

Media Release

Steve Dimopoulos MP

Minister for Environment

Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events

Minister for Outdoor Recreation



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STEPPING UP SUPPORT FOR WILDLIFE WELFARE

The Allan Labor Government is delivering stronger protections and new tools to stamp out wildlife crime and improve animal welfare across Victoria.

Minister for Environment Steve Dimopoulos today released the Government's response to the *Wildlife Act Review* backed by \$2.9 million of investment to support wildlife carers, shelters and rescuers across Victoria.

To improve access to animal trauma care services in regional Victoria we're investing \$2 million to create a new wildlife hospital at the Kyabram Fauna Park, run by Zoos Victoria.

Regional and rural wildlife carers and shelters will also benefit from \$350,000 in vet outreach and training to help build skills and capacity. A new \$300,000 Wildlife Rehabilitator Rebate Scheme will also be set up to help carers cover the costs of treating sick and injured animals including food, medicine and equipment.

We're also investing \$100,000 to bolster the number of wildlife rescuers responding to emergencies like fires and floods, \$100,000 to manage wombat mange, and \$50,000 in one-off grants for shelters in southwest Victoria. This investment is on top of the annual \$300,000 Wildlife Rehabilitator Grants which are now open for applications.

We're also protecting wildlife in urban areas, with a fruit netting swap pilot in five metro councils. The program helps households replace illegal netting with wildlife-safe alternatives at no cost. It's illegal to use or sell fruit tree netting with mesh larger than 5mm x 5mm, which can trap and injure animals like the grey-headed flying-fox.

In response to the Wildlife Act Review, Victoria will ban crocodiles as pets and update the licensing system for wildlife that is dangerous or has complex needs such as venomous snakes and monitor lizards, so they can only be held under tailored licences. There will also be limits on large-scale wildlife breeding to stamp out cruel breeding practices.

We will increase the maximum penalties and introduce new offences for wildlife crimes, and a Fit and Proper Person Test for all licences. We will also extend the statute of limitations for investigating wildlife crime and filing charges for offences against the Act.

We're expanding the partnership with Crime Stoppers Victoria and the Conservation Regulator to report wildlife and forest crime, which will help us protect animals around the clock. We're also creating an easy-to-use online form for submitting forest and wildlife crime reports 24/7.

We're also creating a new online tool that can be used to verify if other party in a purchase arrangement has a valid wildlife licence and create a public record of court outcomes for wildlife and forest crime – making it easier to prevent illegal trade and protect animal welfare.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Environment Steve Dimopoulos

"We're delivering stronger rules and better tools to catch out wildlife crimes and end cruel breeding operations."

"We're backing our dedicated carers and rescuers with more support on the ground and a new wildlife hospital to in regional Victoria."

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