

## Big-hearted donors and locals keep KI wildlife well-fed as emergency feeding program scales back

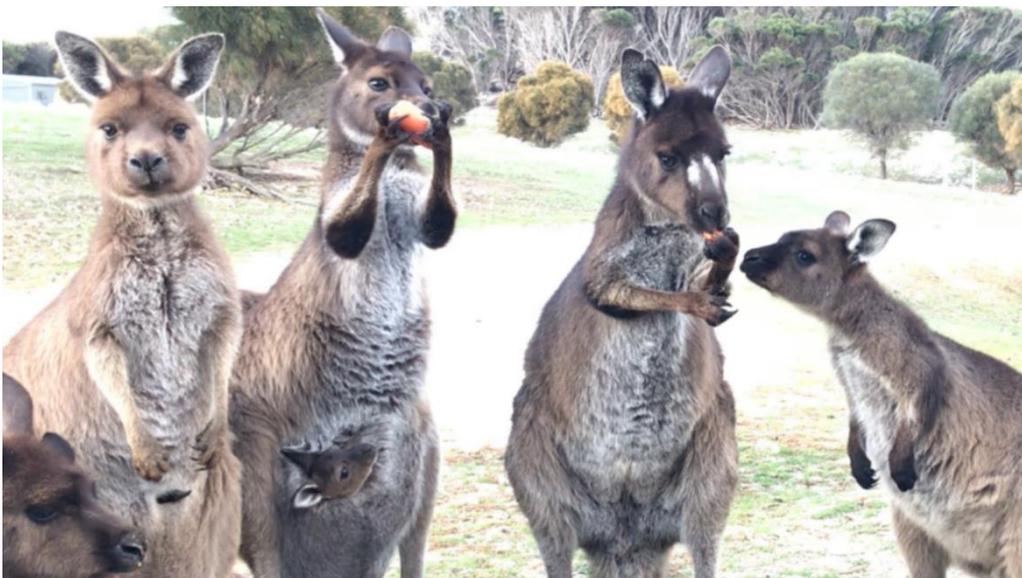
*Animal welfare initiative on island inspired “the very best of humanity”*

The decommissioning of the last RSPCA South Australia feeding stations on Kangaroo Island this week marks a milestone in the gradual scaling back of an emergency response, triggered by devastating bushfires in January. However, the organisation will continue to supply landholders and rescue groups with feed to distribute to wildlife until Spring, by which time the natural vegetation is expected to be sufficient in most areas.

Funded by [RSPCA South Australia’s Bushfire Appeal](#), the wildlife feeding program aimed to prevent animals starving due to loss of habitat. The fires burned about 200,000 hectares of land, almost half the island, including prime wilderness areas such as Flinders Chase National Park. Two people, more than 43,000 farm animals and countless native animals and birds perished in the fires, the worst in the island’s recorded history.

During the five-month program, RSPCA volunteers and staff distributed more than 66 tonnes of feed to sites across the island. Motion-activated cameras captured images of hundreds of native animals and birds at the feed and water stations, which numbered 89 at their peak.

Field Operations Manager Melanie Lambert, who has overseen the program, credits the practical support of the local community, together with the hundreds of people who have donated to the Bushfire Appeal, with the program’s success.



“Apart from seeing hungry wildlife chowing down at our feed stations, the best part of my job has without doubt been working with so many dedicated and determined people,” Ms Lambert said.

“Some of our volunteers returned week after week, driving all around the island to keep the feed and water stations full and to drop-off feed to landholders.

*Kangaroos with joeys at RSPCA SA feeding station - Stokes Bay, June 2020*

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**“We’ve been on a mission to stop animals starving - and it’s worked.”**

The gradual greening of the island’s landscape is providing opportunity for wildlife to forage, although areas that endured the most intense fires remain barren.

“I’m proud to have led this program - it’s not only saved animals but also eased the physical, financial and emotional toll the fires have taken on individuals,” Ms Lambert said.

“No-one values this wildlife more than the islanders, and the support that’s come from people all around the world has demonstrated how widespread the horror was after these awful fires - and how equally widespread the desire has been to help everyone - animals and humans - recover.

“We’ve seen the very best of humanity at this time.”

Donations to [RSPCA South Australia’s Bushfire Appeal](#) are funding the supplementary feeding of Kangaroo Island’s wildlife by the local community. Longer term, the organisation will use any surplus funds to improve South Australia’s capacity to rescue and care for wildlife during and in the aftermath of bushfires. These initiatives will align with recommendations made by the State Government’s Wildlife and Habitat Bushfire Recovery Taskforce.

The Minister for Environment and Water, Mr David Speirs, established the Taskforce in January to provide independent advice to the government on wildlife recovery after bushfires. It is expected to report later this year. (<https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/plants-and-animals/taskforce>)

While RSPCA South Australia is scaling back its wildlife feeding program on Kangaroo Island, the work of staff and volunteers caring for and rescuing animals continues. In the last financial year, the organisation has cared for more than 8300 animals, and found new homes for more than 5000, setting a new 12-month record for adoptions.

**The best way to support this work is to become a regular donor - just \$20 a month makes a difference to the lives of animals in need.**

**Join [RSPCA’s Rescue Team of regular donors](#), and help give animals a second chance at life.**

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