



**WIRES**

**EMERGENCY FUND**

**UPDATE**

**OCTOBER 2023**

# CONTENTS

- 3 WIRES Overview and Mission
- 3 2019/2020 Drought and Fires
- 3 Emergency Fund
- 4 Operational Context
- 4 Managing the Emergency Fund
- 5 WIRES Emergency Response and Recovery Plan
  - 6 Stage 1
  - 7 Stage 2
  - 8 Stage 3
- 9 Long Term Impact
- 9 Thank You

## WIRES OVERVIEW & MISSION

WIRES is Australia's largest wildlife rescue organisation. WIRES has been rescuing and caring for sick, injured and orphaned native animals for over 35 years, and our mission is to actively rehabilitate and preserve Australian wildlife and inspire others to do the same.

WIRES operates a dedicated emergency Wildlife Rescue Office assisting wildlife and the community across Australia 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, providing rescue advice and assistance for over 130,000 animals annually, as well as providing full-time mobile Wildlife Emergency Responders operating across Greater Sydney, South-East Queensland and Tasmania.

WIRES provides significant national support for hundreds of projects to assist with wildlife rescue and rehabilitation across Australia and collaborates nationally with strategic partners to support the long-term recovery of wildlife habitat and the long-term preservation of native species in the wild.

## 2019/2020 DROUGHT & FIRES

The catastrophic Black Summer bushfires in 2019/2020 took an unprecedented toll on native animals, and this crisis event was preceded by a long-term drought that lasted almost a decade in many parts of Australia.

The fires saw millions of hectares of land burnt including threatened species habitat, and an estimated twenty percent of Australian forests were impacted. As a result, hundreds of species are now closer to extinction with a [WWF Report](#) confirming that almost three billion animals were displaced or killed by the fires, including 143 million mammals, 2.46 billion reptiles, 180 million birds, and 51 million frogs.

The scale of the tragedy placed a significant strain on our resources and systems, with WIRES staff and volunteers working tirelessly to support the needs of wildlife and the community.

## EMERGENCY FUND

WIRES established an Emergency Fund to respond to the immediate and long-term impacts of these disasters, providing immediate emergency aid, increasing future wildlife rescue and rehabilitation capacity nationally, and supporting long-term habitat and species recovery.

WIRES were overwhelmed by the response from the local and international community, which has enabled us to significantly expand our impact on wildlife across Australia. These donations have made, and continue to make, an extraordinary difference for native animals, helping WIRES to provide the vital care and support that our unique and vulnerable wildlife desperately needs.

## OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

Immediately following the devastating bushfires, the world entered a global COVID-19 pandemic. WIRES had to navigate this to keep supporting wildlife in need, adapting to constantly evolving border closures and travel restrictions. Thankfully wildlife rescue was confirmed an essential service, and contactless rescue processes and revised safety procedures were quickly established for rescue staff and volunteers. At a time when WIRES was receiving record volunteer enquiries, wildlife training also pivoted to online delivery.

Extreme weather events in Australia have also become more frequent, and scientists are forecasting this will continue due to climate change. In March 2022 severe flooding struck Queensland and New South Wales, and over a six-week period, we supported WIRES wildlife carers and 17 external organisations spanning two states, representing thousands of wildlife volunteers.

Through extreme weather events, including fires, floods, droughts, and a global pandemic, WIRES has continued to increase its impact on native animals, expanding its rescue, rehabilitation, and recovery programs for wildlife nationally.

## MANAGING THE EMERGENCY FUND

WIRES takes the responsibility for all public gifts received seriously, and the highest level of strategic oversight has gone into the diligent management of the Emergency Funds received in 2020.

In addition to ongoing internal monitoring from the WIRES board and management, WIRES has collaborated with external experts to ensure the good governance of the emergency fund.

To ensure the transparent, responsible allocation of funding and the accuracy of reporting, WIRES has:

- **Completed a review with The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC), the national regulator of Australian charities;**
- **Completed annual external statutory audits on the financial statements of WIRES in each of the financial years the funds have been expended;**
- **Commissioned a review of the fund's expenditure by an independent investigative accountant and a full forensic audit by an independent external auditor.**



# WIRES EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND RECOVERY PLAN

The WIRES Emergency Response and Recovery Plan outlines our strategic approach to the disbursement of the \$90 million raised in the Emergency Fund in 2020.

**STAGE 1 – \$12 million**

**STAGE 2 – \$41 million**

**STAGE 3 – \$37 million**

All Emergency Funds are committed to projects and programs that support wildlife rescue, rehabilitation, recovery, and preservation, with less than 8 cents per dollar estimated for essential program management, fund management, and administrative costs.


All Emergency Funds are allocated, with over 20% of the funds expended and the remaining funds committed to multi-year programs. All plans will be strategically reviewed regularly by WIRES Board and Management, and WIRES will release annual Emergency Fund updates until all funds are expended.



## STAGE 1 - \$12 million

Funding Expended: 94% Expended | 6% Committed

### Priorities

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
|  |           |  |
| Emergency response to optimise welfare outcomes for native animals                | Wildlife rescue and rehabilitation requirements for additional wildlife food and equipment | Habitat and species recovery projects in areas impacted by the fires and drought    |

### Major projects include

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <b>\$5 million</b> | Nationally supporting wildlife rescue organisations, authorised carers and vets, with immediate needs for impacted wildlife |
| <b>\$5 million</b> | Supporting species and habitat recovery, including critical threatened species projects across Australia                    |
| <b>\$1 million</b> | Supporting long-term supplementary emergency water provision for wildlife during droughts and post-fires                    |





## STAGE 2 – \$41 MILLION

Funding Expended: 20% Expended | 80% Committed

### Priorities

- 1 Increasing national rescue and rehabilitation capacity
- 2 Improving emergency wildlife response capability
- 3 Supporting long-term species and habitat recovery projects

### Major projects include

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| <b>\$12 million</b> | Implementing national grant projects and programs to improve immediate and long-term outcomes for wildlife                |
| <b>\$6 million</b>  | Supporting species and habitat recovery and preservation, including critical threatened species projects across Australia |
| <b>\$19 million</b> | Increasing national capacity for best practice emergency response, wildlife rescue, and rehabilitation                    |
| <b>\$3 million</b>  | Building best-practice wildlife rehabilitation facilities in NSW  |





## STAGE 3 – \$37 MILLION

Funding Expended: 100% Committed

### Priorities

- 1 Improving emergency rescue and response for wildlife nationally
- 2 Increasing national wildlife rescue and rehabilitation capacity to optimise long-term welfare outcomes
- 3 Supporting species and habitat preservation and risk reduction

### Major Projects include

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| <b>\$16 million</b> | Developing, implementing, and expanding national wildlife services to improve wildlife access to best-practice emergency response, rescue, and rehabilitation, and support the preservation of native species in the wild |
| <b>\$13 million</b> | Building and operating best-practice wildlife rehabilitation facilities   |
| <b>\$7 million</b>  | Establishing a Future Fund for Wildlife to ensure rescue and rehabilitation services for wildlife can be optimised long-term, and support the preservation of native species for future generations                       |



## LONG TERM IMPACT

The emergency funding provided to WIRES delivered mission-critical support for the organisation during the worst disaster season on record. This funding has enabled the growth of core wildlife programs and the development and implementation of new programs to support wildlife and the wildlife sector across Australia.

We know that the key threats facing wildlife are compounding, with increased habitat loss, more frequent and intense natural disasters, disease, changing climate conditions and human/wildlife conflict. To improve the quality and quantity of wildlife emergency response, rescue, and rehabilitation services available for native animals, WIRES has embarked on a range of large, nationally strategic projects designed to deliver significant long-term impacts for wildlife.

The Emergency Fund is providing seed funding to initiate these projects, but more funding will be required to sustain them long-term and is the ongoing support of our donors that makes projects like these possible for wildlife.

## THANK YOU

We express our heartfelt appreciation for the outpouring of support and generosity that our supporters, partners, donors, staff, and volunteers have demonstrated in response to the sequence of emergency events that have ravaged Australia.

There are still many challenges facing wildlife, and we look forward to partnering with you long-term to improve welfare outcomes for more individual animals and to support the recovery and preservation of native species for generations to come.

