

**Submission to House of Representatives Standing Committee on the Environment Inquiry into the
Register of Environmental Organisations**

From F.A.W.N.A. (NSW) INC.

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(For Australian Wildlife Needing Aid)

FAWNA is the volunteer group licensed by NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) to undertake rescue, rehabilitation and release of injured, orphaned and in need wildlife in the operational area of some 18,000 sq km from Bulahdelah to the top of the Kempsey Shire, west to Walcha, Gloucester and east to the seaboard. FAWNA is a member group of the NSW Wildlife Council.

FAWNA is a hands-on, actively working volunteer group that responds, through its 24 hour 7 day a week wildlife rescue telephone "hotline" to calls from the public to provide assistance to injured or orphaned native animals, or to animals causing distress to a member of the public, for example that unwelcome snake in the laundry. Of 292 volunteer members, 202 are trained and Authorised. In the 2014 Financial Year those volunteers responded to 3,300 "rescue" calls. FAWNA reports annually to its licensee, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Division of OEH.

FAWNA has no guaranteed formal funding and is reliant on public donations and its own fundraising efforts. It does receive a small stipend annually from the licensee but its expenditure last Financial Year was \$35000 and government grants totalled \$7900 – about 22.5% of expenditure. FAWNA has been advised its grants will be reduced this year.

It is important in a progressive and caring society that Animal Welfare considerations are fully catered for, and wildlife rehabilitation groups such as FAWNA attend to native fauna that are suffering or need human assistance in some way on a volunteer basis at little cost to Government. It is the community expectation that injured and orphaned fauna can be treated humanely that was the genesis of licensed wildlife rehabilitation groups throughout NSW, and indeed Australia. On many occasions, our volunteers' roles are to arrange humane euthanasia of a native animal, bird or reptile that cannot be rehabilitated to a fit state to return to the wild, but on many more occasions FAWNA's volunteers are able to successfully rehabilitate fauna and return them fit and healthy to their natural environment. The community relies on groups such as FAWNA to remain funded and operational.

FAWNA operates under the Code of Practice for Injured, Sick and Orphaned Protected Fauna and part of the Code requires training of volunteers in Best Practices and species-specific rehabilitation training. It is costly to do what we do, and it is therefore vital that organisations such as FAWNA continue to have the ability to receive tax deductible donations as an active, hands-on working organisation listed on the Register of Environmental Organisations. It is only by donations that FAWNA is able to purchase costly marsupial and bird foodstuffs in bulk, and onsell them to our volunteers at half price. Without that ability, we would not be able to retain our active rescue and rehabilitation volunteers.

We trust that the Standing Committee Inquiry will not recommend any changes to tax deductibility status or to the Register of Environmental Organisations that would lessen wildlife rescue rehabilitation release groups' ability to attract tax deductible donations from the community.

*Submission approved by FAWNA Management Committee 21-4-2015 for lodgement by M. Ryan,
President – **www.fawna.org.au***