

Natural History Society of South Australia Inc.

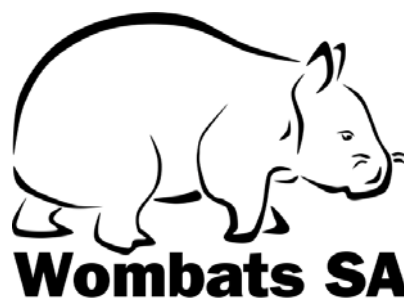
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Wombats SA

The principal purpose of Wombats SA / the Society is the protection and enhancement of the natural environment. We aim to promote and raise public awareness of the value of conserving the native Australian flora and fauna through the maintenance and re-establishment of natural ecosystems and wiser land use.

SOCIETY POSITIONS ON -

- Conservation of Habitat
- Control of Pest Plants and Feral Animals
- Use of Native Species for Human Needs
- Feeding Native Animals
- Prevention of Roadkill
- Keeping Native Animals in Captivity
- Habitat Loss and Climate Change
- Minimising Waste



PREAMBLE

There are certain broad 'Positions' that are fundamental to the aims and purpose of Wombats SA. We propose these should be acceptable to members when speaking on behalf of Wombats SA; as such they should have sound scientific and ethical foundations.

Brief supporting 'Rationales' are supplied as appropriate.

More specific items, relating to these positions, are included as 'Guidelines' and supplied as appropriate.

Position 1: Conservation of Habitat

Wombats SA gives high priority to all measures to protect wildlife habitat to maintain biodiversity.

Rationale:

Loss of wildlife habitat presents a major threat to the conservation of biodiversity in Australia. Wombats SA supports measures to encourage and ensure proper management of lands, both within and outside national parks and reserves, including ecologically sustainable management of urban, agricultural, pastoral and mining lands. Many habitats are represented in parks and reserves but the vast majority of native plants and animals are located on other lands where sustainable management measures are necessary to protect these species.

Position 2: Control of Pest Plants and Feral Animals

Wombats SA supports efforts to control introduced weeds and feral pest animals.

Rationale:

Pest plants and feral animals impact on native species by competing with natural vegetation, destroying habitat, competition for food and shelter, predation and by spreading diseases.

Guidelines:

- The use of herbicides as a control measure against pest plants is supported in accordance with manufacturers' recommendations.
- Shooting as a control measure against goats and other feral animals is supported in accordance with Government Firearms regulations, and as outlined in the Use of Firearms Policy adopted by Wombats SA.
- The use of 1080, or other baits as a control measure against rabbits, foxes and cats is supported in accordance with Government regulations and manufacturers' guidelines.
- Trapping as a control against goats is supported in accordance with animal ethics and humane practices.

Position 3: Use of Native Species for Human Needs

Wombats SA has no objection to the use of native plant or animal species for human needs provided:

- In the case of animal species, harvesting is carried out in a humane manner by licensed operators under the control of relevant wildlife authorities.
- Harvesting of plant material and animals is at sustainable levels and the decision to allow such use is made on the basis of scientific evidence which must be reviewed regularly.

Rationale:

Many native plant or animal species are used for human needs and are commercially valuable. The harvesting of these plants and animals needs to be done sustainably and based on scientific evidence and carefully monitored.

Position 4: Feeding Native Animals

Wombats SA discourages the artificial feeding of native wildlife in the natural environment, except under conditions of severe environmental stress, such as bushfire or drought.

Rationale:

Artificial feeding is discouraged for the following reasons

- **Predation:** feeding stations can attract predators, especially foxes, cats and dogs. Native animals that lose their natural instincts of predator awareness become easy prey.
- **Dependency:** animals may become dependent upon artificial sources of food and become less inclined or able to forage naturally.
- **Poor nutrition:** there is a lack of adequate nutrition in most available artificial feed. Where required, feeding of native animals should only be conducted by qualified wildlife carers with expertise in those species.

Nuisance: hand feeding of native animals such as possums and kangaroos can make them aggressive and they can become a nuisance by stealing food from unaware humans.

- **Relaxed selection pressure:** prolonged artificial feeding can increase survival of individuals that may not have survived the severe environmental conditions.
- **Habitat pressure:** prolonged artificial feeding can cause artificially increased populations that may exert additional environment pressure once feeding is discontinued.

Position 5: National or State Conservation Parks

Wombats SA endorses that the control of national or state conservation parks should not be vested in any organisation or group other than the Australian federal or state government parks authorities. Wombats SA does not endorse commercial developments in national or state conservation parks.

Rationale:

Conservation may not be a high priority with special interest groups. Organisations or groups other than national or state park authorities are much more likely to be susceptible to commercial pressures.

Position 6: Prevention of Roadkill

Wombats SA supports continued mitigation and research into ways of reducing road kills of native wildlife.

Rationale:

Hundreds of thousands of animals are killed each year after being hit by motor vehicles on Australian roads.

Guidelines:

- Many species of wildlife are most active during dawn and dusk. Avoid driving during these high-risk times if possible. Be aware of animals on roadside verges and take care around corners.
- Slow down and pull your vehicle over to allow wildlife time to cross. Be mindful that young animals may not yet recognise a vehicle as a threat and may need extra time to reach safety.

Position 7: Keeping Native Animals in Captivity

Wombats SA is opposed to taking native terrestrial vertebrates from the wild into captivity unless approved by Australian federal and state government regulations. Wombats SA endorses the rescue of injured and orphaned wildlife to recognised and authorised rescue organisations or veterinarians. Wombats SA approves the keeping of native animals, only if they are licensed within the laws of the Australian federal and state government regulations.

Rationale:

- Wombats SA recognises that many Australians keep native mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish as pets and/or as a hobby.

Guidelines:

- Wombats SA endorses the procurement of native animals by captive-bred specimens rather than being taken from the wild.
- Wombats SA encourages responsible pet ownership such as keeping domestic pets indoors to prevent predation or harm to native wildlife species.
- If native wildlife such as an echidna or snake enters your property, pets should be moved indoors and the wildlife allowed to pass, and/or contact the appropriate wildlife organisation for their humane capture and release in a more suitable location.
- Whenever possible, native animals that have been rescued due to injuries or being orphaned should be released into a suitable location after recovery and rehabilitation.

Position 8: Habitat Loss and Climate Change

Wombats SA recognises the evidence that land clearing, pollution and climate change has had a profound detrimental effect on the health, distribution and abundance of native flora and fauna. Wombats SA supports all efforts by governments, corporations, industries and individuals to introduce and action policies and behaviours that will reduce habitat loss and climate change to maintain a supportive environment for our flora and fauna.

Rationale:

The detrimental effect of human activity on the environment has been the destruction of habitat and ecosystems through land clearing, pollution and climate change. We must do all in our power to change human behaviour to mitigate the loss of habitat and address climate change.

Guidelines:

- Wombats SA encourages governments, corporations, industries and individuals to make immediate changes to reduce habitat loss, pollution and use of fossil fuels, and implement environmentally sustainable action.

Position 9: Minimising Waste

Wombats SA encourages governments, corporations, industries and individuals to introduce and action policies and behaviours to minimise their consumption and the amount of waste they generate. Wombats SA endorses the reduction in the use of single-use plastics and encourages recycling to reduce contamination of the environment and eliminate the adverse effects of waste on wildlife.

Rationale:

Plastics contaminate the environment and have a detrimental effect on wildlife. Plastics break down into micro-plastics that contaminate our ecosystem.

Guidelines:

- Wombats SA encourages people to make immediate changes to reduce the use of single-use plastics, reduce waste and facilitate recycling for a positive effect on the environment.

Acknowledgement

Wombats SA gratefully acknowledges the Australian Wildlife Society for the source document, which was adapted for our own societal circumstances.

Endorsed by NHSSA Management Committee, 11 February, 2020