



THE FINCH SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA INC

(Incorporated under the *Associations Incorporation Act 2009*)

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Hawkesbury Finch Club Committee
Canberra Finch Club Committee
Hunter Valley Finch Club Committee
Wollongong Finch Club Committee
Softbill and Native Pigeon Society Executive
The Finch Society of Australia Executive

CC: CCBFA, ABA, NFSA, NPWS

23/06/2015

Hi Everyone,

As you are aware, all current legislative provisions regarding bird licensing in NSW will be repealed and replaced by a new Biodiversity Conservation Act. To this end I attended the recent NSW NPWS Native Animal Keeper's Consultative Committee (NAKCC) on 18/6/15 at the invitation of the CCBFA. A new Act is currently being drafted and NPWS licensing staff advise that we should make a submission by the end of July if we wish our voice to have a significant impact. The FSA was always planning to make a submission, I just didn't realise it was quite so urgent – hence this letter.

Can I ask that all clubs add this item to their next meeting agenda (for Hawkesbury this means tomorrow evening – sorry guys). The aim being to give all members a chance to hear, process and then respond with ideas, agreement, disagreement and feedback. It is likely our FSA submission will inform the CCBFA and possibly the ABA's submission. I will personally present on this matter at the CCBFA meeting on 1/7, Smithfield FSA on 8/7 and ABA on 21/7. The final submission will be finalised and submitted late July.

Some background...

All Biosecurity and Biodiversity legislation at both federal and state levels is currently being reworked. Biosecurity broadly refers to protection from the effects of animals, plants, diseases entering from outside the jurisdiction. Biodiversity, for us, largely relates to maintaining and protecting existing natural ecosystems – specifically populations of native birds in our case. Wildlife licensing in the form of AKL category B1 and B2 licenses are currently the primary mechanism. It is widely accepted that this licensing system is outdated, cumbersome, under resourced and largely ineffective in terms of meeting its desired aims.

Parameters for a new system...

There are two documents of relevance when framing the parameters under which a new licensing system would be approved and implemented. Both accompany this letter and are worth reading or at least skimming. I have also attached the current Species list for your information. Be mindful that reptile and mammal licensing is also included.

During the NAKCC meeting it was clear that managing the risk of native animals being taken from the wild (or returned to the wild) is critical to any new scheme ultimately receiving support from higher level NPWS and OEH staff.

I do recommend all read Section 6 (from p61) in full within the attached “A review of biodiversity legislation in NSW, Final Report” (18/12/14) to better understand the intention of the review. Recommendations 27 and 28 (below) from Section 6 of this document are most pertinent, have received Government support and so will be implemented in one form or another.

Recommendation 27 – Adopt a tiered and risk-based approach to the regulation of wildlife management in NSW to credibly regulate high-risk activities and reduce red tape for low-risk activities. The four tiers would be: exempt activities, code-based complying activities, assessable/licensed activities, and prohibited activities.

Recommendation 28 – Improve the public’s knowledge and understanding of wildlife conservation and management through community-oriented education programs about native plants and animals, the impacts of human-wildlife interactions, and the welfare needs of animals in captivity.

Some thoughts on a new licensing scheme to prompt discussion...

During the NAKCC meeting I summarised my understanding of the parameters broadly as follows (and with some agreement, I might add). The proposed tiers in Recommendation 27 rank keepers based on the size and scale of their operation rather than the current system which is based largely on the species kept.

- Exempt is to cover pet owners – single hand raised parrot, small backyard aviary of mixed finches, something like that.
- Complying is for serious hobbyists. This tier would likely cover most of our membership who have multiple aviaries and breed a range of different exotic and native species. A license maybe required however no need to submit an annual return. Obligation to comply with a code of practice. Warnings and education is the first response to non-compliance. Penalties are only applied for repeat or major non-compliance.
- Assessable would be for dealers and large scale or commercial operations. This would require species level returns and would be subject to penalties much like the present system.
- Prohibited is a tier for special licenses providing exemption for things such as scientific study, pest control and other circumstances for use of wild animals.

How this works in regard to current B1 and B2 birds is completely open to discussion. It has been proposed that B1 is complying and B2 moves you to assessable and we leave it at that. This has issues for those who simply keep a pair or two of wrens or chats. Please try to think laterally, outside the existing system – maybe we can come up with a more effective system.

Ideas to promote widespread use of a new scheme...

The current scheme does not manage risk to wild populations well. It is not widely supported and is held in contempt by many in the avicultural community. “What is the point?” is an oft heard remark that is difficult to answer. It can be argued that the current

system detracts from our avicultural pursuits. We have a terrific opportunity to turn this around to the advantage of all - Recommendation 28 insists we must.

Some ideas:

1. Licenses are in the form of plastic cards, much like a credit card or driver's license. The license itself then becomes a desirable object promoting the licensing scheme.
2. Value added products are provided as part of licensing. For example, NPWS receipt books for transactions at bird sales which include licensing provisions, key avicultural club details and other information on the reverse side for the information of new bird keepers.
3. Include the NAKCC in new legislation to ensure it continues. Consider including and enhancing educational and promotional aspects of its terms of reference. NAKCC to have formal responsibility for the code of practice associated with complying activities.
4. Breeding register app for mobile devices. Develop an app that allows breeders to record their collection details. This app can also be used to monitor targeted and threatened species captive breeding programs. Perhaps an upload function allowing periodic returns for assessable collections to be submitted directly.
5. Educational resources for schools utilising avicultural expertise. Booklets addressing particular areas of the school curriculum where aviculture can be used as a resource. Encourage links between local schools and Avicultural Societies.

The flavour of the recommendations and the intentions expressed by NPWS licensing staff are really encouraging and should be embraced. Ideas such as those above will greatly improve our submission. Please encourage further ideas from your club's members.

So where to from here?

The FSA will make a formal submission at the end of July. I request all clubs present and discuss the above information to members at their next meeting and also through newsletters and magazines as time allows. Due to time constraints, might I recommend clubs obtain member consent at meetings for their club executive to approve the final submission on behalf of members. The FSA executive will obtain final approval from club presidents prior to final submission.

I would be pleased to discuss further so do not hesitate to make contact.

Sincerely,



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