Annual Report 2025-2026

Healthy wildlife, Healthy planet



Wildlife Health AUSTRALIA

Acknowledgements

Wildlife Health Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia. We respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' continuing connection to land, sea, wildlife and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to their Elders past and present.

Join Us

Wildlife Health Australia aims to link, inform and support people and organisations who work with or have an interest in wildlife health across Australia and the Indo-Pacific through technical advice, facilitation, communications and professional support. By becoming a member and joining our community, you join a network of stakeholder with an interest in wildlife health.

Follow the link to join our community: www.wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au
Connect with WHA on Instagram **and** LinkedIn

WHA would like to thank its partners, members, supporters and employees for their dedication and commitment to the ongoing development of Australia's wildlife health system.

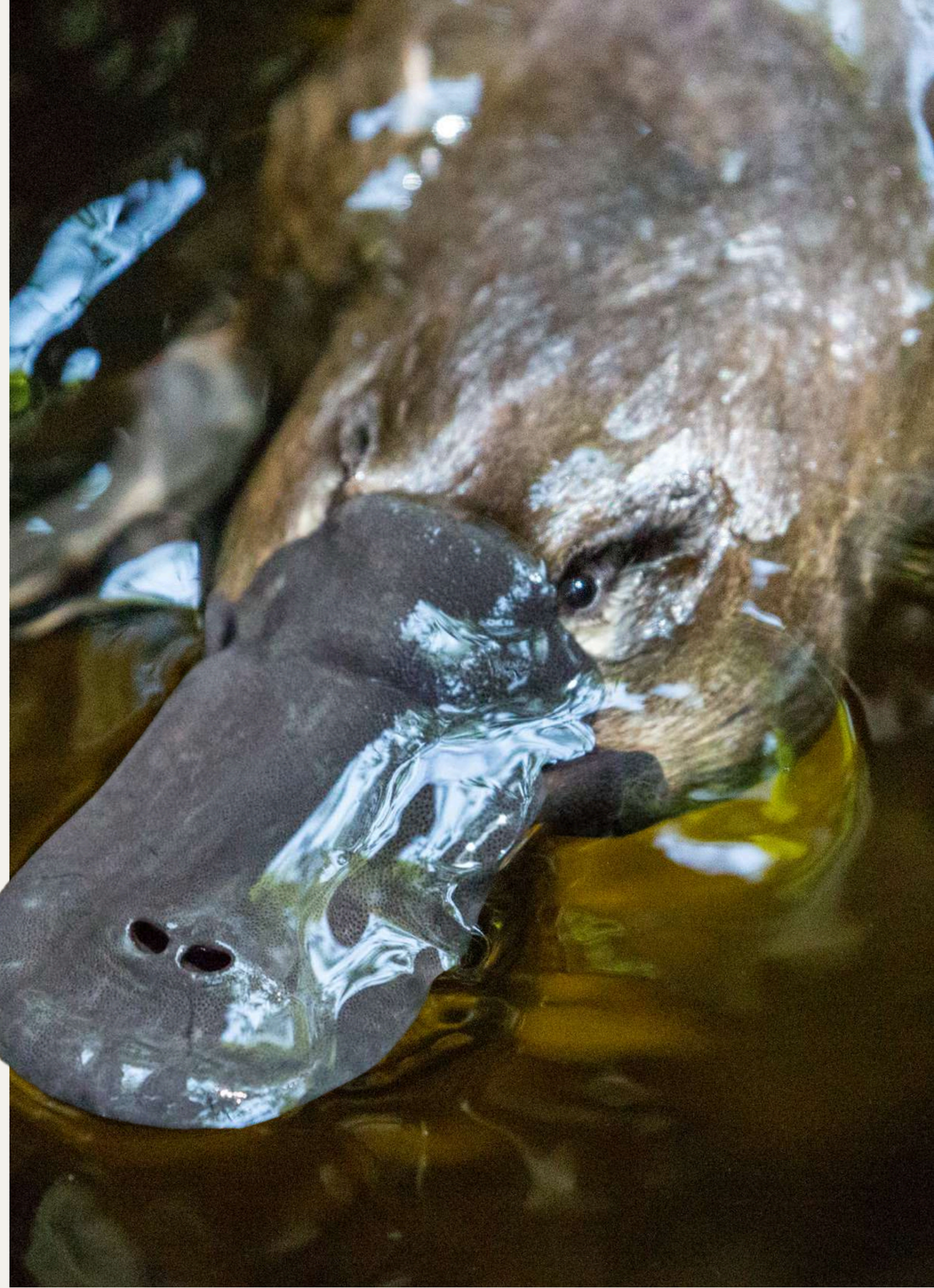
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Terminology Statement

This report uses changing terminology to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. No one term is used as we acknowledge that preferences vary across communities and individuals, and we respectfully recognise the importance of self-determination in how people choose to identify, including by their Nation, Country or language group.





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Message from the CEO & Chair

This 2025-26 annual report marks a significant turning point for Wildlife Health Australia (WHA): a new format that showcases our first full year working under the Strategic Framework 2025-2050, moving from setting a long-term vision for wildlife health to putting that vision into action.

Our Strategic Framework is built around four interconnected pillars: Embed One Health, Amplify the Needs of Wildlife, Bolster Resilience, and Create and Share Knowledge, in alignment with our purpose to advance wildlife health for a healthier future for all.

The organisation began working under a new three-year plan that begins translating the long-term direction of the Strategic Framework into measurable delivery, and aligns business activity to these strategic pillars. This annual report is the first to reflect that approach.

Across the year we saw these priorities reflected throughout our work: strengthening surveillance and national preparedness; building capability in Australia and across our region; strengthening relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; contributing wildlife health expertise to national and international decision-making; and developing the partnerships and systems on which effective wildlife health action depends.

Throughout 2025-26, WHA continued to contribute wildlife expertise to national preparedness committees, working groups, technical guidance and resources, shared information with stakeholders and strengthen our own emergency arrangements. An internal Emergency Animal Disease four-day plan workshop tested those arrangements before the plan was activated following the arrival of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b (H5 bird flu) in June 2026.

Australia's ability to understand and respond to emerging wildlife health threats such as H5 bird flu relies on decades of investment in Australia's wildlife health surveillance systems, technical expertise, partnerships and networks. For example, the National Avian Influenza Wild Bird (NAIWB) Surveillance Program, coordinated by WHA, provides nationally coordinated surveillance and intelligence about avian influenza viruses in Australian wild birds. The program supports preparedness and strategic risk assessment across wildlife, domestic animal and human health, and Australia's capacity to rapidly detect and respond to outbreaks.

In 2025-26, the **NAIWB program reached 10,000 samples reported into its targeted surveillance database.** More broadly, over 1,600 wildlife disease events were reported to electronic Wildlife Health Information System (eWHIS) during 2025-26, with Sentinel Surveillance partners seeing more than 70,000 wildlife cases and contributing nearly 500 of these eWHIS entries.

WHA's capacity to contribute also grew during the year. We welcomed new people and expanded capability across the organisation, including in marketing, organisational support and a new Strategic Partnerships Manager position. These investments **reflect both the increasing scale of WHA's work, demand for specialist wildlife health expertise and coordination, and a deliberate focus on diversifying and growing revenue** to support WHA's vision and future impact.

WHA also set about establishing Friends of One Health, a community of practice bringing together leaders from industry, research and the not-for-profit sector to explore the interconnected challenges and opportunities across human, animal and environmental health. As part of building this network, planning commenced in the 2025-26 financial year for an inaugural Friends of One Health event at Parliament House, Canberra, recognising the importance of integration in supporting prevention, preparedness and response.

The arrival of H5 bird flu has reinforced something that has long underpinned WHA's work and a One Health approach: wildlife health is part of Australia's national interest. It intersects with biodiversity and conservation, biosecurity and agriculture, public health, environmental health and community wellbeing.

The new financial year is at an important point for WHA where continued discussions are underway with Government about WHA's future funding arrangements right when the national value of strong and sustained wildlife health capability is particularly clear.

Capability of this kind is built and sustained through expertise, trust, partnerships and knowledge – WHA's bread and butter for the last 20 years – and now a critical part of the national H5 bird flu response.

We thank our staff, Board, partners, members, funders and the many people and organisations across Australia and internationally who contribute their expertise, time and knowledge to Australia's wildlife health system.

Together, we continue towards our vision: healthy wildlife, healthy planet.



Richard Russell
Chair



Rupert Woods
Chief Executive Officer

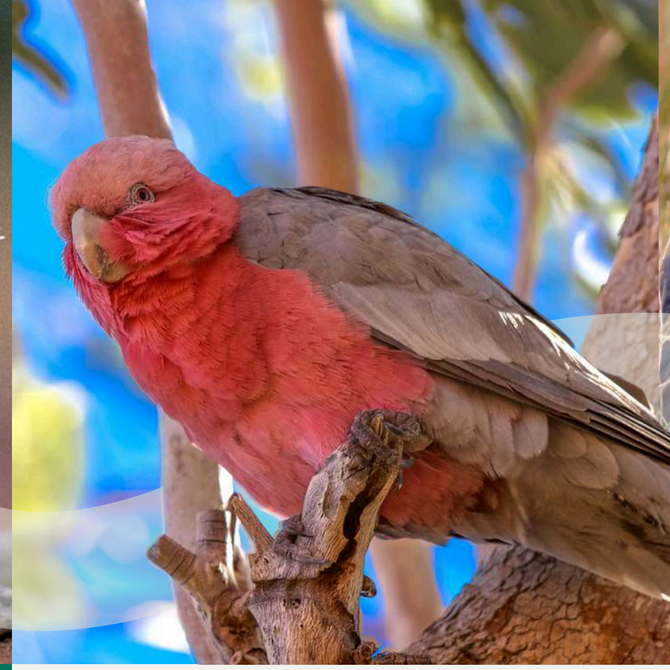
The WHA Board

Pictured: Richard Russell *(Chair)*, Julien Grosmaire, Michelle Campbell-Ward, Stephen Van Mil, Stephen Cartwright, Nicola Craddock, Michelle Roden, Martin Baird, Sharon Kolek, Cameron Bell *(Deputy Chair)*



In 2025 we welcomed veterinarian and conservationist **Stephen Van Mil** to the WHA board, appointed via member vote.






About WHA

Our Purpose

To advance wildlife health for a healthier future for all.

Our Vision

Healthy wildlife, healthy planet.

Wildlife Health Australia advances wildlife health for a healthier future for all.

We connect people, knowledge and expertise across Australia and beyond to strengthen wildlife health systems, improve understanding of emerging risks and ensure wildlife health is considered in decisions affecting animals, people and the environment.

Our greatest strength is our ability to bring together a diverse network of people and organisations with wildlife health knowledge, expertise and information.

WHA's team combines extensive experience and qualifications in zoo and wildlife veterinary medicine, wildlife rehabilitation, emergency response, wildlife disease surveillance and investigation, disease risk analysis, epidemiology, biosecurity, conservation biology, public health, animal science and One Health, alongside policy, governance, stakeholder engagement, communications and organisational management.

Strategic Framework 2025 - 2050

The 2025-26 financial year was the first full year WHA worked under its Strategic Framework 2025-2050.

Developed to provide long-term direction while enabling WHA to adapt to emerging challenges and opportunities, the Framework sets four interconnected strategic pillars, *Embed One Health, Amplify the Needs of Wildlife, Bolster Resilience and Create and Share Knowledge.*

The Strategic Framework provides long-term direction while also designed to evolve alongside changing needs and emerging challenges. It positions WHA to lead with courage, unity and expertise, working with stakeholders at all levels to deliver meaningful change for Australia's wildlife and contributing to a healthier planet for all.

What's new in this report

Rather than reporting separately on each program, our 2025-26 program achievements align to the four pillars of our Strategic Framework.

Look out for the four pillar icons throughout this report for stories from inside WHA.

Embed One Health

- Drive the integration of wildlife interests into public health and biosecurity decision-making
- Demonstrate the value of One Health and lead by example
- Generate an enabling environment for One Health action by expanding connections that foster multidisciplinary action
- Elevate and support Indigenous voices

Amplify the needs of wildlife

- Advocate for wildlife health
- Be the trusted advisor on wildlife health
- Engage with communities to deliver better wildlife health outcomes
- Visibly elevate the role of wildlife health in achieving optimal health for all
- Champion scientific and culturally informed decision making

Bolster resilience

- Strengthen Australia's wildlife health systems
- Build capacity and capabilities across Australia and our region for wildlife health
- Lead collaboration to address wildlife health risks
- Integrate wildlife into prevention, emergency preparedness, response and recovery frameworks

Create and share knowledge

- Transform Australia's wildlife health data systems to create new knowledge and strengthen future readiness
- Expand strategic intelligence and wildlife data capture to improve prevention and early warning capabilities
- Strengthen relationships between diverse data users and knowledge providers
- Anticipate change, innovate and adapt

ENABLERS



WHA Program Streams

While our strategic pillars describe what WHA is working to achieve, **our programs bring together the operational expertise, relationships and capabilities needed to deliver it.**



WHA Programs



Surveillance
Building and connecting Australia's wildlife health surveillance and intelligence systems.

International One Health
Building wildlife health capability and partnerships across the Asia-Pacific and incorporating wildlife into multidisciplinary action.

Business Unit
Providing the people, systems, governance, communications and organisational infrastructure that enable WHA's work.

Emergencies
Strengthening preparedness, guidance and coordination for wildlife health emergencies.

Capacity Building
Strengthening relationships, knowledge, skills and systems across WHA and our stakeholder networks, with a focus on First Nations communities.

2025 - 2026
At a glance

19

Lunchtime Yarns held since the program began in 2023

Total social media followers across all platforms, an **increase of 18% from last year**

9,000+

70,000+

70,000+ wildlife cases were seen by our Sentinel Surveillance partners

40

40 Wildlife Disease Risk Analysis participants **across 19 countries**



1,500+

views of WHA's **Fact Sheets** webpage

1,800

samples collected and tested through **expanded migratory shorebird and seabird surveillance**

1,600+

wildlife disease events reported into eWHIS

320+

total Bat News email subscribers

140

editions of Bat News sent to date

Fact Sheets with technical disease updates reviewed and revised, **+1 new sheet developed**

17

4

published scientific papers using NAIWB surveillance data with WHA input

12,000

>12,000 samples reported into the NAIWB targeted surveillance database this financial year, with over 170,000 samples collected to date.

500

Sentinel entries into eWHIS, approximately 30% of all submissions

Pillar One
Embed One Health

One Health recognises that the health of wildlife, people and the environment is interconnected. Through this pillar, WHA aims to integrate wildlife interests into public health and biosecurity decision-making, demonstrate the value of One Health, build multidisciplinary connections that enable action, and elevate and support Indigenous voices.

Our Impact in 2025-26

Building Capability Internationally

- WHA's team in the International One Health Program delivered Wildlife Disease Risk Analysis training in collaboration with the IUCN SSC Conservation Planning Specialist Group, **reaching 40 participants from 19 countries across four continents.**

- Through the World Organisation for Animal Health WildNet network, **WHA contributed expertise to training, curriculum development and technical activity** in Singapore, Thailand and Cambodia. This included curriculum development for H5 avian influenza sample collection and environmental surveillance training in Thailand and technical field training on drivers of emerging risks in wildlife trade in Cambodia.

- **WHA continued to strengthen productive cross-sectoral and transdisciplinary collaboration,** engaging with 189 partners across the wildlife health, environment, human health and First Nations sectors during 2025-2026. This reflects a broad and diverse partnership base that supports a One Health approach to wildlife health challenges.
- Of these partners, **28% were First Nations organisations and representatives, 32% were from the environment sector, and 10% were from the human health sector,** with the remaining partners representing the animal health, veterinary and biosecurity sectors.

- **Pacific partnerships also supported avian influenza emergency preparedness.** WHA contributed wildlife health perspectives to scenario-based emergency management training in Fiji and successfully partnered in securing funding for a field training pilot program for H5 avian influenza and wildlife.

Continuing our Cultural Learning

- WHA continued its internal cultural learning activities and the work of the Reconciliation Action Plan Committee. Since WHA's Lunchtime Yarns began in 2023, 19 sessions have created **opportunities for staff to listen, learn and engage with First Nations perspectives and experiences.**



Building Relationships through Two-Way Learning

- WHA continued to **strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples** and organisations, **creating opportunities** to bring different knowledge and perspectives together around wildlife health.

- **A significant milestone was the Message Stick meeting** on H5 bird flu in Armidale, NSW, led by Armidale Local Aboriginal Land Council and co-designed and co-hosted in partnership with WHA. Indigenous Rangers, Local Aboriginal Land Councils, Aboriginal Elders and people caring for Country came together with Commonwealth and NSW Government representatives from biosecurity, environment and public health.

- The meeting enabled scientific information about H5 bird flu to be shared while **creating space for Aboriginal community members to raise cultural and community considerations,** including potential impacts on activities such as collecting feathers, hunting for food and visiting sacred places for cultural ceremonies.

Connecting One Health Globally

- Through its role within the World Organisation for Animal Health WildNet network, **WHA contributed to a peer-reviewed paper** examining the importance of coordinated global wildlife health networks in addressing complex health challenges.

Inside the Capacity Building Program
Passing the Message Stick

Two-way learning for stronger H5 preparedness

In February 2026, a gathering in Armidale, NSW, demonstrated **what embedding One Health can look like when listening comes first.**

The first Message Stick meeting on H5 bird flu brought people together not simply to provide information, but to exchange it. Led by Armidale Local Aboriginal Land Council and co-designed and co-hosted with WHA's Capacity Building team, the gathering brought together Aboriginal people caring for Country and representatives from biosecurity, public health and environment agencies.

Scientific information about the threat posed by H5 bird flu formed one part of the discussion. **Equally important was the knowledge and perspective shared by Aboriginal participants about what an incursion could mean for community and culture.**

The discussions highlighted considerations that may not emerge through a conventional technical preparedness process, including implications for cultural practices involving birds, feathers, food and access to culturally significant places. **The success of the gathering strengthened relationships and helped create a foundation for further engagement** around H5 bird flu into the next financial year with first nations communities in other parts of Australia. It also demonstrated one of the central ambitions of WHA's Strategic Framework: creating an enabling environment for One Health action by connecting different expertise and **elevating Indigenous voices.**







Participants in the Message Stick meeting in Armidale.
Image credit: Jen Stanford, Armidale Local Aboriginal Land Council.



Pillar Two
Amplify the Needs of Wildlife

WHA seeks to advocate for wildlife health, be a trusted advisor, engage communities to improve outcomes and champion scientific and culturally informed decision-making. Through this pillar, we aim to make the vital contribution of wildlife health to the health of all increasingly visible.

Our Impact in 2025-26

Representation Where it Counts

- WHA maintained active involvement **in more than 50 committees, advisory groups, working groups and networks** across Australia and the Indo-Pacific, contributing wildlife health expertise to national biosecurity, emergency preparedness, surveillance, conservation and One Health initiatives, spanning government, research, industry and international organisations. This includes in the National Biosecurity Communication and Engagement Network **(NBCEN) – where WHA was this year elevated from observer to full member.**



Trusted Information where it Matters

- **WHA continued to share technical wildlife health knowledge with credible, accessible information.** Throughout the financial year, **17 Fact Sheets** were reviewed and updated and one new Fact Sheet developed during the year.
- The Fact Sheets webpage was **viewed more than 1,500 times** during the reporting period.

- WHA's monthly newsletter for a technical audience provided another **important channel for sharing wildlife health information and resources,** with the Guidelines for Antimicrobial Prescribing in Australian Wildlife the newsletter's most-clicked article link.

Sharing H5 information

- As preparedness for H5 bird flu continued throughout the year, WHA played a significant role connecting expertise, support preparedness and ensure wildlife health perspectives informed national and state planning, surveillance, communication and response activities, **including more than 15 H5 bird flu-focused committees and working groups.**

Ensuring wildlife health is present internationally

- **WHA represented wildlife health issues** at international workshops and forums during 2025-26, including activities focused on multisectoral prevention and control of avian influenza and wildlife disease risk analysis.

- **WHA's work internationally was recognised** during the 93rd World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) General Session this year, during which the Dr William Karesh, Chair of the WOAH Working Group in Wildlife, *"thanked Australia and the work that they are doing on wildlife health and acknowledged Australia's important role in supporting wildlife health management, and helping open discussions on new strategies."*

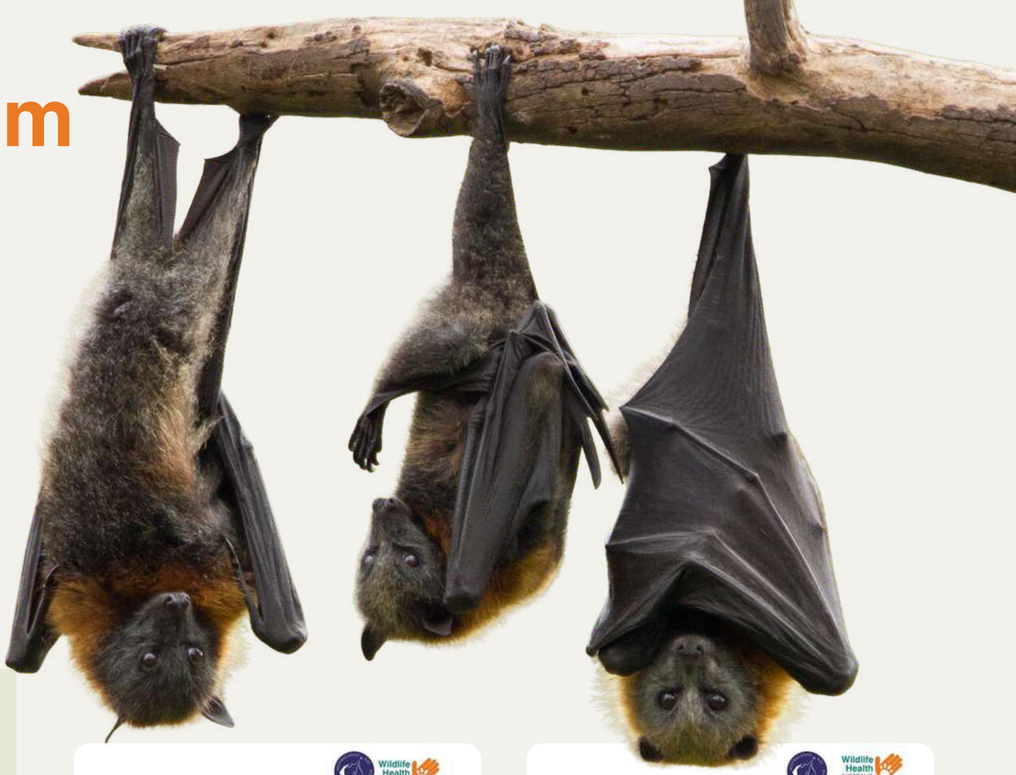


Pictured:
Delegates at the WOAH General Session

- **A new partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization saw WHA support the Field Training Program** - Wildlife, Environment, Biodiversity and Ecosystems in Thailand and Indonesia. Implementation commenced in Indonesia with 50 participants this financial year to be completed by August 2026.

Inside the Surveillance Program

Why the way we talk about wildlife health matters



How risks are communicated when discussing wildlife health is an important influence on how people perceive wildlife itself.

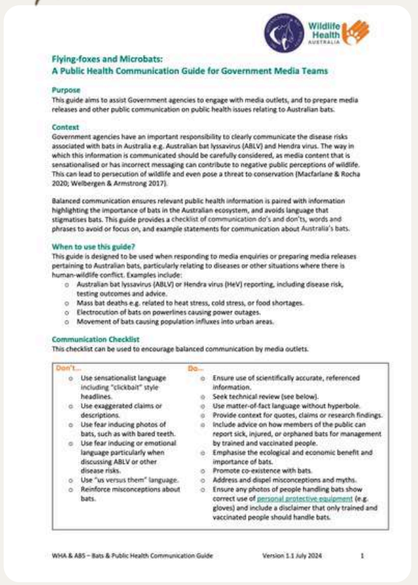
This is particularly important for species such as bats, where discussion of zoonotic disease can inadvertently contribute to fear, misinformation or negative attitudes in the wider community.

Through the Bat Health Focus Group and other specialist networks run by WHA team members in the Surveillance Program, WHA works with partners to advance a range of wildlife health objectives, including supporting communication that accurately reflects public health risks of flying-foxes and microbats while recognising and advocating for their conservation and ecological importance.

During 2025-26, this work included two new guides on how to communicate the ecological importance of flying-foxes and microbats, and possums.

WHA also continued to engage with its popular Bat News, of which there has been 140 editions since its inception, with a readership now exceeding 320 subscribers from state, territory and Commonwealth governments, wildlife rehabilitation, public health, research, universities and other sectors.

This work by the Surveillance Program is an example of amplifying the needs of wildlife by ensuring decisions and public conversations are informed by evidence, and keeping wildlife health and conservation visible in disease risk and analysis discussion.



Flying-foxes and Microbats:
A Public Health Communication Guide for Government Media Teams

Purpose
This guide aims to assist Government agencies to engage with media outlets, and to prepare media releases and other public communication on public health issues relating to Australian bats.

Context
Government agencies have an important responsibility to clearly communicate the disease risks associated with bats in Australia e.g. Australian bat lyssavirus (ABLV) and Hendra virus. The way in which this information is communicated should be carefully considered, as media content that is sensationalised or has incorrect messaging can contribute to negative public perceptions of wildlife. This can lead to persecution of wildlife and even pose a threat to conservation (Macfarlane & Rocha 2020; Welbergen & Armstrong 2017).

Balanced communication ensures relevant public health information is paired with information highlighting the importance of bats in the Australian ecosystem, and avoids language that stigmatises bats. This guide provides a checklist of communication do's and don'ts, words and phrases to avoid or focus on, and example statements for communication about Australia's bats.

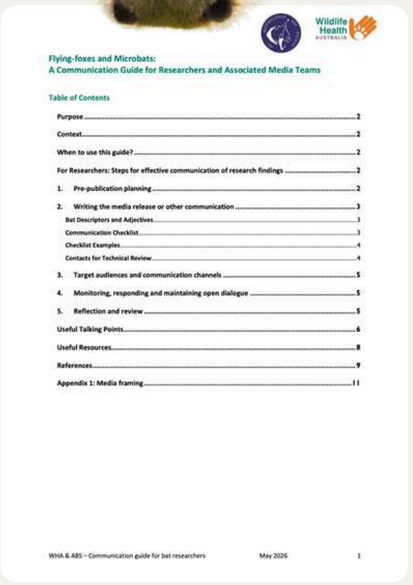
When to use this guide?
This guide is designed to be used when responding to media enquiries or preparing media releases pertaining to Australian bats, particularly relating to diseases or other situations where there is human-wildlife conflict. Examples include:

- Australian bat lyssavirus (ABLV) or Hendra virus (HeV) reporting, including disease risk, testing outcomes and advice.
- Mass bat deaths e.g. related to heat stress, cold stress, or food shortages.
- Electrocution of bats on powerlines causing power outages.
- Movement of bats causing population influxes into urban areas.

Communication Checklist
This checklist can be used to encourage balanced communication by media outlets.

Don't...	Do...
Use sensationalist language including "clickbait" style headlines.	Ensure use of scientifically accurate, referenced information.
Use exaggerated claims or descriptions.	Seek technical review (see below).
Use fear inducing photos of bats, such as with bared teeth.	Use matter-of-fact language without hyperbole.
Use fear inducing or emotional language particularly when discussing ABLV or other disease risks.	Provide context for quotes, claims or research findings.
Use "us versus them" language.	Include advice on how members of the public can report sick, injured, or orphaned bats for management by trained and vaccinated people.
Reinforce misconceptions about bats.	Emphasise the ecological and economic benefit and importance of bats.
	Promote co-existence with bats.
	Address and dispel misconceptions and myths.
	Ensure any photos of people handling bats show correct use of personal protective equipment (e.g. gloves) and include a disclaimer that only trained and vaccinated people should handle bats.

WHA & ABS – Bats & Public Health Communication Guide Version 1.1 July 2024 1



Flying-foxes and Microbats:
A Communication Guide for Researchers and Associated Media Teams

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WHA & ABS – Communication guide for bat researchers May 2026 1

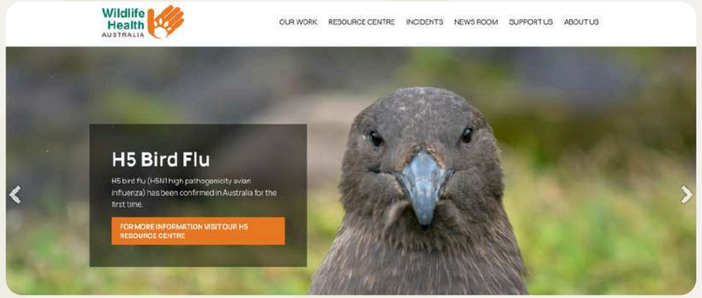
Pillar Three
Bolster Resilience

Resilience is built before an emergency starts. Through this pillar, WHA aims to strengthen Australia's wildlife health systems, build capability across Australia and our region, lead collaboration around wildlife health risks, and ensure wildlife is integrated into prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

Our Impact in 2025-26

Preparing for H5 Bird Flu

- **H5 bird flu preparedness remained a major national priority throughout the year.** WHA participated in national preparedness working groups and committees and continued developing, reviewing and updating technical resources, including the launch of a new public-facing H5 bird flu resource centre webpage. This included guidance addressing H5 bird flu carcass management, vaccination of wildlife and response planning for an outbreak affecting wildlife.



- **WHA also delivered delivering training and awareness activities across Australia and the Indo-Pacific region** through webinars, conference presentations and stakeholder communications to share preparedness information. When Australia's first H5 bird flu detections in wild seabirds were confirmed in June 2026, **the importance of that preparation became immediate.**

Investigating Emerging Risks

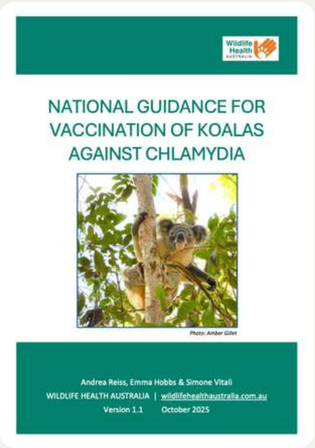
- **WHA supported investigation of significant and unusual wildlife disease events,** including further investigation of *Ophidiomyces ophidiicola* in snakes and disease investigation in endangered Carnaby's cockatoos.
- Disease investigations supported through the **Wildlife Disease Investigation Fund** also included planning for polyomavirus screening of captive-bred Regent honeyeaters to help determine risk associated with release to the wild.
- WHA continued pilot management of the **SOS Wild Birds reporting platform.** Discussions progressed with multiple jurisdictions, with Tasmania and the ACT undertaking pilots.

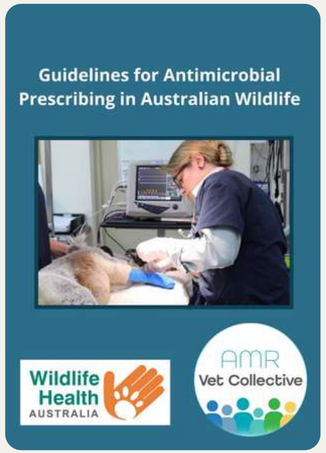
Building resilience to feral animal disease risks

- WHA continued collaboration around **feral animal disease surveillance, management and research.** Staff presented on feral animals as a One Health issue at the NSW Vertebrate Pest Conference, Ecological Society of Australia and Australian Centre for Disease Control One Health Wonders, while continuing involvement in national environment, invasives and biosecurity committees and networks.

Supporting wildlife health guidance

- **National guidance for vaccination of koalas against chlamydia** was published, while national guidance addressing the treatment and care of koalas in natural disasters progressed to final review.
- This was done under t**he Koala Health Project** which brings together veterinarians, researchers, government agencies, non-government organisations and Indigenous representatives around evidence-based approaches to nationally significant health threats.





Inside the Emergencies Program
Bolstering Resilience

When years of preparedness became response

Throughout 2025-26, the Emergencies Program team participated in working groups, contributed technical advice, reviewed and developed guidance, and facilitated the sharing of information with the wildlife sector and other stakeholders. **This contributed to preparedness not only for the arrival of H5 bird flu, but all possible diseases and wildlife threats.**

Within WHA, staff participated in a workshop **to test WHA's Emergency Animal Disease four-day plan,** strengthening internal understanding regarding what would need to happen during the critical early stages of an incident.

This was then put into action in reality when in the final days of June, Australia's diseases situation changed and **H5 bird flu was confirmed in wild seabirds, representing Australia's first detection of the virus in mainland wildlife.** WHA activated its emergency arrangements and became part of the national response – including supporting national planning and decision-making processes, providing technical advice to governments and stakeholders, and delivering wildlife surveillance and intelligence to inform response activities.

The moment was significant, but the capability behind it was not new; it was built through surveillance systems, technical expertise, partnerships and preparedness activities established over many years with the support of WHA.

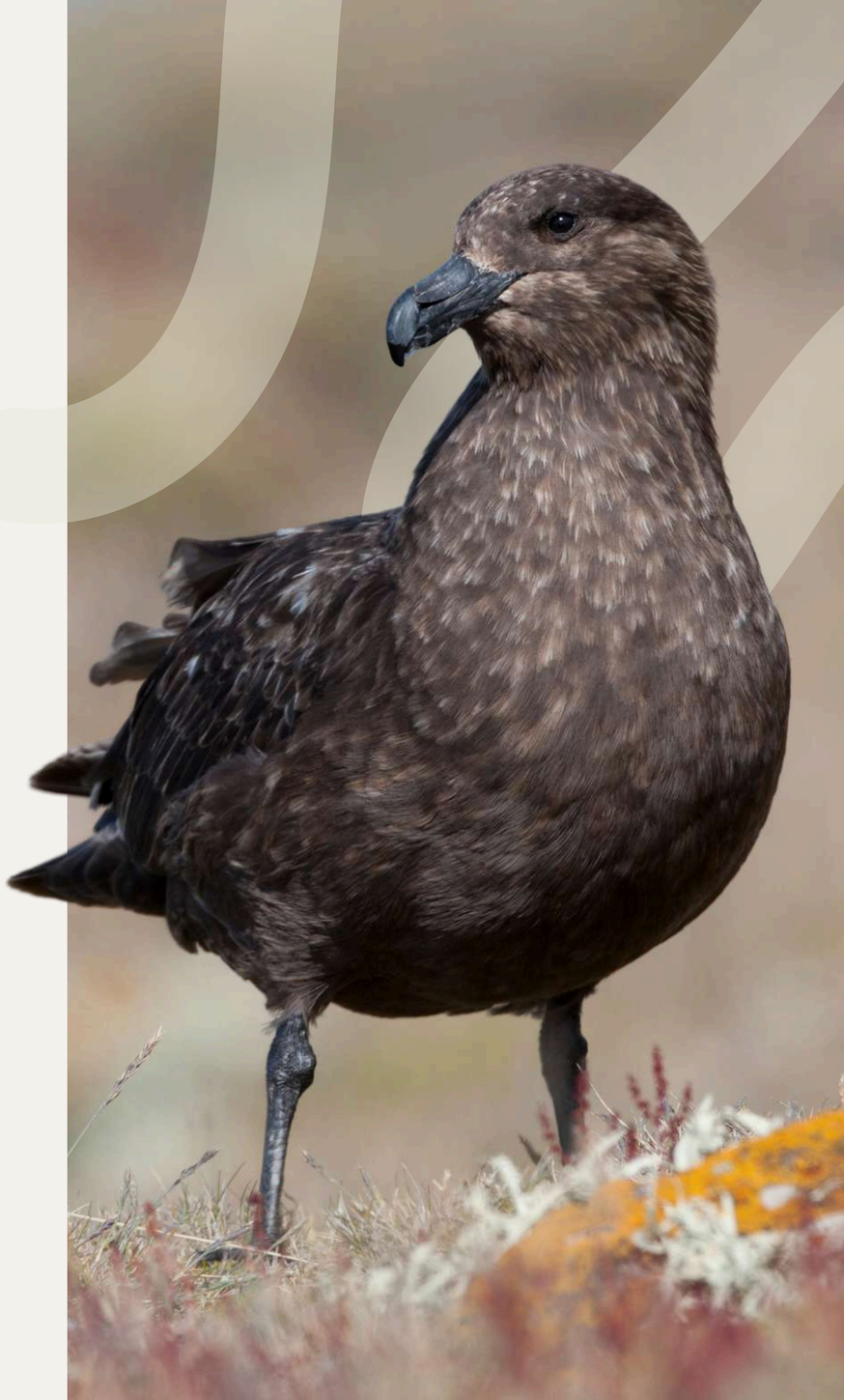
From preparedness to response

01 **PREPARE** Technical guidance, tools and resources.

02 **TEST** Exercise WHA's internal emergency arrangements.

03 **CONNECT** Contribute wildlife expertise across national preparedness structures.

04 **RESPOND** Activate established systems when H5 reaches Australia.



Pillar Four
Create and Share Knowledge

Knowledge strengthens preparedness. WHA aims to transform Australia's wildlife health data systems, expand data capture and strategic intelligence, improve early warning capability, strengthen relationships between those who generate and use information, and anticipate and adapt to change.

Our Impact in 2025-26

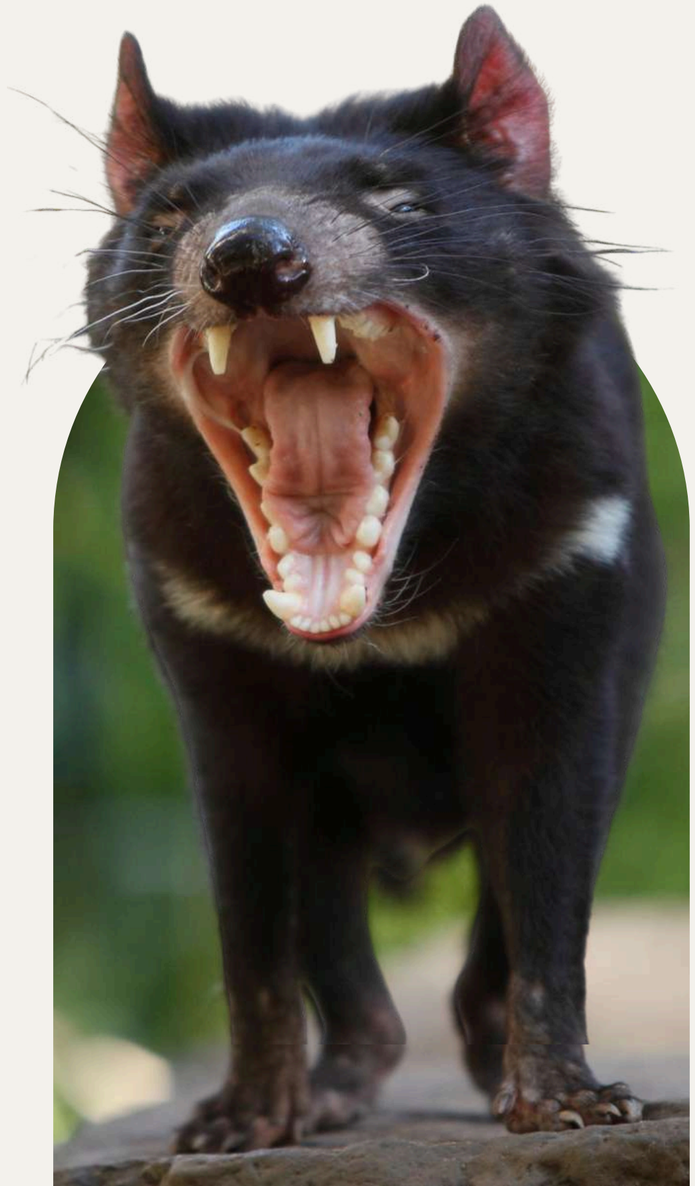
More than 1,600 Wildlife Disease Events

- More than 1,600 wildlife disease events were reported into eWHIS during 2025-26. The national data generated with WHA's partners **improves Australia's understanding of wildlife health and disease,** supports identification of emerging issues and contributes to management of disease outbreaks.

A Surveillance Network on the Frontline

- Sentinel Surveillance Program partners saw more than **70,000 wildlife cases and contributed nearly 500 entries into eWHIS,** approximately 30% of all eWHIS submissions during 2025-26. Since the Sentinel program commenced in 2010, partners have contributed more than 6,000 cases to eWHIS.
- **The network now includes 10 zoos, 11 sentinel veterinary clinics and seven universities.**

- During the year WHA conducted nine visits to Sentinel partners, three visits to other wildlife organisations and induction and eWHIS training for 21 participants, supporting participating organisations and helping **identify barriers to investigation and reporting of wildlife health events.**



Data Becoming Science

- NAIWB surveillance data **contributed to four published scientific papers** during the year, adding to knowledge of avian influenza viruses in Australia, movements of low pathogenicity avian influenza and avian paramyxovirus in Australian wild birds.



An example of **AviFluMap,** a national-first tool modelling H5 bird flu risk in wild birds.

Inside the Surveillance Program
Creating and Sharing Knowledge

Building the knowledge Australia needs before an outbreak occurs

A sample collected from a wild bird may appear to be one small piece of information, but by bringing together thousands of those samples consistently and nationally over time, they become something much more powerful: **intelligence.**

The National Avian Influenza Wild Bird Surveillance Program (NAIWB) brings together surveillance activity from partners around Australia, and has helped build the evidence base needed to understand avian influenza in Australia's wild bird populations. **WHA coordinates activities nationally, collates surveillance data and supports the national Steering Group,** creating a platform for information exchange and technical expertise.



Pictured:
Participants of the NAIWB Steering Group

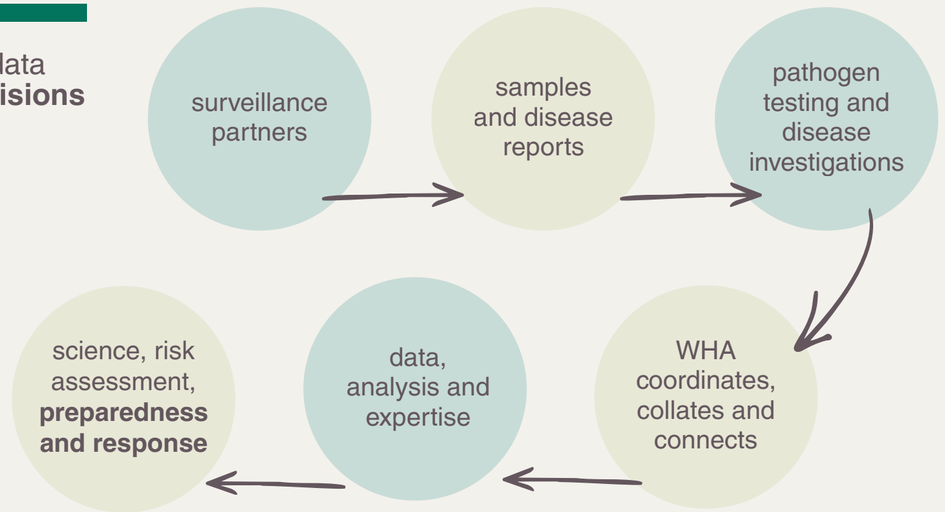
In 2025-26, the program reached two significant milestones: **12,000 samples reported into its targeted surveillance database in one year, and 20 years of operation.** Surveillance of migratory shorebirds and seabirds also expanded, with five partner agencies leading surveillance projects in collaboration with a further 13 agencies and organisations. **This expanded surveillance has collected and tested more than 1,800 samples since 2022.**

Long-term surveillance helps Australia understand which avian influenza viruses are circulating in wild birds and how they behave. It contributes to scientific knowledge, risk assessment, disease preparedness, biosecurity planning and **Australia's capacity to recognise and respond when conditions change.**

The collaborative foundations that underpin the program were further strengthened in 2025-26 when **WHA hosted the first in-person meeting of the NAIWB Steering Group since 2019.** More than 20 representatives from 18 partner agencies came together to exchange information, share expertise, plan future activities and strengthen national coordination.

That long-term investment became especially tangible when H5 bird flu reached Australia in June 2026. **The surveillance system did not need to be created in response to the emergency; it was already there.** Built through two decades of partnership, planning and knowledge-sharing, it provided the foundation Australia needed to understand and respond to a rapidly evolving disease event.

From data
to decisions



Inside the International One Health Program
How it works across Pillars

Wildlife health challenges do not stop at national borders. **Through it's International One Health Program, WHA works to build biodiversity resilience and improve biosecurity across the Asia-Pacific** by strengthening wildlife health capability through partnerships, training and knowledge exchange that connects human, animal and environmental health. WHA's role as a World Organisation for Animal Health Collaborating Centre for Wildlife Health Risk Management is central to this work.

Its work in 2025-26 demonstrates why WHA's strategic pillars are interconnected.

Embed One Health

- **WHA co-authored a peer-reviewed paper** examining the role and value of the World Organisation for Animal Health global wildlife health collaborating centre network, WildNet.



Amplify the Needs of Wildlife

- **Through a new partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization,** WHA supported implementation of the Field Training Program - Wildlife, Environment, Biodiversity and Ecosystems in Indonesia, with **50 participants involved in initial implementation in Indonesia.** Preparatory work also commenced to support future delivery in Thailand.
- **WHA also organised, contributed expertise and represented wildlife health at regional and global forums,** including:
  - a One Health workshop on multisectoral prevention and control of avian influenza for South-East Asia
  - a World Organisation for Animal Health workshop on Addressing Disease Risks in Wildlife Trade in Cambodia,
  - a Wildlife Disease Risk Analysis Writeshop in Singapore.

Bolster Resilience

- WHA contributed technical expertise and curriculum development to **regional activities in Thailand, Cambodia and Singapore.**
- Building on the **WOAH WildNet HPAI Wildlife Surveillance and Biosafety Training Workshop** held in Thailand in 2025, WHA expanded its Knowledge Hub to support wildlife health capability across the region developing a new online 'Biosafety in H5 Avian Influenza Sample Collection' course planned for release in 2026-27.
- **WHA also supported development of two courses for the Orangutan Veterinary Advisory Group** on disaster risk reduction planning and wildlife disease risk management, with the first iteration engaging 90 participants.

Create and Share Knowledge

- **WHA strengthened cross-organisational networks through the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council,** including invited presentations on collaboration for One Health and ethical wildlife risk communication at the human-wildlife interface.
- Working with the IUCN SSC Conservation Planning Specialist Group, WHA **delivered Wildlife Disease Risk Analysis training to 40 participants from 19 countries across four continents.**
- **Participants developed and shared wildlife disease risk analyses relevant to their own countries and regions,** contributing practical knowledge to support decision-making and preparedness for emerging wildlife health threats.

International One Health

Strengthening wildlife health across the Asia-Pacific: *where our team have been*













WHA Business Unit

Progress across WHA's four strategic pillars **depends on the people, partnerships, systems and governance** that allows our operational expertise to have an impact.



Inside the WHA Business Unit
The Organisation Behind the Work

Our Strategic Framework recognises enablers of systems thinking, trusted partnerships, multidisciplinary expertise, community engagement, strategic foresight, optimised governance, innovative communications and marketing, emerging technologies and sustainable funding – much of which is led by the foundational work of the Business Unit.

Growing our Capability

- WHA welcomed new people and expanded capability across the organisation during 2025–26. Marketing capacity increased through the expansion of the Marketing Manager role to a full-time position, **strengthening the organisation's ability to communicate its work and engage stakeholders.** A new Strategic Partnerships Manager role was established to support the **development of meaningful partnerships, diversify revenue opportunities** and strengthen WHA's long-term sustainability.

- **Additional capacity was also brought into the organisation** to support continuity during a period of staff leave, including the return of an experienced team member from WHA's predecessor organisation, the Australian Wildlife Health Network. **Business unit capability was further strengthened** through the elevation of the Administration Coordinator role, providing essential support for organisational growth, governance and increasing program delivery.

Improving our Systems and Capability

- WHA implemented key digital tool improvements, including use of HubSpot to improve stakeholder engagement and Monday.com to **streamline some project coordination and workflow management.**

- Professional development opportunities, including attendance at the Technology for Social Justice Conference, supported staff capability building and **WHA's readiness to leverage emerging technologies responsibly and effectively.** This formed part of an ongoing investment in staff upskilling, Artificial Intelligence (AI) readiness and innovation.

- WHA's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee continued to **provide a dedicated forum for advancing inclusion initiatives** and fostering an inclusive workplace culture aligned with organisational values, including staff awareness and learning activities.

- In Governance, a new **Revenue Advisory Group was established** to assist the WHA Board to provide strategic oversight and recommendations regarding income-generation activities.





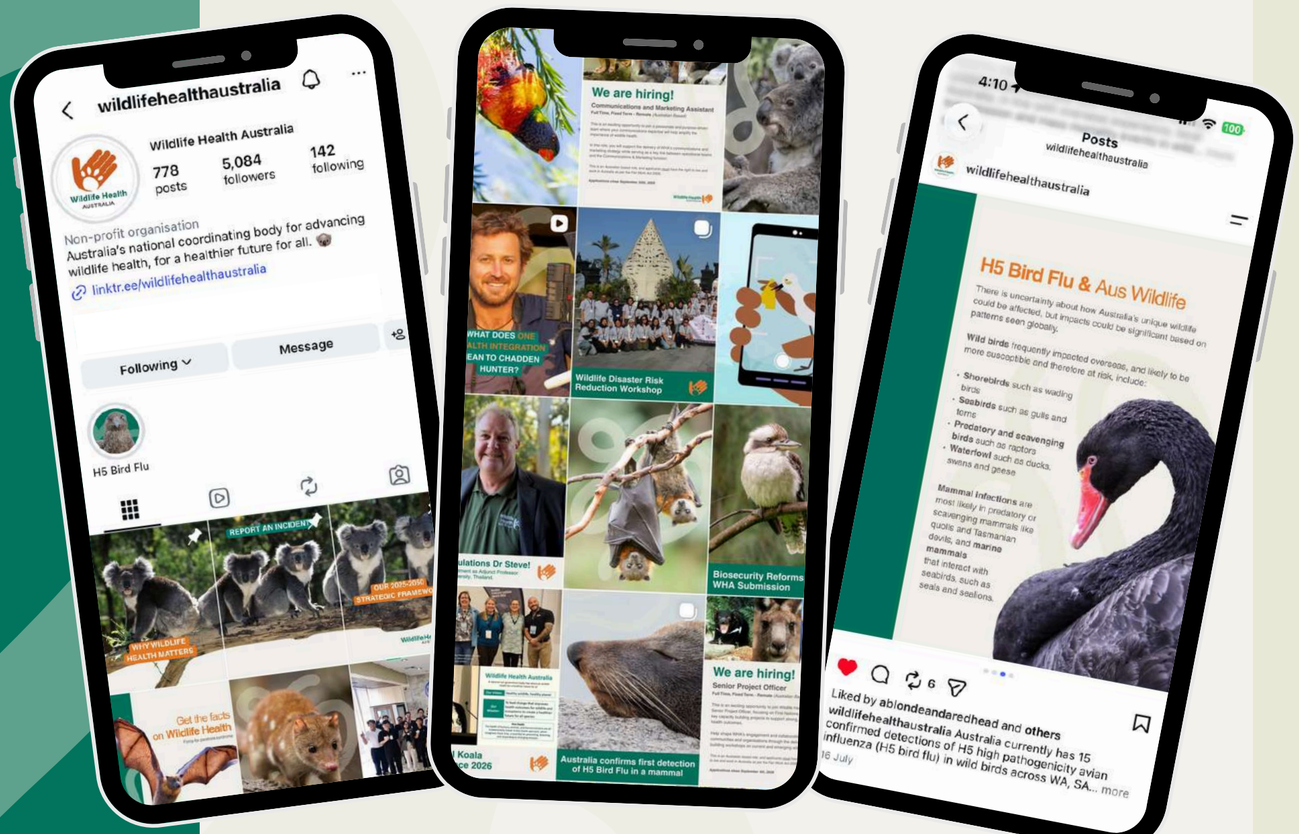




Extending our Reach

WHA continued to expand its digital media reach during 2025–26, **growing its combined social media audience by 18% to more than 9,000 followers**, strengthening awareness of wildlife health issues and increasing engagement with WHA's work across professional and community audiences.

The successful launch of the *Strategic Framework 2025-2050* was an important focus during the year across digital platforms, helping introduce WHA's new strategic direction and build greater awareness of our work and impact.



WHA in the Media

WHA demonstrates leadership and trusted expertise when approached by media on a diverse range of public conversations spanning wildlife disease, conservation, biosecurity, One Health and human-wildlife interactions. Supported within the Business Unit by Communications expertise and administration, WHA has been a responsive to media enquiries as an important voice in national conversations. In particular the arrival of **H5 bird flu saw a sharp spike in media enquiries,** with public comments led by Chief Operating Officer Tiggy Grillo.

Expert commentary, technical advice and wildlife health perspectives of WHA in media include:

- National preparedness for H5 bird flu and potential impacts on Australian wildlife - featured in coverage by The Saturday Paper, ABC News, ABC Science and Nine News.

- **Lab Notes Interview: The H5 bird flu risk for Aussie wildlife:** ABC radio and podcast interview

- **Arrival of H5 bird flu:** Australian Geographic

- Wildlife trade and emerging disease risks, ABC News: Global wildlife trade report examines disease risks

- One Health and Australia's preparedness for H5 bird flu, including recognition of WHA's role in strengthening wildlife health intelligence and surveillance systems. Joint Ministerial Media Release

- Wildlife mortality events and surveillance efforts for H5 bird flu, including reference to WHA's pilot national bird mortality reporting platform. CityNews Canberra: The ecological disaster threatening Australian seabirds

- Aboriginal-led preparedness and protecting Country from bird flu, highlighting the Message Stick initiative. NSW Government: Mob-led learning helps protect Country from bird flu fallout

- Koala health and chlamydia management, supporting national conversation around one of Australia's most significant wildlife health challenges and development of the National guidance for vaccination of koalas against chlamydia.

- Magpie Paralysis Syndrome and emerging wildlife diseases. Better Homes & Gardens Australia: What is magpie paralysis syndrome and what can you do to help?

- Human-wildlife interactions and public health, including expert commentary on a viral possum story that attracted national and international media attention: news.com.au and News24.

Our Members, Partners and Supporters

Partner Agencies

WHA works with a broad group of partner agencies, including individual and associate members, wildlife networks, peak bodies, academia, zoos and carers. We recognise and thank all partners for bringing their broad range of expertise and insights to inform our work and the national outlook on Australia's unique wildlife, including policy perspectives to clinical innovations, disease discoveries and investigative breakthroughs.

Funding Streams and bodies

- Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
- Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Australian State and Territory Biosecurity Agencies
- Animal Health Australia

Members

Membership of Wildlife Health Australia offers individuals and organisations an opportunity to actively contribute to the governance and future direction of wildlife health in Australia. Members play a vital role in ensuring accountability, transparency and good governance by participating in annual general meetings, voting on key resolutions and supporting the election of directors. Becoming a member demonstrates a commitment to strengthening Australia's wildlife health system and provides a direct voice in shaping the organisation's priorities, strategy and impact. WHA currently has 249 members.

Benefits of Membership:

- Direct voice in shaping the organisation's priorities, strategy and impact
- Notifications of elections, meetings and other key events and activities
- The WHA Newsletter: a monthly email packed with the latest news, journal articles, events and job opportunities relating to wildlife health
- Wildlife disease fact sheets and other resources, via the WHA website
- Ad hoc disease notifications via email
- Linkage to other experts
- Information and advice on wildlife health queries from our friendly and helpful staff

Membership forms are available here

Donations, Bequests & Corporate Partners

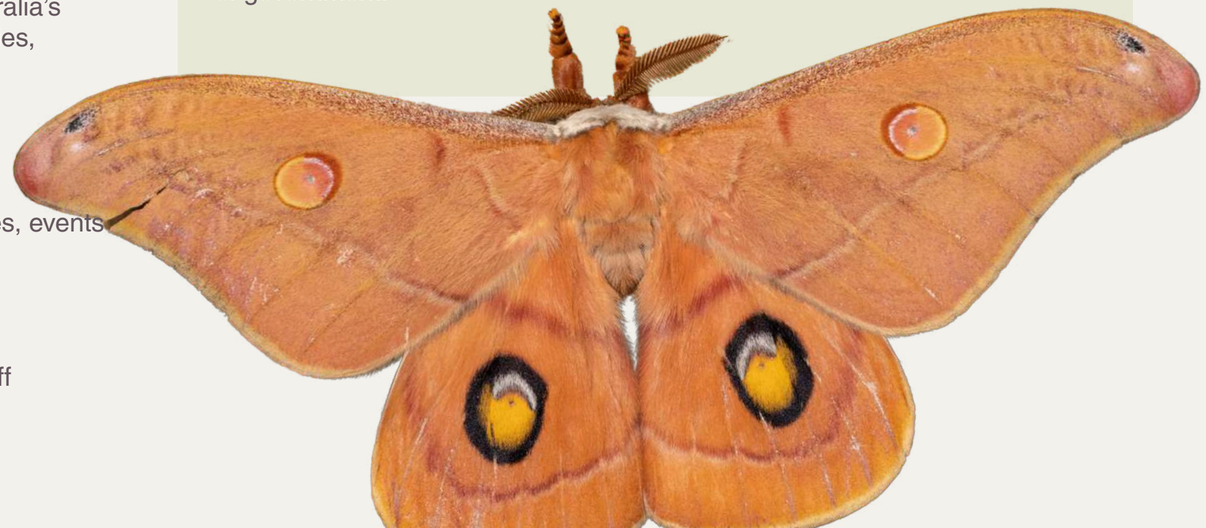
WHA has deducible gift recipient status, meaning any donations to the organisation are tax deductible. By making a tax-deductible donation to WHA, you will be supporting an organisation that is working to protect our amazing wildlife for future generations.

Make a donation here.

If you would like to discuss leaving a gift for WHA in your will, please contact Rupert Woods, on 0438 755 078, or rwoods@wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au

WHA is a sponsorship-friendly organisation looking for partners. Please contact Rupert Woods, at rwoods@wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au if you are interested in helping with our work.

Significant in-kind funding and support is also provided by Australia's states and territories, zoo, university and other veterinary practices that see wildlife, as well as many other supporters and collaborators both within and outside of government.



Financial Overview

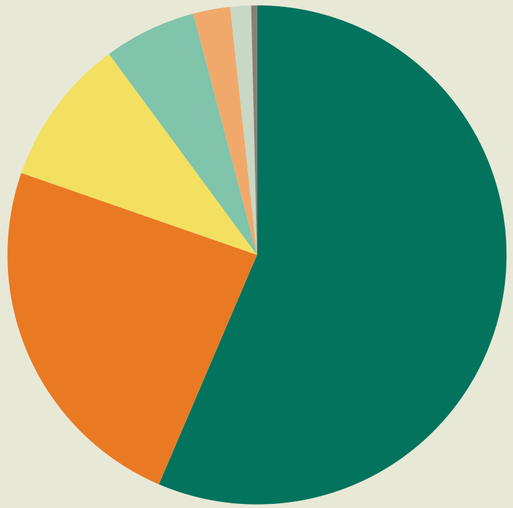
2025 - 2026

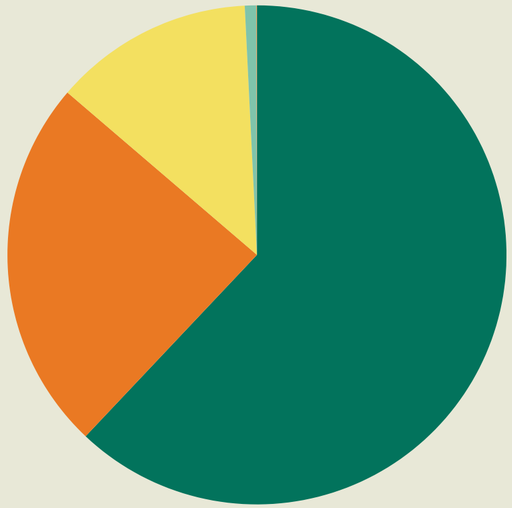


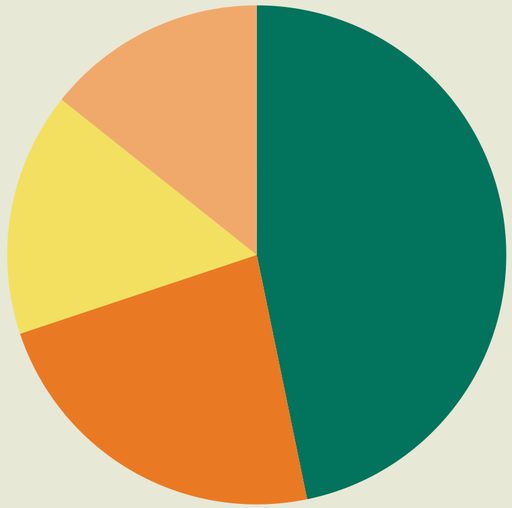
Financial Overview 2025 - 2026

WHA's ability to contribute national wildlife health intelligence, coordination, preparedness and technical expertise depends on sustained investment in the people, systems and partnerships that make that capability possible.

The events of 2025-26 demonstrated the importance of WHA's work and maintaining these foundations over the long term. Wildlife health systems and trusted networks cannot be created at the moment an emergency begins; they are built over years through continued collaboration, technical capability and investment.









Financial Position Statement

Wildlife Health Australia Limited

As at 30 June 2026

Line item	2026 ($)	2025 ($)
ASSETS		
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	9,966,606	12,564,229
Accounts receivable and other debtors	221,385	27,884
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	**10,187,991**	**12,592,113**
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	7,662	471
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	**7,662**	**471**
TOTAL ASSETS	**10,195,653**	**12,592,584**
LIABILITIES		
Current liabilities		
Accounts payable and other payables	4,615,299	1,275,480
Borrowings	15,937	17,611
Current tax liabilities	-	17,990
Provisions	439,080	940,215
Other liabilities	139,813	9,813
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	**5,210,129**	**2,261,109**
Non-current liabilities		
Other payables	3,028,199	9,676,303
Provisions	58,552	10,147
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	**3,086,751**	**9,686,450**
TOTAL LIABILITIES	**8,296,880**	**11,947,559**
EQUITY		
Retained surplus	1,898,773	645,025
TOTAL EQUITY	**1,898,773**	**645,025**

Looking Ahead

This financial year was the first full year of WHA's Strategic Framework in action. It was also a year in which the importance of long-term wildlife health preparedness became particularly clear more widely.

As WHA moves into 2026-27, H5 bird flu will continue to demand sustained monitoring, coordination and collaboration. At the same time, the broader challenges that shape wildlife health remain: emerging diseases, biodiversity loss, environmental change and the increasingly evident connections between wildlife, human and animal health.

Our four strategic pillars provide a clear framework for meeting those challenges.

We will continue to embed One Health, amplify the needs of wildlife, bolster resilience and create and share knowledge, supported by the partnerships and organisational capability that make collective action possible.

Thank you

WHA thanks its staff, Board, members, funders, partners and supporters, and the many people and organisations who contribute expertise, information, time and resources to Australia's wildlife health system.

Our work is collective and collaborative by design. Every disease report, sample, partnership, research contribution, training activity, conversation and shared resource adds to Australia's ability to understand wildlife health and act when it matters.

Healthy wildlife, healthy planet.

Wildlife Health AUSTRALIA

