



Biodiversity Conservation Act - Wildlife Licensing Reforms

**NATIVE ANIMAL KEEPING AND DEALING**

**STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIVE GROUP**

## **NATIVE MAMMAL EXPERT SUB-GROUP**

10am- 2pm, Tuesday 18 September 2018

Sydney Masonic Centre (cnr Goulburn and Castlereagh Street, Sydney)

### **RECORD OF OUTCOMES**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Robert Oliver welcomed attendees and noted apologies.

It was noted the sub-group was comprised of nominees of Stakeholder Consultative Group members.

The purpose of the sub-group is to advise OEH on issues raised in submissions on the private keeping of native mammals in the licensing reforms Discussion Paper

#### **2. MEETING OBJECTIVES**

The Stakeholder Consultative Group meeting on 29 August 2018 noted:

- an unexpectedly large number of submissions in support the private keeping of native mammals.
- these included a detailed proposal for a risk-based licence class framework prepared by the newly created Mammal Society of NSW.
- there were also many submissions in support of retaining the current OEH policy.

OEH undertook to develop detailed reform options to be considered at next Consultative Group meeting including:

1. retain current policy position and mammal keeping species list.
2. expand the species list for private keeping of native mammals

Concerns were raised that further public consultation on these options should be undertaken, since comments on mammal keeping were not specifically sought in the licensing reforms Discussion Paper.

#### Proposed Actions

- Attendees to advise OEH of other groups and organisations that should be consulted on this issue.
- OEH to develop options for further public consultation on proposed changes to mammal keeper licensing.

### 3. CURRENT NSW MAMMAL KEEPING POLICY

Robert Oliver provided an overview of the current NSW policy on private mammal keeping in NSW (included in agenda papers as Attachment A).

It was noted the policy was last reviewed in about 2002 in a consultative process involving wildlife and animal welfare groups.

### 4. MAMMAL KEEPING IN OTHER STATES AND TERRITORIES

#### a) South Australia and Victoria

It was noted the agenda papers included:

- a list of the Victorian and South Australian mammal keeper species lists, and NSW Mammal Society proposals (Attachment C)
- data on private mammal keeping in Victoria and South Australia, as obtained by the NSW Mammal Society (Attachment D)
- A comparison of Victoria and South Australia licence eligibility requirements, licence conditions and fees (Attachment E).

Comments included:

- the Victorian and South Australian data appeared to include mammals kept by licensed exhibitors as well as licensed private keepers
- neither Victoria nor South Australia appear to have published or require compliance with husbandry and welfare codes or standards.

#### Proposed action

- OEH to seek data from Victoria and South Australia on the species and number of mammal kept by private keepers, if available.

#### b) NSW policy on interstate relocations

Currently interstate keepers of native mammals not on the NSW species list must either rehome the animals or make other arrangements if they are moving to NSW. In some cases, this may result in euthanasia of the privately kept mammals illegally brought into NSW.

Queensland allows entry of native mammals on a restricted permit with conditions that inhibit selling, breeding, releasing the animals etc. A copy of the Queensland permit form and conditions was tabled at the meeting.

Comments were sought on whether NSW should adopt a similar permit system for people moving from interstate with native mammals.

Comments included:

- the permit should filter people who can fairly and reasonably dispose of animals through alternative pathways to rehome species that don't form strong bonds.
- for captive-bred species where the animal forms a strong bond with the owner, there may be welfare impacts of separating mammals from their keepers
- the keeper should address security risks and housing arrangements for pairs that may potentially breed
- the option of desexing males could be considered to prevent breeding and reduce risks if males escape to the wild.

#### Proposed Action

- OEH to develop a proposal modelled on the Queensland permit system for further consideration.

## 5. MAMMAL SOCIETY OF NSW PROPOSALS

Mitch Hodgson provided an overview of the proposed licensing framework submitted by the Society (included in agenda papers as Attachment B).

- the framework is similar to what is already in place for other native animals pets, with species to be regulated by Code and licence classes from M1 (basic), M2 (advanced) through to M3 (specialist)
- keepers would need to demonstrate competency to move up levels of licence
- keepers would be required to comply with a code of practice setting out husbandry and welfare standards, as apply to other types of kept native animal
- all licence applicants could be required to complete training modules to further prove suitability and capability as an owner.

Comments included:

Licence conditions and assessment criteria will be reviewed at the next meeting including reviewing the current content and process for Victoria and South Australia.

- minimum cage requirements should allow the animal to exhibit natural behaviours
- many keepers use cages as temporary housing and allow the animal to have free roam of the residence e.g. sugar gliders

### Proposed action

- OEH to develop draft proposed licence eligibility requirements and licence conditions for review by the sub-group
- The Mammal Society of NSW to prepare a draft outline of a code of practice for private mammal keeping for review by the sub-group.

## 6. RISK ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED SPECIES

The Mammal Society submission proposed 44 mammal species for inclusion in an expanded species list, and has provided:

- risk assessments for three species (common ringtail possum, fat-tailed dunnart and sugar glider)
- an additional 15 risk assessments circulated immediately prior the meeting and tabled at the meeting.

It was noted the additional risk assessments included two threatened Phascogale species that were not included in the Mammal Society's submission.

In the time remaining for the meeting, it was agreed to commence reviewing the risk assessments.

### Proposed code-regulated species

The Mammal Society submitted risk assessments for proposed three mammal species for regulation by code of practice only.

- Spinifex Hopping Mouse (currently requires licence in NSW)
- Plains Rat (currently requires licence in NSW)
- Mitchells Hopping Mouse

Comments included:

- these species are exempt from licensing in Victoria and/or South Australia
- before moving any mammal species to code-regulated, captive population data and should be assessed and reliable sources of captive-bred animals should be identified to ensure adequate lawful sources of supply
- husbandry and welfare standards should be developed and implemented to increase keeper competency before considering moving mammal species to code

- inclusion of Mitchells Hopping Mouse to the species list is sensible given that they are possibly already kept in NSW under Spinifex Hopping Mouse.

#### Proposed M1 or basic licence species

Two species assessments were reviewed, Fat-tail dunnarts and Sugar gliders

Comments included:

- fat-tail dunnarts have a very small captive population which raises concerns about legal supply
- animals from scientific research may be used to supply the pet industry (eg, University of Wollongong was identified as a potential supplier of fat-tail dunnarts)
- more information was sought on the Victorian processes for making surplus zoo animals available to licensed keepers
- concerns about nocturnality and the fact that sugar gliders are colony animals
- interactions that nocturnal reptiles / birds have with keepers is very different to the interactions bonded native mammals would have with keepers
- sugar gliders can be kept individually and will bond with humans if this is the case – due to their popularity as pets in America they are well researched and have proven to be great pets in other states of Australia and other countries.

The Mammal Society advised it had surveyed their members to identify their priorities for proposed additions to the NSW keepers list.

#### Proposed actions

- OEH to obtain more information on the Victorian processes for making surplus zoo animals available to licensed keepers
- Mammal Society of NSW to confirm their priorities for assessing the remaining species, including about ten species for review at the next meeting.

An indicative priority list discussed at the meeting included:

- |                           |                                   |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • Rufous Bettong          | • Eastern Quoll                   |
| • Sugar Glider            | • Tiger Quoll (Spot Tailed Quoll) |
| • Squirrel Glider         | • Tammar Wallaby                  |
| • Common Ringtail Possum  | • Fat-Tail Dunnart                |
| • Common Brushtail Possum | • Mitchells Hopping Mouse         |

## **7. NEXT STEPS**

Robert Oliver advised the proposed next steps in developing the option of an expanded species list for private keeping of native mammals

- A second mammal sub group meeting will be convened prior to the October Native Animal Keeping and Dealing Stakeholder Consultative Group meeting.
- The meeting invitation will be extended to include relevant experts from Australian Museum, Wildlife Health Australia, Taronga Zoo, and Zoo and Aquarium Association, and any other organisations nominated by attendees.
- The agenda for the next meeting will include:
  - any updated data on privately kept mammals in other states
  - any available information on Victorian processes for making surplus zoo animals available to licensed keepers
  - proposed licence eligibility conditions and licence conditions
  - contents of proposed code of practice for private mammal keeping
  - review of species risk assessments in order of priority as proposed by the Mammal Society.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Attendees**

Anthony Stimson, NSW Mammal Society

Audrey Koosmen, NSW Wildlife Council

Brendon Neilly, RSPCA NSW

Cindy Jackson, Jetty Pets

Deborah Kerr, NSW Wildlife Council

Lee Webley, NSW Mammal Society

Michael Donnelly, NSW Mammal Society

Mitchell Hodgson, NSW Mammal Society

Professor Mike Archer, NSW Mammal Society

Richard Woodman, NSW Wildlife Council

Steve Jackson, NSW Department of Primary Industries

Robert Oliver, Office of Environment and Heritage

Louise Hatton, Office of Environment and Heritage

Hannah Lewis, Office of Environment and Heritage

### **Apologies**

John Grima, Pet Industry Association of Australia

Peter Stathis, Office of Environment and Heritage