

ACT Wildlife



Rescue • Rehabilitate • Release

ACT Wildlife Incorporated – Submission to 2019-20 Budget Consultation

Canberrans love the Bush Capital and the reputation surrounding this concept. The ACT is a place where native animals are seen within suburbia and nature reserves. Kangaroos, our national emblem are adored by Australians and foreigners alike. Locals who find injured, orphaned or sick animals will call us for advice and expect the animals to be cared for.

With so much native habitat being destroyed to facilitate suburban growth there are increasing problems with native bird, mammal and reptile populations. Public interaction with some species is becoming more of an issue as the animals are forced to live in smaller and smaller areas. This in turn causes increased deaths and suffering of, in particular, brushtail possums, wombats and kangaroos.

ACT Wildlife Incorporated is a registered charity with DGR status and run entirely by volunteers. Our core business is the rehabilitation of native animals that are injured, sick or orphaned in the ACT. The service to the community is significant; we give advice about animals they encounter; native animals that are affected by close human and domestic animal contact.

I am saddened to see in the Budget Consultation online outline that the ACT Government's core areas of responsibility do not include the environment.

ACT Wildlife is the only active wildlife rehabilitation organisation within the ACT.

ACT Wildlife is committed to providing assistance and care wherever and whenever required. We have around 45 carers and other essential volunteers who are currently working from their own homes, using their own resources. ACT Wildlife is providing a volunteering avenue to people who are retired, need volunteering opportunities for future employment, or are unable to work for some reason. We are also working with Comcare helping with a 'back to work' client. We hope soon to offer school and CIT student work experience placements.

By far the largest regular income comes from donations, usually small amounts given by grateful people that we have helped. Our largest expenditure has been specialist foods suitable for native animals. ACT Wildlife has received some money from the ACT Government, which we hope to use to employ an administration assistant to help with phone and animal coordination over the busiest 6 months, Spring and Summer, the time when we receive the most animals and phone calls.

However, while I agree that Government services aimed towards people are extremely important and should be supported, there is very little for animals and the environment.

Biodiversity is so important. Bettong and bush curlew introductions are important, but so is the wider native animal community.

The ACT Government could very easily deliver services to biodiversity and animal welfare by supporting volunteers who spend their own time and money for a cause they are passionate about and which enhance our Bush Capital reputation.

“What new ideas, services or programs should the ACT consider to meet emerging or evolving community needs” ACT Wildlife is striving to fulfil community expectations of assistance when they have an unfavourable interaction with a native animal. At the moment we are struggling to provide a rescue service and we depend greatly on ACT veterinary practices to assist us with examination, assessment and treatment (including euthanasia) of injured and sick animals. Each year we are seeing an increase in the numbers of animals coming into care through the ever-increasing number of phone calls we receive. Last year volunteers answered 9,500 phone calls with as few as 13 volunteers covering 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We have 10 volunteers who pick up animals to take to vets or to carers, some of these also answer the phone and are carers as well.

This year, for a number of reasons, the drought being a major one, a larger than usual number of animals are taking advantage of our suburban green areas. This brings them into close proximity with people, their pets and vehicles. People that come face to face with animals having suffered trauma from vehicle strikes are also traumatised. It is never nice to come across a kangaroo with two broken legs and a joey struggling to get back into her pouch. Our phone operators and carers often become accidental counsellors and are often traumatised themselves having to deal with people that expect, and indeed, demand prompt service.

ACT Wildlife volunteers work well with the Parks and Conservation wildlife rangers' co-ordinating some rescues and sharing advice.

Some statistics: In addition, In our last financial year ACT Wildlife:

Received 2329 native animals

Released 1210 back to the wild

Relieved the suffering of 510 animals with the help of our many great vet clinics in the ACT

Raised approximately 171 orphaned native birds and mammals

Rescued 79 endangered grey headed flying foxes from fruit tree netting and barb wire fences

56 animals were known to have been caught by dogs

88 were known to have been caught by cats

426 were known to be hit by vehicles or flew into a window

94 had a confirmed disease

ACT Wildlife conducts 12 – 14 professional-grade training sessions each year; addressing orientation, separate species training, operation of our phone service, online database and record keeping. While the organisation is made up of a dedicated group of volunteers the disparate nature of the work and volunteers presents us challenges with coordination and continuity. Our Management committee performs the role of overseeing volunteers, animal distribution, forward planning and much of the day to day running of the organisation.

This year we are working out of a building at Jerrabomberra Wetlands, which is still being set up following a 2017 ACT Environment Grant and a site at Duffy. We hope to conduct training and public education at Duffy initially and receive animals from the public at Jerrabomberra. However once we get going with the recently acquired premises these roles may be reversed and/or modified. The Duffy premises (701 Cotter Road) presents us with potential to provide a

long-term site for the public to associate with wildlife care. ACT Wildlife aspires to have a Wildlife Hospital in the future but for now we would be happy to have strategies for volunteer retention that will be assisted with employing an administrative assistant, a huge move for a small organisation. This will free up volunteers / wildlife carers from administrative tasks, such as taking phone calls, answering public enquiries, receiving animals and volunteer coordination. Initially this will be funded by a one-off allocation of \$30,000 from Parks and Conservation, and EPSDD.

We are seeking funding for 0.75 FTE position and undertake to fundraise for the other 25%.

Please contact me for further information.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Peachey". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the typed name.

Marg Peachey
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30.10.2018