

# ESTABLISHING A STATEWIDE WILDLIFE REHABILITATION COUNCIL IN QUEENSLAND

**Adrian Caneris**  
**Wildlife Preservation Society Qld**  
**Chair – QWRC Steering Committee**  
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## *Abstract*

During the community consultations conducted by Queensland's Environmental Protection Agency, as part of the public review of the wildlife component of Queensland's *Nature Conservation Regulation 1994* the majority of responses received were issues related to wildlife rehabilitation.

Disparity amongst stakeholders was common. The one resounding endorsement came for the proposal for the establishment of an association to amalgamate wildlife rehabilitation interest, across Queensland, under an over-arching yet inclusive alliance. This is now known as the **“Queensland Wildlife Rehabilitation Council”** or QWRC

Whilst there is wide support for the concept, the challenges of creating a truly representative state wide entity for wildlife rehabilitation interests are immense.

Queensland Wildlife Rehabilitation Council (QWRC) is a progressive group comprised of appointed wildlife rehabilitation volunteers, two representatives from State Government Departments one being from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS), and the second from the Department of Primary Industries (DPI), and two peak community based organisations being the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Inc (RSPCA) and the Wildlife Preservation Society Queensland (WPSQ).

## **Introduction**

In May 2000, the EPA produced a scoping paper for a review of the wildlife component of the *Nature Conservation Regulation 1994*. In March 2001, seven public meetings were held across Queensland to explore more efficient ways to legislate the keeping and use of wildlife.

The community consultations held during March 2001 produced a significant number of responses although the foremost issues related to the rehabilitation of wildlife. . Disparity amongst stakeholders was common with many and varied issues. Whilst through the submissions numerous issues were identified with requests for improvement, workable solutions were rarely offered.

Resounding endorsement came for the proposal of establishing an association to amalgamate wildlife rehabilitation interest, across Queensland, under an over-arching yet inclusive alliance. The need for the establishment of a representative body for wildlife rehabilitation in Queensland was identified within the EPA scoping paper and endorsed by the associated public consultation meetings across the state. The establishment of an association to amalgamate wildlife rehabilitation interests under an over-arching yet inclusive body was strongly sought.

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To define the means by which wildlife rehabilitation could have statewide representation the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) formed a working group. This working group established a steering committee that was to comprise representatives selected from nominations received from all listed wildlife care groups throughout Queensland. As well, a reference committee was established containing those nominees who were not selected on the QWRC steering committee.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> May 2003 the steering committee was established with the Wildlife Preservation Society of Qld (WPSQ) requested to chair the committee. The QWRC steering committee was to consist of:

- 11 wildlife rehabilitators as district representatives, and
- 1 representative each from the WPSQ, RSPCA, QPWS and DPI

The QPWS has provided and meet all administration costs, other than meeting attendance expenses.

### **The Steering Committee and its Charter**

The first “Steering Committee” meeting, was held in Brisbane, May 2003, to “workshop” the future directions, and terms of reference for QWRC. The main objects identified for the steering committee was to establish a representative body, which ensures all stakeholders, have a clear understanding of, and opportunity for participation in, a committee that;

- Unites wildlife rehabilitation interests under one structure or association.
- Provides the means by which those actively involved in wildlife rehabilitation will have a representative statewide body.
- Provides advice and direction to government and community on all aspects of wildlife rehabilitation.
- Advances wildlife rehabilitation in Queensland.

The Steering Committee has met monthly and continued to progress material between meetings through substantial use of electronic and verbal communications. This was vital, and remains such, to ensure the ongoing progression and establishment of the QWRC. The steering committee has produced several documents that will give guidance and assistance towards a finalised QWRC.

The main documentation produced has focused on proposed terms of reference and the establishment of a constitution for a fully functioning QWRC. These documents, while still in a draft form, constitute the basis and guidelines, to formulate the development and implementation for the future council.

The steering committee has determined the following as the QWRC Mission Statement.

*To direct, guide, and improve standards and outcomes of native wildlife rehabilitation and release throughout Queensland.*

**Adrian Caneris, WPSQ  
Chair - QWRC Steering Committee  
June 2004**

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### **An Interim Council**

Whilst working on the establishment of the QWRC, the steering committee has inevitably been sought to provide advice on current operational issues. A consequence, of the pressing need for a statewide representative body to provide such counsel, is that the QWRC steering committee has recommended its status be changed from that of a steering committee to an interim or inaugural council.

The establishment of the current committee as an interim QWRC is viewed as a prudent and sensible move. The existing QWRC steering committee provides a functioning and fully representative framework for ensuring an inclusive and consistent structure to oversee and implement any future changes. As well, the interim QWRC will have, and be seen to have, the independence required for such an association to function effectively.

As an inaugural council the current steering committee will also be in a better positioned to broaden its focus and commence representation of the wildlife rehabilitation interests. These interests have invariably delayed or distracted the steering committee from its charter.

Active and ongoing involvement in the implementation of appropriate and uniform rehabilitation practices and standards for native wildlife across Qld during the interim period will be crucial to stakeholder acceptance of the proposed QWRC concept.

The Steering Committee is establishing Memorandums of Understanding with QPWS, DPI and RSPCA to ensure ongoing support and commitment levels for future councils.

### **The Future**

It is envisaged that the QWRC will be an organisation amalgamating all wildlife rehabilitation interest across Queensland. As well, the committee will seek to liaise with and where absent help establish similar statewide representation in other states.

It is the author's view that only upon the establishment of similar committees in all States and Territories across Australia that a national body could then begin to become realistic and able to provide effective representation in Australia.