



## Pre-Budget Consultation 2026-27 Submission

## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Every day in Tasmania, countless native animals are injured, orphaned, or displaced. From road trauma to habitat loss and disease, the need for rescue and rehabilitation is ever present — but the capacity of the volunteer network that responds is stretched to breaking point.

Wildlife Network Tasmania (WNT) is the body established to hold this fragile system together. Our volunteer carers, rescuers, release site owners, vets, the Board, and other helpers provide thousands of hours of unpaid labour each year, ensuring injured and orphaned wildlife receive the care they need and delivering outcomes that would otherwise fall to government. This extraordinary commitment delivers outcomes of significant value to the community, the environment, and Tasmania's reputation as a place that values its natural heritage. Yet, without urgent and proportionate investment to strengthen and sustain this effort, the sector's capacity to continue at its current level is at serious risk — a risk that could not only impact wildlife and volunteers but also undermine public confidence and government credibility on an issue the community cares deeply about.

WNT will receive just \$115,000 in 2025-2026 from the State Government — funding that allows for basic administration but not the scale of leadership, support, and advocacy the sector desperately needs. This is not enough to retain volunteers, support native animal welfare, or deliver the outcomes of the Sector Strategy and Action Plan — a framework co-designed by government and the sector, and owned collectively by all stakeholders. With funding only provided until June 2026 there is no guarantee that WNT will be able to carry on its vital work beyond this date.

We are asking the Tasmanian Government to partner with us and commit to \$350,000 per year over three years. This is a modest, proportionate investment compared to:

- The millions of dollars in labour value and out of pocket expenses contributed annually by over 1,500 Tasmanian volunteers.
- The funding levels of other bodies, many of which represent far smaller sectors (recreational fishing receives funding of \$233,000 per annum).
- Reputational risks for government as regulator if volunteers' capacity continues to decline — particularly under the *Animal Welfare Act 1993*.

The return on this investment will be clear and measurable:

- **Volunteer retention:** through micro-grants, training, and wellbeing support.
- **Native animal welfare outcomes:** fewer animals turned away or euthanised, more returned to the wild.
- **Sector stability:** a coordinated, skilled, and sustainable network aligned with government policy — and a great story for the community and tourism.

Behind these numbers are human stories. One carer recently told us she nearly gave up after 15 years due to costs and exhaustion — until WNT's small grant last Christmas, and connection to training support and the WNT community gave her the strength and desire to continue. Multiply her story by hundreds, and you see both the risk of underinvestment and the opportunity of timely support.

This is not charity — it is a partnership. By investing now, government secures the very foundation of its wildlife policy, protects Tasmania's natural heritage, and demonstrates visible leadership on an issue the community cares deeply about and tourism thrives on.

We are asking for \$350,000 per year over three years — a time-limited, proportionate investment that will stabilise the sector, protect Tasmania's wildlife, and return value many times over in animal lives saved, volunteers retained, and public trust maintained.

## 2 PARTNERSHIP & GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT

Transformational change requires a genuine partnership between WNT and the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE). WNT provides on-the-ground insight and coordination; government provides recognition, input, and policy alignment.

Effective collaboration depends on:

- Shared accountability for deliverables and outcomes.
- Ongoing engagement from senior decision-makers.
- Recognition of WNT's role as the peak body for the wildlife rehabilitation sector.
- Transparent communication to the community about what is funded and achieved.

With this partnership approach, WNT can maximise the return on government investment, strengthen sector capacity, and deliver measurable outcomes for wildlife, volunteers, and the community.

## 3 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

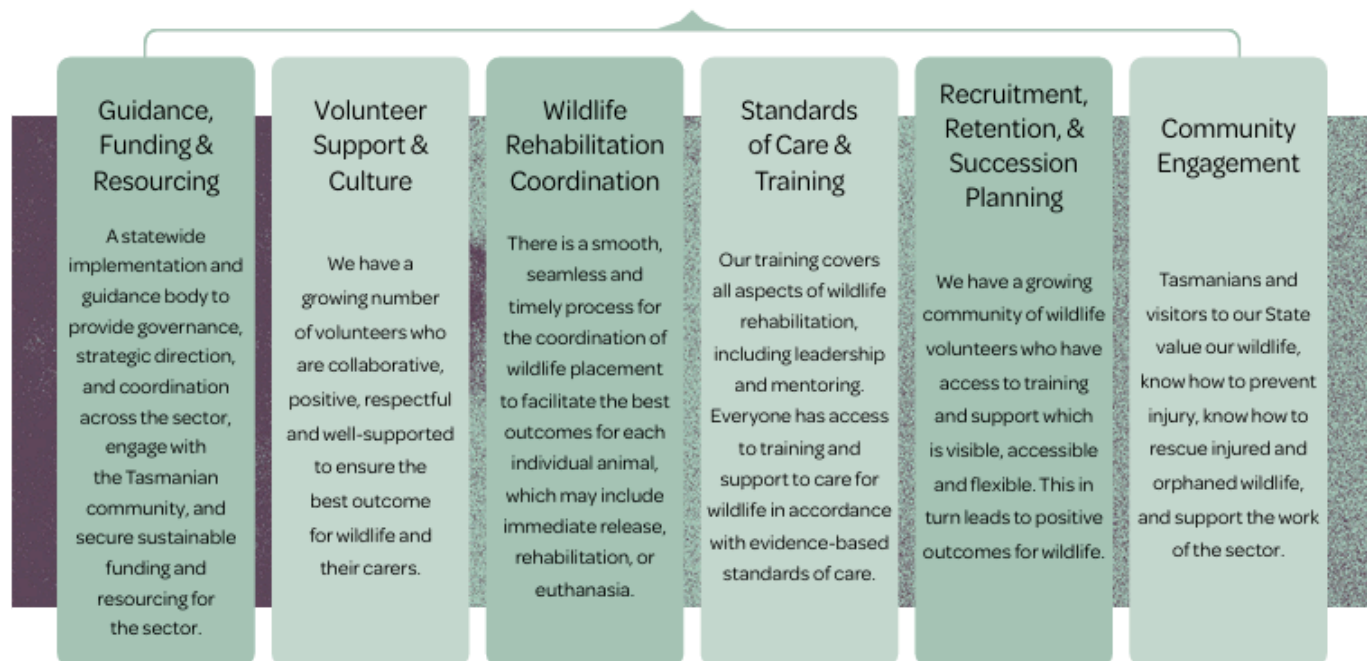
### 3.1 WNT Strategic Plan 2025–2030

Vision	All injured and orphaned wildlife receive expert care from compassionate, skilled people and are supported by a strong network.		
Purpose	Wildlife Network Tasmania is here to strengthen and support the rescue, rehabilitation and release of injured and orphaned wildlife by building capacity, skills, connections, and leadership across the sector.		
Strategic Pillars	Facilitating Support	Sector Leadership	Sustainable Organisation
	Connecting and enabling volunteers, groups and stakeholders.	Connecting and enabling volunteers, groups and stakeholders.	Ensuring WNT's own governance, funding and operations are robust.

The full version of the WNT Strategic Plan 2025-2030 is included in the appendices.

### 3.2 Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector Strategy & Action Plan 2022–2024

The *Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector Strategy and Action Plan 2022–2024*, published in March 2022, was the first strategic blueprint developed by and for the state's wildlife rehabilitation community. Co-designed under the NRE-led Coordinating Body from April 2021, it drew on written submissions, an online survey and statewide workshops covering standards of care and training, volunteer support and culture, rehabilitation coordination, community engagement, and recruitment, retention and succession planning. These inputs shaped both the overarching framework and the detailed action plan.



## 4 WHY THE BASELINE IS NOT ENOUGH

The current \$115,000 per annum allocation:

- Funds part-time independent contractors.
- Maintains the virtual hub in its current form.
- Allows limited training delivery and sector communications.

It does not:

- Resource broad volunteer engagement and collaboration.
- Provide micro-grants to support volunteers' operational needs.
- Enable targeted recruitment campaigns to address volunteer shortages.
- Fund the rollout of Standards of Care to underpin training and quality assurance.
- Expand the virtual hub into a comprehensive knowledge and connection platform.
- Develop physical volunteer hubs to strengthen regional capacity.

Without additional investment, WNT cannot deliver the scale of change envisaged in either the *WNT Strategic Plan 2025-2030* or the *Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector Strategy & Action Plan 2022–2024*.

## 5 PROPOSED THREE-YEAR INVESTMENT

The current \$115,000 baseline funding from NRE Tas sustains only the most limited functions of WNT — essentially keeping the lights on. It covers a reduced level of part-time administrative and community engagement contractors, basic governance and compliance, minimal training delivery, and maintenance of the virtual hub in its current form. It does not resource the strategic leadership, sector-wide engagement, or reform initiatives expected of the body.

Activity	Current \$115,000 per annum	Proposed \$350,000 per annum
Volunteer Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ No structured wellbeing support.</li> <li>❑ High attrition risk.</li> <li>❑ Minimal training and ad hoc communication.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Structured training, mentoring, and wellbeing program.</li> <li>✓ Micro-grants to support carers.</li> <li>✓ Higher volunteer retention.</li> <li>✓ Full capability of Virtual Hub Resource Centre.</li> <li>✓ Development of Physical Hubs.</li> </ul>
Native Animal Welfare Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Limited ability to respond to rising rescue and rehabilitation numbers, over capacity across the state.</li> <li>❑ Animals turned away and/or euthanised.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ More animals rehabilitated and released.</li> <li>✓ Reduced welfare concerns.</li> <li>✓ Positive narrative for community and tourism.</li> </ul>
Sector Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Reactive rather than proactive engagement.</li> <li>❑ Basic administration and compliance only.</li> <li>❑ Partners minimal engagement capacity.</li> <li>❑ Limited data collection and reporting.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Active implementation of key priorities in the <i>Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector Strategy &amp; Action Plan 2022–2024</i>.</li> <li>✓ Dedicated sector coordination and advocacy.</li> <li>✓ Robust reporting, data insights, and joint work program.</li> <li>✓ Clear accountability and shared outcomes.</li> </ul>
Community Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Diminishing public confidence.</li> <li>❑ Low visibility.</li> <li>❑ Limited recruitment campaigns.</li> <li>❑ Volunteers feel undervalued and unsupported.</li> <li>❑ Fewer new volunteers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Active community engagement and education.</li> <li>✓ Public confidence in government leadership.</li> <li>✓ A sector to be proud of.</li> <li>✓ More volunteers.</li> </ul>
Sustainable Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Limited potential to attract external funding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Opportunities to attract funding.</li> </ul>

Investment required: \$350,000 p.a. (inclusive of existing \$115,000 baseline)

Over the three-year investment period WNT will schedule and prioritise delivery of the following initiatives, all of which will require timely and responsive input from government — and NRE specifically — to ensure success.

Initiative	WNT Strategic Pillar	Annual Cost	Outcomes	SS&AP <sup>1</sup> alignment
Broad sector & volunteer engagement program	Facilitating Support	\$75,000	Increased collaboration, reduced duplication, create stronger peer networks	Volunteer support, sector coordination
Volunteer micro-grants scheme	Facilitating Support	\$50,000	Direct support of up to \$500 for ~100 volunteers for personal costs - equipment, transport, feed; improved volunteer retention	Volunteer support, sector coordination
Develop mentor-specific training and resources	Facilitating Support / Sector Leadership	\$20,000	Deliver face-to-face mentor training in the North and South and develop online mentor-specific resources	Training, standards implementation & volunteer support
Refine and expand Intro to Mammals course	Facilitating Support / Sector Leadership	\$15,000	Deliver three courses per annum for 30 attendees per course	Training, standards implementation
Expanded species-specific courses	Facilitating Support / Sector Leadership	\$45,000	Higher skill levels, improved animal welfare outcomes by providing additional species training	Training, standards implementation
Develop Intro to Birds course	Facilitating Support / Sector Leadership	\$8,000	Provide an entry level pathway into wildlife rehabilitation, other than mammals	Training, standards implementation
Mentor/mentee matching	Facilitating Support	\$2,000	Improved animal welfare outcomes by providing support	Volunteer support, sector engagement
Targeted recruitment campaign	Sector Leadership	\$20,000	Increased volunteer numbers by 20% in the South and 10% in the North	Volunteer support, sector growth
Development of Standards of Care	Sector Leadership	\$25,000	Consistent, high-quality rehabilitation practices by commencing production of care documents for all species cross Tasmania	Standards development, implementation, quality assurance

<sup>1</sup> SS&AP = Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector Strategy and Action Plan 2022–2024

Initiative	WNT Strategic Pillar	Annual Cost	Outcomes	SS&AP <sup>1</sup> alignment
Virtual hub expansion	Facilitating Support / Sustainable Organisation	\$20,000	Centralised resources, training, and communications covering areas such as ecommerce functionality (linking to our partners) to purchase wildlife supplies, feed, pouches, etc.	Technology access, sector engagement
Physical volunteer hub concept development	Sustainable Organisation	\$25,000	Blueprint for regional hubs, costed implementation plan	Volunteer support, regional capacity
Governance, monitoring & evaluation	Sustainable Organisation	\$25,000	Transparent reporting, impact measurement, continuous improvement	Sector reform, accountability
Build strategic partnerships and diversify funding streams	Sustainable Organisation	\$20,000	Secure 10 new corporate, philanthropic and cross-sector partnerships; develop non-government revenue streams; reduce reliance on core grant	Sustainable funding, sector resilience

The current \$115,000 baseline funding from NRE Tas sustains only the most limited functions of WNT — essentially keeping the lights on. It covers a reduced level of part-time administrative and community engagement contractors, basic governance and compliance, minimal training delivery, and maintenance of the virtual hub in its current form. It does not resource the strategic leadership, sector-wide engagement, or reform initiatives expected of a peak body.

The additional \$235,000 p.a. sought through this investment case is what enables WNT to operate as a *properly resourced body* — delivering the initiatives above, leading sector reform, and ensuring Tasmania's wildlife rehabilitation sector is coordinated, skilled, and sustainable. Without this uplift, transformational change is not possible.



## 6 ALIGNMENT WITH INTERNAL AND SECTOR PRIORITIES

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This investment proposal aligns with and is informed by various strategic initiatives and solutions developed by WNT which include:

- A. Provided to NRE:
  - *Workforce Development Plan*
  - *Volunteer Governance and Management Framework*
  - *Independent Review of the Sector Strategy & Action Plan 2022–2024*
  - *Revisions to the Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector Strategy and Action Plan 2022–2024*
  - *WNT Strategic Plan 2025–2030*
  - *Budget Priority Statement 2024*
  - *Wildlife Rehabilitation Skills Pathways Review: Project Plan*
  - Inclusion of wildlife in a revised version of the Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements
  - Input into Government's *Threatened Species Strategy*
  - *Training Strategy (working draft)*
- B. Internal working documents (not yet provided to NRE):
  - *Project Brief: Wildlife Volunteer Hub*

## 7 SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT & VALUE OF WILDLIFE

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Wildlife is integral to Tasmania's identity, culture, and environment. Investment in rehabilitation safeguards this value, delivering returns far beyond the dollar spend — in community pride, ecological health, and economic resilience.

### 7.1 Economic Benefits

- Wildlife tourism is a key driver of Tasmania's visitor economy. Healthy wildlife populations enhance Tasmania's brand and visitor experience.
- Reduced roadkill and improved wildlife survival rates protect tourism assets and reduce costs to government and community.

### 7.2 Social Benefits

- Volunteer engagement fosters community cohesion, skills development, and wellbeing.
- Micro-grants and training reduce volunteer burnout and turnover.

### 7.3 Environmental Benefits

- Higher survival rates for injured/orphaned wildlife contribute to biodiversity conservation.
- Standards of Care improve animal welfare outcomes and public confidence.

## 8 CONCLUSION & CALL TO ACTION

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WNT has proven its ability to coordinate, advocate, and deliver for Tasmania's wildlife rehabilitation sector. With an uplift to \$350,000 per year, government can ensure that this vital sector not only survives but thrives.

This is a call to action — to partner with WNT for a three-year investment that will safeguard Tasmania's wildlife, support its volunteers, and secure the future of the sector that underpins our shared environmental legacy.



## 9 APPENDICES

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### 9.1 The Problem

Extract from WNT's *Budget Priority Statement 2024*

Tasmania is commonly referred to as the roadkill capital of the world, with an estimated 280,320 animals tragically killed on our roads every year with many more injured and orphaned in addition to this number.

Human actions, particularly our interactions with wildlife, are the primary drivers of the heavy wildlife rehabilitation load. Major threats to wildlife include road trauma, attacks from domestic animals such as cats and dogs, and disease.

Many individuals, groups and organisations contribute to the prevention, rescue, treatment, rehabilitation and release of injured and orphaned wildlife. The community feels a strong moral and ethical responsibility to assist when injured and orphaned wildlife are encountered, and between residents and tourism more than 18,000 calls are made each year requesting assistance for injured, displaced or orphaned wildlife.<sup>4</sup>

It is estimated that the volunteers in the Tasmanian sector (combining wildlife rehabilitators, wildlife rescuers and those volunteering at wildlife premises that are assisting with wildlife rehabilitation), number over 1500 individuals giving considerable time and investing significant expense in the delivery of this community service.

Without this community volunteer army, there would be a burden on the Tasmanian Government to respond directly to calls from the public to assist injured and orphaned wildlife, as well as pressure from other sectors in the community, including tourists and all users of public roads that experience the enormous visual impact of the scale of wildlife roadkill/injuries occurring in Tasmania.

Research reveals that volunteers within the wildlife sector dedicate eight times more hours than the national average for volunteering collectively. Research has also shown that the sector struggles with high rates of volunteer attrition. Volunteers, who are the backbone of wildlife conservation in Tasmania, are often overwhelmed by the financial, logistical and emotional demands of their roles, leading to mental health challenges that include burnout, disengagement and compassion fatigue. Aside from the obvious animal welfare concerns, carer attrition creates bottlenecks and domino effects that are threatening the sustainability of the sector and capacity to deliver the positive wildlife outcomes being sought.

## 9.2 WNT Strategic Plan 2025-2030

Vision	All injured and orphaned wildlife receive expert care from compassionate, skilled people and are supported by a strong network.		
Purpose	Wildlife Network Tasmania is here to strengthen and support the rescue, rehabilitation and release of injured and orphaned wildlife by building capacity, skills, connections, and leadership across the sector.		
Strategic Pillars	Facilitating Support	Sector Leadership	Sustainable Organisation
Strategic initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide resources and support to Volunteers</li> <li>• Utilise technology to increase access and engagement of the sector with priority on a virtual hub</li> <li>• Deliver comprehensive skill-based accessible training</li> <li>• Strengthen networks, communication and connection across the sector</li> <li>• Increase sector Volunteers, including rescuers, rehabilitators and release sites</li> <li>• Develop strategic partnerships and stakeholder engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforce our role as the peak body for the wildlife rescue and rehabilitation sector</li> <li>• Apply and communicate NRE's Standards of Care</li> <li>• Support NRE to communicate their regulatory responsibilities</li> <li>• Build a best practice, business case for a physical Hub concept</li> <li>• Advocate for wildlife and for all Tasmanian wildlife to be permitted species</li> <li>• Review and transform the frameworks and systems that underpin the wildlife sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stable, secure and growing funding</li> <li>• Secure and deploy the right skills, expertise and resources to deliver on our purpose efficiently and effectively.</li> <li>• Maintain contemporary governance framework</li> <li>• Build reputation and brand recognition</li> <li>• Ensure fit for purpose technology</li> <li>• Develop strategic partnerships and stakeholder engagement</li> </ul>
Outcomes in 5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wildlife Rehabilitators are trained and supported</li> <li>• Increased number of volunteers in the sector</li> <li>• Strategic Partnerships, including with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government</li> <li>• Corporates</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Annual Training Plan</li> <li>• Number of training enrolments, and conversion to carers</li> <li>• Increased retention of Volunteers</li> <li>• Stable base of rehabilitators</li> <li>• Volunteer satisfaction</li> <li>• Website visits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WNT sought after for advisory groups</li> <li>• Animals receive treatment within 24 hours</li> <li>• All wildlife are permitted species</li> <li>• Physical Hubs</li> <li>• Website visits</li> <li>• Reviewed skills pathway</li> <li>• Updated Tier system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliable and diversified income</li> <li>• Board and staff satisfaction</li> <li>• Stable, skill-based, active board with sector knowledge</li> <li>• Succession Plans</li> <li>• Internal Controls</li> <li>• Risk Management Framework</li> <li>• Sustainable and reasonable expectations of volunteer directors</li> <li>• Strategic Partnerships</li> </ul>

### 9.3 Tasmanian Government Funding of Peak Bodies<sup>2</sup>

The Tasmanian Government provides recurrent operational funding to a range of peak bodies across community services, environment, and primary industries, recognising their role in sector coordination, advocacy, and capacity-building.

Peak Body	Sector	Annual Core Funding	Allocating Department	Source / Notes
Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania	Community development	\$2.1 million	Department of Premier and Cabinet	Ongoing operational funding plus program support for 34 Houses statewide
Mental Health Council of Tasmania	Mental health	\$450,000	Department of Health	Core funding via Department of Health
Carers Tasmania	Carer support	\$300,000	Department of Health	Core funding plus Carers Week grant
Volunteering Tasmania	Volunteering	\$250,000	Department of Premier and Cabinet	Core funding plus project grants
Tasmanian Association for Recreational Fishing (TARFish)	Recreational fishing / marine environment	~\$233,000 p.a.	Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania	\$700,000 over three years to support advocacy, stewardship, and sustainable fishing
Landcare Tasmania	Landcare / environmental stewardship	~\$250,000	Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania	Core funding plus project grants for community-led conservation

These allocations demonstrate that the Tasmanian Government recognises the value of well-resourced peak bodies in delivering sector-wide outcomes. WNT's request for \$350,000 p.a. (inclusive of current \$115,000 baseline) is proportionate to the scale of our mandate and consistent with funding levels for comparable organisations in both the community and environmental sectors.

<sup>2</sup> Information in table is based on publicly available information collated in October 2025.

## 9.4 NRE-Funded Community and Environmental Organisations<sup>3</sup>

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE Tas) also provides recurrent or multi-year funding to a range of community and environmental organisations that deliver sector-wide benefits. These allocations reinforce the precedent for WNT's request, as they demonstrate NRE's role in resourcing organisations that coordinate volunteers, deliver conservation outcomes, and strengthen community capacity.

Organisation	Sector	Annual Core Funding	Source / Notes
Wildcare Tasmania	Wildlife volunteering / environmental stewardship	~\$150,000	Supports volunteer coordination, grants, and conservation programs
Landcare Tasmania	Landcare / environmental stewardship	~\$250,000	Core funding plus project grants for community-led conservation
Conservation Landholders Tasmania	Private land conservation	~\$100,000	Support for landholder engagement and biodiversity outcomes
TARFish	Recreational fishing / marine environment	~\$233,000 p.a.	\$700,000 over three years to support advocacy, stewardship, and sustainable fishing
NRM North	Regional natural resource management	Core funding plus project grants (varies)	One of three regional NRM bodies delivering the Tasmanian NRM Strategy 2030 in partnership with community, industry, and government
NRM South	Regional natural resource management	Core funding plus project grants (varies)	Focus on land, water, and biodiversity outcomes in southern Tasmania
Cradle Coast Authority (NRM)	Regional natural resource management	Core funding plus project grants (varies)	Covers north-west Tasmania, delivering NRM programs with community and industry
Tasmanian Land Conservancy	Private land conservation	State-funded projects (e.g. Swift Parrot Bruny Island Covenant Project)	Works with NRE on conservation covenants and threatened species recovery
Landcare Action Grants Program	Community-led conservation	\$900,000 over three years (2024–2027)	Delivered with Landcare Tasmania to co-invest in on-ground works for sustainable agriculture, landscape remediation, and Rivercare

Like these organisations, WNT was established by NRE Tas to deliver coordination, advocacy, and capacity-building functions for its sector. Our proposed investment mirrors the scale and purpose of these allocations, ensuring the wildlife rehabilitation sector receives the same level of strategic support as other NRE-funded community and environmental bodies.

<sup>3</sup> Information in table is based on publicly available information collated in October 2025.