

Media Release

The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP

Minister for Energy, the Environment and Climate Change
Minister for Solar Homes



Wednesday, 9 December 2020

NEW ACTION PLAN TO IMPROVE WILDLIFE RESPONSE DURING FIRE

The Andrews Labor Government is ensuring bushfire impacted wildlife have the best possible chance of survival by improving and refining the way animals are rescued.

The *Wildlife Welfare Bushfire Response 2020 Action Plan* has been developed in partnership with the wildlife welfare sector following the devastating 2019/20 bushfires.

The bushfires, which burnt more than 1.5 million hectares of land across the state, saw the loss of hundreds of millions of animals and highlighted areas in the rescue response that could be improved.

The *Wildlife Welfare Bushfire Response 2020 Action Plan* will finalise new wildlife rehabilitation guidelines and:

- Establish a new Wildlife Welfare Sector Liaison role to improve communications
- Provide and coordinate veterinary services
- Incorporate wildlife welfare roles and training into DELWP's emergency response
- Set up an online tool to collect and share wildlife assessment and triage data
- Monitor koalas released after treatment to understand survival rates

These initiatives, funded by the \$59 million Bushfire Biodiversity Response and Recovery Program, are part of a suite of measures to protect and enhance our precious environment implemented since the 2019/20 fires.

The Action Plan was developed following a roundtable of wildlife groups, convened by Minister D'Ambrosio and included delegates from Animals Australia, Animal Justice Party, Australian Veterinary Association, RSPCA Victoria, Wildlife Victoria, Zoos Victoria and the University of Melbourne among others. The Government thanks Mr Andy Meddick for his leadership on this reform.

The Government is also continuing its support for the important services provided by the Victorian Wildlife Hotline operated by Wildlife Victoria, with \$494,000 allocated in the 2020/21 State Budget.

To further support those who care for our wildlife, the Government is providing \$200,000 to be shared between 76 of the state's authorised wildlife shelters and foster carers.

Maximum grants for this year's *Wildlife Rehabilitator Program* have increased to a maximum of \$3000 per recipient.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change Lily D'Ambrosio

"Last summer's bushfires were devastating but they've provided an opportunity for us to learn and improve our approach to rescuing wildlife and giving these precious creatures the best chance of survival."

"Working together with the wildlife sector on improving our response to bushfire rescue has been inspiring and will result in better outcomes for our animals."

"We're supporting those who advocate, care for and rehabilitate our wildlife to enrich our environment so we can all continue to appreciate and enjoy it."

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