

Wombat Whispers

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Hello members

of The Wombat Foundation. Some months have past since our first newsletter, and we still patiently (!) await confirmation of The Foundation being registered on the National Register of Environmental Organisations. We are advised that the Minister's signature is now all that is required. As previously explained, this will provide us with the ability to offer tax deductibility for donations.

However, there is activity elsewhere, as advised in the update below from Dr Alan Horsup.

Garry Richmond

Secretary
Wombat Foundation

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Burrow Bits

Happy New Year to all *Wombatophiles*! Lets hope it's a good one for the wombats and that the rain Gods smile on us this year! Probably the most significant thing that has happened since my last report was a major wombat fundraiser held in Sydney in November. This was organised by several highly committed and caring Sydney-siders who convinced a Sydney businessman to donate a dollar for every dollar raised on the night, secured Jana Pittman as celebrity speaker and Bradley Trevor Grieve (author of the 'Blue Day books') as MC and obtained famous artists to donate paintings for auction. In Queensland, I was extremely fortunate to have had a wombat volunteer who is also a sculptor. John Vink sculpted a beautiful full-sized northern hairy-nosed wombat from which he made 12 polyurethane and 3 bronze wombats. John painted some of the polyurethane wombats in natural colours and the rest were painted by Sydney artists. All artwork was auctioned on the night, and with the Sydney businessman's very generous contribution, an amazing \$120,000 was raised! Most of this will help fund our research at the Wombat Research Centre for the next 3 years.

On the ground at Epping Forest NP things are going well. Rain in November with good follow-up falls in December and January have really greened up the park. All we need now is a rain depression to sit over the park for a week to top up the water table! I reported that a big win last year was getting the wombats to drink. We have now gone one step further and have wombats feeding at one of our food stations! This has been captured on video and

Wombalina the southern hairy-nosed wombat suckles while her Mum snoozes.

includes footage of a female and juvenile eating sweet potato, kangaroo pellets, lucerne hay and molasses. Visits to food and water stations have dropped off now that the park has greened up but this is an important break through. This work is part of Masters student Donna Treby's research which is mostly aimed at developing techniques that can be used to create other wild or captive populations of northern hairy-nosed wombats. Donna is also writing a wombat husbandry manual and describing the architecture and environment of northern hairy-nosed wombat burrows and their habitat in detail.

A major project on the agenda this year is to extend the automatic water system that currently fills two of the 10 wombat troughs to all of the troughs. We plan to install two more

header tanks and several kilometres of polypipe so that all troughs are self-filling. This will make the caretaker's job a lot easier and reduce human disturbance near the burrows.

At the Wombat Research Centre at Rockhampton Zoo, PhD student, Lindsay Hogan, is now well into her research. She has recently installed a video monitoring system in all eight wombat dens and four yards. This will allow her to monitor breeding behaviour and interactions amongst all the wombats. The baby born there last year is now a whopping 17 kg and 14 months old. She was named *Wombalina* in a local naming contest and still suckles from her Mum, Anna, but must be only a month or two away from 'getting the shove'.

We are currently finalising a sponsorship deal with a central Queensland coal mine to build a demountable at the



Wombat Research Centre. The building will provide much needed laboratory, surgery and office space for our research there, including a clean, cool location to house Lindsay's video monitoring gear. This is another great example of the community lending a hand to help the wombats.

Thanks again for your support and interest.

Regards, ALAN

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**"Wombat Whispers" is the
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Donations always welcome!