

Koala plates grants program

Consultation outcomes report



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Executive summary

The South Australian Government launched all-new 'Koala State' number plates in July 2023.

The initiative aimed to support the wildlife rescue and rehabilitation sector in South Australia, with \$50 from each plate sale going towards a fund for the sector.

The Department for Environment and Water is managing this fund, and through its Fauna Permits Unit, regulates the wildlife rescue and rehabilitation sector by administering permits in line with the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.

The department intends to establish a grants program so that funds can be distributed to permitted carers and/or organisations.

As part of the development of this program, the department undertook consultation via the state government's YourSAy platform. Members of the wildlife rescue and rehabilitation sector were invited to share feedback on how the grant program should be structured and key considerations such as eligibility criteria and funding priorities.

During the 6 week consultation from January to February 2024, 41 responses were received. Most responses were from individuals (73%) with some identified as being made on behalf of a relevant organisation or group (27%).

This report summarises the feedback received for each of the question asked as part of this consultation.

Key feedback included:

- Small grants of up to \$2,000 were the most popular grant structure preference.
- There were suggestions that a variety of grants models were made available depending on who was applying (organisation vs individual).
- There was some support for directing the funds to areas that either affect or support the whole sector such as bushfire preparedness, a 24-hour dedicated wildlife hospital, vet subsidies or the establishment of a peak body.
- Housing, equipment, vet fees and food were the most popular items to be funded by the grants program.
- Purchase of vehicles, computers and land, conference fees and utilities were the most popular items to be excluded from a grants process.
- Further considerations raised for the grants process included funding for the Adelaide Koala and Wildlife Centre, research into conditions affecting koalas, virtual fencing projects, giving preference to organisations working with threatened species, and ensuring that the process is open to all carers not just organisations that are metro-based, and that there is no favouritism of certain species over others.

The department is working to develop the grants program and application process based on the feedback provided, with an aim to launch the first round to eligible applicants by the end of August 2024.

Introduction

Background

The state government recognises the important work undertaken by the wildlife rescue and rehabilitation sector. As part of its commitment to support the sector, 'Koala State' number plates launched in July 2023, with \$50 from each plate sale going towards a fund for the sector.

As of 6 May 2024, 1,914 plates have been sold meaning that \$95,700 is available to distribute to the sector. The plates remain on sale.

The Department for Environment and Water is managing this fund, and through its Fauna Permits Unit, regulates the wildlife rescue and rehabilitation sector by administering permits in line with the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.

To distribute the money raised, the department intends to establish a grants program so that funds can be distributed to permitted carers and/or organisations.

The proposed objectives of the grants program are to:

1. Support the wildlife rescue and rehabilitation sector by increasing their ability to respond to and care for sick, injured or orphaned wildlife by providing funding for items which directly assist the provision of these services.
2. Improve animal welfare outcomes for sick, injured, or orphaned wildlife.

Consultation was undertaken to understand how the sector would like to see the grants program structured and gather feedback on its scope.

How we engaged

The consultation was hosted on the state government's YourSAy platform from Monday, 15 January 2024 until Sunday, 25 February 2024 (6 weeks). A survey was used to gather feedback and asked participants to rank their preferred grant model, identify alternatives, and provide details on other considerations for the program (such as funding priorities).

The consultation was targeted, and only available to those in South Australia's wildlife rescue and rehabilitation sector. Two emails were sent to permitted individuals and groups, promoting the consultation and encouraging participation.

Who we heard from

- 41 responses were received.
- Of these responses, 11 were made on behalf of organisations/groups, 29 from individuals, and 1 person skipped this question.

Submissions identified as being made on behalf of an organisation include:

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Wildlife Welfare Organisation (SA) Inc | • Adelaide and Hills Koala Rescue – 1300KOALAZ Inc |
| • Save Our Wildlife Foundation Inc | • Kangaroo Rescue South Australia Inc |
| • Bat Rescue SA | • SA Native Animal Rescue |
| • Humbug Scrub Animal Rescue | • Minton Farm Animal Rescue Centre |
| • Koala Rescue Inc | • Two Songs Sanctuary |

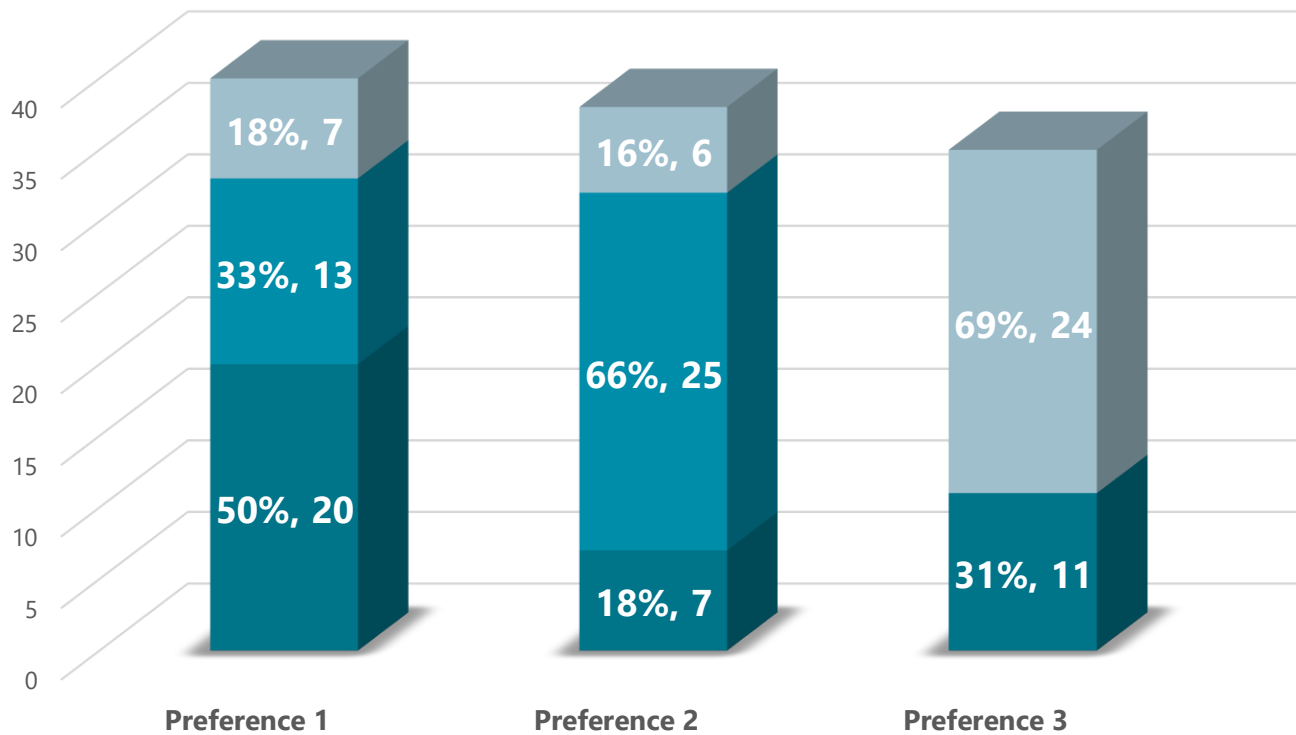
Next steps

The department is working to develop the grants program and application process based on the feedback provided, with an aim to launch the first round to eligible applicants by the end of August 2024.

What we heard

Preferred model for the grants program

Participants were asked to consider 3 identified program models (small grants, medium grants, and a single large strategic grant) and rank these from 1-3, with 1 being their top preference.



■ Small grants (up to \$2,000) ■ Medium grants (up to \$10,000) ■ A large strategic project (up to \$30,000)

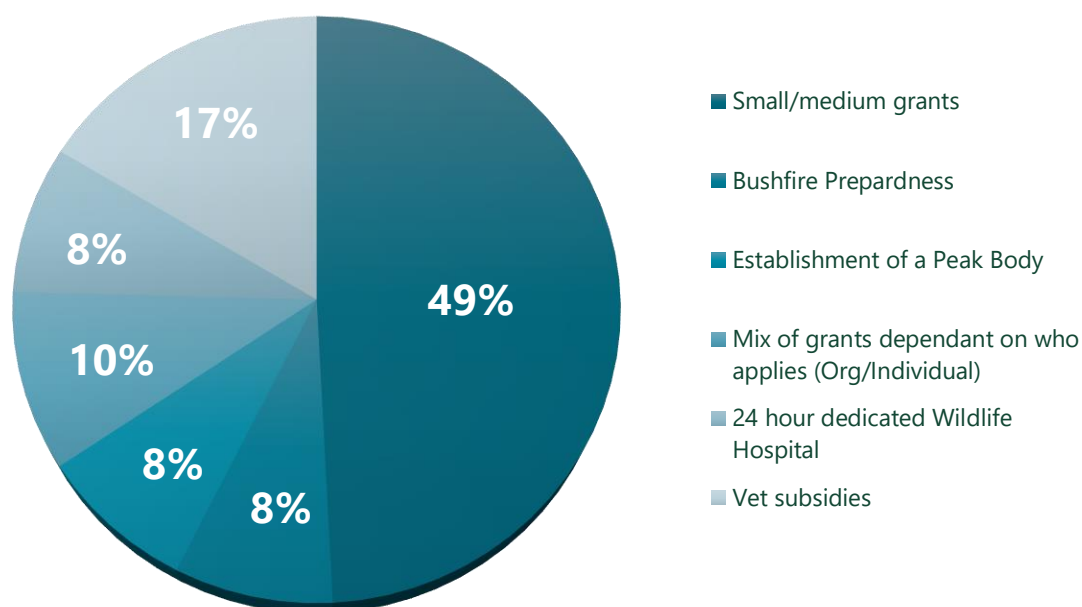
Main themes

- Preference 1: 50% of respondents (20 people) ranked small grants as their first (top) preference.
- Preference 2: 66% of respondents (25 people) ranked medium grants as their second preference.
- Preference 3: 69% of respondents (24 people) ranked a large strategic grant as their third preference.
- There were 40 responses for first preference, 38 for second and 35 for third, indicating that some participants chose not to rank all options.

Alternative grants program models

Participants were also invited to suggest alternate grant program models, outside of those identified by the department. Most respondents chose not to provide any suggestions. 16 people provided additional feedback or alternative structures.

Of these written responses, the main themes have been grouped and included in the graph below based on the frequency they were mentioned.



Main themes

- A mix of grant models should be available, depending on organisation size or whether applying as an individual or on behalf of a group.
- The funds may be more appropriate to be used to address a wider issue affecting the whole sector, such as bushfire preparedness, administrative support for wildlife groups in the form of a peak body, support for wildlife group members, or the establishment of a 24-hour dedicated wildlife hospital available to carers.
- Some alternative monetary structures were suggested, including \$3,000 small grants, \$5,000 grants and a small number of \$20,000 grants.
- Vet subsidies, training, support for the establishment of a dedicated wildlife clinic.

Quotes from survey participants

"I would like to see both medium grants (\$5000) offered to organisations and small grants (\$2000) offered to individuals. Could there be some consideration for the Adelaide Koala and Wildlife Centre also getting some funds as they support many carers and I believe we would be lost without them."

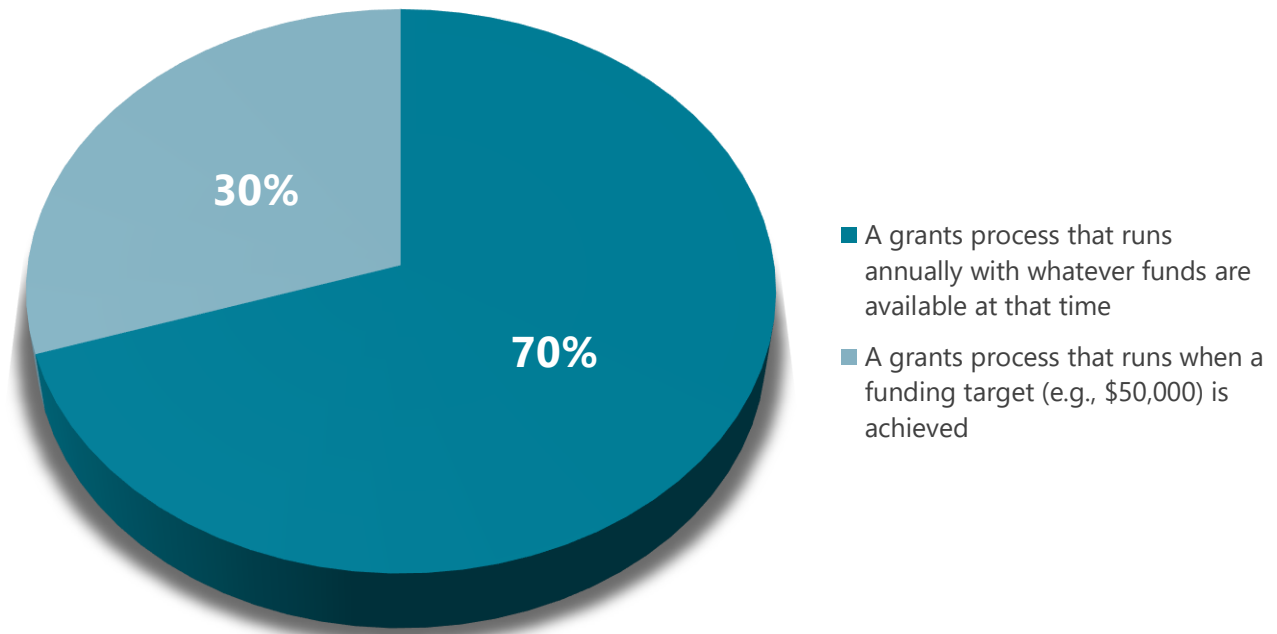
"I feel that the amount of money provided could be put to better use in bushfire preparedness or some other problem that directly affects the number of animals that wildlife carers receive. The sum is really too small to help any wildlife organisations significantly."

"Other idea to be considered would be using the bigger pot of money to provide support to all groups around administration issues. Possibly a peak body for groups to go through that's only job is to support the sector."

"We have many wonderful vets in our country, unfortunately they do not receive specialized training for our wonderful wildlife they are more geared for domestic and farm animals (where the money is)."

Future grant rounds

This question asked participants how they would prefer grants to be distributed in future years. They could select between an annual process (which would use whatever funds were available) or a program that occurred when a funding target was reached.



Main themes

- Most participants (70%) indicated that they would prefer an annual grants process, using whatever funds were available.

Appropriate amount to distribute through the grants program

Based on their previous answer, participants were asked what they thought was an appropriate amount of money to distribute through the program.

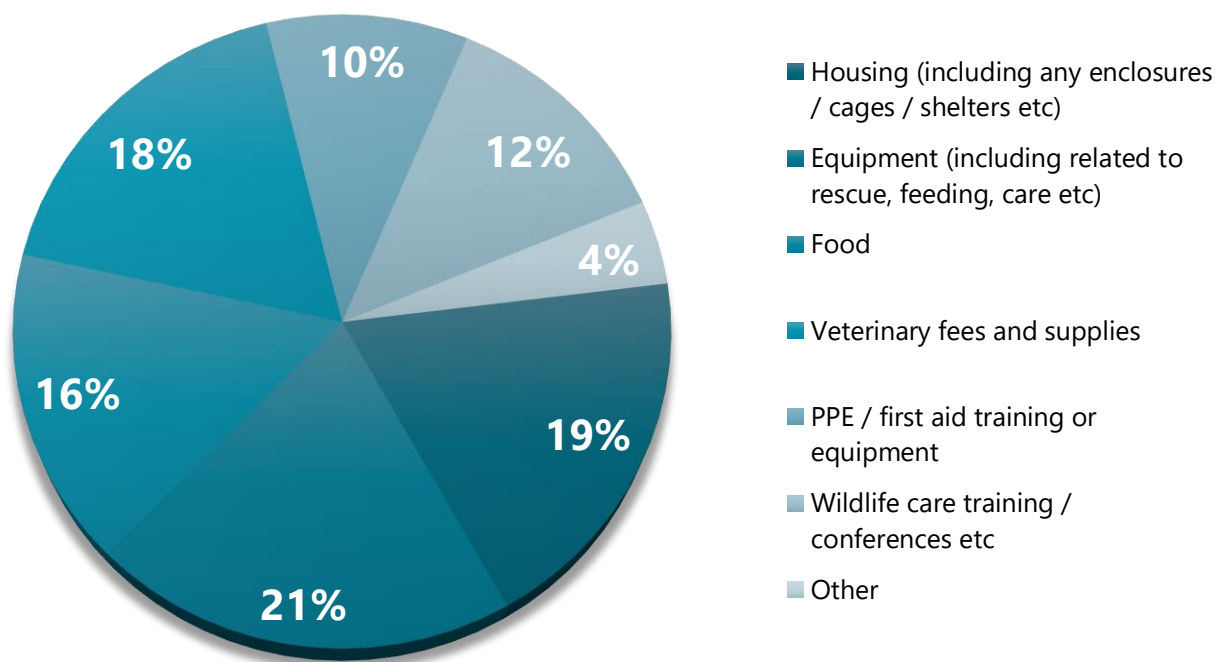


Main themes

- \$10,000 - \$20,000 was the top choice (33%), however, there was little difference between the remaining options.
- Of the 'other' responses provided, participants suggested using whatever had been raised in the previous 12 months.
- One person also highlighted that it was difficult to answer without knowing how many applicants there would be.

Items/activities that should be funded

Participants were asked to nominate activities that should be funded through the grants program. Some options were provided to select, and participants could also identify any others they felt weren't covered.



Main themes

- Equipment, housing, veterinary supplies and food were the most popular responses.
- Of the 4% of 'other' responses, suggested items or activities to be funded included:
 - Fuel or fuel subsidies for rescuers or rescue vehicles (6 mentions)
 - Nesting / release boxes (3 mentions)
 - GPS for rescuers or rescue vehicles (3 mentions)
 - Incubator (3 mentions)
 - Medications (2 mentions)
 - Vaccinations (1 mentions)
 - Educating members of the public (1 mention)
 - Infrastructure that supports the sector (1 mention)

Items/activities that should not be funded

This question asked participants to list items or activities they felt **should not** be funded through the grants program. Of the written answers, responses have been represented based on frequency they were mentioned.



Main themes

- The most listed items included vehicle purchases, computers, conference attendance and related expenses, insurance, utilities and land purchase(s).
- Some responses specified that training and/or conference attendance should be the responsibility of the individual or the organisation they are part of.
- There was some feedback received that suggested if organisations were granted funding, it should be based on specific criteria, such as ethos or current financial position.

Quotes from survey participants

"I think if you are going to give grants to groups, they should have a proven track record of their abilities and ethos."

"Offices for large organisations, salary. While I believe rescuers and carers SHOULD be paid, in SA we are so lacking in any kind of funding support at this time it needs to go to animal needs as a matter of urgency."

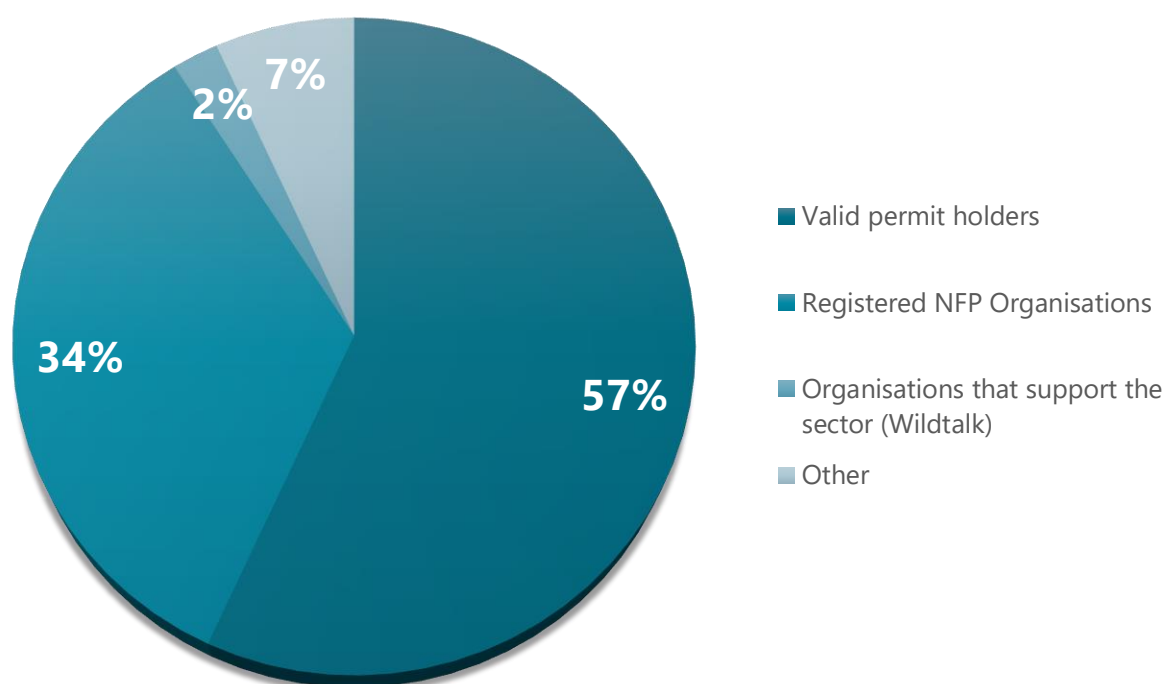
"Wildlife carers choose to undertake what we do and I strongly believe they should pay for any training, conferences, PPE. Anything that benefits the person should be at their own expense. The people's money generated through this plates program SHOULD be used ONLY on the animals - food, vets, shelters."

"Wildlife training / conference attendance. I personally feel that it is up to individuals to ensure that they do ongoing PD as you would any role."

Eligibility

Participants were asked to identify who they felt should be eligible to apply for funding. They were asked to tick one or more of the following options:

- All individuals who have held a valid permit within the last 12 months, have submitted an annual permit return and maintained accurate records, have no convictions under relevant legislation (including interstate and national) within the past 10 years.
- Only registered non-for-profit wildlife rescue organisations.
- Organisations that support or provide a service to the rescue, rehabilitation sector (e.g., Wild talk).
- Respondents could also provide other suggestions.



Main themes

- 61% of participants selected all individuals who hold a valid permit.
- Of the 'other' suggestions provided, some participants suggested:
 - Funding should only be available to permit holders who rescued/cared for koalas
 - Funding should be used to assist research in koala protection
 - Vets should be eligible to apply.

Other considerations

Participants were asked to identify anything else that would assist the department to finalise the grants program, including any other considerations they felt had been missed. The points raised in this section covered several areas, these are summarised below.

- Support for Adelaide Koala and Wildlife Centre to receive grant funding as a focal point for treating wildlife.
- Possible funding for research into key conditions affecting koalas (Calcium Oxalate Nephrosis).
- Support for Wildtalk.
- Wildlife Organisations demonstrating levels of incoming animals/workloads/financial situation – ‘means testing’ type system.
- General overall support for supplying funding to the sector.
- Ensuring the process is open to all carers, not just organisations/metro-based groups.
- All funds to go to the Virtual Fencing project to help prevent koalas killed on the roads.
- No favouritism of certain species when awarding grants.
- Ensuring the money goes directly to supporting the animals and their long term survival.
- Giving preference to organisations working with critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable species (in that respective order).

Quotes from survey participants

"Preference should be given to organisations based on their productivity and assets/income base. Acquittal by written evidence to be due 9 months after grant approval. Any funds not acquitted to be rolled into the next annual grant total."

"Cute and fluffy animals are naturally favoured by the public and are more likely to attract public support when it comes to donations, especially during major events such as bushfires. Unfortunately, less 'cuddly' species do not enjoy such a positive public perception. These species include (but are not limited to):

- Flying foxes
- Microbats
- Snakes and pythons
- Lizards
- Birds

It is not simply a case of being favoured less, but unhelpful misinformation is spread and, in worst cases, some of these species are actively deterred or harmed by the public. This is why we feel it is important for these 'forgotten' species to be guaranteed an allocation of funds from this Koala Plates grants program."

"I would like to see the Adelaide Koala and Wildlife Centre get funding as all organisation take their wildlife there for treatment."

"I would like to suggest that the financials of an organisation along with their strategic plan is a criteria. I feel this is a solid way in making sure that the grant goes to an organisation that really needs it."

"It is the long term carers that hold the bulk of the costs. Interim carers only have the animals in care for a short time whereas Not For Profit wildlife carers have the expense for the entire animals life span and seriously need support. Again I emphasize this money should go DIRECTLY to support the animals long term survival."

"Funds need to be shared equally amongst species. Whilst there are wildlife groups with one species as their rescue and care specialty, such as koalas, bats, wombats, there are groups that rescue and care for ALL wildlife. This needs to be weighed up with permit holders of one species versus permit holders for multiple species. I fear that if non-for-profit organisations win grant eligibility, there will be individual species groups shouting out that their preferred species is more important and in need of funds over other groups that take on most species."

"Extra support for those supporting vulnerable species."

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Telephone +61 (8) 8124 4972

ABN 36702093234

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www.environment.sa.gov.au



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