

Submission
No 23

**INQUIRY INTO VETERINARY WORKFORCE SHORTAGE
IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I am a wildlife carer who is regularly taking animals to vets, caring for them and releasing those which meet the criteria.

1 TRAINING - Most vets have little understanding of the specific needs of these unique species and sadly most animals are unnecessarily euthanized. As a past Chair of one of the largest branches of Wires with >200 members, the statistics show that >65% of animals that come into contact with a Wires rescuer are killed or die. Clearly, not all animals are able to be saved, however with a wildlife trained and experienced veterinarian, where euthanasia is the LAST option, I have been a part of some amazing outcomes with the commitment of professionals and volunteers working together.

Solution - 1 Wildlife trained vets

2 Lay people trained in specific areas of need - in some African nations, lay people are trained to perform medical procedures due to the shortage of doctors who would usually do them and it works.

2 BURNOUT - Please don't confuse euthanasia and killing, the end result is the same, yet the latter is commonplace and unnecessary when it comes to the treatment of wildlife. Unnecessary death is a major problem for some and often the result of being time poor.

Solution - 1 reduce the entry requirements for training to be a vet.

2 have another qualification that allows for limited medical training/procedure which reduces workload of fully trained vets.

3 PRACTICE POLICY AND COMMERCIAL REALITY - I spoke with our dog and cat vet who also treats wildlife and who I have used for >20 years and asked why he doesn't do more for wildlife - he will take an Xray, give meds/fluids, euthanasia and all at no cost and this is much more than most. He paused and said, we could do all that we do for pets, however time is money and with wildlife there is no return. Sadly, wildlife are killed in their thousands every week in vet practices, simply because no one is able/prepared to pay for service. Some vets struggle terribly, knowing they are bound by the vet practice rules on the treatment of wildlife and take the 'required' option and move on. I can't imagine how you go home at night, knowing you have helped domestic pets and their carers, yet ended the lives of wildlife who could have received the same level of care if there was a commitment to do so

Solution - 1 change the NPWS rules re Wildlife as "pets" - this reduces the stress on vets to kill unnecessarily and opens up opportunities for wildlife to be saved when so many have been lost. This isn't a solution for all species and all disabilities, however it is for many.

2 as was suggested by my vet re costs - have an agreed rate for treatment of non-pet species from the wild and open the treatment plan broadly.

3 REGULATORY BARRIERS - Should this issue be addressed properly, there is another issue which needs addressing. This is the issue of wildlife who are not 100% fit and are therefore killed. Wires is notorious for demanding this "rule" be followed. This causes incredible stress for vets and carers - I know because I speak with them. I know firsthand of a possum with a chipped tooth, which the vet had on the table, anaesthetized and ready to remove the tooth, when a call came in from the Wires volunteer to advise that if the animal had the procedure, the Wires carer would not be taking it back into care. The vet then killed an otherwise healthy Brushtail Possum because it would be missing 1 tooth and he wasn't aware of other care options. Another life lost needlessly, and staff left wondering why

Solution - Open up the range of outcomes that are available to animals under law and remove the onerous requirements of long-term care.

3 REGULATORY BARRIERS - There must be another option for those animals who aren't 100% and are killed on mass. Keep in mind that a blind animal gives birth to sighted offspring, an animal with a broken finger/toe can survive in the wild and there are many other examples, yet vets are called upon to end the lives of these animals unnecessarily and vets often struggle with the outcomes. Provided animals who aren't able to go back to the wild have a safe environment, are looked after

and provided veterinary care as required, they can live long and happy lives with their human "family".

Solution - Open up the range of outcomes that are available to animals under law and remove the onerous requirements of long-term care.

4 TRAINING - I spoke with a veterinary student in her 4th year at Sydney Uni while on prac at Camden and asked how much training she gets in Wildlife during her course. She told me 1 week, however she had taken an elective to do more, and I was expecting this to involve months, only to be told that the extra was 3 weeks. So, the total training/experience with Wildlife that a vet student from the most prestigious university in Australia can receive in 5+ years is 1 month. I asked what she found most difficult and she stated there was a lot of euthanasia.

Solution - have wildlife vets and offer them pay and opportunity that mirrors domestic and livestock vets.