



NATIONAL FINCH AND SOFTBILL ASSOCIATION Inc.

June 28, 2021

INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE VICTORIAN WILDLIFE ACT 1975

I write on behalf of the National Finch and Softbill Association (NFSA) to provide some comments on the current Review of the Victorian Wildlife Act 1975. Detail about NFSA is appended later, but we are a National body representing the interests of aviculturists focussed on the keeping, breeding and conservation of finches and softbills. We have a State based Committee and a membership base comprising the major finch and softbill oriented clubs and societies in all states, including Victoria.

Clearly this Act is well overdue for review and there are many areas where modern aviculture has changed considerably since 1975 to the extent that many provisions of the Act are irrelevant or actively work against the activities of passionate and committed aviculturists in pursuit of a wonderful hobby.

We don't intend to comment in detail on the Act, but instead indicate our strong support for submissions from the Canary and Cagebird Federation of Australia and from the Mornington Avicultural Society and Victorian Avicultural Council, both affiliated with NFSA.

Some key points from our viewpoint are:

1. Populations of Native birds now held by aviculturists are essentially domestic strains of these species, which in many cases have been kept and bred in captivity for decades. There is now no extensive trapping of native birds and this practice largely ceased at least 40 years ago. As a result aviculturists have developed considerable expertise in husbandry and breeding to successfully maintain captive populations. We are also acutely aware of the welfare needs of birds and both husbandry and welfare are captured in some states in Codes of Practice (eg, the Code of Practice for Aviculture in Queensland).
2. Aviculture has no desire for take from the wild except in particular circumstances for scientific research or conservation breeding purposes.
3. Many aviculturists are committed to conservation and the top echelon of experienced breeders have both expertise and infrastructure which could contribute greatly to conservation breeding of threatened bird species. We wish to register the genuine interest of aviculture to participate in such programs.
4. Aviculture nationally would benefit from more harmonisation of regulations between States. A clear case in point is the divergent situation with licensing requirements across States. In Queensland and South Australia commonly kept and abundant species of native birds held in aviculture no longer require licensing and NSW and ACT will soon follow the same approach. We have consistently argued that licensing schemes are unlikely to stop illegal take of birds and a risk-based licensing arrangement for Victoria which results in most commonly kept species being exempt would significantly support aviculture as a vibrant and legitimate hobby. There are certainly some classes of native bird species which do warrant licensing but the current list of Exempt species could be greatly extended.

5. Finally, NFSA would strongly recommend the establishment of a consultative committee or advisory group which can provide a forum for regular discussion between government and avicultural bodies. Communication is critical to ensure that whatever form the revised Act takes will result in a workable outcome for government and a supportive environment for the future keeping and breeding of native wildlife by an emerging generation of committed hobbyists.

Yours sincerely



Dr. Gary Fitt
Vice- President NFSA
gary.fitt@bigpond.com

ABOUT THE NFSA

The **National Finch and Softbill Association Inc.** was formed in October 2006 to provide a forum for unified discussion about issues relevant to finch and softbill keepers across Australia. The formation of NFSA was in part a response to the widespread perception that the interests of finch breeders were not being well represented in various regulatory discussions with regard to aviculture at both Federal and State Government level.

The NFSA aims to provide wide and enduring benefit for finch and softbill aviculturists. Our Aims and Objectives are:

- To provide a tolerant, impartial and non-divisive forum for collecting the views of finch and softbill aviculturists and providing a cohesive interface with other avicultural bodies.
- To promote the conservation of finch and softbill species both in the wild and in captivity through the support, development and implementation of research and restoration projects, and the establishment of captive breeding programs for targeted species.
- To assist and advise all governments and their agencies on any matters relating to finches and softbills.
- To strongly and publicly oppose the trapping of wild finches and softbills and the smuggling of finches and softbills and their eggs. NFSA will use its best endeavours to assist government to achieve the conviction of bird smugglers, and will advise government on the most effective methods of prevention.
- To improve the image of aviculture as a legitimate and respected leisure activity within the Australian community.

NFSA membership currently includes the major finch specialist avicultural clubs and societies in Queensland, NSW, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, with an estimated total member representation of around 5000 finch and softbill aviculture.

Contacts:

David Pace (President – dpace@scotch.sa.edu.au)

Dr. Gary Fitt (Vice-President – gary.fitt@bigpond.com)