NRE RTI 027 – Registered Wildlife Rehabilitators

Question 1

Numbers of rehabilitators from 2014-2016 (partial data – permitted wildlife rehabilitators only) and 2017 – 2024 (full data – wildlife rehabilitators without permit requirements and those who require and have permit wildlife rehabilitators).

Response

Context and data collection

NRE Tas collects data on wildlife rehabilitators in Tasmania for two different purposes:

1. A list of wildlife rehabilitators that can rehabilitate native wildlife species that do not require a permit to rehabilitate under the *Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulations 2021* (list of wildlife rehabilitators); and

2. NRE Tas also collects personal information for the purposes of issuing Wildlife Rehabilitation Permits under the *Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulations* 2021 in line with NRE Tas' regulatory responsibility.

In contrast to other jurisdictions in Australia, the wildlife rehabilitation sector in Tasmania is mainly made up of individual wildlife rehabilitators.

Compiling the list is an administrative function which NRE Tas currently undertakes on behalf of the wildlife rehabilitation sector. It provides a centralised pool of individual wildlife rehabilitators and enables a channel of communication that results in wildlife being placed with appropriately trained and experienced wildlife rehabilitator in a timely manner.

The list is predominantly used for the purposes of coordinating the placement of wildlife that comes through Bonorong Wildlife Rescue, Tasmania's largest state-wide wildlife rescue service. With permission from wildlife rehabilitators, the list is shared with Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Services (WIRES) and this organisation uses the list to send notifications to wildlife rehabilitators to place animals.

Tasmania is the only state to have a state-wide coordination system. In other jurisdictions this coordination function is undertaken by well-established wildlife rehabilitation groups who organise the placement of animals within their respective groups.

Data limitations

NRE Tas has provided numbers of wildlife rehabilitators on the list from 2017-2024 in Table 1 below (columns 2 and 3), however there are caveats to this data, as follows:

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1. The numbers of wildlife rehabilitators on the list fluctuates weekly

The number of wildlife rehabilitators on the list fluctuates over time depending on recruitment and training, wildlife rehabilitators retiring from the sector and the short-term availability of wildlife rehabilitators.

Wildlife rehabilitation is a voluntary commitment that impacts on a person's lifestyle. To help manage this, wildlife rehabilitators request to be taken off the list on a short-term basis when they are unavailable to rehabilitate wildlife for reasons such as, taking a break from wildlife rehabilitation, travelling interstate or overseas, a change in circumstance or due to personal commitments.

2. Not all wildlife rehabilitators are on the list

The list is not a mandatory requirement, or a legal obligation. There are wildlife rehabilitators in the state who receive wildlife for rehabilitation through their local veterinary clinic and local community and may prefer to work independently of Bonorong Wildlife Rescue and WIRES.

3. Not all rehabilitators on the list are actively taking wildlife

The number of wildlife rehabilitators on the list is not a true representation of the number of rehabilitators who are actively rehabilitating wildlife. Wildlife rehabilitators voluntarily respond to notifications from WIRES, and they may choose not to respond, to turn off notifications from the WIRES app or delete it altogether, without notifying NRE Tas that they would like to be taken off the list.

4. Limitations with reporting

NRE Tas is not able to retrospectively report on the total numbers of wildlife rehabilitators on the list on the same date each year, nor can it report on the fluctuations during each year. The data provided in Table 1 comes from reports that have been drawn from the database at various times over the past eight years (2017-2024) on a case-by-case basis for reporting to stakeholders (including government and the sector) and for the purpose of helping coordinate arrangements for wildlife requiring rehabilitation. This data provides a snapshot of the number of rehabilitators on the list at the time the report was drawn from the database. Given the differences in the date of the snapshots, and the fact that not all rehabilitators are on the list, the information below should be considered to indicate the trend in numbers of wildlife rehabilitators on the list over time, not the exact numbers present in Tasmania.

Trends in the number of wildlife rehabilitators in Tasmania (2014-2024)

For completeness, the table contains both the number of permit holders and those on the list for non-permit species. The permit information has been drawn retrospectively from Environment's permit and licence database.

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Table 1. The number of wildlife rehabilitators in Tasmania from 2014 to 2024 for non-permit species (columns 2 and 3) and permit species (column 4).

Year	Date of snapshot	Number of wildlife rehabilitators on the list on the date of snapshot (non-permit species)	Number of individual wildlife rehabilitation permit holders (permit species)	Total
2014	NA	Not available	110	110
2015	NA	Not available	102	102
2016	NA	Not available	84	84
2017	9 November 2017	160	90	250
2018	16 August 2018	154	107	261
2019	9 August 2019	146	118	264
2020	10 December 2020	178	127	305
2021	5 May 2021	192	120	312
2022	26 May 2022	181	113	294
2023	12 February 2023	218	112	330
2024	22 November 2024	212	119	331

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Question 2

Departmental resources for wildlife rehabilitation provided by financial year, from 2016/17 to 2023/24.

Response

NRE Tas provides funding from its budget for wildlife rehabilitation in two different capacities:

1. Resourcing for staff within NRE Tas; and

2. Funding for external wildlife rehabilitation organisations.

The funding for NRE Tas staff supports NRE Tas' role in the wildlife rehabilitation sector in:

- Wildlife emergency preparedness and response with management arrangements led by the Department, which is the lead agency for 'wildlife and animal welfare in emergencies' under the Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements (TEMA).
- Regulating the taking, possessing and releasing of wildlife, including issuing permits to wildlife rehabilitators.
- Regulating and enforcing animal welfare in relation to wildlife.
- Supporting the development of the inaugural Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector Strategy in 2020-21
- Policy work to support Wildlife Network Tasmania's (from 2022 onwards) implementation of the Strategy.

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Table 2. Approximate NRE Tas funding for wildlife rehabilitation in Tasmania, including internal funding for NRE Tas staff and external funding for wildlife rehabilitation organisations.

Financial Year	NRE Tas approx. funding across Wildlife Services, Policy and other staff ($)	Funding for external organisations ($)				Total Budget ($)
		Wildlife Network Tasmania	Raptor Refuge	Bonorong Wildlife Sanctuary	Reptile Rescue	
2016/17	2.5 FTE 142,939.29				1,200.00	144,139.29
2017/18	2.5 FTE 158,891.27					158,891.27
2018/19	2.5 FTE 148,952.12		6,363.64			149,588.76
2019/20	2.5 FTE 162,857.75 and approx. 120,000 in staff overtime and on call allowance		7,636.37	59,366.20		229,860.32 + approx. 120,000 = 349,860.32
2020/21	2.5 FTE 166,293.22		7,000.00	100,134.00		273,427.22
2021/22	2.1 FTE 157,460.94	115,000.00	10,000.00			282,460.94
2022/23	1.6 FTE 137,428.47	115,000.00	10,000.00	9,090.91		271,519.38
2023/24	1.3 FTE 120,341.36	115,000.00	10,000.00	$23,723.04[1]		269,064.40

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[1] Figures are as at November 2024