

**Submission
No 19**

**INQUIRY INTO 2025 INQUIRY INTO THE OPERATION OF
THE APPROVED CHARITABLE ORGANISATIONS UNDER
THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS ACT 1979**

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This is my updated and edited submission to the one I sent on 29th October 2025.

All opinions stated in this submission are mine alone and any statements made are, in my opinion, honest and accurate.

This submission in general, deals with the experiences I have had regarding interactions with WIRES and the RSPCA, and what others in the wildlife sector have conveyed to me.

I hold grave concerns that WIRES are positioning themselves to become an enforcement agency in the native wildlife sector.

I will set out in point form some of the many reasons why I hold this view:

WIRES WELFARE TEAM:

Since 2020, after the Black Summer Bushfires and the associated influx of donations (approx. \$100million), WIRES created a 'Welfare Team' made up of ex-RSPCA inspectors. These inspectors had no, or very limited knowledge of, wildlife welfare issues.

The CEO (Leanne Taylor) is on the record as stating at the 2024 AGM: "there are massive gaps in the sector that could be addressed by expanding the Welfare Team" and at the 2025 AGM: "the Welfare Team is core to the existence of WIRES" and in April 2025 she stated at the Chairs Advisory Group meeting that "she would follow the same actions again" when questioned about the failure to follow WIRES procedures such as support, training, mentoring and referring perceived health issues to vets - instead of putting in a complaint directly to the RSPCA as the first response despite the enormous backlash from wildlife carers everywhere.

One of the ex-RSPCA inspectors that now is employed on the WIRES Welfare Team, cost the RSPCA around \$1 million in a compensation payout, as a result of a botched raid on a member of the public (see the attached link): thenightly.com.au . This not only shows this staff member's willingness to not follow policies and procedures (or indeed the law) but shows that the CEO has no issues in employing someone of this calibre. This same staff member, who has been involved in recent attempts to enter the property of a wildlife carer under the guise of creating a 'health management plan', when asked legitimate questions regarding a particular health condition in wildlife reported to WIRES 8 months prior, her response was "I don't know, I'm not a vet". Yet I believe she and other 'Welfare Team' staff insisted on pursuing that carer, not for any concerns related to animal cruelty or knowledge of continued health issues but as a targeted response for being questioned and criticised.

The Welfare Team has seemed, on many occasions to not act in the interest of animal welfare but as a reaction to issues with members and carers based on personality, perhaps instigated by others within WIRES? WIRES must not be permitted to use the RSPCA as a punitive measure against members they feel the need to pressure. Despite having procedures in place to avoid almost all welfare issues, WIRES seem to want to proceed to legal prosecution as the first option. Not only does it seem that WIRES has made vexatious complaints to the RSPCA but that the RSPCA appears to be prioritising WIRES referrals.

I can supply evidence of many such disturbing actions.

In one action recently, an RSPCA inspector conducted an inspection on a WIRES carer based on a seemingly vexatious WIRES complaint with little substance or merit. This action by WIRES is evidence of ongoing vindictive activity towards this member for speaking out about WIRES (documented) wrongdoings. During this inspection the RSPCA inspector was filmed telling the wildlife carer that she saw no evidence of cruelty. In fact she admitted that the facilities and condition of the animals were in good order. Should RSPCA be getting such an immediate response from RSPCA? Are

these animals seen to be in 'imminent danger'? What process does RSPCA take to understand the urgency for a WIRES complaint?

WIRES, in my opinion, show many reasons why they are not to be trusted with any authority to conduct enforcement. If they were to be granted such authority, I believe future conflicts and litigation would be common place. Which in turn would cause a dramatic reduction in the number of volunteers wanting to take on the risk of becoming a wildlife carer.

WIRES has an absence of supervision or control.

WIRES has no accountability.

WIRES has shown a distinct lack of financial transparency (as seen in their overall 2025 financial report which shows less detail than previous years).

The culture in the organisation is disturbingly toxic (which has been documented by carers and in the media)

Favouritism and unfairness is the norm.

Their approach is punitive not supportive.

Ex-RSPCA inspectors make up the core of the Welfare Team. This is detrimental to the organisation as they have no background or training with wildlife.

Member data entered (which is the basis for the reporting to the NPWS- the licensing authority) is often destroyed due to fear of retribution.

Wildlife numbers and outcomes are not clear for both WIRES and members.

Member numbers are being artificially inflated. Around 1000 members were removed but they are still counted as members for the NPWS reporting. Wombat mange treaters are being included as members for statistical purposes despite having no member rights. Rescue 101 volunteers who are only allowed to transport animals to vets and carers, also have no membership rights - but are also counted in volunteer numbers lodged with ACNC.

Enforcement as an activity is contrary to the objectives of WIRES. WIRES Welfare Team is unconstitutional and has been since its inception.

Wires management have already removed themselves somewhat from the objective of the company which can be seen by the 2025 expenditure where wages, salaries and consultants are \$11 million and veterinarian expenditure and wildlife food combined amounts to less than \$1 million. This is definitely NOT how donors anticipated or wanted their money to be spent.

ANIMAL SUFFERING AND EUTHANASIA:

Numerous Government agencies, wildlife groups and veterinarians use the Captive Bolt Device for the humane euthanasia of animals including wildlife. Victorian Wildlife, for example, train their volunteers in the handling and use of the device. To prolong an animals suffering by extending the time before euthanasia is administered, increasing suffering by unnecessary confinement and transportation to a veterinary practice (if available or open), in my view is an act of cruelty in itself, when the captive bolt could end the animals suffering instantly, not to mention the cost savings and could free up already stretched veterinarian services and/or Police time for that matter.

Asking carers to take badly injured animals to a vet clinic only adds further stress to the animals and possibly has a detrimental impact on the mental wellbeing of the rescuers.

WIRES CEO appears to have a personal, and in my opinion, unfounded dislike for the use of the captive bolt device to the detriment of our wildlife. Such an attitude from the CEO goes to show that personal decisions appear to override animal welfare concerns. Failure to quickly and humanely eliminate the suffering of badly injured animals (when possible), in my opinion, amounts to inappropriate and unethical decision making. Where has this policy for WIRES not to use Captive Bolt devices originated? Is it a policy that makes any sense in real-world scenarios? What is the plan for large wildlife species injured on our roads and in our regional areas because right now, the lack of plan is an animal welfare issue *caused by* WIRES policies?

THE BENEFITS:

Instant death.

Immediate relief for the suffering animal.

Cost savings - no vet expenses, no use of Police resources or unnecessary transport costs.

No bundling an injured animal into a vehicle or the possible movement of an uncontrolled injured wild animal.

Health and safety benefits for rescuers include - no lifting heavy animals, avoiding the sharp exposed broken bones, no mess or damage to the vehicle

Eliminating additional pain and suffering for the animal.

No time wasted by waiting for Police or transporting the animal to the vets and again waiting to be seen.

WIRES has made recent comments to a rural branch indicating they would report anyone using the device to the Police. How are such threats appropriate?

WHEN:

Owning and using the device is legal.

No licence is required although use by licensed carers is at least overseen.

It can be purchased online.

Police in our area when we attend rescues, tell us that they think the device should be made available to them for euthanasia of the injured, often immobile animals they attend to. It is often distressing that animals euthanised by police officers need several bullets to finally kill them and this is another example of animal cruelty that is happening because WIRES policies are failing wildlife. These events cause distress for all involved – the officers and any bystanders – and yet for years WIRES has not resolved this issue.

What consultation has WIRES had with respect to their policies and processes for injured wildlife, if any? If WIRES has not collaborated with the NSW Police, why do they still put a high percentage of calls out to be attended by the Police and is this appropriate?

Please see link for media article where NSW Police said they have no resources to attend to wildlife calls - https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/mission-creep-the-callouts-wasting-nsw-cops-time/news-story/82a6abb7af96b0e5a51fac9c486e404a?utm_source=DailyTelegraph&utm_medium=

email&utm_campaign=Editorial&utm_content=DT_LATESTNEWS_PM-CUR_02&net_sub_id=462157219&type=curated&position=3

Many of the cruelty accusations against carers which involve RSPCA seem to involve macropod carers. Carers are starting to ask if this just a coincidence or a deliberate strategy. WIRES is failing to compensate volunteer darters or shooters despite having the funds to cover these important roles and have even prevented WIRES branches covering these costs themselves from branch funds which volunteers raise themselves from fundraising activities.

An important question is why is WIRES making it harder for volunteers to train as shooters and increasing the cost and complexity of these courses? And refusing to give experienced carers the necessary sedation the animals require to transport them safely? This all needs to be resolved between vets and wildlife rescuers but WIRES are not helping – in fact it is causing more disconnect.

I use the Captive bolt device for euthanasia of farm animals (on my farm) when required and have done so for many years, without incident. I believe it is a far better welfare outcome than leaving the animal to lay suffering on the roadside for days at a time which is what carers are currently witnessing. WIRES has NO PLAN for these animals – that is animal cruelty caused by WIRES inaction.

GOVERNANCE:

I and many others don't believe WIRES has shown the leadership, governance, transparency or integrity to be given the responsibility to undertake a role of an enforcement authority in the wildlife sector.

As have been observed on many occasions over the last decade, WIRES are not impartial, competent or trustworthy to be given such authority given that in recent years they appear to be more than willing to use the RSPCA as a means of harassment

for pursuing grievances they have with their own members. One can only imagine the behaviour they would exhibit if they had unfettered access to this activity.

The nature of wildlife rescue indicates that many animals are already compromised. In my view, it would be too easy for WIRES to instigate a legal case based upon the condition of an animal in care at a certain point in the rehabilitation process without considering how far an animal may have improved. There is strong carer and community interest in a court conviction of a wildlife carer from Blue Mountains where WIRES seems to have failed to offer any support or guidance before asking RSPCA to raid the property of this carer. The failure to follow policy or offer advice and assistance is concerning many, including donors to WIRES.

WIRES have shown with many instances of false accusations, and recently with the refusal to adhere to the constitution when registering to become a Company limited by guarantee and the illegal removal of appropriately 1000 members, that they are not to be trusted.

WIRES has been forced to admit (due to two Supreme Court actions by members) that they illegally registered with ASIC their (the Boards) new constitution without the required approval of members. At the same time they removed 1000 members who refused to accept the illegally registered constitution and this action has caused a lot of discontent among wildlife carers.

These court cases to correct the injustices perpetrated upon WIRES members, are still going, as are numerous cases in the Fair Work Commission that have been taken out by former employees and members. These cases relate to unfair dismissal, bullying and failure to reinstate members.

While members have had to pay between \$100,000 and \$200,000 to run their own cases, questions must be asked about what amounts WIRES is spending of donated funds for legal representation to fight their own members and whether this spending can be justified or even appropriate.

In 2023 WIRES ran a survey of members and former members to understand issues in the organisation. The results have never been published despite WIRES telling members the results would be released. Over 700 people took the time to complete this survey and the results deserve to be analysed. The only reason I can see not to release them is that they are so damning that WIRES wants the information to be buried.

In my opinion, WIRES has already shown a far too close relationship with, and to the activities of, the RSPCA.

If WIRES were to be granted future enforcement authority, conflicts, litigations, decreased volunteer numbers and ultimately a reduction in the level of care, support and positive outcomes for members and our native wildlife will be the result.

Wildlife that comes into care is already compromised. Prosecuting volunteers that rescue and care for these compromised animals is not providing any kind of justice or reassurance.

The culture of vindictive behaviour must not be tolerated any longer – WIRES has a mindset and a focus that is not working well for the wildlife rehabilitation sector.

The Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector Strategy Review is currently considering the future of the sector but there are doubts that it will be able to fully resolve the many issues without first fully evaluating WIRES considerable role in NSW. The bushfire funds were donated during a specific Appeal aimed at helping areas affected by the fires. WIRES seems to be using these funds for purposes that don't align with why people donated to the appeal.

Earlier this year I attended one of the Wildlife Sector Review roundtables hosted by Trish Doyle MP in conjunction with the NPWS. There were many concerns and constructive discussions had by the many attendees that included vets and representatives from many different organisations. One overwhelming opinion was that WIRES was in crisis and I feel it is certainly not an organisation that could be entrusted to administer POCTA Act enforcement of wildlife.

With a former WIRES staff member (now working for the NPWS) being instrumental in running the roundtable discussions, this could be seen as an apparent conflict of interest. We hope not, but there does appear to be a far too cosy relationship within the three organisations (WIRES, RSPCA and NPWS).

It is very concerning that over \$70 million of the bushfire donations are left at WIRES disposal and I believe there must be a Parliamentary Inquiry to see what WIRES has done with the millions already spent and whether their strategic plan is aligned with others in the sector including vets, Police, SES & RFS and other wildlife groups.

I thank you for the opportunity to contribute my submission.