



**Native Animal Rescue Group**  
**Submission to Treasury**  
**Regarding Deductible Gift Recipient Registers Reform**

**Who we are and what we do**

The Native Animal Rescue Group (NARG) is a registered and licensed native animal rehabilitation group. Our volunteers are dedicated to the rescue and rehabilitation of native animals. NARG does not receive government funding and the costs of caring for injured, sick and orphaned native animals are met by our members and our fundraising activities. Typical expenses include: veterinary care, medication, veterinary supplies, specialized milk formula, food and enclosures.

Our area of operation covers approximately 2,600 square kilometres. Our volunteers drive long distances on rural and dirt roads to rescue or euthanase animals in need of assistance.

NARG's area of operation is a wombat 'hot spot' and each year our volunteers care for a large number of wombats and macropods. We also care for koalas, possums, gliders, birds and reptiles.

Infant wombats, kangaroos and koalas remain in care for 18-24 months before they are independent and large enough to be returned to the wild. There is a lot of work and expense involved in caring for these animals for such an extended time. On average, NARG carers provide more than 50,000 days of care to animals each year.

Our goal is to provide best practice animal husbandry to ensure optimal outcomes for the animals that come into our care. Our volunteers receive regular training.

NARG operates a 24-hour helpline (4846 1900) to respond to calls about native animals in need of assistance.

NARG is a registered charity and donations are tax deductible.

**Sources of income**

Most of our work is funded by our members and carers themselves. NARG raises money through our fundraising activities. We also apply for grants to assist with special projects such as providing food and water to surviving wildlife in fire affected areas and expensive animal enclosures.

## **Administrative expenses**

NARG has no paid employees. All work is done on a voluntary basis. Our annual administrative expenses consist of:

- Web site management, hosting and registration
- Telephone line for 24-hour wildlife assistance and rescue
- Publications for volunteers and members of the public
- Training courses for volunteers and members of the public
- Stationary
- Zoom subscription – for meetings and remote training
- Bank fees and charges
- Occasional expenditure on equipment such as scanners, etc

## **Other expenses**

The bulk of NARG's expenses are directly related to the care of native animals. This includes things such as:

- Veterinary care
- Veterinary supplies
- Medication
- Specialist milk formula and food for native animals
- Aviaries
- Enclosures
- Petrol subsidies to volunteers who drive long distances to perform rescues (often more than 100 km for a single rescue/euthanasia)
- Ammunition for firearms – euthanasia of large animals

In the aftermath of the 2019-2020 bushfires NARG set up 200 food stations in burnt out areas to provide food and clean water to survivors. Resupplying 200 food stations daily was a massive effort and extremely expensive. However, it enabled us to identify animals in need of veterinary assistance and bring them into care. It is estimated that at least 10,000 animals were saved from starvation by this project.

## **NARG's current reporting requirements**

- Register of Environmental Organisations – annual report required
- Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission ACNC – annual report required
- Annual NSW Department of Environment Statistical Return – this is a huge amount of work with 27 data points for every animal taken into care
- Deductible Gift Recipient annual report
- NWC membership
- NARG Annual Report
- NARG Annual Financial Statements and Reconciliation

Additional record keeping required for NARG's operation

- Membership register
- Membership training register – NSW licence conditions for wildlife carers required regular training
- Snake handler register – to ensure currency of training to handle venomous snakes
- Non-member register of volunteer workers
- Shooters register – to ensure currency of NSW shooters licence requirements for euthanasia of severely injured wildlife
- Lyssavirus vaccinated members and their current titre levels for bat rescues
- Register of grants and acquittals
- Compliance audits of all carers to ensure that they are meeting the terms of our licence and requirements of codes of practice

All of these record keeping and reporting requirements are mandated by various authorities. None are simply administrative overreach by NARG.

### **Time constraints**

In terms of membership numbers NARG is one of the smallest wildlife rescue groups in NSW. Nevertheless, we have a heavy rehabilitation load.

Our area of operation covers a large area which is 'wildlife rich, population poor'. This means that we have many animals needing assistance while our membership is small. It also means that fundraising from our local area is limited.

Rescue, euthanasia and care of injured, sick and orphaned native animals is extremely time consuming and our dedicated volunteers are always pressed for time.

As mentioned above, NARG has a very heavy reporting and record keeping burden. All this administrative work must be done by our already stressed and stretched members. Many of whom also have full time jobs.

### **Realities of a wildlife rescuer's life**

Animal rescue groups are unlike most charitable groups in that our core business requires 24 hour a day work that cannot be delayed. Rescues and euthanasias are critical incidents that require an immediate response, no matter what time of day or night.

Animals in care must be fed and cared for on time. Infants in particular cannot wait even an extra 10 minutes to be fed or toileted. Native animal rescue groups have the added burden of meeting licencing reporting and adhering to codes of practice and best practice animal husbandry.

### **NARG's biggest concern**

The compulsory inclusion on the DGR has added yet another administrative and reporting burden on our already stressed members. Many larger environmental organisations have paid employees to undertake administrative and reporting requirements. These large organisations, particularly in the wildlife rehabilitation sector, receive the bulk of public donations which are out of proportion to the contribution they make to wildlife rehabilitation.

NARG does not have, nor can we afford to pay someone to do administrative and reporting jobs. We have very limited income and all of our money needs to be directed to wildlife care. We also need to ensure that we have some money at the ready to respond to the next environmental crisis.

Reporting requirements and record keeping have become an enormous burden on small groups such as NARG. We are very concerned that continued increases on reporting burdens will be unsustainable for small groups of volunteers who make a significant contribution to our community and the environment.

Without wildlife rehabilitators to care for and preserve as much of the genetic diversity of our native animals as possible, our march towards the extinction of our unique and environmentally essential animal species will accelerate. The cost to our economy will be incalculable.

NARG's executive members are always anxious about making sure that we submit reports on time. We also worry about something being overlooked. Failure to comply with the growing number of reporting requirements could lead to loss of our licence to operate, charitable deductible status, insurance coverage and more. This is a huge source of anxiety for small organizations run by volunteers.

Governmental departments and authorities have no comprehension of the burden on wildlife carers who need to feed a tiny infant every two hours, 24 hours a day, for weeks on end and then also have to contend with the long list of administrative tasks that are required.

### **NARG's requests**

1. Given the already heavy administrative burden placed on groups like ours, we ask that reporting requirements be limited to only what is essential. The last thing that we need is even more detailed reporting requirements while our members are caring for injured, sick and orphaned native animals 24 hours a day.

NARG has been forced to register under the Register of Environmental Organisations and DGR. We ask that you take into consideration our existing administrative burden and limit the amount of work required to fulfil reporting obligations.

2. NARG also requests that environmental organisations be listed as a separate group on the DGR so that potential donors can easily search and identify these organisations.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to provide input into this process.



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