

Wildlife Welfare Bushfire Response 2020

Action Plan



Acknowledgements

This document was developed in conjunction with representatives from the animal welfare sector through the Wildlife Welfare Roundtable. Special thanks to representation from Animals Australia, Aurora Wildlife Shelter, Animal Justice Party, Australian Veterinary Association, Goongerah Wombat Orphanage, International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), Parks Victoria, RSPCA Victoria, University of Melbourne Veterinary School, Wildlife Victoria and Zoos Victoria for supporting the co-design and delivery of this Action Plan.

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Photo credit

Cover Photograph: Marcia Riederer

Acknowledgment

We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it. We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

We are committed to genuinely partner, and meaningfully engage, with Victoria's Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and their broader aspirations in the 21st century and beyond.



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Minister's foreword

The 2019-20 bushfires were unprecedented in both scale and severity. Burning more than 1.5 million hectares across Victoria, the fires presented significant challenges in responding to wildlife impacts across the landscape, bringing widespread attention to the thousands of wildlife injured or killed by the fires and calls for action from the community.

The exceptional nature of the fire season left a scar across the eastern seaboard and raised concern within both the wildlife rehabilitation sector and the community more broadly as to the timeliness, scale and resourcing of the response effort.

To better understand the challenges and concerns, I convened a Wildlife Welfare Roundtable, funded by the Victorian Government's \$17.5 million Phase 1 Bushfire Biodiversity Response and Recovery program. Through this process we engaged broadly across the wildlife care and welfare sector to listen to the concerns and test ideas for improving aspects of the response.

This *Wildlife Welfare Bushfire Response 2020 Action Plan* outlines the activities my government is committed to complete with our partners over the coming months to deliver improvements to our standards and processes, enhance communication and public engagement and establish better ways of working across the wildlife welfare sector. The Roundtable and Action Plan has been an opportunity to redefine the relationship with the wildlife rehabilitation sector for the long term, and I'm pleased that an ongoing Wildlife Emergencies Reference Group will be established to continue the conversation.

Thank you to everyone who has participated in the process from across the sector. Your contribution has shaped the actions outlined in this plan and will help strengthen our response, delivering improved outcomes for wildlife during fire events.



Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio MP
Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change
Minister for Solar Homes

1. Resourcing and preparedness

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverables
1.1 Confirmation of State Controller Wildlife role	Lead: DELWP	November 2020	Confirmation of State Controller Wildlife role documented and approved within the DELWP emergency management system.
		December 2020	Develop FAQ including triggers for deployment of State Controller Wildlife.
1.2 Review and update Victorian response plan for wildlife affected by fire	Lead: DELWP	November 2020	Revise and circulate for feedback an updated edition of the <i>Victorian Response Plan for Wildlife Impacted by Fire</i> to the Wildlife Welfare Roundtable.
		December 2020	Finalise and release revised and updated edition of the <i>Victorian Response Plan for Wildlife Impacted by Fire</i> including regional engagement.
1.3 Incorporate Wildlife Welfare roles and training into DELWP's emergency management systems	Lead: DELWP Support: WV	November 2020	All data regarding accreditation for wildlife welfare roles including position descriptions and training records to be entered into appropriate departmental IT systems. Trained roles including accredited volunteers are integrated into DELWP's emergency response procedures for deployment.
1.4 Update and embed wildlife welfare information for pre-season briefings	Lead: DELWP Support: ZV, WV	November-December 2020	Wildlife welfare information updated and included in annual pre-season briefings and General Fire Fighter training for staff for 2020/21.
		November - December 2020	Refresh/update wildlife roles for 20/21 including accredited volunteers.
1.5 Emergency management exercises	Lead: DELWP Support: All	November – December 2020	Undertake targeted emergency management exercise for the 2020/21 fire season.
1.6 Building veterinary capacity*	Lead: ZV Support: AVA, DELWP, RSPCA, UoM	July 2020 - June 2021	Develop and deliver training modules and course content to build the appropriate wildlife experience and capacity for vets and vet nurses to effectively assess and treat injured wildlife during fire events.
1.7 Online Wildlife Emergency Reporting Tool*	Lead: DELWP	July 2020 – January 2021	Develop and implement internal electronic recording system for the collection of wildlife assessment and triage data.
	Lead: DELWP Support: WV	July- November 2020	Develop and launch an online Wildlife Emergency Reporting Tool.

*Action funded through Theme 2: Bushfire Biodiversity Response and Recovery Program

2. Improved standards and processes

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverables
2.1 Provision and co-ordination of veterinary services	Lead: ZV, DELWP Support: AVA, RSPCA	December 2020	Develop and communicate a process for the provision and co-ordination of veterinary services.
2.2 Post-treatment release monitoring*	Lead: ZV Support: DELWP, PINP	November 2020 - March 2021	Undertake research for post treatment release monitoring of rehabilitated koalas to understand post release survival rates.
2.3 Finalise the Wildlife Rehabilitation Guidelines	Lead: DELWP, ZV Support: OCR, WV	June 2021	Finalise and release the Victorian Wildlife Rehabilitation Guidelines. The guidelines provide best-practice guidance to Victorian wildlife rehabilitators about the capture, transport, treatment, rehabilitation and release of sick, injured and orphaned wildlife in Victoria. They will complement the mandatory requirements under the shelter and foster carer authorisations and the existing Authorisation Guide.
2.4 Streamline communication process	Lead: Communications working group	November 2020	Develop a Terms of Reference and clearly communicate the process for information sharing and media communication across the wildlife welfare sector during fire.

*Action funded through Theme 2: Bushfire Biodiversity Response and Early Recovery Program

3. Working together

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverables
3.1 Convene a Wildlife Welfare Roundtable*	Lead: DELWP	July 2020 – November 2020	Convene a Roundtable to increase engagement across the wildlife welfare sector.
		December 2020	Establish an ongoing Wildlife Emergencies Reference Group.
3.2 Create Wildlife Welfare Sector Liaison Role	Lead: DELWP	December 2020	Document and approve Wildlife Welfare Sector Liaison role for deployment during declared emergencies. Include role detail in the Updated <i>Victorian Response Plan for Wildlife Affected by Fire</i> (see Action 1.2)

*Action funded through Theme 2: Bushfire Biodiversity Response and Recovery Program

4. Communication

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverables
4.1 Reporting	Lead: DELWP	April 2021	Publish statistics and case studies related to wildlife post fire season.
	Lead: CWG	December 2020	Publish Action Plan with online dashboard status tracking.
4.2 Strategy development	Lead: CWG	December 2020	Develop an agreed strategic communication strategy.
4.3 Develop and promote key communication materials	Lead: CWG	November 2020 - February 2021	Develop targeted stakeholder engagement and communication materials focussed on the following key issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Dangers associated with operating on fire grounds</i> - <i>The role of triage & wildlife assessment teams</i> - <i>Supplementary feeding: incorporating new evidence and research</i> - <i>Making and receiving donations.</i> - <i>Where and when the community may see wildlife and how to assist</i>
4.4 Research to inform communication strategies	Lead: ZV, UoM AWSC Support: CWG	November 2020 - April 2021	Undertake research into community attitudes, trust and expectations regarding the welfare of wildlife in Victoria.

Acronyms

AWSC	Animal Welfare Science Centre
AVA	Australian Veterinary Association
CWG	Communications Working Group
DELWP	Department of Environment Land Water and Planning
OCR	Office of the Conservation Regulator
PINP	Phillip Island Nature Parks
TOR	Terms of Reference
RSPCA	RSPCA Victoria
UoM	University of Melbourne
WV	Wildlife Victoria
ZV	Zoos Victoria

For more information on the progress of this action plan, please visit:

www.wildlife.vic.gov.au/wildlife-emergencies/wildlife-fire-emergencies

delwp.vic.gov.au