

## NSW GOVERNMENT DECISION NOT TO APPROVE GRANT TO SAVE WILDLIFE

The Honourable Penny Sharpe MLC  
Minister for Climate Change, Energy, the Environment & Heritage  
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Dear Minister Sharpe,

I was shocked to learn that the NSW Government has decided not to approve the previously announced Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital Grant 2023-27.

The Biodiversity Conservation Act states that NSW's wildlife is the property of and protected by the Crown. Yet, the government relies on volunteer wildlife carers and general practice vets to donate their professional services to treat and care for injured, sick, and orphaned wildlife with no compensation.

I appeal to you to reconsider your decision and provide some or all of the grant funds reserved and announced by the NSW Government to BBWH. Here are some good reasons:

- As Australia's largest mobile wildlife hospital, your decision not to approve their grant jeopardises their ability to respond to wildlife impacted in a natural disaster, such as a bushfire or flood, anywhere in Australia. Climate science indicates that Australia faces El Nino-driven extreme weather events this summer. This puts wildlife in clear and present danger of catastrophic injury, death and in the case of threatened species, extinction. Will Australian governments stand by and let the only mobile wildlife facility of its kind sit idle due to lack of funding while this happens?
- BBWH contributes directly to getting threatened species like koalas, green sea turtles, grey-headed flying foxes and squirrel gliders back into the wild. More than half of their threatened species patients were returned to care or released.
- BBWH reduces the stress and emotional burden felt by volunteer wildlife carers, general practice vets and the public when they see animals suffer.
- Inflation, economic pressure and interest rates means the public and organisations have less money and inclination to donate.
- If BBWH is forced to close, more animals will die needlessly from road accidents, natural disasters, disease and attacks by domestic pets and feral pests because members of the public and carers will have nowhere to take them for expert care.
- BBWH has first-hand experience treating and caring for wildlife at the epicentre of the catastrophic floods that devastated the Northern Rivers region, the worst in Australia's history.
- Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital and its donors and sponsors have funded \$4 million in construction, infrastructure, equipment, location, staffing, licences and operations at no cost to the government, treating over 4000 native animals for injuries, and illness. Their work supports 19 jobs and generates \$4.3 million in economic output in NSW. It is reasonable that the government contributes to their important work.
- I have personally donated to Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital because I care about wildlife. I think the NSW government has a moral and legal obligation to contribute as well.
- My organisation/business has donated to/sponsored Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital because we care about the environment, biodiversity and the welfare of wildlife. We would like to see the NSW government match our contribution.

Minister, as someone who cares about wildlife and biodiversity, I urge you to please reconsider your decision and allocate some or all of the grant funds previously reserved by the NSW Government to BBWH urgently to allow them to continue to provide positive welfare outcomes for wildlife through treatment, rehabilitation and community education.

Yours sincerely,

Your Name/Organisation