO	Home-based	59	13,153
✓	Native Animal Rescue Group-NARG##	Home-based	31	1,032
✓	Native Animal Trust Fund-NATF	Home-based	192	3,266
✓	Northern Rivers Wildlife Carers###	Home-based	130	9,607
✓	Northern Tablelands Wildlife Carers	Home-based	46	52,021
✓	ORRCA – Marine Mammal Rescue and Research	(marine rescue only)	443	Coastal NSW
✓	Port Stephens Koalas	Home-based	33	176
✓	Rescue & Rehabilitation of Australian Native Animals – RRANA	Home-based	15	144,849
✓	Saving Our Native Animals – SONA	Home-based	35	4,810

Name	Type of operation	Number of members#	Area of coverage (km <sup>2</sup> )
Sea World	Facility (Joint DPI/OEH licence)	N/A	N/A
Sunraysia Wildlife Carers	Home-based	12	47,723
✓ Sydney Metropolitan Wildlife Services	Home-based	429	5,662
Taronga Conservation Society and Western Plains Zoo	Facility (Joint DPI/OEH licence)	N/A	N/A
✓ Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers	Home-based	59	1,475
✓ Wildcare Queanbeyan##	Home-based	329	20,280
✓ Wildlife Aid	Home-based	65	16,368
✓ Wildlife Animal Rescue and Care Society	Home-based	163	1,846
✓ Wildlife Carers Central West	Home-based	37	22,630
✓ Wildlife in Need of Care	Home-based	140	2,457
Wildlife Information and Rescue Service	Home-based	2,613	509,403
✓ Wildlife Rescue South Coast	Home-based	287	28,462
✓ Individual licence holders (all combined)	Home-based	18	N/A
<b>Total</b>		<b>5,571</b>	

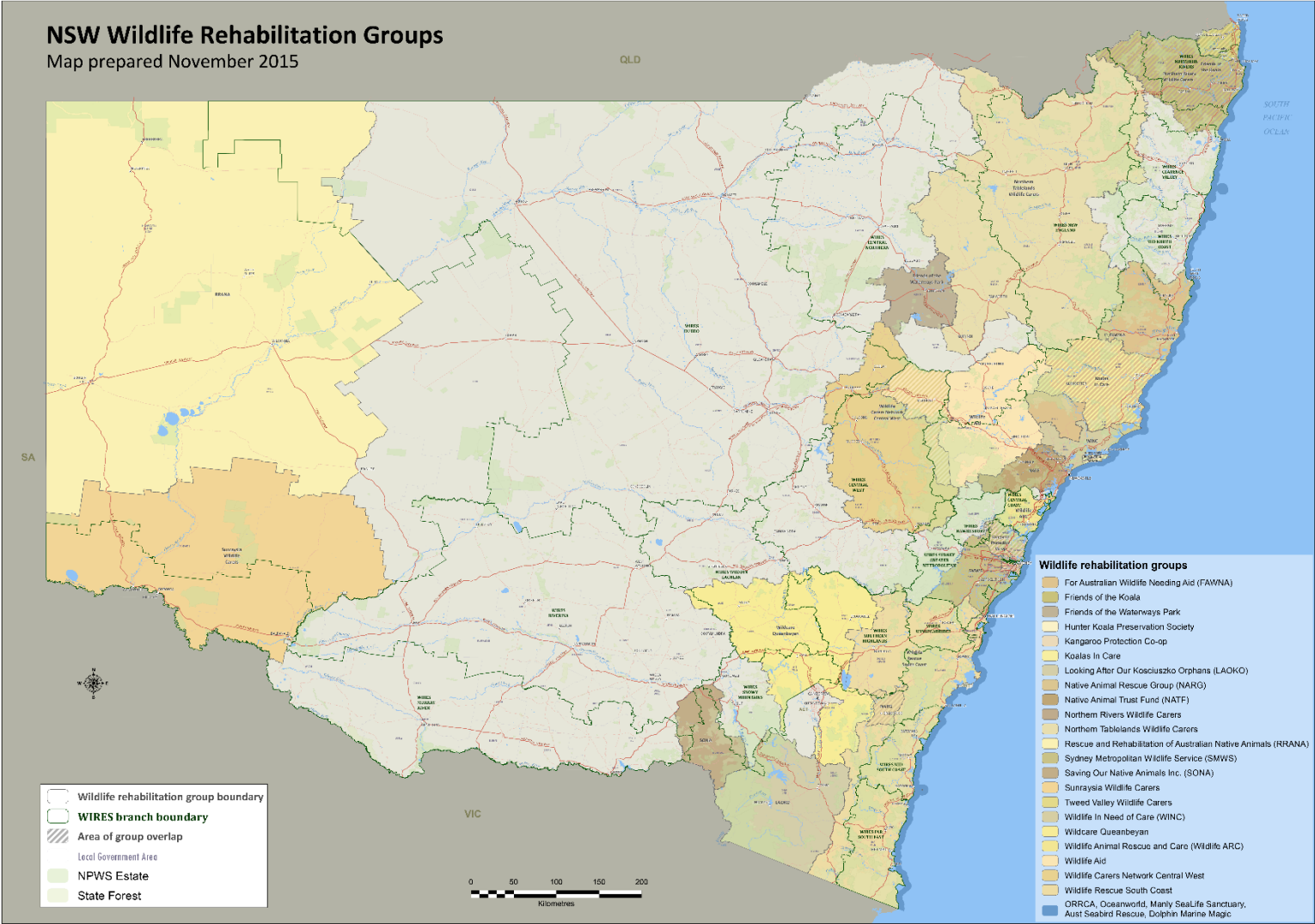
✓ Member of the peak body

# Approximate group member numbers derived from the membership list provided by most groups to 2017 (except Sunraysia, SONA, LAOKO 2018)

## Groups with members from other states

N/A No defined area of operation

# Appendix B Geographic areas of operation of wildlife rehabilitation groups





## Appendix C Regulation of wildlife rehabilitation in other states

Information about how wildlife rehabilitation is regulated in other states is provided here and presented in summary form in **Table C.1** below.

- **Western Australia (WA):** Anyone can rescue and rehabilitate wildlife in this state without a permit.

The Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPW) has an approval process for individual rehabilitators who wish to be acknowledged as Parks and Wildlife 'Approved Registered Rehabilitators'. Individual rehabilitators are offered training by DPW and are subject to a property inspection to ensure they meet the Standards for Wildlife Rehabilitation in WA. Individual rehabilitators can operate from their home or from a centre. Some individuals have collaborated and formed groups, some of which are registered with the department.

DPW provides a telephone referral service called the Wildcare Helpline, which is operated by volunteers and provides advice to the community about injured and displaced wildlife, stranded whales and dolphins, and cane toad sightings. Where relevant, callers are put in touch with their nearest registered wildlife rehabilitator.

- **South Australia (SA):** Anyone can rescue without a permit but may require one if the animal is unlikely to be released again. The class of permit depends on what type of species is being held. Animals are required to be kept in accordance with the provisions of the National Parks and Wildlife Regulations 2001 and species specific guidelines.

SA has mostly individual wildlife rehabilitators. A few groups exist, however all people who hold protected fauna must possess a permit even if they belong to a group. The RSPCA plays a more active role in native fauna rescue and undertakes limited compliance checks of people who hold wildlife.

- **Victoria:** Only a Wildlife Shelter Operator or Foster Carer authorised by the Victorian government (DELWP) can acquire and care for sick, injured and orphaned native animals.

Wildlife shelter operators are experienced wildlife rehabilitators who have the expertise and facilities to house a range of wildlife species. Prospective shelter operators must provide details of their experience and training, name of local veterinarian and species they intend to care for to DELWP (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning).

Foster Carers are inexperienced rehabilitators who are authorised under a Wildlife Shelter so they can be mentored and supervised. A Shelter Operator can have a maximum of three foster carers at any given time.

Both Shelter Operators and Foster Carers are required to comply with minimum standards of care. Also, shelter operators must maintain records in a prescribed format, but are not required to submit them. However, DELWP must be advised of any threatened species within 48 hours of their acquisition.

Wildlife Victoria Inc. is an organisation independent of government that gives advice about wildlife to the community and offers a rescue service for native animals. The organisation operates a single phone number hotline and provides training and support

to their extensive network of volunteers. Rescued animals are taken to a vet or Wildlife Shelter Operator.

- DELWP operates a Wildlife Rehabilitator Grants Scheme that provides financial support to Wildlife Shelter Operators and Foster Carers with two or more years' experience. The \$170,000 scheme provides individual grants of up to \$2000 for personal protective clothing, equipment for rescue, training and education, consumables, veterinary care and veterinary supplies.
- **Queensland:** A rehabilitation permit is required to rehabilitate and release sick and injured animals. Permits can be issued to groups and individuals and some individuals have their own permit and belong to groups. There are about 50 groups and 2000 volunteers participating in wildlife rehabilitation. All are required to comply with minimum standards outlined in the Queensland Government's Code of Practice.

The Queensland Government has funded Queensland RSPCA to support wildlife rescue and rehabilitation. They operate a 24-hour single phone number hotline, a wildlife ambulance service and admit wildlife into their Brisbane Wildlife Hospital. The RSPCA also have a wildlife hero program which provides supplementary rescue services. Wildlife rehabilitation in Queensland is also supported by highly regarded facilities such as Currumbin Wildlife Hospital.

- **Tasmania:** Permits are issued by the Tasmanian Government (DPIPWE) to a wildlife rehabilitator each time an animal comes into care. This is to monitor housing capacity of the rehabilitator and ensure they have the appropriate experience to care for that species. Some species are exempt from permit requirements. A record sheet is sent out with a permit and required to be returned once the fate of the animal is known.

Prospective wildlife rehabilitators are required to do a course before they are permitted to care for wildlife. There are no prescribed minimum standards, but DPIPWE do provide General requirements for the care and rehabilitation of injured and orphaned wildlife in Tasmania.

**Table C.1 A summary of the regulatory systems for wildlife rehabilitation across all Australian states**

	NSW	QLD	VIC	SA	WA	TAS
<b>Is native wildlife rehabilitation regulated by government?</b>	Yes Licensing to be replaced by a system of accreditation	Yes Licensing system	Yes Authorisation system	Yes Hold and release permit required for each animal (basic class) Required to hand specialist species to a specialist permit holder	No licences Approval process in place for providers seeking to be acknowledged as government approved	Yes A separate permit is issued for each animal
<b>Who is regulated?</b>	Groups (min. size 20) Individuals	Groups (>2) Individuals	Wildlife Shelters (experienced wildlife carers) Foster Carers (less experienced – max. 3/shelter)	Individuals One or two groups exist, but all individuals require a licence	Individuals One or two groups exist, but individuals require a licence	Individuals
<b>Training</b>	Responsibility of licensee	Responsibility of licensee RSPCA provides rescue training	Responsibility of licensee Wildlife Vic Inc. provides training for rescue	Responsibility of licensee	Government offers introductory training based on codes of practice	Responsibility of licensee
<b>How are new applications assessed?</b>	Assessed in accordance with Policy	Application form excludes people with past wildlife offences RSPCA and Rangers inspect premises	Demonstrate training or experience	Appropriate experience Appropriate facilities	Government will/may conduct premise inspection of 'approved' rehabilitator	People are given info and advised to do a course New people are assigned an experienced mentor
<b>Codes of practice/standards/guidelines</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No, guidance material only

	NSW	QLD	VIC	SA	WA	TAS
<b>Are the boundaries of rehab groups defined?</b>	Yes, each group can only authorise carers in a defined area They can rescue anywhere	No	No	No	No	N/A
<b>Are species listed on the licence?</b>	Yes, species type	Yes	Certain species are not covered by authorisation	Yes	Only registered providers can keep threatened species	Yes, one permit per animal
<b>How are disputes within/ between groups managed?</b>	Mediate disputes within groups NPWS occasionally gets involved	No involvement	No involvement	No involvement	No involvement	N/A there are no groups
<b>What reporting requirements are placed on the licence?</b>	Summary of animals collected and released Provision of detailed encounter template Provision of membership list, permanent care animals	Advised to keep records but not to submit	Specified on authorisation Must keep records but not required to submit Threatened species to be reported	Must submit annual return	Threatened species are reported	A record sheet is sent out for each animal It is returned on death/ release
<b>Are there policies on acceptable release locations?</b>	Near encounter site If in NP, then apply translocation policy	Appropriate habitat close to encounter site (5 km) Some flexibility depending on species	Suitable habitat in general vicinity Relocation not permitted if poses a risk to wild populations	Need separate permit if not authorised in rescue permit At rescue site (1 km) No hand-reared orphans can be released	Go back to place of capture Some exceptions, e.g. macropods	Near encounter site List of conditions in general requirements

	NSW	QLD	VIC	SA	WA	TAS
<b>What are the circumstances under which wildlife may be held permanently?</b>	Companion animal Education Research	Ranger decides No companion or education clauses No macropods, maybe common birds	Licence provides for euthanasia or release Case-by-case basis only	Captive escapees, unreleasable due to injury or imprinting & origin unknown Most wildlife is retained; you require a permit	Wildlife officer checks animal and facilities before permanent care allowed	Case-by-case basis
<b>RSPCA involvement</b>	Enforce animal welfare legislation Some veterinary assistance	RSPCA and wildlife hospitals, e.g. Currumbin	Minimal RSPCA involvement	RSPCA will rescue animals (do 5–10%) They also check permits	None	None
<b>How is human health addressed?</b>	Vaccination and treatment at carer's expense	Follow advice of healthcare professionals Bat carers must have vaccines	No mandatory requirements	Require lyssa vaccine for bat work	Require lyssa vaccine for bat work	Advice only
<b>Peak body</b>	Yes NSW Wildlife Council	Yes Qld Wildlife Rehabilitation Council	Yes Victorian Wildlife Council	No	Yes West Australian Wildlife Rehabilitation Council	Yes Tasmanian Wildlife Rehabilitation Council

## Appendix D Volunteer survey: demographics of the sector

Data supporting the survey findings in [Section 2.2](#).

**Table D.1 Percentage responses to ‘What is your gender?’ (n=970)**

Response	% of respondents
Female	79%
Male	21%
Indeterminate / Intersex / Unspecified	1%

**Table D.2 Percentage responses to ‘What is your age?’ (n=970)**

Response	% of respondents
18–30 years	11%
31–50 years	30%
51–65 years	37%
Over 65 years	20%
Under 18 years	0.3%
Prefer not to say	1%

**Table D.3 Percentage responses to ‘Which of the following best suits your employment status?’ (n=948)**

Response	% of respondents
Work full-time	29%
Work part-time	19%
Self-funded retiree	17%
I receive the aged pension	10%
I receive other Centrelink benefits	9%
Other*	8%
Student	5%
Unemployed (without Centrelink benefits)	4%

\* Includes self-employed, those who didn't indicate work hours or income source (e.g. retired, not working, carers, veterans), 'domestic workers', casual workers, those for whom more than one of the above options are relevant (e.g. student + work part-time, work part-time + Centrelink benefits, etc.).



**Table D.4 Percentage responses to ‘What is the highest level of education you completed?’** (n=953)

Response	% of respondents
Diploma / Degree / Doctorate	58%
Vocational qualification (e.g. trade certificate)	17%
Year 12 or equivalent (e.g. higher school certificate)	10%
Year 10 or equivalent (e.g. leaving certificate, school certificate)	11%
None of the above	2%

**Table D.5 Percentage responses to ‘What is your approximate annual income?’** (n=839)

Response	% of respondents
\$0–\$24,999	33%
\$25,000–\$49,999	27%
\$50,000–\$74,999	19%
\$75,000–\$99,999	8%
\$100,000–\$124,999	6%
\$125,000–\$149,999	3%
\$150,000 and up	4%

**Table D.6 Percentage responses to ‘Which of these best describes your household?’** (n=924)

Response	% of respondents
I live with my partner	45%
I live with my family, including my dependent(s)	21%
I live by myself	17%
I live with my family, but none of them are dependent on me	12%
I live with other people (e.g. friends, flatmates)	5%

**Table D.7 Percentage responses to ‘Do you rent or own the place where you live?’** (n=919)

Response	% of respondents
Own	75%
Rent	20%
Neither*	5%

**Table D.8 Percentage responses to ‘How many years have you volunteered in the sector?’**

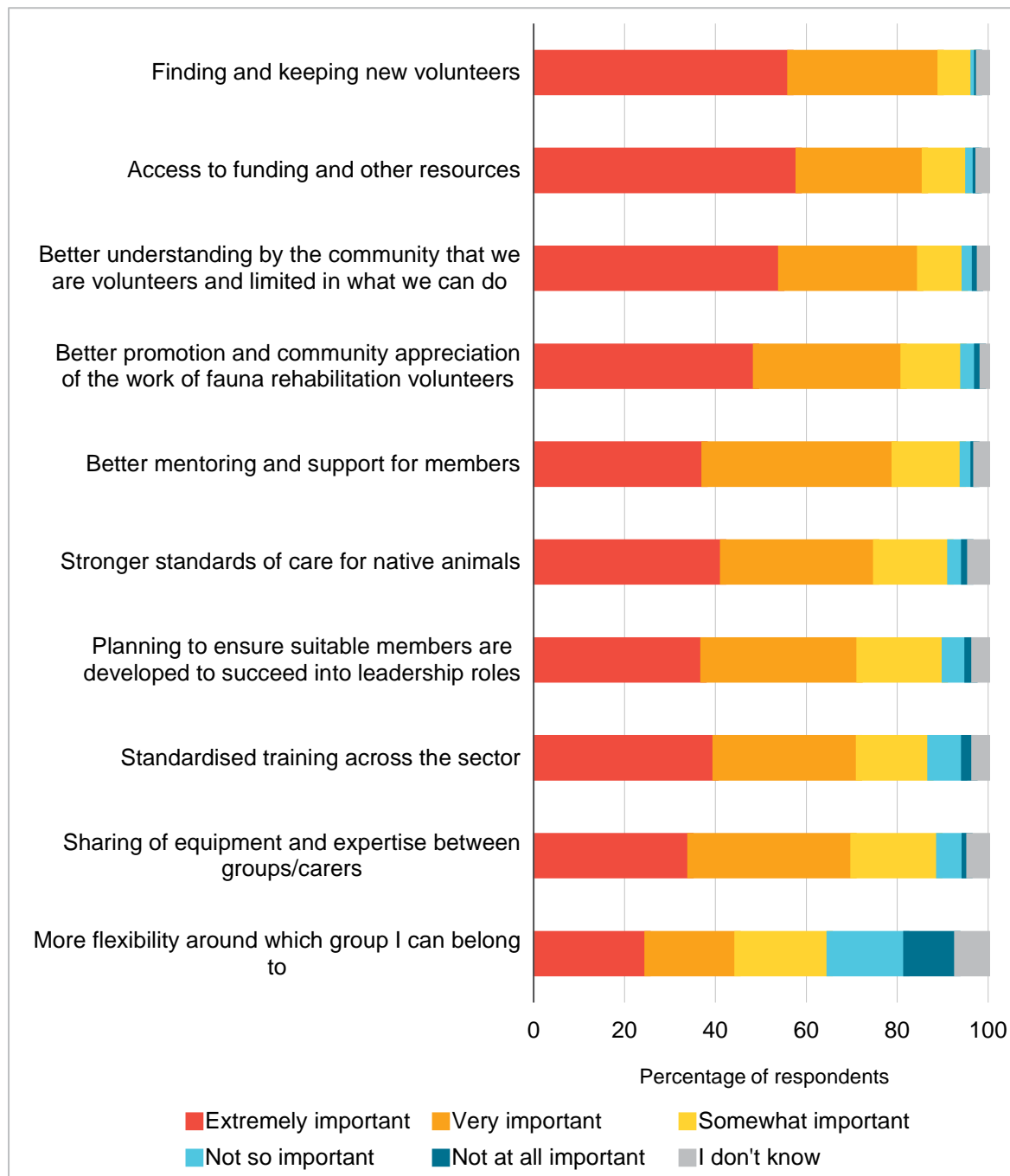
	Years		
	Group members (n=776)	Individual licensees (n=17)	All (n=906)
Range	0 to 65	5 to 54	0 to 65
Average	8	30	9
Median	6	29	6

**Table D.9 Percentage responses to ‘About how long have you been a member of your main group?’ (n=777)**

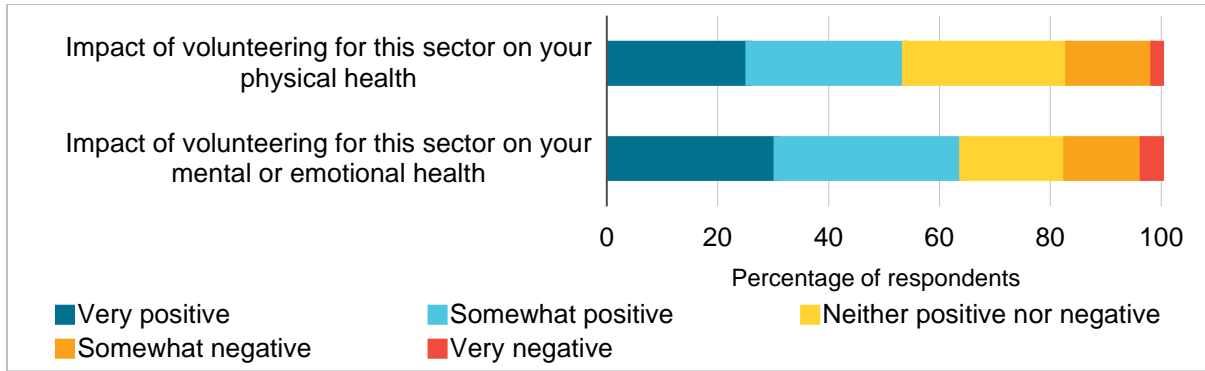
	Length of membership
Range	0 to 45 years
Average	6 years, 11 months
Median	4 years, 6 months

## Appendix E Volunteer survey – issues and challenges

Data supporting the report findings provided in [Section 2.5](#).



**Figure E.1** Percentage responses to ‘How important are the following to you in relation to future directions for fauna rehabilitation?’ (approx. n=662)



**Figure E.2** Percentage responses to 'Does volunteering for this sector have a positive or negative effect on your physical and mental/emotional health?' (n=645)

## Appendix F Number of native animals encountered by the sector

Summary data provided by wildlife rehabilitation providers from 2000–01 to 2016–17 reporting years supporting the survey findings in [Section 3.2](#). A reporting year is the same as a financial year.

**Table F.1 Number of animals reported ‘rescued/collected’ by wildlife rehabilitation providers from 2000–2017\***

Year	Mammals	Birds	Reptiles	Frogs	Totals
2016–17	37,889	60,004	15,963	162	114,018
2015–16	33,324	59,932	16,374	138	109,768
2014–15	27,988	52,063	12,781	71	92,903
2013–14	31,055	54,600	13,579	172	99,406
2012–13	28,818	42,740	15,804	118	87,480
2011–12	26,293	40,391	12,092	93	78,869
2010–11	26,925	48,750	12,513	165	88,353
2009–10	22,698	42,188	11,536	310	76,732
2008–09	21,991	37,552	11,126	184	70,853
2006–07	8,376	8,214	2,390	34	19,014
2005–06	10,202	18,914	3,779	65	32,960
2004–05	9,115	13,738	3,345	64	26,262
2003–04	6,305	11,147	2,355	56	19,863
2002–03	12,175	19,343	4,562	64	36,144
2001–02	6,740	12,787	3,031	109	22,667
2000–01	12,078	23,383	8,031	171	43,663
<b>Totals</b>	<b>321,972</b>	<b>545,746</b>	<b>149,261</b>	<b>1,976</b>	<b>1,018,955</b>
Average	20,123	34,109	9,329	124	63,685

\* Figures for 2007–08 are not available.

**Table F.2 Number of animals reported 'released' by wildlife rehabilitation providers from 2000–2017\***

Year	Mammals	Birds	Reptiles	Frogs	Totals
2016–17	9,444	17,651	6,553	46	33,694
2015–16	7,996	16,544	6,404	47	30,991
2014–15	7,264	15,136	5,488	22	27,910
2013–14	8,200	15,497	5,737	93	29,527
2012–13	6,418	10,454	5,091	27	21,990
2011–12	6,066	9,904	4,384	33	20,387
2010–11	9,110	18,090	6,896	71	34,167
2009–10	6,175	14,378	5,597	214	26,364
2008–09	8,285	16,327	7,641	91	32,344
2006–07	2,521	4,148	1,669	11	8,349
2005–06	4,151	7,239	2,548	32	13,970
2004–05	2,213	5,548	1,677	26	9,464
2003–04	2,588	5,678	1,738	34	10,038
2002–03	3,961	6,730	1,609	28	12,328
2001–02	2,994	6,893	2,232	25	12,144
2000–01	4,662	9,671	5,463	41	19,837
<b>Totals</b>	<b>92,048</b>	<b>179,888</b>	<b>70,727</b>	<b>841</b>	<b>343,504</b>
Average	5,753	11,243	4,420	53	21,469

\* Figures for 2007–08 are not available.



**Table F.3 Proportion of animals reported released post rehabilitation from 2000–2017\***

Year	Mammals	Birds	Reptiles	Frogs
2016–17	0.25	0.29	0.41	0.28
2015–16	0.24	0.28	0.39	0.34
2014–15	0.26	0.29	0.43	0.31
2013–14	0.26	0.28	0.42	0.54
2012–13	0.22	0.24	0.32	0.23
2011–12	0.23	0.25	0.36	0.35
2010–11	0.34	0.37	0.55	0.43
2009–10	0.27	0.34	0.49	0.69
2008–09	0.38	0.43	0.69	0.49
2006–07	0.30	0.50	0.70	0.32
2005–06	0.41	0.38	0.67	0.49
2004–05	0.24	0.40	0.50	0.41
2003–04	0.41	0.51	0.74	0.61
2002–03	0.33	0.35	0.35	0.44
2001–02	0.44	0.54	0.74	0.23
2000–01	0.39	0.41	0.68	0.24

\* Figures for 2007–08 are not available.

## Appendix G Volunteer survey – contribution of the sector

Data supporting the report findings provided in [Chapter 3](#).

**Table G.1 How much do respondents report investing into their volunteer work in the wildlife rehabilitation sector?**

	Average	Median	Total	Number of respondents
Volunteering hours in past 12 months	898	365	755,754	842
Value* of volunteering time in past 12 months (\$)	28,736	11,680	24,184,128	
Expenditure (\$) in past 12 months	3,123	500	2,626,572	841
Total value* of volunteer input in past 12 months (\$)	31,866	12,900	26,799,020	841
Total expenditure by volunteers (\$)	24,030	3000	20,137,449	838
Total years volunteering			7,983	

\* Value of volunteer time based on hourly rate of \$32 which is a Consumer Price Index (CPI)-adjusted version of a 2010 rate provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

**Table G.2 Responses by role to ‘Over the past 12 months, around how much of your own money, in total, did you spend on your volunteer work for this sector?’**

Current role	Expenditure (\$) in past 12 months					Number of respondents
	Range	Range (one role only)	Average	Median	Total	
Executive Member	0 to 20,000	40 to 10,000 (n=4)	2,825	1,550	384,145	136
Species Coordinator	0 to 20,000	35 (n=1)	3,399	2,000	526,910	155
Animal Carer	0 to 800,000	0 to 24,000 (n=33)	4,010	1,000	2,345,976	585
Rescuer / Transporter	0 to 800,000	0 to 2,000 (n=55)	3,663	700	2,314,976	632
Office support	0 to 30,000	0 to 480 (n=8)	1,000	2,512	597,890	238

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Current role	Expenditure (\$) in past 12 months					Number of respondents
	Range	Range (one role only)	Average	Median	Total	
Other	0 to 200,000	0 to 1,000 (n=17)	1,000	3,422	667,225	195

## Appendix H Veterinary professionals survey results

Data supporting the report findings provided in [Section 4.3](#).

**Table H.1 Percentage responses to ‘How useful was your veterinary science course at teaching the following skills in relation to free-living native animals?’ (n=72)**

Skill	Extremely good	Very good	Somewhat good	Not so good	Not at all good	I don't know / can't remember
Identification	8%	7%	24%	31%	28%	3%
Handling	10%	6%	32%	25%	25%	3%
Understanding biology, diet and behaviour	14%	17%	25%	26%	15%	3%
Recognising common injuries and diseases	13%	21%	29%	19%	15%	3%
Performing first aid and initial treatment	24%	17%	36%	10%	13%	1%
Performing complex surgery	14%	10%	19%	28%	26%	3%
Knowing when it is appropriate to release an animal back to the wild	10%	8%	35%	21%	24%	3%
Knowing when and how to euthanase a sick or injured animal	25%	26%	26%	13%	8%	1%
Knowing when dependent young have a reasonable chance of survival in rehabilitation	8%	11%	25%	18%	35%	3%
<b>Average</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Median</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>3%</b>

**Table H.2 Percentage responses to ‘How important (veterinarians only) is it for veterinary professionals to have the following skills in relation to free-living native animals?’ (n=72)**

Skill	Extremely important	Very important	Somewhat important	Not so important	Not at all important
Identification	23%	43%	34%	0%	0%
Handling	41%	44%	14%	0%	0%
Understanding biology, diet and behaviour	21%	47%	29%	3%	0%
Recognising common injuries and diseases	39%	54%	7%	0%	0%
Performing first aid and initial treatment	59%	31%	10%	0%	0%
Performing complex surgery	9%	11%	47%	30%	3%
Knowing when it is appropriate to release an animal back to the wild	36%	41%	17%	4%	1%
Knowing when and how to euthanase a sick or injured animal	67%	30%	3%	0%	0%
Knowing when dependent young have a reasonable chance of survival in rehabilitation	37%	47%	14%	0%	1%
<b>Average</b>	37%	39%	20%	4%	1%
<b>Median</b>	37%	43%	14%	0%	0%

**Table H.3 Percentage responses to ‘How useful was the course you (vet nurses only) selected above at teaching the following skills in relation to free-living native animals?’ (n=59)**

Skill	Extremely good	Very good	Somewhat good	Not so good	Not at all good	I don't know / can't remember
Identification	3%	5%	29%	31%	31%	2%
Handling	3%	20%	29%	17%	27%	3%
Understanding biology, diet and behaviour	5%	14%	34%	25%	20%	2%
Recognising common injuries and diseases	5%	17%	32%	20%	24%	2%
Performing first aid and initial treatment	8%	17%	42%	17%	14%	2%
Performing complex surgery	3%	8%	14%	19%	54%	2%
Knowing when it is appropriate to release an animal back to the wild	2%	10%	19%	31%	37%	2%
Knowing when and how to euthanase a sick or injured animal	14%	12%	29%	20%	24%	2%
Knowing when dependent young have a reasonable chance of survival in rehabilitation	2%	7%	29%	29%	32%	2%
<b>Average</b>	5%	12%	28%	23%	29%	2%
<b>Median</b>	3%	12%	29%	20%	27%	2%



**Table H.4 Percentage responses to ‘Have you attended any professional development activities relating to free-living native animals (assessment, treatment, rehabilitation, etc.), such as seminars, conferences, or short courses?’**

Role	Yes	No	Number of respondents
Veterinarian	53%	47%	70
Veterinary nurse	32%	68%	56
Veterinary student	100%	0%	2
Other (please specify)	29%	71%	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>135</b>

**Table H.5 Percentage responses to ‘Around what percentage of free-living native animals are brought into your practice by each of the following?’ (n=67\*)**

Answer choice	Average	Median
Volunteer wildlife rehabilitators	29	20
General public	68	80
Other (e.g. vet/zoo staff)	5	0

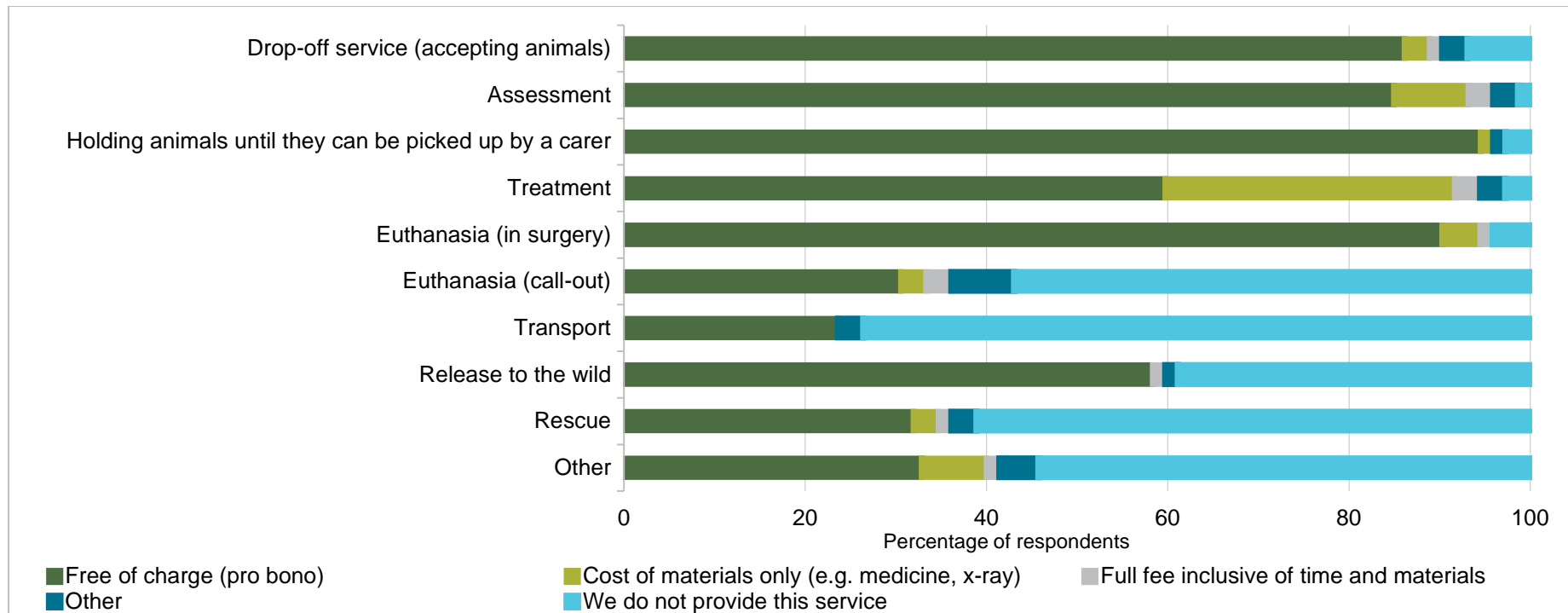
\*Two respondents who said no animals are brought into their practice were excluded from the results.

**Table H.6 Percentage responses to ‘Around how many of each the following types of free-living native animals does your practice deal with per year?’**

Animal type	Range	Average	Median	Total	Number of respondents
Koalas	0 to 30	2	0	132	71
Kangaroos and wallabies	0 to 250	25	5	1,779	70
Wombats	0 to 50	2	0	170	71
Possums and gliders	0 to 400	48	20	3,385	71
Flying-foxes	0 to 200	8	2	567	71
Dangerous reptiles (e.g. venomous snakes)	0 to 100	3	0	246	71

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Animal type	Range	Average	Median	Total	Number of respondents
Other terrestrial reptiles	0 to 250	34	20	2,437	71
Marine mammals and sea turtles	0 to 45	2	0	137	71
Other mammals	0 to 100	8	1	537	70
Raptors (birds of prey)	0 to 50	7	3	474	71
Seabirds and waterbirds	0 to 200	17	5	1,209	71
Other birds	0 to 1000	137	80	9,719	71
Frogs	0 to 24	2	0	119	71
<b>Total number of animals / year</b>	<b>14 to 1496</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>20,911</b>	



**Figure H.1** Percentage responses to ‘What services does your practice provide free-living native animals and how are they usually costing?’ (n=73)

**Table H.7** Percentage responses to ‘What is the estimated total financial value (\$) of all services and products your practice has provided without charge, for free-living native animals over a recent 12-month period (excluding government agencies)?’

	Range	Average	Median	Total	Number of respondents
Expenditure by vet practice in recent 12 months (\$)	0 to 200,000	15,053	5,000	1,038,650	69
Expenditure per animal (\$)	0 to 290	41	29		67

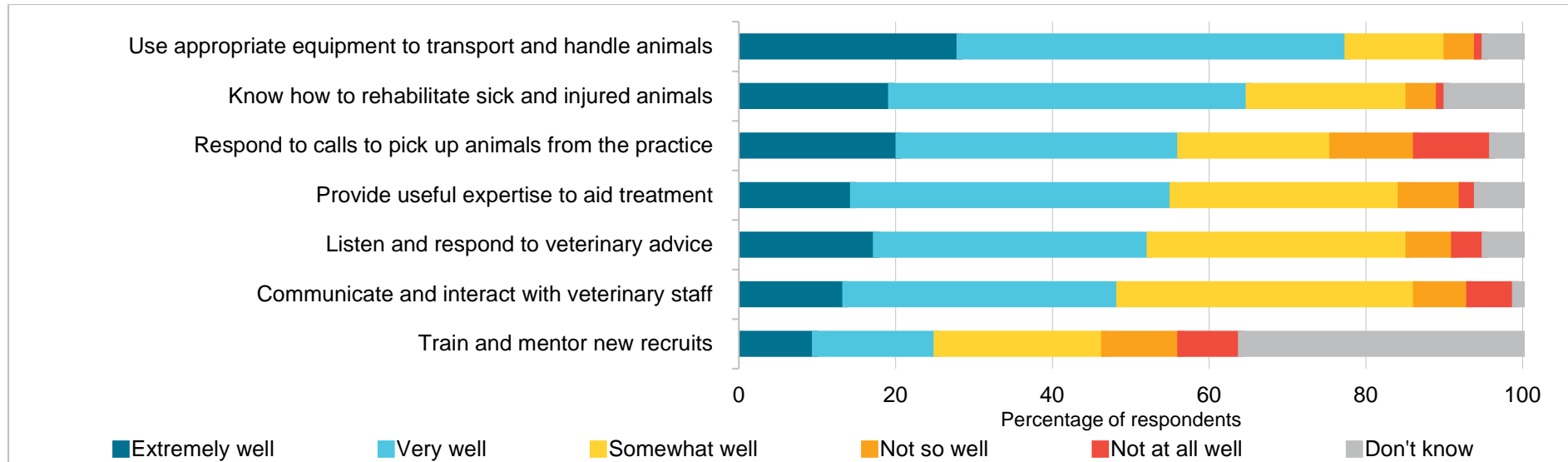


Figure H.2 Percentage responses to ‘How well does this wildlife rehabilitation provider do the following?’ (n=103)

Table H.8 Percentage responses to ‘How well does this wildlife rehabilitation provider do the following?’ (n=103)

	Extremely well	Very well	Somewhat well	Not so well	Not at all well	Don't know
Respond to calls to pick up animals from the practice	20%	36%	19%	11%	10%	4%
Use appropriate equipment to transport and handle animals	28%	50%	13%	4%	1%	5%
Know how to rehabilitate sick and injured animals	19%	46%	20%	4%	1%	10%
Train and mentor new recruits	10%	16%	21%	10%	8%	36%
Provide useful expertise to aid treatment	15%	41%	29%	8%	2%	6%
Listen and respond to veterinary advice	17%	35%	33%	6%	4%	5%
Communicate and interact with veterinary staff	14%	35%	38%	7%	6%	1%
<b>Average</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>9%</b>

**Table H.9 Percentage responses to ‘In the last 12 months, have you received, or made, any complaints about this wildlife rehabilitation provider regarding the following?’ (n=103)**

	% of respondents
Behaviour of group leaders	11%
Behaviour of group members	17%
Standard of care, including equipment, facilities and treatment of animals	7%
Euthanasia of an animal	1%
Release of an animal into an inappropriate location	4%
Release of an animal when it was not ready	4%
Response time for animal collection / rescue	23%
Other complaint (please specify below)	5%
No complaints received / made	62%

## Appendix I Grants to wildlife rehabilitation providers

Data supporting findings in [Section 4.4](#).

**Table I.1 NPWS grants to wildlife rehabilitation providers over the last three financial years from 2013–14 to 2015–16**

Name of provider	Amount	NPWS region*
Australian Seabird Rescue Inc.	\$5,130	Northern Rivers
FAWNA (NSW) Inc.	\$13,600	Lower North Coast
Friends of the Koala Inc.#	\$7,830	Northern Rivers
Hunter Koala Preservation Society	\$4,600	Central Coast Hunter
Koalas In Care Inc.	\$4,300	Lower North Coast
Looking After Our Kosciusko Orphans	\$8,000	Southern Ranges
Native Animal Trust Fund	\$6,000	Central Coast Hunter
Northern Rivers Wildlife Carers	\$5,130	Northern Rivers
Saving Our Native Animals	\$1,500	Southern Ranges
Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers	\$5,130	Northern Rivers
Wildcare Queanbeyan	\$3,000	Southern Ranges
Wildlife ARC	\$3,000	Central Coast Hunter
Wildlife in Need of Care Inc.	\$7,000	Central Coast Hunter
WIRES	\$23,787	North Coast
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$98,007</b>	

\* NPWS region names are those used at the time the grant was given.

# Includes a 2013–14 grant allocation not given in the OEH annual report.

**Table I.2 Environmental Trust grants to wildlife rehabilitation providers from 2013–14**

Year	Name of provider	Funding stream	Amount
2015–16	Australian Seabird Rescue	Lead Environmental Community Group	\$37,400
2015–16	WIRES	Lead Environmental Community Group	\$80,500
2015–16	Friends of Koala	Restoration and Rehabilitation	\$99,200
2015–16	Friends of Koala	Environmental Education	\$76,621
2013–14	Australian Seabird Rescue	Environmental Education	\$53,140
2013–14	Australian Seabird Rescue	Lead Environmental Community Group	\$2,500
2013–14	Friends of Koala	Lead Environmental Community Group	\$12,000
2013–14	Sydney Metropolitan Wildlife Services	Lead Environmental Community Group	\$5,000
2013–14	WIRES	Lead Environmental Community Group	\$50,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$416,361</b>



## Appendix J Volunteer survey – evaluation of services

Data supporting the report findings provided in [Chapter 5](#).

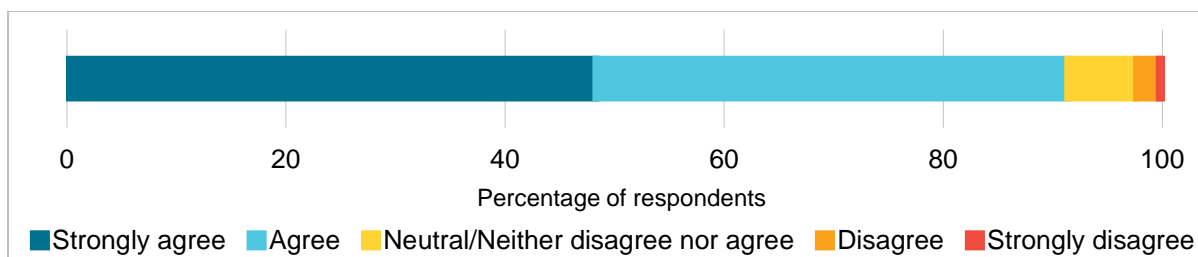
**Table J.1 Percentage responses by role to ‘How satisfied are/were you with the overall leadership provided by your group?’**

Current role	Extremely satisfied	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Not so satisfied	Not at all satisfied	I don't know	Number of respondents
Executive Member	27%	40%	24%	5%	3%	1%	131
Species Coordinator	17%	32%	29%	8%	12%	1%	145
Animal Carer	23%	35%	23%	10%	8%	2%	533
Rescuer / Transporter	23%	36%	23%	9%	7%	2%	577
Office support	28%	35%	24%	6%	6%	1%	216
Other	26%	36%	22%	7%	8%	1%	179

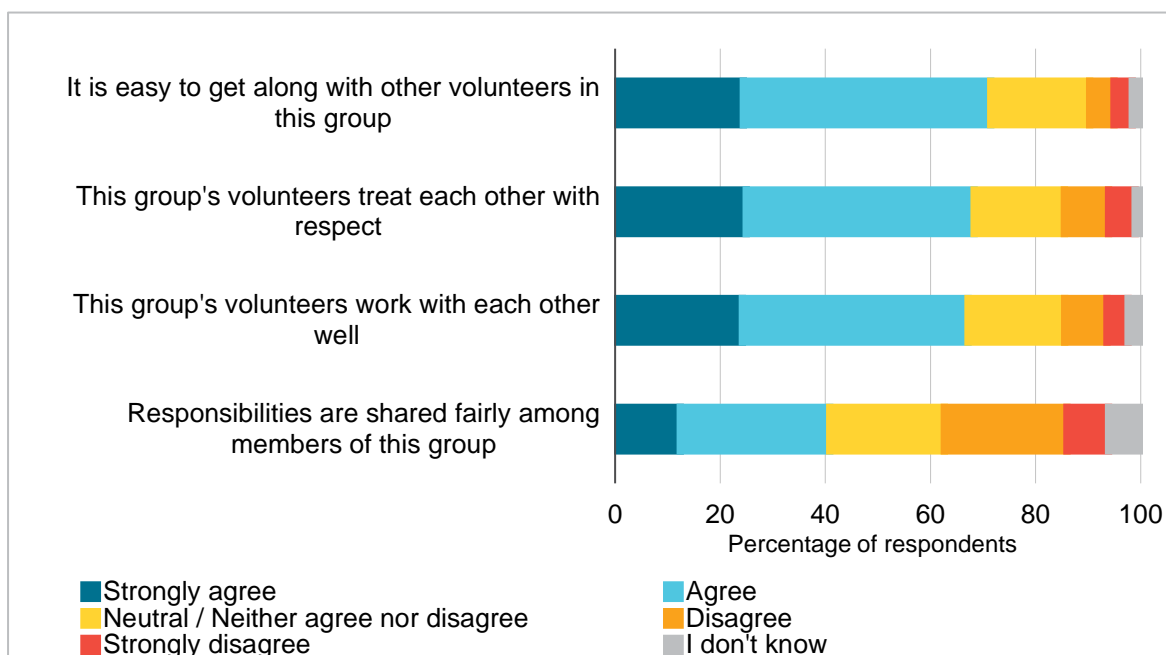
**Table J.2 Percentage responses by role to ‘How useful is your group’s constitution?’**

(Note: Respondents who said they were ‘Not at all familiar’ with their group’s constitution were not asked how useful it is.)

Past/current role	Extremely useful	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not so useful	Not at all useful	Number of respondents
Executive Member	12%	36%	39%	9%	4%	228
Species Coordinator	10%	32%	42%	10%	5%	222
Animal Carer	10%	34%	43%	10%	3%	568
Rescuer / Transporter	10%	35%	42%	9%	3%	606
Office support	12%	36%	38%	10%	4%	341
Other	14%	37%	38%	8%	3%	213



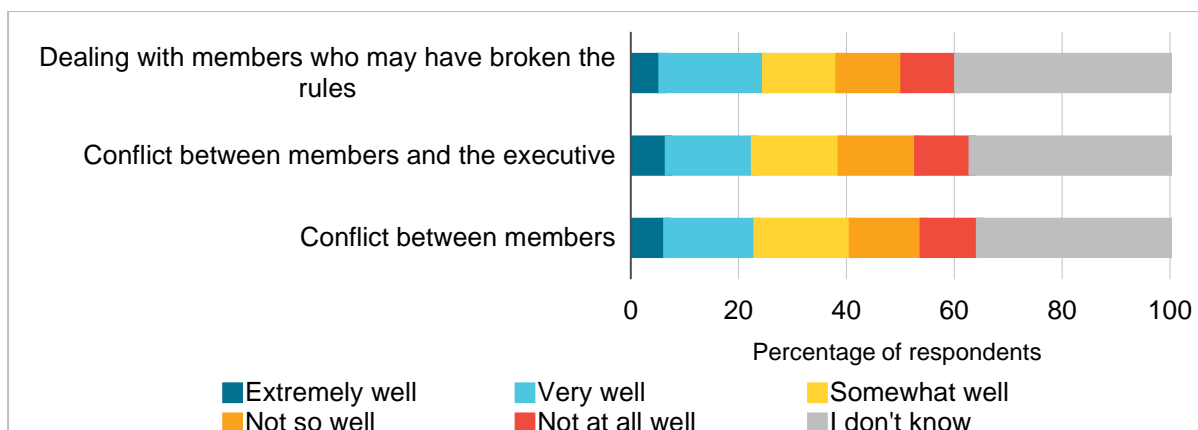
**Figure J.1** Percentage responses to ‘To what extent do you agree with the statement: “As a volunteer for my group, I clearly understand what is expected of me”?’ (n=671)



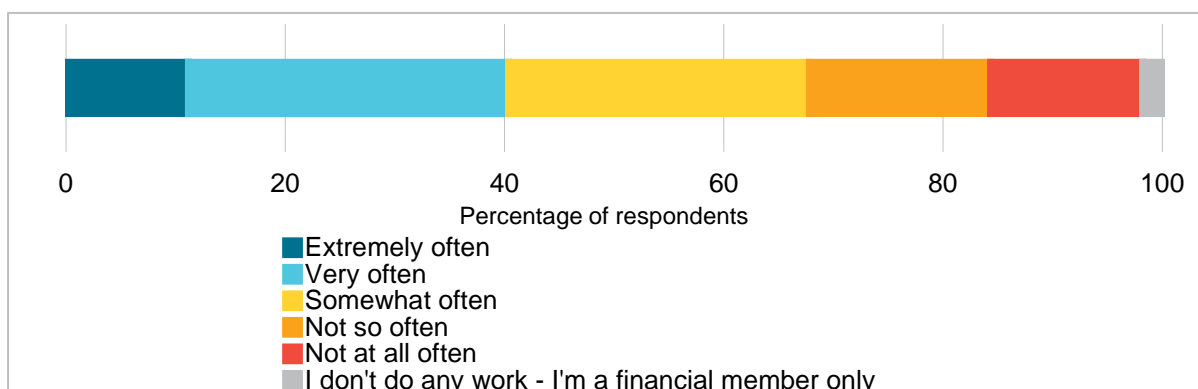
**Figure J.2** Percentage responses to ‘To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your group’s volunteers?’ (n=669–670)

**Table J.3** Percentage responses to ‘To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your group’s volunteers?’ (n=approx. 670)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral / neither disagree nor agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know
This group's volunteers work with each other well	24%	43%	18%	8%	4%	2%
It is easy to get along with other volunteers in this group	24%	47%	19%	5%	3%	2%
This group's volunteers treat each other with respect	25%	43%	17%	8%	5%	1%
Responsibilities are shared fairly among members of this group	12%	28%	22%	23%	8%	6%
<b>Average</b>	21%	40%	19%	11%	5%	3%
<b>Median</b>	24%	43%	19%	8%	5%	2%



**Figure J.3** Percentage responses to 'How well does your group do the following?' (n=671)



**Figure J.4** Percentage responses to 'How often do you receive feedback from your group's leaders?' (n=671)

**Table J.4** Percentage responses to 'How good is your group at the following?' (n=approx. 650)

	Extremely good	Very good	Somewhat good	Not so good	Not at all good	I don't know
Responding to calls	33%	40%	15%	4%	3%	5%
Servicing the full area within its boundaries	17%	35%	20%	10%	4%	15%
Getting new members	5%	23%	35%	14%	6%	17%
Hanging on to existing members	7%	23%	24%	17%	10%	20%
Financially supporting members	7%	18%	28%	15%	10%	22%
Looking after the health and safety of members	19%	37%	22%	6%	4%	11%
Continually improving the service they provide	13%	33%	25%	8%	4%	17%
Fundraising	9%	32%	32%	8%	3%	17%
Financial planning	10%	22%	17%	6%	4%	41%
<b>Average</b>	13%	29%	24%	10%	5%	18%
<b>Median</b>	10%	32%	24%	8%	4%	17%

**Table J.5 Percentage responses to ‘How useful were the following types of training you have done with the wildlife rehabilitation sector?’ (n=approx. 689–698)**

Type of training	% of respondents who have done training	Of those who did the training, how useful did they find it?				
		Extremely useful	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not so useful	Not at all useful
Leadership / Management / Executive	31%	24%	34%	26%	11%	5%
Introductory course/basic rescue	96%	47%	38%	13%	1%	1%
Specialist species care	85%	51%	36%	11%	1%	1%
Office/admin	47%	26%	38%	29%	5%	3%
Refresher	63%	31%	35%	20%	8%	5%

**Table J.6 Percentage responses to ‘To what extent do you agree with these statements about training and development opportunities?’**

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral/ Neither disagree nor agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know	Number of respondents
My group has an effective training program that meets my needs	24%	45%	19%	7%	3%	2%	681
I am satisfied with the opportunities provided by my group to apply my talents and expertise	22%	42%	22%	6%	4%	4%	681
I am satisfied with the opportunities provided by my group for advanced training/development ( <i>group members only</i> )	20%	38%	22%	13%	4%	4%	681
I am satisfied with the opportunities for advanced training/development available to me ( <i>individual licensees only</i> )	13%	20%	33%	7%	27%	0%	15
I am satisfied with the opportunities for advanced training/development available to me ( <i>all respondents</i> )	19%	38%	22%	13%	4%	4%	696

**Table J.7 Percentage responses to ‘How important to you are the following when deciding what training to do?’ (n=approx. 698)**

	Extremely important	Very important	Somewhat important	Not so important	Not at all important
Availability/timing	34%	43%	20%	2%	1%
Cost	23%	27%	32%	14%	4%
Location	29%	35%	28%	6%	2%
Opportunity to learn something new	53%	41%	6%	1%	0%
Opportunity to share my knowledge with other volunteers	21%	29%	33%	13%	4%
Opportunity to socialise	5%	12%	33%	33%	18%
Provision of training resources	29%	46%	19%	4%	2%
Recognition of training	24%	29%	29%	12%	6%
Skills and knowledge of trainers	62%	33%	3%	1%	0%

**Table J.8 Percentage responses to ‘Overall, how much does your group need to improve in the following areas?’ (n=approx. 653)**

	Not at all	A little	A moderate amount	A lot	A great deal	I don't know
Leadership and internal communication	18%	28%	16%	10%	14%	14%
Training	23%	33%	20%	9%	8%	7%
Supervision and mentoring	20%	33%	17%	12%	10%	9%
Standard of wildlife care	38%	30%	11%	5%	5%	12%
Capacity to deliver services	19%	30%	23%	9%	7%	13%
<b>Average</b>	23%	31%	17%	9%	9%	11%
<b>Median</b>	20%	30%	17%	9%	8%	12%

**Table J.9 Percentage responses to ‘Overall, how much does your group need to improve its supervision and mentoring?’**

Past/current role	Not at all	A little	A moderate amount	A lot	A great deal	I don't know	Number of respondents
Executive Member	16%	39%	18%	15%	11%	2%	219
Species Coordinator	16%	32%	19%	18%	12%	3%	214
Animal Carer	19%	33%	18%	13%	10%	7%	558

Past/current role	Not at all	A little	A moderate amount	A lot	A great deal	I don't know	Number of respondents
Rescuer / Transporter	20%	34%	17%	13%	9%	8%	596
Office support	18%	35%	19%	13%	11%	5%	333
Other	17%	40%	16%	13%	10%	4%	207

**Table J.10 Percentage responses to 'How satisfied are you with the following as provided by your group?' (n= 695)**

	Extremely satisfied	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Not so satisfied	Not at all satisfied	I don't know
Overall leadership	24%	36%	22%	9%	7%	2%
Mentoring / Supervision	23%	37%	24%	8%	6%	2%
<b>Average</b>	23%	36%	23%	8%	7%	2%
<b>Median</b>	23%	36%	23%	8%	7%	2%

**Table J.11 Percentage responses to 'How familiar are you with OEH codes of practice for the animals you help rehabilitate?' (n= 757)**

Familiarity	% of respondents
Extremely familiar	24%
Very familiar	42%
Somewhat familiar	25%
Not so familiar	6%
Not at all familiar	4%

**Table J.12 Percentage responses to 'How familiar are you with OEH licence conditions for wildlife rehabilitators?' (n=754)**

Familiarity	% of respondents
Extremely familiar	23%
Very familiar	40%
Somewhat familiar	26%
Not so familiar	6%
Not at all familiar	4%



**Table J.13 Percentage responses to ‘How good is your group at the following?’ (n=approx. 740)**

How good is your group at:	Extremely good	Very good	Somewhat good	Not so good	Not at all good	I don't know
Informing members of current animal care standards	29%	39%	19%	6%	3%	4%
Providing high quality animal care	38%	43%	12%	1%	1%	4%
Ensuring members comply with OEH codes of practice	23%	34%	22%	6%	4%	11%
Monitoring the level of care provided to animals	27%	35%	19%	7%	5%	7%
Animal record keeping	31%	37%	19%	6%	2%	6%
<b>Average</b>	30%	38%	18%	5%	3%	6%
<b>Median</b>	29%	37%	19%	6%	3%	6%

**Table J.14 Percentage responses to ‘Overall, how much does your group need to improve its standard of wildlife care?’**

Past/current role	Not at all	A little	A moderate amount	A lot	A great deal	I don't know	Number of respondents
Executive Member	32%	41%	14%	5%	6%	2%	220
Species Coordinator	27%	37%	17%	7%	9%	4%	214
Animal Carer	35%	33%	11%	5%	5%	10%	559
Rescuer / Transporter	37%	32%	12%	5%	5%	11%	597
Office support	34%	37%	12%	4%	6%	7%	334
Other	37%	34%	14%	6%	4%	6%	207

**Table J.15 Percentage responses to ‘Overall, how much does your group need to improve its capacity to deliver services?’**

Past/current role	Not at all	A little	A moderate amount	A lot	A great deal	I don't know	Number of respondents
Executive Member	15%	37%	26%	12%	8%	2%	220
Species Coordinator	15%	33%	26%	11%	11%	4%	214
Animal Carer	18%	30%	23%	10%	8%	11%	559
Rescuer / Transporter	18%	31%	23%	10%	8%	11%	596
Office support	16%	35%	23%	11%	7%	7%	334
Other	19%	31%	25%	9%	9%	7%	206

**Table J.16 Percentage responses to 'How important to you are the following?' (n=approx. 660)**

How important to you is:	Extremely important	Very important	Somewhat important	Not so important	Not at all important	I don't know
Greater access to funding and other resources	58%	28%	10%	2%	1%	2%
Finding and keeping new volunteers	56%	33%	7%	1%	0%	2%
Better understanding by the community that we are volunteers and limited in what we can do	54%	31%	10%	2%	1%	2%
Better promotion and community appreciation of the work of wildlife rehabilitation volunteers	49%	32%	13%	3%	1%	1%
Stronger standards of care for native animals	42%	34%	16%	3%	1%	4%
Standardised training across the sector	40%	32%	16%	7%	2%	3%
Better mentoring and support for members	38%	42%	15%	2%	1%	3%
Planning to ensure suitable members are developed to succeed into leadership roles	37%	34%	19%	5%	2%	3%
More sharing of equipment and expertise between groups (and individual carers)	34%	36%	19%	6%	1%	4%
More flexibility around which group I can belong to	25%	20%	20%	17%	11%	7%
<b>Average</b>	43%	32%	14%	5%	2%	3%
<b>Median</b>	41%	33%	15%	3%	1%	3%

