

New South Wales Wildlife Council, Inc.

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Achieving optimal outcomes for Australian wildlife

Tuesday, 24 March 2009

Mark Savio, Director
Domain & Royal Botanic Gardens
Botanic Gardens Trust
Mrs Macquarie's Rd
Sydney 2000

Dear Mark

I am responding on behalf of the NWC to your email of 23 March 2009 regarding the Section 95(2) condition of our involvement with the proposed dispersal of the RBG Grey-headed Flying-fox colony. On 19.2.09 I attended a meeting of the NWC and raised the issue of the above certification. I had previously conferred with NWC representatives of WIRES and Sydney Metropolitan Wildlife Service about the proposal. These are the two wildlife rescue and rehabilitation groups that are licensed to cover the relevant areas. Their position then was that the proposal is both ethically and ecologically unsound and that they opposed its implementation. These groups have made this position clear to both State and Federal Governments.

The position of the NWC since first becoming involved as a member of the Steering Committee was also that it opposed the proposal on the same grounds as those expressed by both WIRES and SMWS. This position remains unchanged. NWC has also indicated to Federal and State Governments its opposition to the proposal.

Both WIRES and SMWS have expressed concern for the welfare of the displaced animals. It needs to be recognised and acknowledged that, as rescue and rehab groups, their responsibilities would lie with the rescue of flying-foxes which are injured or orphaned as a result of the BGT actions. It is beyond the scope of their responsibilities as volunteers to remove healthy animals that are reported in inappropriate environments such as people's gardens or nearby parks. Neither should they be expected to call on already overworked volunteers to be on standby. It is up to the volunteers themselves to decide whether or not they wish to be involved with this dispersal.

The NWC requires that the BGT provide us with a proposal that can be put to the member NWC organizations before we can proceed.

Please provide the following in your proposal:

- An undertaking to provide a "help" line to which the rehab organizations can direct callers who have complaints rather than genuine issues which would involve rescue/care. You

should include details of when that line would be staffed and the kind of support you will provide to members of the public in this circumstance.

- Remuneration for costs incurred by rehab organizations and individual volunteers as a consequence of the actions of the BGT; veterinary expenses, food costs and ancillary costs such as phone and petrol. We need to be sure that the BGT understands that the financial ramifications of their actions could be considerable.
- The BGT number of carers you anticipate will be required, the location(s), the number of days and duration of time. The NWC cannot guarantee that any individual carers will be able to assist but it would be helpful to know the size of assistance required.
- Provide a "job description" of exactly what will be required of volunteers and forward to the NWC for distribution so that individual rehabilitators could decide if they wish to volunteer for the role.
- While we appreciate Dr Phalen's offer of aviaries to house any overflow of animals coming into care, a decision regarding the appropriateness of these cages for flying-foxes would have to be made prior to this offer being taken up. Please advise when and how this might be arranged.

The NWC is particularly concerned about the open-ended nature of the proposal. We believe it would be unacceptable for the animals to be subjected to harassment indefinitely.

The NWC joined the Steering Committee in the hope that the BGT could be persuaded to see that its proposal was flawed and that alternative actions to the dispersal could be undertaken. It is extremely disappointing to realise that this is not the case. In the light of the disastrous events in Victoria, which have caused contraction of foraging grounds for many species, including the flying-foxes, we had hoped that the BGT position might be softened toward these animals. We believe that the proposal will be a contributing factor in the ultimate extinction of this species, since it will be impacting directly on the reproductive capabilities of the grey-headed flying-fox. We are prepared to assist only because of our concern that the suffering of the flying-foxes be minimised.

Sincerely



Ilona Roberts
for the NSW Wildlife Council Inc