



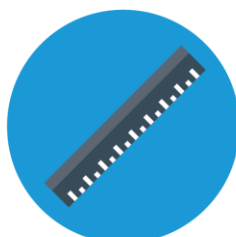
FIRST PERSON
CONSULTING

Evaluation of Wildlife Victoria

Prepared for
Wildlife Victoria



RESEARCH



EVALUATION



DESIGN

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Executive summary

Background

Wildlife Victoria has been in operation for 30 years. It is a registered not-for-profit charity that, at its core, provides a wildlife emergency response service. This service **provides callers with advice and, where needed, arranges volunteer rescuers and transporters, and links with veterinarians, carers and shelters to get the best help for sick, injured or orphaned wildlife.**

Complementing this service, it:

- advocates for better wildlife welfare
- educates the community about how to successfully co-exist with wildlife.

It is the largest organisation of its kind in Victoria and, despite the scale of operations, it is reliant on an uncertain stream of funding.

To promote accountability and support future applications for funding, Wildlife Victoria commissioned First Person Consulting (FPC) to **independently evaluate the organisation's contributions to Victoria**, including:

- the value to members of the Victorian community
- the value to volunteers
- the value to local and state government agencies
- the value in terms of wildlife welfare
- the opportunities for improving how Wildlife Victoria delivers its services and for the wildlife care sector as a whole.

Our approach was to:

- **Develop a program logic model for Wildlife Victoria** to summarise its core functions and expected outcomes.
- **Review key documents and data**, including:
 - financial reports for data relating to income and expenditure
 - the Wildlife Victoria Salesforce database for data relating to the Emergency Response Service
 - review of external sites and documents to understand Wildlife Victoria's broader role, including council, state government and other wildlife rescue websites.
- **Interview key stakeholders (39)**, including:
 - **Volunteers (9).**
 - **Key sector stakeholders (14).** This included representatives from DELWP, Zoos Victoria, RSPCA, councils, Wildlife Victoria staff and other rescue organisations.
 - **Reporters** (callers to the service) **(16).**
- **Survey volunteers** using a short online survey to support interview and database data. This was distributed by Wildlife Victoria to 103 volunteers, avoiding volunteers who had been surveyed less than six months previously.

Key findings

Wildlife Victoria is a long-established and significant contributor to the management of wildlife welfare in Victoria. **As an organisation, it directly expends an average of \$1.2 million per year, largely in providing a dedicated reporting and coordination service for wildlife in distress.**

It links a pool of around 560 volunteer rescuers and transporters with vets and with licenced wildlife carers and shelters. Through this, the organisation is able to support and leverage **a further \$1.9 million in volunteer time and in-kind equipment and transport costs.**

In turn, this provides a range of benefits to:

- **Community members.** Over 80,000 calls and requests for help were received in 2017-18. The organisation was able to address over half of these, creating 43,712 cases that involved 50,230 individual animals. The value for reporters is the assistance provided by phone staff or on-ground volunteers in helping to manage these incidents—which are often distressing.
 - **96% of surveyed volunteers considered the service to be important or very important to members of the public**
 - **half of interviewed reporters (8/16) spoke specifically about the emotional support and stress relief provided by the Wildlife Victoria service**
 - these incidents were also an important opportunity for improving reporters' awareness, understanding and appreciation of wildlife.

In addition to education at the time of wildlife incidents, in the last four years Wildlife Victoria has also **run education sessions with almost 11,000 participants**—largely school children, helping them to better understand the value of and how to protect native wildlife.

- **Volunteers.** Wildlife Victoria's key function is connecting volunteer rescuers and transporters to a network of 482 vets and 147 wildlife shelters and foster carers. **Most surveyed volunteers (90%) noted that in the absence of this service, they would probably reduce the number of rescues they did.** Volunteers also pointed to the important role of training and support, highlighting it as a key area where the organisation can continue to improve.
- **Government.** There is strong and growing community demand for the service that Wildlife Victoria provides. **In the absence of Wildlife Victoria, this community expectation is likely to flow through to councils, state government agencies such as DELWP, or other government-funded organisations.**
 - **At present, they are not equipped to deal with the scale of the work supported by Wildlife Victoria,** nor able to harness the efficiencies of their centralised, state-wide phone system.
 - **Most councils currently refer wildlife incidents straight to Wildlife Victoria**—of those that mention a wildlife rescue service on their website, 94% direct people to Wildlife Victoria.
 - **A conservative estimate of running a similar service through a government agency is in the order of \$600,000.** Moreover, the cost to establish this service would also require:
 - initial investment in the database system, training and process-development

- development of networks and connections to relevant people and organisations throughout the state
 - establishment of relationships with volunteers such that they are willing to work with the system.
- **Wildlife.** Between 2014 and 2018, Wildlife Victoria received **reports relating to over a quarter of a million animals (227,004) across approximately 400 species.** The organisation offers the opportunity to rehabilitate sick or injured wildlife that may have otherwise suffered or died, including orphaned young, or to humanly euthanise animals where rehabilitation is not feasible.
 - In 2017-18, the most common issue related to the animal being ‘found on the ground’ (28,839; 57%) or being struck by a vehicle (6,415; 13%)
 - In terms of known outcomes around 14% (3,877) ended up in rehabilitation, 14% (3,776) were euthanised and 10% (2862) died – in most other cases (44%; 12,281) advice or education was given, or animals were referred elsewhere, with no ability to follow-up.
 - Conservation benefits from Wildlife Victoria’s work are more diffuse but include the support of 65 species and 2411 individuals listed under the *Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* that were reported to Wildlife Victoria between 2014 and 2018.
 - The other, less-direct conservation benefit relates to the value of the Wildlife Victoria database, which contains several hundred-thousand detailed records of animal incidents that can help research and other evidence-based decision-making.

It is important to note that Wildlife Victoria is not the only organisation working to support sick, injured and orphaned wildlife in Victoria. There is a network of dozens of rescue groups, shelters and carers located throughout the state. However, the strengths and benefits of Wildlife Victoria in this space are:

- its large scale relative to other groups, helping create efficiencies and improve its reach across the state
- its reputation, which helps members of the public to find and access the service in a space characterised by small and often disparate organisations.

Overall, its size, reach and reputation puts Wildlife Victoria in a unique position. It is currently well acknowledged as a coordinator of wildlife rescues and transport across the state. There is clear opportunity for this role to continue into the future, including greater integration and expansion of its work to ultimately improve the way that sick, injured and orphaned wildlife are attended to in Victoria.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

Wildlife Victoria is a not-for-profit registered charity that:

- provides the community with advice and assistance to deal with wildlife in distress
- advocates for better wildlife welfare
- educates the community about how to successfully co-exist with wildlife.

In terms of advice and assistance to the community—the main work of the organisation—Wildlife Victoria received over 80,000 requests for help in 2017-2018. In turn, this assisted over 50,000 animals. Demand for Wildlife Victoria's rescue service has almost doubled in the past five years.

Despite the scale of operations, Wildlife Victoria is reliant on an uncertain stream of funding. More than three-quarters (76%) per cent of its 2017-2018 income was from donations and bequests.

To promote accountability and support future applications for funding, Wildlife Victoria commissioned First Person Consulting (FPC) to independently evaluate the organisation's contributions to Victoria.

This document reports on the findings from the evaluation.

1.2 Objectives and scope of work

The objective of the project was to evaluate Wildlife Victoria's role, value, and effectiveness. This evaluation could then be used to support applications for competitive grants, approaches to philanthropic foundations and family trusts, and in the negotiation of service agreements with government agencies.

The project was guided by a set of key questions:

- **What value does Wildlife Victoria provide to members of the Victorian community?** This includes value to incident reporters, the direct economic contributions that the organisation makes, and the leveraging of volunteer resources achieved through the organisation.
- **What value does Wildlife Victoria provide to volunteers?** This includes the contribution that the organisation makes to the work of volunteers.
- **What value does Wildlife Victoria provide to state and local government agencies?** This includes any role fulfilled by the organisation that would otherwise fall to government agencies, as well as any economic efficiencies of this arrangement.
- **What value does Wildlife Victoria provide in terms of wildlife welfare?** This includes documentation of the animal welfare benefits from Wildlife Victoria's work, contributions to biodiversity conservation (e.g. threatened species) and the role that Wildlife Victoria plays within the wildlife sector.
- **What opportunities are there for improving how Wildlife Victoria delivers its services and for the wildlife care sector as a whole?**

1.3 This document

This document:

- outlines the methods used in this evaluation (Section 2)
- provides a high-level overview of Wildlife Victoria and its work, including the scale of operations and a valuation of the economic inputs leveraged through its work (Section 3)
- discusses the value of Wildlife Victoria to:
 - the Victorian community, particularly in terms of members of the public who report wildlife incidents (Section 4)
 - volunteers (Section 5)
 - local and state government (Section 6)
 - animal welfare and conservation (Section 7)
- summarises the key findings and outlines some of the key challenges and opportunities for Wildlife Victoria into the future (Section 8).

2 Methods

2.1 Key steps

The key steps in this evaluation were:

- **A face-to-face inception/planning meeting** with relevant Wildlife Victoria staff to:
 - clarify the objectives of the project
 - refine the scope of high-level questions/areas of interest that need to be addressed
 - identify relevant documents and data for review
 - discuss project logistics, including timing of key elements.

Following the inception meeting we developed a project plan that guided delivery of the evaluation.

- **Development of a draft a program logic model for Wildlife Victoria.** This was done using available documents and early discussions with Wildlife Victoria staff, to help in focusing data collection from volunteers and other stakeholders.
- **Review of key documents and data**, including:
 - financial reports for data relating to income and expenditure
 - the Wildlife Victoria Salesforce database for data relating to the Emergency Response Service
 - review of external sites and documents to understand Wildlife Victoria's broader role, including council, state government and other wildlife rescue websites.
- **Interviews with key stakeholders (39)**, including:
 - **Volunteers (9).** Volunteers were an important source of information on volunteer-labour and in-kind contributions, as well as for understanding the benefits of their work and the role of Wildlife Victoria.
 - **Key sector stakeholders (14).** This included representatives from DELWP, Zoos Victoria, RSPCA, councils, Wildlife Victoria staff and other rescue organisations.
 - **Reporters (16).** We asked members of the public who had reported injured wildlife to Wildlife Victoria about the value of the service and what they would have done without it.
- **Survey of volunteers.** We designed a short online survey (Appendix A) to support interview and database data. This was distributed by Wildlife Victoria to 103 volunteers, avoiding volunteers who had been surveyed less than six months previously as part of a separate project. We received 29 responses (28%).
- **Reporting and presentation of the results.** Results from the evaluation were integrated into a report and presented to key Wildlife Victoria staff. This provided an opportunity to 'sense-check' key findings and identify any gaps.

2.2 Limitations

Several limitations should be kept in mind when interpreting the results of this project:

- To manage the burden on volunteers, volunteers selected for the evaluation were from a sample of volunteers not surveyed in a 2018 volunteer survey. As such, the sample size for

some of the data in this report are not as large as otherwise might be desirable. Nevertheless, where appropriate, estimates of the confidence in calculations has been provided. Results have also been cross-checked against other volunteer data, including 105 responses to a 2018 volunteer survey. This indicates that, overall, the feedback and data collected through this evaluation provides a meaningful and representative picture of Wildlife Victoria.

- The focus of this evaluation has been on a relatively open-ended exploration of the organisation's value. There is no organisational-level strategy against which to provide a detailed evaluation of the organisation's effectiveness. We have, however, identified a range of opportunities that Wildlife Victoria may wish to pursue in refining its operations.
- Much of the data in this report is based on the insights and perceptions of key stakeholders. As such, it is subject to inherent subjectivities and biases that should be kept in mind. We have addressed where possible by collating data from a range of stakeholders and stakeholder groups and triangulation with other data where possible.

3 Wildlife Victoria's activities, outputs and outcomes

3.1 Organisational description and program logic

Wildlife Victoria has been in operation for 30 years. It is a registered not-for-profit charity that, at its core, provides a wildlife emergency response service. This phone and internet service supports members of the public by providing advice, and if appropriate, to connect them with volunteer rescuers and transporters to assist sick, injured or orphaned wildlife. Complementing this service, it:

- advocates for better wildlife welfare
- educates the community about how to successfully co-exist with wildlife.

Figure 1 outlines a program logic for the organisation. This simplified model provides a one-page summary of:

- the inputs into Wildlife Victoria's work (including financial and in-kind contributions)
- the key activities Wildlife Victoria engages in
- the outputs of those activities (i.e. the material products or services delivered)
- the outcomes those activities and outputs are expected to lead to—i.e. the short-, medium- and long-term changes in people, the environment or organisations.

3.2 Scale and value of operations – inputs and outputs

Most of the benefits of Wildlife Victoria's work to the Victorian community are difficult to quantify in dollar terms. For example, there are no markets to reliably assess the value of reduced animal suffering or the value of support to reporters. However, in line with assessing the impacts of other not-for-profits¹, documenting the value of inputs and scale of outputs provides a useful foundation for more qualitative assessment of outcomes (Sections 4 to 7 below).

Key inputs into Wildlife Victoria's operations are:

- **an expenditure of \$1,150,523** (average expenditure of the three years 2015-16 to 2017-18)²
- of which, an average of \$804, 073 (70%) was spent on employment costs
- **employment of a total of 20 staff at 9.2 full-time-equivalents**
- **volunteer contributions of approximately \$1,922,898³**, comprised of:
 - 37,908 hours of labour worth \$1,585,355
 - equipment expenses: \$81,760
 - travel costs: \$255,783 (Table 1).

Wildlife Victoria's average revenue of \$1,099,923, comes from (average of 2015-16 to 2017-18):

- 82% donations and bequests
- 10% grants and corporate sponsorship
- 8% other.

¹ Contribution of the Not-for-Profit sector: Productivity Commission Research Report. 2010. Productivity Commission. Canberra.

² Wildlife Victoria Inc. Statement of Profit or Loss (2015-16 to 2017-18).

³ Note only the rescue and transport contributions are assessed here – care and rehabilitation of wildlife is largely outside the scope of Wildlife Victoria's activities and is, therefore, not included.

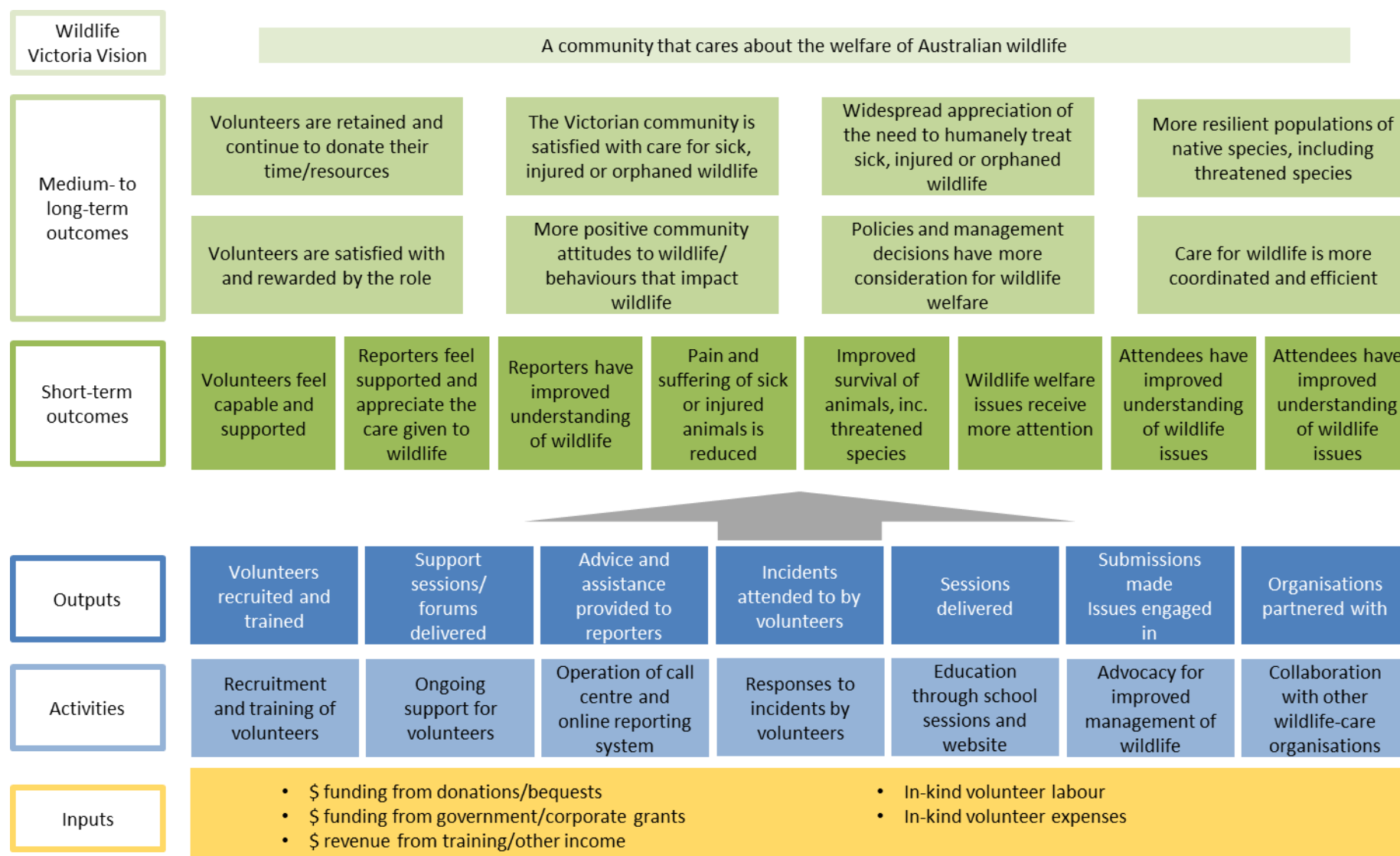


Figure 1. Wildlife Victoria's key activities, outputs and outcomes.

Table 1. Components of volunteer contribution.

Contribution component	Amount (per year)	Notes
Labour	37,980 hours per year at \$41.74 per hour: \$1,585,355 in total	Total hours calculated based on relationship between # incidents and hours reported by volunteers. This equates to 3.9 hours per incident—a more conservative estimate than the 4.1 hours per incident based on simple average hours reported by volunteers. Total incidents used = 9669 and the value per hour is derived from ATO wage data from May 2018 ⁴ . This is consistent with the gross opportunity cost method used by both the ATO ⁵ and in other volunteer research. ⁶
Equipment expenses (e.g. nets, cages, blankets etc.)	\$146 ±\$46.78 per volunteer per annum (95% confidence interval of the mean(i.e. ~±2 standard errors)) \$81,760 in total	Estimate from survey of volunteers, noting very low correlation ($r^2=0.01$) between equipment expenditure and # rescues (i.e. it is essentially a fixed cost). Based on 560 unique active volunteers.
Travel expenses	Total distance of 376,151 km and value of: \$255,783 ± \$36,074	Distance based on average trip of 38.9km taken from sample of 200 cases analysed using Google Maps and 9,669 incidents with call-outs/transport. 0.68 c/km based on Australian Taxation Office travel costs.

From these inputs, the scale of Wildlife Victoria's outputs are substantial. In 2017-18:

- **43,712 cases were created** in Wildlife Victoria's Emergency Response Service database (instances where people seek help about an animal potentially in need). These came from:
 - 41,526 answered calls (53% of the 77,928 calls received)
 - 8,958 online requests
 - a total of 86,868 requests for help.
- These cases involved **50,230 individual animals**.
- In response to these cases, Wildlife Victoria staff and volunteers:
 - provided advice and support to the reporter
 - **sent out a volunteer to help rescue or transport animals around 10,000 times⁷**
 - referred cases on to other organisations, including Victoria Police, Marine Response Unit, DELWP, and to wildlife foster carers and shelters – with 2,446 cases (around 5%) referred to this latter group alone.
- **Wildlife Victoria Sent and received close to a quarter of a million (224,234) SMS messages** in liaising with its pool of 1114 unique contacts (volunteers, vets, wildlife shelters, carers and other stakeholders).

The benefits of these outputs for community members, volunteers, government agencies and animals are described in the Sections below.

⁴ <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6302.0>

⁵ <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/5256.0Appendix62012-13>

⁶ e.g. Ironmonger, D 2012, The Economic Value of Volunteering in Victoria, Department of Planning and Community Development, Victorian Government.

⁷ based on estimates from Wildlife Victoria 2017-18 service summary

4 Value to the Victorian community

4.1 Overview

This section discusses the value that Wildlife Victoria and its volunteers provide to members of the Victorian community. This includes:

- the benefits to members of the public who report an issue or incident with wildlife
- education and awareness-raising
- the promotion of public health and safety.

The role and value of Wildlife Victoria to other aspects of the Victorian community—such as through the support of animal welfare and conservation outcomes—are dealt with in Sections 5 to 7.

4.2 Support for community members who find wildlife in distress

Although Wildlife Victoria’s work is ultimately targeted at helping sick, injured and orphaned wildlife, it also benefits members of the public. Wildlife Victoria relies on community members to report wildlife incidents. At the same time, it provides a service to those reporters in the form of **assistance and support to help manage wildlife incidents, often in distressing situations**. Ninety-six per cent of surveyed volunteers considered the service to be important or very important to members of the public (Figure 2).

The specific benefits identified by reporters, volunteers and other stakeholders include:

- **Reassurance that animals were being helped by someone appropriately trained and skilled.** Of the volunteers who commented, around two-thirds (14/22) noted that this was a key benefit of their on-ground work, one noting “it’s reassurance to the caller that there’s someone that they can call for help; reassurance that there is someone there to help the animal”. This applies both to the specific incident—that someone is there to help—but also to wildlife more generally; “it’s the peace of mind that people like us are out there saving wildlife”.

It was useful, you don’t really know what to do. I’m a city person and we saw a badly injured kangaroo about two years ago and called [Wildlife Victoria] ... they tracked it down, put it out of misery. It’s good to know these services are available and just that there’s people who know what to do and that they’re responsive. (reporter)

Some volunteers noted that this helped some reporters to ‘move on’ with their lives after reporting an incident—such as getting to work or similar—secure in the knowledge that the animal was being taken care of.

- Around half of interviewed reporters (8/16) spoke specifically about the **emotional support and stress relief provided by the Wildlife Victoria service**.

It was a happy ending, but it was stressful ... it was just horrible waiting for them to arrive and help with the duck. (reporter)

Emphasising the same point, other stakeholders highlighted the clear value in the service in relieving this, sometimes desperate, need:

The organisation itself is an amazing concept ... it's awesome for the wildlife and the member of the public and when they're desperate to speak to someone who can do something about it, it's really important for them. ... It's instant relief for them. (other wildlife sector stakeholder)

Some volunteers reflected that this is partly about their role in empowering reporters, enabling them reduce feelings of helplessness.

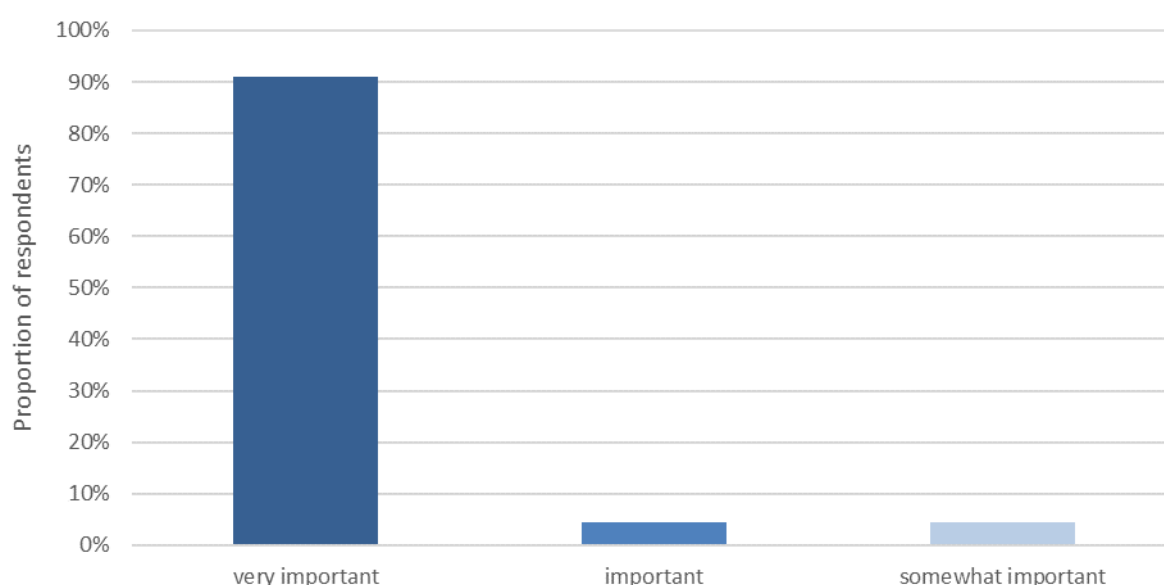


Figure 2. Volunteers' perceptions of the importance of a service such as Wildlife Victoria and its network of volunteers to members of the public (n=22).

4.3 Promotion of Public Health and safety

Wildlife Victoria's rescue of sick, injured and orphaned wildlife also has tangible public health and safety outcomes. Additional to assisting the members of the public that are reporting a sick, injured and orphaned animals, Wildlife Victoria promotes public health and safety for the wider community, removing potentially hazardous animals. Wildlife Victoria volunteers are trained and experienced in the treatment of injured and diseased animals and this has several tangible benefits:

- Linked to the previous section about support from appropriately trained and skilled volunteers, an element highlighted by survey respondents was **incidents being managed more safely**. For example, one of the most frequent animal reports are macropods, which can be particularly dangerous to approach when large. In 2018 there were 8256 incidents with macropods that were reported to Wildlife Victoria. As one volunteer noted:

It's also about removing hazards, i.e. animals near the road. Or assisting animals with proper equipment to prevent non-trained members of the public being harmed trying to do so themselves. (volunteer)

- Another noted benefit is that appropriately attending to sick animals can prevent the spread of zoonotic disease, and the contamination of waterways, soil and groundwater.⁸ Simply removing the animal from site prevents human interactions with sick or injured animals and prevents any further contamination of water or soil. Flying-foxes are reported to Wildlife Victoria at an average of 870 animals per year (between the years Of 2014-2018). Whilst rare, each of these incidents is a potential for the transfer of the zoonotic *Australian bat lyssavirus* to members of the public, particularly as the reported bats may be sick or injured.⁹ Wildlife Victoria volunteers deployed to bat rescues are appropriately vaccinated against the disease, and are provided with a protocol in dealing with members of the public who might have been scratched or bitten by a sick or injured bat.

4.4 Education and awareness raising

Over half (12/22) of the surveyed volunteers observed that wildlife incidents were also an important opportunity for improving reporters' awareness, understanding and appreciation of wildlife. This applies both to the interactions they have when called out to incidents, as well as the support and advice given to reporters by Wildlife Victoria phone staff.

Whenever I go out to a rescue, I always spend time talking to the other person until they have an understanding of the way things are... I always give the community feedback about the animal they've called in, for example sending texts once they've been released. I get some really good feedback from that. Quite often people don't realise how long something's in care. (volunteer)

In addition to the information, advice and general awareness-raising that happens when a member of the public reports a wildlife incident, Wildlife Victoria also runs a series of education workshops. These sessions are held in schools, scouts, holiday programs, kindergartens, vets and other community forums (e.g. Rotary clubs). Over the last four years (2015 -2018), Wildlife Victoria ran these sessions with:

- 153 organisations
- 10,932 participants.¹⁰

⁸ https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/798089/Primefact-Animal-carcass-disposal.pdf

⁹ <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/infectious-diseases/disease-information-advice/rabies-australian-bat-lyssavirus>

¹⁰ This includes 634 participants from a community-focused series of 21 events—*RACV Wild Bytes – stories from your backyard*—run in partnership with the RACV.

These sessions are run by volunteers. Depending on the target group they focus on showcasing native fauna and discussing challenges, threats and actions that people can take to help animals in distress, or to prevent injuries in the first place. In addition to these standard events, between 2016 and 2018, supported by the RACV, Wildlife Victoria ran a series of events across the state to raise awareness more broadly about Victoria's native wildlife (Box 1).

Box 1 – Awareness raising through RACV Wild Bytes – Stories From Your Backyard

In addition to its regular suite of education workshops, which are typically run in schools, Wildlife Victoria ran the *RACV Wild Bytes – Stories From Your Backyard* series of events in 2016-2018. Over 600 people attended this series of 21 workshops, which were focused on members of the broader community who were keen to learn about and help native wildlife.

The events included discussions between host and panel members consisting of volunteers and Wildlife Victoria emergency response staff. They covered a range of topics, such as

- handling orphaned joeys
- avoiding swooping birds
- what to do if you hear a possum in your roof
- attracting native birds into your backyard
- issues with fruit tree netting
- responsible pet ownership
- rescue stories first-hand from wildlife rescue volunteers.

Events were held in a range of venues, ranging from community halls in Bunyip through to the NAB offices in Melbourne.

The team organising the events noted that it was also an opportunity for

... engaging with local rescue groups and giving them the opportunity to network with their local community; and in turn give locals the opportunity to make connections with their local rescuers was a definite highlight for us. The ability to engage with so many different communities around Victoria was equally as important for us during this program.¹¹

¹¹ RACV & Wildlife Victoria two-year and final Community Partnership review. April 2018. Wildlife Victoria.

5 Value to volunteers

5.1 Overview

Volunteers are at the core of Wildlife Victoria's operations. A network of around 560 volunteer rescuers and transporters across the state provide their time and other resources to help sick, injured and orphaned wildlife and the broader community.

As outlined in Section 3.2, these volunteers contribute in the order of \$1.9 million per year of unpaid labour and in-kind transportation and equipment costs. Wildlife Victoria:

- **Connects these volunteers to wildlife incidents and a network of 482 vets and 147 shelters and foster carers** across the state (Section 5.2).
- Provides a role in **advising volunteers, linking them to training and, increasingly, providing support** and networks to help manage the emotional strain of volunteering (Section 5.3).

These roles, as well as the underlying motivations of volunteers (Section 5.4), are discussed below.

5.2 Connecting volunteers to members of the public and wildlife in need

One of the key benefits and functions of Wildlife Victoria, as noted by volunteers, is the role that it plays in connecting them with wildlife incidents. Most volunteers interviewed (8/9) highlighted this as an essential feature of Wildlife Victoria's work. This includes:

- Acting as the first point of contact for members of the public reporting incidents and filtering those that are not relevant to wildlife or that can be managed by reporters.
- Alerting volunteers by SMS when help is needed—either in attending an incident or transporting an animal to/from a vet, wildlife shelter or carer. Wildlife Victoria's volunteer database allows messages to be sent only to relevant volunteers according to their location, training, operating hours and other preferences. Volunteers can then choose to respond if they are able to.
- Providing information to volunteers about the most relevant/appropriate vet, shelter or carer for animals to be delivered to and supporting those shelters and carers in picking up animals in need of help.

What I really value is the organised transport. I can't drive all the way to Malvern east or wherever to pick up an animal, so that's really useful what they do. If I didn't have Wildlife Victoria, I would have less animals because I can't pick them up and vets don't transport them. (volunteer - shelter)

In relation to Wildlife Victoria's clear role in connecting stakeholders and coordinating rescues:

- 87% of surveyed volunteers indicated that this role is either useful (5%) or very useful (82%; Figure 3)
- 90% of surveyed volunteers noted that, in the absence of Wildlife Victoria, they would probably reduce the number of rescues they did; two-thirds (65%) indicating a substantial reduction (Figure 4). Those volunteers that indicated there would be little impact noted that they would instead likely turn to other, smaller rescue organisations for referrals.

Personally, I couldn't do as much as I do without the help of Wildlife Victoria. I'm incredibly grateful from a personal point of view and from the animal point of view that Wildlife Victoria are around. (volunteer)

Well, we probably wouldn't be doing what we're doing if it wasn't for Wildlife Victoria ... unless you were going to advertise ... people just wouldn't know. (volunteer)

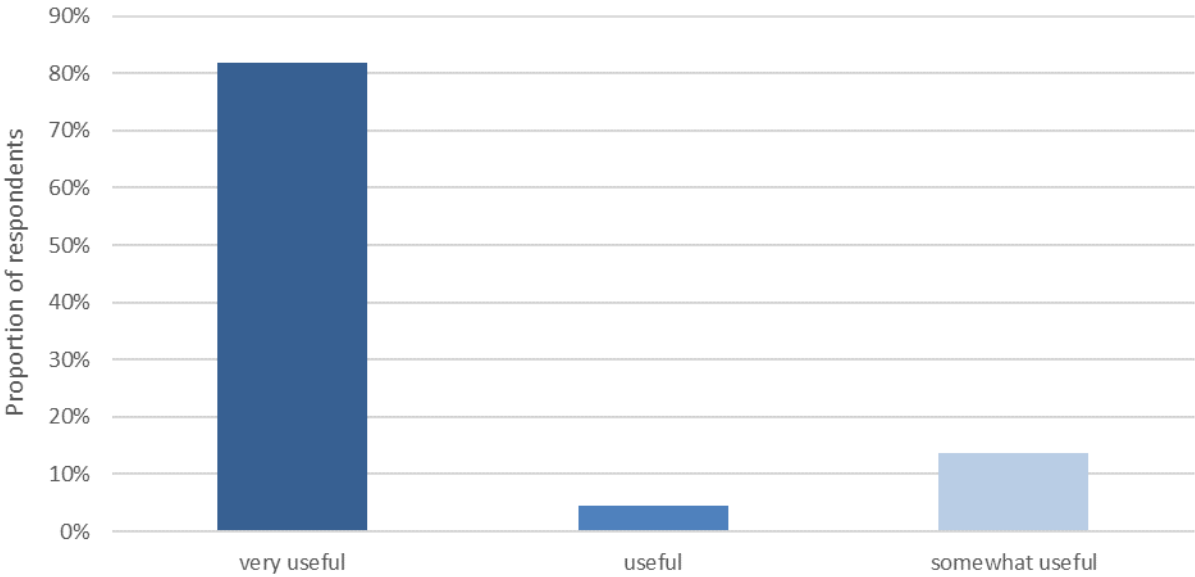


Figure 3. Usefulness of having an organisation like Wildlife Victoria to volunteers in terms of connecting and coordinating rescues/wildlife support.

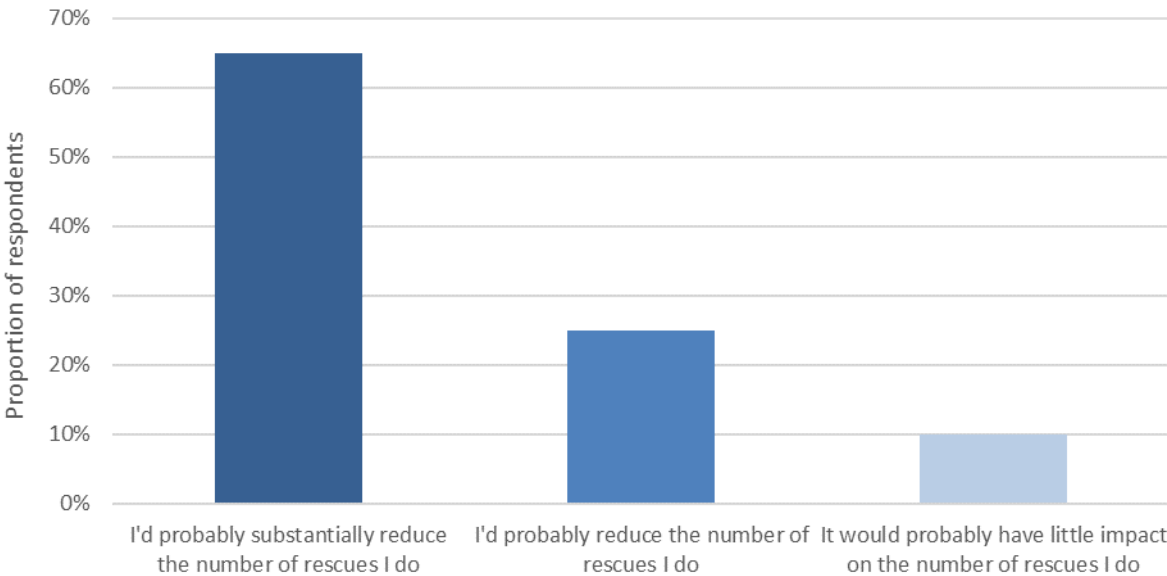


Figure 4. Impact on volunteers if Wildlife Victoria did not exist.

5.3 Building and supporting the capacity and capabilities of volunteers

As well as coordinating rescue efforts, Wildlife Victoria also plays a role in supporting volunteer rescuers and transporters. This includes:

- Acting as a **source of information and advice** about wildlife handling, rescue or care techniques. This includes the Wildlife Victoria support team providing advice and support, as well as connecting volunteers to relevant experts for particular species or situations.

You can choose what you take on and what you don't take on- and I can ring them for advice, specialists in the field, or networks. Quite often they'll ring me for advice too, so it's a really good relationship, I guess. (volunteer)

- **Running volunteer training courses and events.** Wildlife Victoria provides basic training courses and occasionally contracts other wildlife carers to provide specialist rescue courses to their volunteers. These courses are promoted through the Wildlife Victoria networks, including to potential volunteers.
- **Linking volunteers to other networks.** This includes a relatively new initiative to establish regional social-media groups that volunteers can use to connect with others in their area. Some volunteers highlighted that there had been more opportunities in the past to connect with volunteers—either through training or other forums—and that they strongly valued these opportunities.
- **Providing informal support.** As with initiatives to link volunteers, this support is an emerging action by Wildlife Victoria to help volunteer rescuers and transporters manage the complexities and stresses of their roles. At present, this happens through *ad-hoc* phone conversations and informal 'check-ins'.

I think one of the major benefits ... being able to ring and discuss after you've done a rescue, especially when it's not so positive ... being able to talk to someone who actually knows what you've been through really does help.

- **Credibility benefits.** As a large, long-standing, state-wide organisation, Wildlife Victoria has a higher level of credibility and a more recognisable 'brand' than smaller wildlife organisations. This can help volunteers in their interactions with other parts of the community. This applies to the reassurance provided to members of the public reporting incidents that they are interacting with trained, vetted individuals, but also in more general interactions and wildlife education or advocacy. One volunteer, for example, highlighted a case where they had been working with a local industry to better manage wildlife on their property:

Quite often as an independent Wildlife shelter, you're seen as a tree hugging greenie. So, having Wildlife Victoria behind us in terms of meeting and documentation has really helped ... having a state-wide service backing you up is brilliant. They've been fantastic in that way.

Overall, most surveyed volunteers (80%) were satisfied or very satisfied with the support discussed above (Figure 5)¹². The fifth (20%) of volunteers who were dissatisfied with Wildlife Victoria's support highlighted a range of issues that reflect both the history of how Wildlife Victoria's role has changed in working with volunteers as well as opportunities for how it can better support volunteers into the future. These issues are discussed further in Section 8.2, but include:

- the transition to having a clearer focus on phone, rescue and transport services has left some shelters and carers feeling less-supported by the organisation than in the past
- the lack of financial reimbursement to volunteers for fuel and other costs—something that occurred earlier in the organisation's history
- the need for more interaction and networking between volunteers—something that Wildlife Victoria is actively working to address.

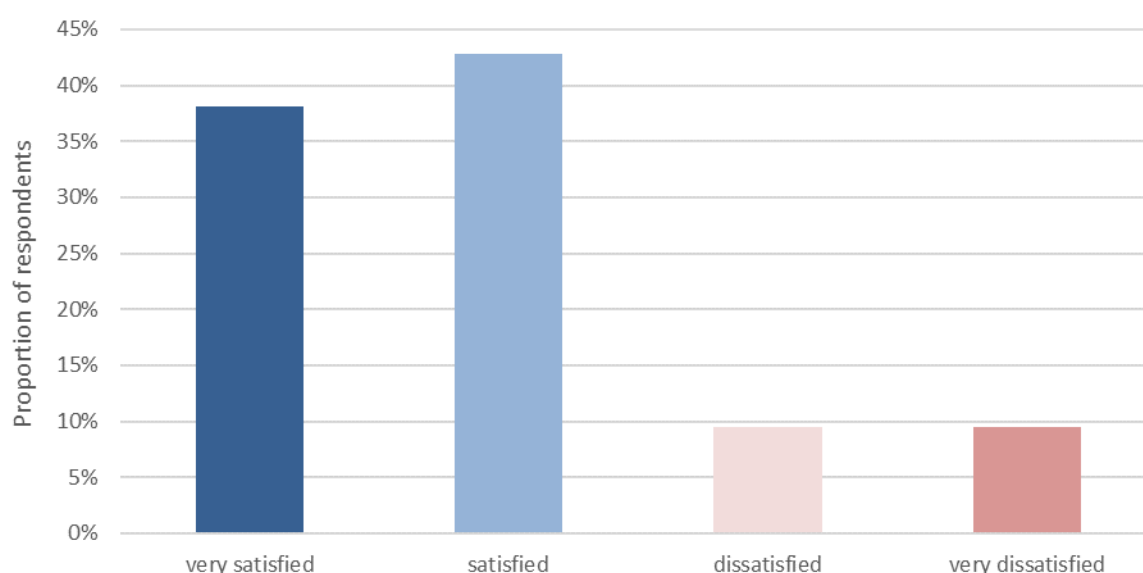


Figure 5. Volunteer survey respondents' satisfaction with the level of support provided by Wildlife Victoria.

5.4 Motivations and rewards for volunteers

All survey respondents and interviewees noted that the underlying reason for working alongside Wildlife Victoria is to help wildlife. However, in line with much of the literature in this area¹³, volunteers also noted a range of other motivations that contribute to this, including:

- The sense of satisfaction from helping wildlife in need. This includes an underlying sense of duty, responsibility or the need to 'doing the right thing' in helping wildlife in need (Box 2).

¹² Note this is similar to results from the 2018 Wildlife Victoria Volunteer Engagement Survey, which asked whether volunteers 'feel as though their work is valued by Wildlife Victoria' – 80% responding 'yes'.

¹³ e.g. see R Haering, V Wilson, A Zhuo, P Stathis. Towards a more effective model of local wildlife care with the volunteer wildlife rehabilitation sector: A survey of volunteers in New South Wales, Australia. 2018. Proceedings of the Australian Wildlife Research Conference, Sydney.

- The positive experiences from working and connecting with wildlife.

I started to do this when I had a lot of problems with my family ... and I needed to do something that fulfils me ... [and it is a] fantastic feeling which I can't compare to anything else when you have a relationship with a wild creature. I've learnt heaps – it's very rewarding. In a way I've found my purpose. (volunteer)

- The opportunities to learn and improve their own skills and experience. This includes general improvements in their own understanding of native animals. It also includes more specific animal care or handling skills that, for some volunteers, were beneficial to their 'day jobs' in the veterinary or environmental sectors.
- The opportunities to meet and work with other people, particularly those interested in wildlife.

I love hearing that other people have gained confidence, or I've taught them something, the interaction is really a benefit (volunteer)

- Satisfaction in helping members of the public and in raising awareness around wildlife conservation.

These 'process' benefits (i.e. the benefits to volunteers themselves as opposed to the work that they do¹⁴) are an important outcome of the work that Wildlife Victoria supports. Other work shows that these benefits flow through to measurable impacts (and associated community-wide benefits) on:

- reducing depression
- improving life satisfaction and wellbeing
- reducing risks of mortality.¹⁵

However, it is also important to note that wildlife carers are often susceptible to burn-out and compassion fatigue, exacerbated by a perceived lack of understanding and appreciation of their voluntary work.¹⁶

¹⁴ Ironmonger, D 2012, The Economic Value of Volunteering in Victoria, Department of Planning and Community Development, Victorian Government.

¹⁵ C Jenkinson, A Dickens, K Jones, J Thompson-Coon, R Taylor, M Rogers, C Bamba, I Lang, S Richards. Is volunteering a public health intervention? A systematic review and meta-analysis of the health and survival of volunteers. 2013. BMC Public Health 13:773.

¹⁶ Englefield, B, Starling, M, McGreevy P 2018 'A review of roadkill rescue: who cares for the mental, physical and financial welfare of Australian Wildlife Carers', in Wildlife Research, 45, 2, 102-118.

Box 2 – Finding purpose through wildlife volunteering

One of Wildlife Victoria's most active volunteers, Jason, volunteers throughout the Surf Coast to help sick, injured and orphaned wildlife. Around five years ago he realised he needed to connect with Wildlife Victoria so that he could provide the level of service required in the area.

I started doing it down here as at the time there wasn't anyone else rescuing ... which is ridiculous in an area that has a large diversity of animals ... so I thought it was almost my duty to do it.

After training with a local wildlife shelter, Jason largely learnt on the job:

[I] got thrown into it straight away, so the majority of my training was hands on, learning how to deal with each individual animal as required.

He now volunteers for both Wildlife Victoria and Surf Coast Animal Rescue. Well-recognised in the Surf Coast community, Jason was awarded the 2019 Surf Coast Shire Citizen of the Year for his work helping wildlife and the community throughout the region.

Jason said that it is a love of animals that drives him, but that he has also found meaning and purpose in his work:

At the time, I didn't realise that it's what I would say was my calling. When people ask the question 'What is your purpose in life?' I could never answer. But now, I would answer that it is to provide help for animals in need. I have now found my purpose in life.

6 Value to state and local government

6.1 Acting in place of government

The key value that Wildlife Victoria provides to state and local government is in providing a service that may otherwise fall back on them. This includes:

- a direct deferment of effort and expense in providing the call and rescue/transport service that Wildlife Victoria provides
- an indirect saving by providing this service through a single, state-wide organisation.

The *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* outlines an underlying obligation to prevent suffering, noting that an act of cruelty includes cases where a person:¹⁷

... omits to do an act with the result that unreasonable pain or suffering is caused, or is likely to be caused, to an animal ...

In a broader sense, the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Wildlife During Rehabilitation notes:

Wildlife rehabilitation is generally viewed by the community as an ethical obligation to assist wild animals found in pain or distress, particularly if as a result of human interference (for example road trauma, pet predation, or oil spills).¹⁸

Similarly, the Victorian Animal Welfare Action Plan outlines as its vision: “A Victoria that fosters the caring and respectful treatment of animals”.¹⁹ The plan also makes the following key points (p. 7):

- The way animals are treated reflects on Victoria’s national and international reputation, including market access, consumer confidence and the ability to create and sustain jobs.
- Good animal welfare is achieved through humane, reasonable and respectful treatment of animals.
- Community expectations about how animals are treated are increasing.

As such, the strong community demand for a service they can contact to help wildlife in distress is unlikely to diminish. This is supported by the growing number of reports to Wildlife Victoria (with a 25% increase in cases between 2014 and 2018). In the absence of Wildlife Victoria, **this demand would most likely flow through to an expectation on councils, state government agencies such as DELWP, or other government-funded organisations.**²⁰ Indeed, Wildlife Victoria staff and volunteers both highlighted that the majority of community members wrongly believe Wildlife Victoria is government funded.

¹⁷ *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* Section 9(1)(c)

¹⁸ Code of Practice for the Welfare of Wildlife during Rehabilitation:
<http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/animal-health-and-welfare/animal-welfare/animal-welfare-legislation/victorian-codes-of-practice-for-animal-welfare/code-of-practice-for-the-welfare-of-wildlife-during-rehabilitation>

¹⁹ Animal Welfare Action Plan: Improving the welfare of animals in Victoria. 2017. Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources. p. 6.

²⁰ Noting that 1) there are no other wildlife rescue organisations of similar scale, 2) if other organisations grew to Wildlife Victoria’s size, they would face the same resource constraints.

At present, the capacity for government to address wildlife incidents to the same level as Wildlife Victoria does not exist:

- **The majority of councils do not deal with native wildlife.** For example, Frankston City Council's website explicitly states, "Council's Animal Management team does NOT manage wildlife". Other councils interviewed here suggested they lacked the appropriate training and permits:

We're actually not legally allowed to touch animals apart from dogs and cats ... so it's not even possible for us to do anything about it. (council interviewee)

- Some councils have small animal management teams that, while they deal primarily with domestic animals, also manage a smaller number of wildlife incidents. However, interviewees indicated that they are unable to cope with all reports at the present level of resourcing. They noted examples where neither council nor Wildlife Victoria volunteers have been able to attend can be problematic:

It can be quite an issue ... I think the service is seen to be quite poor if the person is with the injured animal for several hours. I hope that people don't think it's the council, because if the wait is long, that would reflect pretty badly on us. (council interviewee)

- **Most councils refer wildlife incidents straight to Wildlife Victoria.** Across the state's 79 council websites:
 - 59% had contact details for some form of wildlife rescue
 - **of those that mention a wildlife rescue service, 94% direct people to Wildlife Victoria** and around two-thirds (68%) only mentioning Wildlife Victoria and no other organisations. Meaning a total of 56% of Victorian councils had Wildlife Victoria as a suggested organisation for wildlife rescue on their website.

We just give them the Wildlife Victoria phone number, we don't pass them on it's just 'here is the number' ... we just use Wildlife Victoria like we would use any other service we don't do, like plumbing or water. (council interviewee)

- **Some councils have higher levels of reporting than others**, often driven by macropod-related incidents in areas of high population growth (Table 2). These cases can be particularly complex, requiring volunteers specially skilled in handling, euthanising or tranquilising large animals. DELWP's Living with Wildlife Action Plan 2018 notes the need to "monitor the effectiveness of the kangaroo management planning process to reduce impacts on kangaroos in Melbourne's growth areas".²¹ This demonstrates an acknowledgement of the complexity of macropod management and rescue in high growth areas, for which Wildlife Victoria provides ongoing support.
- **All state government and Zoos Victoria interviewees also acknowledged the calls, rescues and transporting work that Wildlife Victoria currently does is not something that they**

²¹ https://www.wildlife.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/112429/DEWLP_LivingWithWildlife-ActionPlan_www.pdf

could fulfil with current resourcing. A relatively new tool on the DELWP wildlife website provides some level of information and advice for people who have found sick, injured or orphaned wildlife. However, the key feature of the tool is that it directs people to appropriate wildlife rescue organisations, invariably including Wildlife Victoria.

[Without Wildlife Victoria] for us, I imagine there most of those calls would be coming directly to us ... we only have a certain amount of staff in each region- we can't facilitate that as well ... so, they're actually providing a service that we don't have the capacity or resources to deal with (stakeholder interviewee).

It is also worth noting that, while the discussion above refers to the flow-on impacts on government, there is also a substantial burden of calls referred to Wildlife Victoria from organisations such as the RSPCA. In 2018, 3454 calls were referred to Wildlife Victoria—66 per week. In the absence of Wildlife Victoria RSPCA would need to identify how it deals with these calls and may even be subject to more calls as reporters look to other organisations to report wildlife incidents to.

Table 2. Number of incidents calls per area 2018 (top 7 reporter areas).

Suburb	Number of cases	Council	Growth ²²
Melbourne	400	City of Melbourne	Urban
Sunbury	389	City of Hume	Growth corridor
Warrnambool	382	Warrnambool City	Regional centre
Werribee	325	Wyndham City	Growth corridor
Malvern east	323	City of Stonnington	Urban
Bundoora	302	Darebin City Council	Urban
Epping	273	Whittlesea Council	Growth corridor

6.2 Efficiencies and assets

The results and discussion above highlight that **Wildlife Victoria is providing a service to the community that may otherwise fall to government at a level that is currently untenable.**

Furthermore, in providing this service, Wildlife Victoria is leveraging a range of efficiencies and assets that government agencies (state or local) currently do not possess. This includes:

- **Economies of scale.** As a single organisation, Wildlife Victoria undoubtedly benefits from a range of efficiencies and economies of scale as compared to having individual local and state-government trying to provide the same service. In this way, Wildlife Victoria reflects many of the advantages of a shared services delivery model.

²² As per Victorian Planning Authority growth corridor plans: <https://vpa.vic.gov.au/>

- These models have been increasingly advocated at all levels of government. They appear to be particularly suited to specialised roles/services, such as those provided here.^{23,24}
- A review of the NSW wildlife rescue system in 2018 also highlighted the potential efficiency savings of having a single rescue number – similar, in effect, to what Wildlife Victoria is doing.
- It also highlighted the **associated benefits of such as system in terms of clearer communication to members of the public.**²⁵
- **Dedicated infrastructure, systems and branding.** Wildlife Victoria’s dedicated call centre, SMS notification system, database and website represent substantial investments of resources and expertise. These would not easily be duplicated without significant additional capital outlay. For Wildlife Victoria, they are sunk costs that benefit the ongoing coordination of wildlife rescues.
- **Human capital.** Over time, the team has built up a breadth and depth of knowledge that is continually shared, refined and used to advise members of the public and volunteer rescuers. This knowledge base is an important part of the phone service itself, with several external interviewees commenting on the improved consistency of the advice since transitioning to a paid team:

Volunteers used to do everything, which was great because the financial challenges weren’t there. But it did mean that volunteers might give different answers ... and when advice was bad, it was bad ... now people provide the same information again and again.

- **Social capital.** As noted in Section 5.2, the organisation is able to tap in and connect with a huge pool of volunteers across the state. It also has connections with wildlife carers, shelters, vets and specialists – a detailed understanding of who is capable of what and under what circumstances. This is vital both in managing the demand for services but also the burden on volunteers. As noted earlier, volunteers are not always satisfied with the level of support they receive but continue to work with Wildlife Victoria because of their shared purpose. It is not clear whether a government agency could straddle the same line of running a professional, paid call centre that, at the same time, draws directly on volunteer labour from the community.

The overall financial savings to government of the efficiencies and assets above are difficult to calculate. However, the most straightforward and conservative estimate is the running cost of the emergency response call centre. **As outlined in Table 3, the annual labour and associated operational costs of this would be around \$600,000** based on Wildlife Victoria’s staffing level and

²³ B Dollery and A Johnson. Enhancing efficiency in Australian Local Government: an evaluation of alternative models of municipal governance. 2005. University of New England

²⁴ Victorian Auditor-General’s Office. Shared services in local government. 2014. VAGO

²⁵ Review of the NSW volunteer fauna rehabilitation sector. Unpublished draft discussion paper, NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, Sydney NSW. Cited in R Haering, V Wilson, A Zhuo, P Stathis. Towards a more effective model of local wildlife care with the volunteer wildlife rehabilitation sector: A survey of volunteers in New South Wales, Australia. 2018. Proceedings of the Australian Wildlife Research Conference, Sydney.

Department of Treasury and Finance's budgeting guidelines. As per the discussion above, this does not include:

- the establishment costs of the integrated phone, SMS and database system
- the training and development of staff and the associated systems and practices for providing advice
- the networks, connections and influence among wildlife volunteers.

Table 3. Estimated labour and associated on-costs for running the emergency response phone service

Component	Estimated cost ²⁶	Notes
5.8 FTE for staffing emergency response phone service ²⁷	\$478,268	Based on Victorian Public Service Band 2 employees, including on-costs and basic operational costs ²⁸
Supervision 1.0 FTE	\$118,067	Based on VPS 4 employee, including on-costs and basic operational costs.
Total	\$596,335	

6.3 Role within the Victorian wildlife sector

As part of the value to government and the broader community, it is worth highlighting some of the key features differentiating Wildlife Victoria from other wildlife rescue organisations operating in Victoria. These features largely relate to:

- **Scale.** Wildlife Victoria is the largest organisation of its kind in Victoria. While there may be dozens of smaller organisations that also have volunteers that attend wildlife incidents or provide advice, none are of the same scale as Wildlife Victoria. Some are very small and highly changeable, contributing to a fragmented and often difficult-to-map sector. In contrast, Wildlife Victoria has a three-persons per shift, dedicated call centre that addresses over 40,000 reports per year (more than 100 per day). This scale brings with it a range of benefits in terms of dedicated systems, insurances and other operational economies of scale.

They have a huge database of people across Victoria that have specific skill sets for roles and specific scenarios ... without them there it would be very very difficult as a smaller organisation to do what they do. It would be impossible to do. We are inundated with calls ourselves, let alone calls across Victoria.
(volunteer – shelter)

²⁶ Costings drawn from Department of Treasury and Finance budget submission guidelines for Victorian government programs - Attachment E: 2018-19 budget submission and template – additional guidance.

²⁷ Based on current Wildlife Victoria staffing levels

²⁸ Does not include office-space costs or computer infrastructure costs

- **Reach and recognisability.** In contrast to many more localised organisations, Wildlife Victoria operates state-wide and has done this for 30 years. Volunteers, government and other stakeholders noted that it is the most widely recognised wildlife organisation in Victoria (see also Section 6.1 regarding council references). Similarly, as shown in Figure 6, more organisations' websites refer to Wildlife Victoria than to any other rescue organisation.

Their primary role is the provision of a hotline service to the public and that acts as a liaison point for other wildlife groups, their phone number is the best known of the groups and in terms of a single entry for the displaced animal, that's the role Wildlife Victoria has played recently. (government interviewee)

- **Focus and integration.** Wildlife Victoria has a clear role in linking reporters to advice and on-ground support. Together with its scale and brand, this focus has the potential to help integrate a sector that is often seen to be fragmented and, in turn, deliver a smoother, more efficient service to the community than possible through a disaggregated network of individual organisations working in isolation.

It's invaluable. I honestly think what they do is so important and without them It would leave an enormous gaping hole ... They deserve an enormous amount of credit for what they do. The carers are the end point, but we need that triage sector that's moving things along and that contact centre is really important for the public, because people are really stressed and the first thing, they need to know is the right information. (government interviewee)

- **Reliability.** The dedicated call centre at Wildlife Victoria provides a level of reliability that does not appear to be consistently available elsewhere. Around a third of the reporters interviewed here noted that they had initially tried to contact another rescue service but could not get a response. Many of the links between sites directed to out of date webpages and contacts, reducing confidence in some organisations' availability. While some organisations run 24-hour services, these typically depend on dedicated individuals. As such, Wildlife Victoria effectively establishes a baseline level of service provision for the state – a phone number that is staffed during core hours and that reporters can confidently find and access.

Prepared for Wildlife Victoria

7 Value in terms of wildlife welfare and conservation

7.1 Wildlife welfare

The final group of benefits delivered by Wildlife Victoria relate to wildlife welfare and, to a lesser extent, conservation. As noted in Section 4.1, the focus of Wildlife Victoria's activities is ultimately on improving the welfare outcomes for native animals in cases where they are sick, injured or orphaned.

While it is difficult to quantify these benefits, several basic statistics provide some sense of the nature and scale of the incidents that the organisation and its volunteers deal with (see also Box 3):²⁹

- In 2017-18, volunteers and phone staff provided support relating to 50,230 individual animals.
- Between 2014 and 2018, there were over a quarter of a million animals reported (227,004) across approximately 400 species. Most animals were mammals (54%) or birds (43%). Reptiles and amphibians related to around 3% of reports (Figure 7).
- The most frequently reported animals between 2014 and 2018 were possums (47,549; 23%), kangaroos (36,182 individuals; 18%), ducks (24,289; 11%) and magpies (11,566; 6%; Table 4).
- Among animals supported in 2017-18, the most common issue related to the animal being 'found on the ground' (28,839; 57%) or being struck by a vehicle (6,415; 13%)—among kangaroos, vehicle collision was implicated in almost half of cases (3,467; 47%).
- In terms of known outcomes around 14% ended up in rehabilitation, 14% were euthanised and 10% died – in most other cases (44%) advice or education was given, or animals were referred elsewhere, with no ability to follow-up.

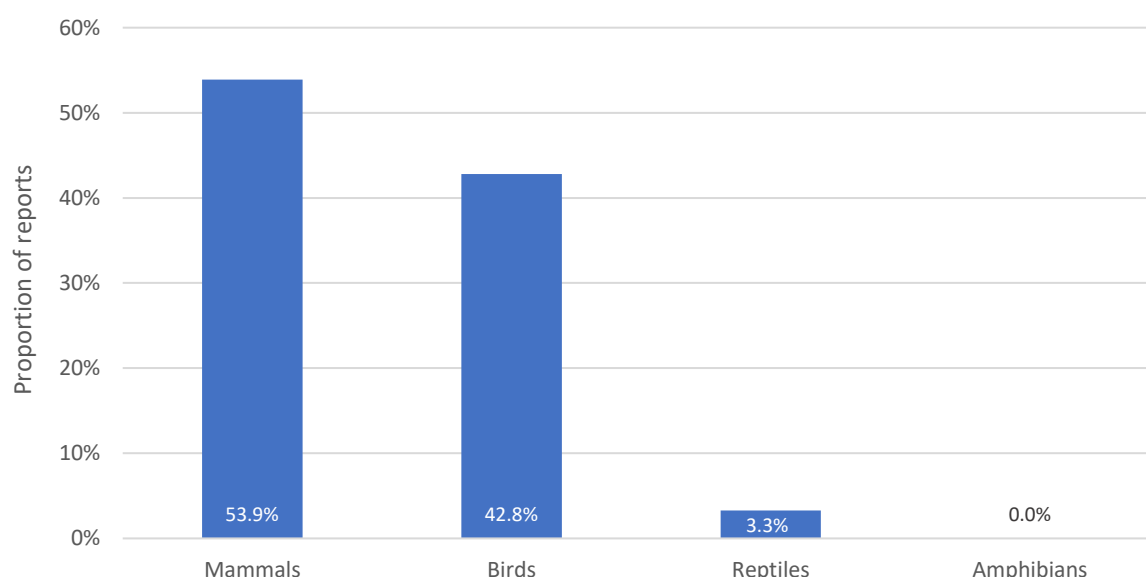


Figure 7. Proportion animals in different taxa reported to Wildlife Victoria between 2014 and 2018 (n=227,004).

²⁹ Data from Wildlife Victoria's Emergency Response Service database.

Table 4. Top 25 most frequently reported animals to Wildlife Victoria between 2014 and 2018.

Name	Group	# of incidents	% of incidents
Eastern Grey Kangaroo	Mammals	36,182	17.8%
Ringtail possum	Mammals	31,399	15.4%
Magpie	Birds	11,566	5.7%
Brushtail possum	Mammals	11,039	5.4%
Unidentified Duck	Birds	9,676	4.8%
Pacific Black Duck	Birds	9,636	4.7%
Unidentified Bird	Birds	9,421	4.6%
Rainbow Lorikeet	Birds	6,818	3.3%
Unidentified Possum	Mammals	5,111	2.5%
Wood Duck	Birds	4,977	2.4%
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Birds	4,068	2.0%
Bare-nosed Wombat	Mammals	3,877	1.9%
Raven	Birds	3,693	1.8%
Koala	Mammals	3,649	1.8%
Echidna	Mammals	3,380	1.7%
Swamp Wallaby	Mammals	3,254	1.6%
Common Blue-tongued Lizard	Reptiles	3,048	1.5%
Tawny Frogmouth	Birds	2,907	1.4%
Micro-bat	Mammals	2,320	1.1%
Spotted Turtle Dove	Birds	2,287	1.1%
Galah	Birds	2,246	1.1%
Seagull	Birds	2,215	1.1%
Black Swan	Birds	2,100	1.0%
Grey-headed Flying-fox ³⁰	Mammals	2,033	1.0%
Laughing Kookaburra	Birds	1,717	0.8%

Importantly, the core benefits to wildlife welfare include both:

- the opportunity to rehabilitate sick or injured wildlife that may have otherwise suffered or died, including orphaned young
- the opportunity to humanly euthanise animals in cases where rehabilitation is not feasible—ending their suffering.

Volunteers discussed examples of both cases (Box 3), acknowledging the importance of both being able to directly help, as well as ease the suffering of wildlife in need.

³⁰ Listed as Threatened under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*

Box 3. Examples of the benefits to wildlife welfare

Volunteers provided numerous examples of how they had been able to help sick, injured or orphaned wildlife. Some of the diverse cases that volunteers talked about included:

- “I’ve had a lovely situation with a tawny frogmouth. It got caught in a grate in St Kilda and when we took it to get released it flew back into its tree and looked back at me as if to say, ‘thank you’”.
- “I’ve been to some of them where because of an accident or injury, the mother [kangaroo] has dropped the joey - I’ve been able to transport it out to one of our carers. Even if the female is injured, and you have to euthanise her, you still have the joey”.
- “There was a swamp harrier that this person had seen on the side of the road; thought it was near dead. The client contacted Wildlife Victoria and they gave the person advice to take it to the nearest vet - which is quite common - and then the emergency vet called me to come and get it. I had it in urgent care for a couple of weeks - it was quite badly hurt but recovered quite well”.
- “We got called to a galah that got hit on a highway. It had a fracture in its wing so couldn’t fly and also a small concussion from being hit. Its little partner was flying around ... we took that animal into care for at least 6-8 weeks. We took it back to be released—and we always take it back to where you got it from—and we let this little galah go. It flew up into a tree and within 10-20 seconds its partner arrived, and they were preening and kissing, which was incredible because it was close to the eight weeks mark. That really stuck in my head ... that species, the Galah, they do mate for life”.

In terms of wildlife welfare, one volunteer summarised:

If Wildlife Victoria wasn’t around there would be a lot of wildlife out there suffering. They need to have people like them available, so people can ring and at least report something ... even if it ends up being euthanised

In addition to the direct support of wildlife welfare, Wildlife Victoria also plays a role in advocating on issues of wildlife welfare. This role is targeted to issues where awareness raising and partnerships can help address clear wildlife welfare concerns. Recent examples include:

- Collaboration with RSPCA and Zoos Victoria on the Safe Cat, Safe Wildlife campaign. This was a clear collaboration for Wildlife Victoria, as in the 2017-18 financial year, 810 animals were reported to Wildlife Victoria as having been attacked by a cat.
- Contributions to stakeholder consultations on the 2019 review of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (POCTA) Regulations, in particular on the issue of restricting the use of backyard fruit-tree netting to wildlife safe options. This was directly relevant to Wildlife Victoria’s work, as each year about 180 flying foxes as well as numerous birds are reported entangled in wildlife-unsafe fruit tree netting.

- Submission to the 2018 DELWP Authority to Control Wildlife system review.
- Representation to VicRoads regarding the risks of 'rub rails' to wildlife and rescuers.
- Awareness-raising relating to animal entanglements in rubbish including discarded fishing hooks and lines.
- Supporting a campaign led by Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting.
- Referring cases of possible wildlife crime to DELWP. An example of this was the recent Tubbutt Eagle case, where a man was jailed for 14 days and fined \$2500 for poisoning 406 wedge-tailed eagles in Melbourne's east.³¹ The original call was made to Wildlife Victoria, which was then referred to DELWP for investigation.
- Advocating with local councils and government for the safety and security of roosting sites of the Grey-headed flying fox across Victoria.

7.2 Conservation outcomes

Wildlife rescue and rehabilitation focuses primarily on the welfare of individual animals, while conservation is more concerned with population-level impacts. Thus, while the benefits of Wildlife Victoria for animal welfare are clear, conservation benefits tend to be more diffuse. Nevertheless, these benefits include support for, and potentially improved survival of, sick, injured, orphaned threatened species.

Between 2014 and 2018, 65 species and 2411 individuals listed under the *Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* were reported to Wildlife Victoria (Table 5). While the population-level benefits of this is unclear, the number of individuals of some of these species is notable relative to the total population size.³²

³¹ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-09-24/man-poisoned-wedge-tailed-eagles-in-gippsland-jailed/10298426>

³² e.g. Hooded Plover reports = 0.5% of estimated population size of 7000 (<https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/22693883/93429190>); Powerful Owl reports = 1.0% of population size of 2500 (<https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/22689389/93229550>)

Table 5. Top ten most frequently reported threatened species (under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*) between 2014 and 2018. A full list is provided in Appendix B.

Common name	Scientific name	Number of reports
Grey-headed Flying-fox	<i>Pteropus poliocephalus</i>	2033
Hooded Plover	<i>Thinornis rubricollis</i>	41
Squirrel Glider	<i>Petaurus norfolcensis</i>	28
Broad-shelled Tortoise	<i>Chelodina expansa</i>	28
Powerful Owl	<i>Ninox strenua</i>	26
Blue-billed Duck	<i>Oxyura australis</i>	20
Major Mitchell Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua leadbeateri</i>	18
Brush-tailed Phascogale	<i>Phascogale tapoatafa</i>	16
Southern Brown Bandicoot	<i>Isodon obesulus</i>	15
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta nigripes</i>	14

The other, less-direct, conservation benefit relates to the value of the Wildlife Victoria database.

Containing several hundred-thousand detailed, geo-located records of animal incidents, this database has been used to help:

- General research into native wildlife, particularly human-wildlife interactions.
- Early warning of potential biosecurity concerns. This includes, for example, investigations in into unusual levels of raptor fatalities (Box 4).

One of the powers is... by making a repository you can see patterns in taxa and a whole lot of things that are happening that you wouldn't if you weren't dealing with this volume. (government stakeholder)

- Identify and/or confirm roads where there have been numerous car collisions with wildlife to help justify improved warning signs.

We've had some kangaroo crossing signs put up on major roads, and the only reason they did that was because we could show data from Wildlife Victoria about how many kangaroos died on that part of the road. So being able to ring them and say 'I need particular Information' is really good. (volunteer)

Wildlife Victoria gets approximately one request a week for extracts from this database from a range of organisations and agencies (Table 6).

Table 6. Number of information requests in 2018 by agency/organisation

Agency/organisation	Number of information requests
Other wildlife/wildlife rescue organisations	13
Academic researchers	11
Vic Roads	5
Parks Victoria	4
Media (newspapers, radio):	4
Councils	3
Police	2
Total information requests	42

Box 4 – Developing, maintaining and rapidly sharing biosecurity information

Over the period from June – September 2018, there was a steep increase in the numbers of birds of prey being found sick or dead in Victoria. Wildlife Victoria confirmed this from their emergency response database, which showed 537 sick or dead birds of prey during this period.

With this state-wide information, Wildlife Victoria could compare regions and identify particular areas of concern across the state. Once identified as an issue, Wildlife Victoria contacted Animal Health Australia, a not-for-profit established by the Australian and state and territory governments, who launched the investigation. Forty-eight birds were necropsied and twenty-nine sent for toxicological analysis. From the analyses, contagious disease was ruled out and the mass deaths attributed to rodent poison, road trauma and, predominantly, a starvation event.

The database provided a valuable state-wide understanding of where and when these incidents were occurring – something that would not have been possible without this single dataset.

8 Key findings, challenges and future opportunities

8.1 Key findings

Wildlife Victoria is a long-established and significant contributor to the management of wildlife welfare in Victoria. **As an organisation, it directly expends an average of \$1.2 million per year, largely in providing a dedicated reporting and coordination service for wildlife in distress.**

It links a pool of around 560 volunteer rescuers and transporters with vets and with registered wildlife shelters and carers. Through this, the organisation is able to support and leverage **a further \$1.9 million in volunteer time and in-kind equipment and transport costs.**

In turn, this provides a range of benefits to:

- **Community members.** Over 80,000 calls and requests for help were received in 2017-18. The organisation was able to address over half of these, creating 43,712 cases that involved 50,230 individual animals. The value for reporters is the assistance provided by phone staff or on-ground volunteers in helping to manage these incidents—which are often distressing.
 - **96% of surveyed volunteers considered the service to be important or very important to members of the public**
 - **half of interviewed reporters (8/16) spoke specifically about the emotional support and stress relief provided by the Wildlife Victoria service**
 - these incidents were also an important opportunity for improving reporters' awareness, understanding and appreciation of wildlife.

In addition to education at the time of wildlife incidents, in the last four years Wildlife Victoria has also **run education sessions with almost 11,000 participants**—largely school children, helping them to better understand the value of and how to protect native wildlife.

- **Volunteers.** Wildlife Victoria's key function is connecting volunteer rescuers and transporters to a network of 482 vets and 147 wildlife shelters and foster carers. **Most surveyed volunteers (90%) noted that in the absence of this service, they would probably reduce the number of rescues they did.** Volunteers also pointed to the important role of training and support, highlighting it as a key area where the organisation can continue to improve.
- **Government.** There is strong and growing community demand for the service that Wildlife Victoria provides. **In the absence of Wildlife Victoria, this community expectation is likely to flow through to councils, state government agencies such as DELWP, or other government-funded organisations.**
 - **At present, they are not equipped to deal with the scale of the work supported by Wildlife Victoria,** nor able to harness the efficiencies of their centralised, state-wide phone system.
 - **Most councils currently refer wildlife incidents straight to Wildlife Victoria**—of those that mention a wildlife rescue service on their website, 94% direct people to Wildlife Victoria.

- **A conservative estimate of running a similar service through a government agency is in the order of \$600,000 per annum.** Moreover, the cost to establish this service would also require:
 - initial investment in the database system, training and process-development
 - development of networks and connections to relevant people and organisations throughout the state
 - establishment of relationships with volunteers such that they are willing to work with the system.
- **Wildlife.** Between 2014 and 2018, Wildlife Victoria received **reports relating to over a quarter of a million animals (227,004) across approximately 400 species.** The organisation offers the opportunity to rehabilitate sick or injured wildlife that may have otherwise suffered or died, including orphaned young, or to humanly euthanise animals where rehabilitation is not feasible.
 - In 2017-18, the most common issue related to the animal being ‘found on the ground’ (28,839; 57%) or being struck by a vehicle (6,415; 13%)
 - In terms of known outcomes around 14% (3,877) ended up in rehabilitation, 14% (3,776) were euthanised and 10% (2862) died – in most other cases (44%; 12,281) advice or education was given, or animals were referred elsewhere, with no ability to follow-up.
 - Conservation benefits from Wildlife Victoria’s work are more diffuse but include the support of 65 species and 2411 individuals listed under the *Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* that were reported to Wildlife Victoria between 2014 and 2018.
 - The other, less-direct conservation benefit relates to the value of the Wildlife Victoria database, which contains several hundred-thousand detailed records of animal incidents that can help research and other evidence-based decision-making.

It is important to note that Wildlife Victoria is not the only organisation working to support sick, injured and orphaned wildlife in Victoria. There is a network of dozens of rescue groups, wildlife shelters and carers located throughout the state. However, the strengths and benefits of Wildlife Victoria in this space are:

- its large scale relative to other groups, helping create efficiencies and improve its reach across the state
- its reputation, which helps members of the public to find and access the service in a space characterised by small and often disparate organisations.


Overall, its size, reach and reputation puts Wildlife Victoria in a unique position. It is currently well acknowledged as a coordinator of wildlife rescues and transport across the state. There is clear opportunity for this role to continue into the future, including greater integration and expansion of its work to ultimately improve the way that sick, injured and orphaned wildlife are attended to in Victoria.

8.2 Challenges and opportunities

While not the focus of this evaluation, a range of ongoing challenges and opportunities emerged through this work that are worth noting:

- **Population growth and the demand for support.** Continued population growth and the associated development and urbanisation of landscapes means that human-wildlife interactions—and the demand for support for wildlife—are likely to continue to increase.
- **Volunteer recruitment and training.** Some areas of the state do not appear to be well serviced by volunteers, meaning that there is a higher burden on existing volunteers in those areas. Recruitment and training of volunteers in underserviced areas is a key opportunity, including training that is accessible in regional areas. Subsidised training may help, with the potential to refund expenses to volunteers who go on to actively participate in the rescue network.
- **Volunteer support.** Wildlife Victoria's recent efforts to better connect and support volunteers should be recognised and encouraged. One key area of opportunity may be in promoting peer-to-peer mentoring, potentially by connecting new with more experienced volunteers. Efforts to form online support groups may also help, together with opportunities for face-to-face connections through training sessions or other volunteer-focused meetings or workshops. As a central coordinating body, Wildlife Victoria has a unique opportunity to connect people in similar areas or with similar interests and specialities.
- **Funding.** The lack of secure funding for the organisation is an obvious challenge that threatens the viability of the service that it delivers. Given the discussion throughout this report, there is a clear case to be made for a service-level agreement with state government, similar to those used in the health and human services area. This could, potentially, be funded through surcharges or revenue from car registrations (as a key source of wildlife injury) or charges related to sub-divisions and permits in growth-corridor developments (as another driver of human-wildlife interactions).
- **A diverse and uncoordinated wildlife sector.** Several key stakeholders highlighted that the wildlife rescue and care sector is fragmented. This equates to potential duplication, lost efficiencies, reduced collaboration and confusing communications to the public about who to contact for help. Wildlife Victoria already has a key role in this system, with the potential to become further established as the 'glue' that helps to bind, coordinate and support this passionate and dedicated sector. This includes continuing to improve relationships across non-government organisations and with both local and state government agencies.
- **Identifying and developing strengths.** Building on the above point, Wildlife Victoria has the opportunity to further clarify its role and strengths, including development of a strategic plan (that we note Wildlife Victoria is currently finalising at the time of writing). This would help in acknowledging and further improving its role as a coordinator of support for sick, injured and orphaned wildlife.

Appendix A – Volunteer survey questions



Evaluation of Wildlife Victoria - Volunteer feedback

Thank you for following the link through to this survey.

There are 14 short questions and **your answers are anonymous.**

If you have any questions, please contact Patrick Gilmour at First Person Consulting (pat@fpconsulting.com.au / 03 9600 1788) or Megan Davidson at Wildlife Victoria (megan.davidson@wildlifevictoria.org.au).

1. On average, how many hours per week (approximately) do you spend volunteering for Wildlife Victoria?

2. If you're able to estimate it, what proportion of your volunteering time do you spend on the following: (0-100%)

responding to call-outs to wildlife incidents

transporting wildlife to or from vets or wildlife shelters

providing advice to members of the public about sick, injured or orphaned wildlife

preparing or maintaining equipment that you use in responding to call-outs

paperwork or administration related to your volunteer work

caring for wildlife/running or supporting a wildlife shelter

other wildlife-related volunteer work

1



Evaluation of Wildlife Victoria - Volunteer feedback

3. In a typical year, how much do you spend on equipment or materials for responding to wildlife incidents (approximately)?

Note: please don't include car costs or money spent on costs as a carer or shelter.

4. Roughly **how many kilometres per year** do you drive to attend wildlife incidents or to transport animals?

5. How many incidents (on average) would you attend in a typical year?



Evaluation of Wildlife Victoria - Volunteer feedback

6. From your perspective, how useful is it for volunteers like yourself to have an organisation like Wildlife Victoria helping to connect and coordinate rescues?

- ☐ very useful
- ☐ useful
- ☐ somewhat useful
- ☐ not useful at all
- ☐ not sure/don't know

7. The benefits for wildlife from the work you do are clear. What benefits do you think members of the public get from your work?

8. What do you get out of volunteering for Wildlife Victoria - what benefits are there (if any) for you?

9. What would be the impacts on you and your work if Wildlife Victoria didn't exist?

- ☐ I'd probably stop doing rescues
- ☐ I'd probably substantially reduce the number of rescues I do
- ☐ I'd probably reduce the number of rescues I do
- ☐ It would probably have little impact on the number of rescues I do
- ☐ Other (please specify)

10. How important is it for members of the public to be able to access Wildlife Victoria's help and network of volunteers like yourself?

- ☐ very important
☐ important
☐ somewhat important
☐ not important at all
☐ not sure/don't know

11. How satisfied are you with Wildlife Victoria's support of volunteers?

- ☐ very satisfied
☐ satisfied
☐ dissatisfied
☐ very dissatisfied
☐ not sure/don't know

12. How can Wildlife Victoria improve its work and/or its support of volunteers like yourself?

13. How long have you volunteered with Wildlife Victoria?

- ☐ less than a year
☐ 1-5 years
☐ 6-10 years
☐ more than 10 years

14. What is your postcode?

(so we can work out roughly where in the state we're getting feedback from)

That's it!

Thank you very much for helping us work out the contribution volunteers are making in this area.

If you have any questions about this survey or the evaluation of Wildlife Victoria, please contact Patrick Gilmour at First Person Consulting (pat@fpconsulting.com.au ; 03 9600 1778).

Appendix B – List of threatened species

Table 7. Threatened species listed under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* that were reported to Wildlife Victoria between 2014 and 2018.

Common name	Scientific name	Group	# incidents
Alpine Tree Frog	<i>Litoria verreauxii alpina</i>	Amphibians	1
Baw Baw Frog	<i>Philoria frosti</i>	Amphibians	1
Giant Bullfrog	<i>Limnodynastes interioris</i>	Amphibians	1
Giant Burrowing Frog	<i>Heleioporus australiacus</i>	Amphibians	1
Growling Grass Frog	<i>Litoria raniformis</i>	Amphibians	4
Apostlebird	<i>Struthidea cinerea</i>	Birds	1
Australasian Bittern	<i>Botaurus poiciloptilus</i>	Birds	2
Baillon's Crake	<i>Porzana pusilla</i>	Birds	1
Barking Owl	<i>Ninox connivens</i>	Birds	11
Black Falcon	<i>Falco subniger</i>	Birds	2
Blue-billed Duck	<i>Oxyura australis</i>	Birds	20
Brolga	<i>Grus rubicundus</i>	Birds	5
Crested Bellbird	<i>Oreoica gutturalis</i>	Birds	1
Diamond Dove	<i>Geopelia cuneata</i>	Birds	1
Diamond Firetail	<i>Stagonopleura guttata</i>	Birds	2
Fairy Tern	<i>Sterna nereis nereis</i>	Birds	4
Freckled Duck	<i>Stictonetta naevosa</i>	Birds	1
Glossy Black Cockatoo	<i>Calyptorhynchus lathami subsp. lathami</i>	Birds	2
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	Birds	10
Ground Parrot	<i>Pezoporus wallicus</i>	Birds	2
Hooded Plover	<i>Thinornis rubricollis</i>	Birds	41
Intermediate Egret	<i>Ardea intermedia</i>	Birds	5
King Quail	<i>Coturnix chinensis</i>	Birds	8
Lewin's Rail	<i>Rallus pectoralis</i>	Birds	1
Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	Birds	2
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta nigripes</i>	Birds	14
Little Tern	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>	Birds	6
Major Mitchell Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua leadbeateri</i>	Birds	18
Masked Owl	<i>Tyto novaehollandiae</i>	Birds	7
Northern Giant-Petrel	<i>Macronectes halli</i>	Birds	3
Orange-bellied Parrot	<i>Neophema chrysogaster</i>	Birds	1
Plains-wanderer	<i>Pedionomus torquatus</i>	Birds	2
Powerful Owl	<i>Ninox strenua</i>	Birds	26
Red-chested Button-quail	<i>Turnix pyrrhothorax</i>	Birds	1

Common name	Scientific name	Group	# incidents
Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo	<i>Calyptorhynchus magnificus</i>	Birds	10
Regent Honeyeater	<i>Xanthomyza phrygia</i>	Birds	1
Regent Parrot	<i>Polytelis anthopeplus subsp. monarchoides</i>	Birds	2
Shy Albatross	<i>Diomedea cauta</i>	Birds	4
Sooty Owl	<i>Tyto tenebricosa</i>	Birds	3
Southern Giant-Petrel	<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>	Birds	3
Speckled Warbler	<i>Chthonicola sagittata</i>	Birds	1
Square-tailed Kite	<i>Lophoictinia isura</i>	Birds	3
Superb Parrot	<i>Polytelis swainsonii</i>	Birds	5
Swift Parrot	<i>Lathamus discolor</i>	Birds	5
Turquoise Parrot	<i>Neophema pulchella</i>	Birds	3
Wandering Albatross	<i>Diomedea exulan</i>	Birds	2
White-throated Needletail	<i>Hirundapus caudacutus</i>	Birds	3
Broad-toothed Rat	<i>Mastacomys fuscus</i>	Mammals	2
Brush-tailed Phascogale	<i>Phascogale tapoatafa</i>	Mammals	16
Common Bent-wing Bat	<i>Miniopterus schreibersii</i>	Mammals	4
Eastern Barred Bandicoot	<i>Perameles gunnii</i>	Mammals	4
Greater Glider	<i>Petauroides volans subsp. volans</i>	Mammals	6
Grey-headed Flying-fox	<i>Pteropus poliocephalus</i>	Mammals	2033
Leadbeater's Possum	<i>Gymnobelideus leadbeateri</i>	Mammals	3
Long-nosed Potoroo	<i>Potorous tridactylus subsp. tridactylus</i>	Mammals	4
New Holland Mouse	<i>Pseudomys novaehollandiae</i>	Mammals	5
Southern Brown Bandicoot	<i>Isodon obesulus</i>	Mammals	15
Southern Right Whale	<i>Eubalaena australis</i>	Mammals	4
Spot-Tailed Quoll	<i>Dasyurus maculatus</i>	Mammals	2
Squirrel Glider	<i>Petaurus norfolcensis</i>	Mammals	28
Swamp Antechinus	<i>Antechinus minimus subsp. maritimus</i>	Mammals	1
Bandy Bandy	<i>Vermicella annulata</i>	Reptiles	1
Broad-shelled Tortoise	<i>Chelodina expansa</i>	Reptiles	28
Red-naped Snake	<i>Furina diadema</i>	Reptiles	1
Striped Legless Lizard	<i>Delma impar</i>	Reptiles	1