

The case for a regulation under the Wildlife Act to prohibit feeding of wildlife under certain circumstances.

There are situations where provision of food to Sulphur-crested Cockatoos has resulted in significant damage problems. Soft timber window and door frames, in particular those made of western red cedar, are attacked and sometimes severely damaged by cockatoos engaged in beak maintenance chewing, after having fed at a source of food provided in somebody's back yard. This damage often occurs to neighbouring properties, sometimes several houses away from where they are being fed, but the nexus between deliberate feeding and subsequent house damage is indisputable. I base this statement on data I collected when I worked for DELWP's predecessors and recorded all the phone calls I received on problems caused by wildlife (this was before there was a Customer Service Centre). Of approximately 100 calls complaining about damage to houses caused by Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, in almost every case, the complainants were aware of somebody in a nearby house who was feeding these birds.

In these situations assistance should be available to house holders to prevent further damage being caused. This should comprise a graded strategy, starting with extension and education material designed to alert persons feeding birds of some of the undesirable consequences of their well-intentioned actions. The next stage should comprise direct requests to these persons to cease providing food, referring to the consequent damage being caused to neighbouring properties. If these measures fail, then there should be a legal mechanism to prohibit further food being provided for the birds in cases where such damage is being caused. This is consistent with the intent of section 7 of the Wildlife Act, which provides a mechanism for the reduction of damage caused by wildlife, in that case through the destruction of wildlife.

There are other situations where deliberate feeding of wildlife has undesirable consequences. Feeding possums in public parks can expose those possums to cruelty from people, as well as leading to higher densities of possums, with adverse impacts on vegetation in those parks, as well as increased fighting between possums, leading to injuries not otherwise seen.

Australian King-parrots are a favourite bird to attract with food, because they become very tame, and they are spectacular-looking birds. Each winter, the Healesville Sanctuary receives sick King-parrots infected with spironucleosis, an organism that usually kills them, and that is spread readily at feeding stations that are not cleaned daily.

One way to manage these problems could be to draft a regulation pursuant to S 87 (ga) of the Wildlife Act 1975 in order to prohibit or regulate the recreational feeding of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos when this action directly or indirectly leads to cockatoos causing damage to property or to the environment, or which could contribute to the spread of disease amongst wildlife. A PIN would be an appropriate mechanism for providing a penalty, if required, as the last stage of the process outlined above.

Rather than restricting the regulation to Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, it could be worded more broadly such that it could be used for situations where wildlife is

causing damage to property or the environment or where the feeding of wildlife could contribute to the spread of disease amongst wildlife.