

Wombatised Inc.

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Wombatised

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Dear Everyone,

So much rain. So difficult for so many. So challenging for wombats and wildlife. Who knows how many hundreds of animals have perished in these floods. I do hope you all have survived the 'Sixty Year Onslaught'!

*Thanks to all those who have renewed their Wombatised membership as this is such an important source of income for us. If you haven't had a chance to do so, it's **never too late!!** Here are the details once again:*

- *Premium membership. Come and meet us!* \$50.00
- *Family membership* \$20.00
- *Adult membership* \$10.00
- *Child membership* \$5.00

Our bank details are in the top right-hand corner of this page. Please drop a quick email to adriennebradneysmith@gmail.com when you renew so I can send your Wombatised e-certificate.

*We have had some offers to make **cookies and cakes** for our **Wombatised Corbett Plaza stall** on **3rd April** – Easter Saturday, but **need more volunteers!!** Please send an email to the above address if you can help.*



*If you're looking for an unusual Easter gift we have some **Wombatised Easter Eggs** for just \$6.50. Once the egg inside the wombat's tummy is devoured, the little felt creature can become a finger puppet or an egg warmer.*

*Please make a note of the date of our seminar **Wombats and Wildlife Magnetism in the Southern Highlands** on the **Saturday, the 1st May** from 10:00 until 4:00 at the Mittagong RSL. The main topics will be conservation, habitat corridors, biodiversity, wombat health and wellbeing. It promises to be fun and informative and an opportunity to meet like-minded wombats and wildlife lovers! And **Christmas in July** at **The Glass Café** will be on **22nd July!***

*All the very best,
From us all at Wombatised*

Tallygang Mountain Mumma

(affectionately known as 'Mumma Bear')



Watch out for a detailed story about this amazing wombat in an upcoming newsletter. Meanwhile, here she is with her second baby who is now a little Velvet (see bulge in pouch!).

During the few hot days of summer earlier this year, Mumma Bear and her baby felt the heat. This is where climate change affects wombats on an intimate level ... on hot nights, for example, when they both

become too hot for comfort.

Now we have the opposite extreme – heavy, continual rain. Mumma Bear dug her own new nursery burrow on the side of the hill and it was relatively dry. This was such a relief as torrential rain is so dangerous for wombat babies. However, we haven't seen them since the latest deluge and we are hoping mother and baby are safe and sound.

The wombat-proof fencing installed near the river to keep wombats away from the road has been very effective for the past seven years. Thank goodness for metal stakes! There is a protected area nearby for both wild and released animals and lots of dry docks and hay, all so necessary during heavy rain.

To feed or not to feed?

*Looking at the above photo, you might ask should we be feeding our wild animals? It is an interesting debate which was very relevant in the 1980s when food was more plentiful but if we destroy habitat and the food it provides, what do you expect? Extinction is imminent when habitat disappears. We all like to mow our lawns and clear land but this habitat also belongs to birds, lizards and small mammals. Bracken and dreaded blackberry bushes are a haven for small birds, particularly little blue wrens as they offer protection from larger birds and other predators. If you wrote a story about flying foxes you would call it **Following the Flowering Gum**. We've removed so much eucalypt east of the Great Divide so flying foxes search for introduced food in urban areas and congregate in the rapidly diminishing remnant forests around human habitat.*

*Maslow's **Hierarchy of Needs** (food, shelter and relationships) is just as much applicable to wildlife as to ourselves. Stress caused by insufficient food, shelter and positive relationships upsets gut flora, thermo-regulation and metabolism. Supplementing our wildlife's diet with suitable food is becoming more and more of a necessity, particularly after the recent catastrophic bushfires and floods. Raw rolled oats, for example, are a source of warmth and comfort for animals in need.*

However, this is not carte blanche for people to feed native animals with white bread, chips, biscuits or other unsuitable food. This is not to sanction people with bird seed feeders who have allowed the seed to rot in the bottom of the container. Moulding seed can result in salmonella poisoning which in turn can lead to contagious and often deadly diseases in birds. The best way to feed birds is to sprinkle the seed on the ground and choose a different spot each time to avoid decomposing, or even better, grow a patch of millet or seeded grasses, flowering plants etc. in your garden!

A Salutary Lesson

When the editor of this newsletter was writing the article about wood ducks in last month's edition, she inadvertently mentioned that wood ducks had absolutely no road sense (as anyone driving around the Southern Highlands would know).



*Tania quietly asked **why should wood ducks have road sense?** They have been on the planet a lot longer than we have and it is we, the 'Jonny-come-latelys' who have in the past few hundred years introduced so many hazards into the environment. From this perspective, why should we expect the oldest mammals on the planet to have developed road sense?*

And why is our wildlife so often seen on the sides of the road, in danger of being hit by a car? So many trees have been uprooted, so much land has been cleared, and trampled on by stock, and filled with ever-spreading urban development that often only the green belt on the side of the road is left. No wonder our native animals pay such a heavy price.

Wombatised Corbett Plaza Street Stall
Saturday 3rd April (Easter Saturday)
Easter goodies and LOTS of other delights!!
Please come and support us!

A Tale of Two Wombats (Tania's diary continued from last month) *and the Problems of Release*

Tania has been monitoring the release of wombats Gwen Throsby and Lochie Tuggerlong, keeping a careful record of her observations each night. We left her last month agonising over Lochie who had been targeted by another wombat. He is now safely ensconced with his old friend Rosie but the problem has now shifted to Gwen and her release, and of course to the heavy rain which continues to fall as Tania writes her diary.



6th March: Lochie is enjoying being back with his old friend, Rosie (left), while he recuperates from his first venture into the wild. Meanwhile Gwen has been trying her hardest to hold her ground, sitting at the mouth of each burrow to claim it, a bit like Goldilocks trying out each of the Three Bears' beds!

Unfortunately she took a liking to Mumma Bear's bed (Mumma Bear is a wild adult wombat I rehabilitated two or three

years ago) and although Mumma Bear was kind to her, she made it very clear that Gwen was not welcome as she (Mumma Bear) now has a baby of her own. Yes, Gwen was gently but firmly pushed out.

I left the gates open for Gwen, knowing that she may be intimidated by other wombats and might need to escape and last night I heard a thump, thump under the house. Then there was some knocking at the door! Yes, it was Gwen who had never before been around the front of the house but who knew where to find home and safety. So clever! Who said wombats were muddle-headed (*although the editor of this newspaper assures me that Ruth Park meant this as a term of endearment when she created her amazing children's story, The Muddle Headed Wombat.*) After a good sleep Gwen will join Lochie and Rosie again, in their soft release sanctuary.

Releasing a wombat is sometimes fraught with anxiety and I really need to have a caravan on site to that I can see what's going on and if necessary, protect the youngsters from aggressive, well established wombats. Young animals are on a direct path to the School of Hard Knocks, having to contend not only with competition from the alpha male and/or female but with mange, flooded burrows and a host of other dangers. It's not like letting our own kids go once they leave school. Our young people live in a privileged world of shelter, ample food and protection. Our wildlife has so much going against it.

12th March:

Gwen is now with Lochie and Rosie in a safe, soft release site. Two days ago I saw her and she was squealing from anxiety. They all love their horse food pellets.



15th March:

I'm worried about Gwen. She has managed to take over the best burrow in the compound but with this continual heavy rain, the burrow is filling up and I'm wondering if she's tucked safely in an air pocket at the end of the burrow .

Sometimes I put polo fleece in burrows and extend the dry dock. Wombats love dragging hay and bark and debris into the burrow for insulation – it's natural behaviour. They often take bark from the base of trees, stringing it with their teeth to insulate the burrow. We can do it with hay but there's a problem of mould if the wombat doesn't clean it out. If this is the case, we have to pull it out with a hoe. Babies like Gwen would normally be with their mothers until they are almost her size, the two of them keeping each other warm.

Tonight Michael and I are going to stay near Gwen, Lochie and Rosie. We might have to pump out the burrows. We'll need to do a Roll Call. Life is so tough for wombats.

Lochie was curled up in a nest, high up under a beautiful shelter. We could hear Rosie and Gwen in the burrow and a strong torch light confirmed their presence.



20th March:

The river was so swollen today we could barely make our way to Rosie's compound. We had to rush because the water rises so quickly. Lochie and Rosie were curled up together with full tummies in a beautiful bed of hay - a very nice dry corner in the dry dock thanks to Michael's great construction work.

All the burrows in the compound are flooded and I was worried Gwen might be in an air pocket on the mountain slope. But luckily she had made her own burrow - a 5 metre exquisite burrow and there's only probably an inch of water in the bottom.

It's has been very stressful journey for her, going into the wild (as it is with most of our orphans) and she's decided that her own burrow is best. It was so heartening to see her beautiful face down in the burrow tunnel.

So far all three are accounted for in these terrible floods. They are comfortable and dry.

21st March:

Lochie would be approximately 18 kilograms now and Gwen around 20 which is roughly the same weight when babies leave mum for good and the ideal weight for orphans to be released. We're flexible regarding the release weight as it's really a matter for when they are ready and when they want to go. Often if they are too old and there's too much competition with the wild ones because they're sexually mature.

Lochie and Gwen swapped burrows last night. Lochie is happy as long as he's warm and has lots of hay. Gwen was screaming and wanting to get out. The wild is calling her. Her first release was not successful because of Mumma Bear. She's angry, frustrated and sad because she wants to go, but we're in the middle of a deluge and more rain is forecast. Her eventual release site is beautiful but she must wait until this deluge is over. I must let her go. It's my responsibility to heed her needs. This rain is keeping me so busy and I'm exhausted.

22nd March:

I've come to realise there really is hope in this world. Look at the wombat! X-rays of wombat skulls reveal a striking similarity with seal skulls, which indicates some kind of connection way back and explains why wombats have adapted well to waterways and are excellent swimmers.



Wombat skull



Seal skull

I've noticed how Lochie, when conditions are poor, just stands still, like a rock, curled over but with all fours on the ground – no lying down. Wombats are like horses in this respect. They both turn their rumps to the wind and barely move as minimal movement conserves energy.

I do hope the babies are all right in this terrible weather.

24th March:

Gwen is enjoying her new burrow, and is resuming her nocturnal behaviour. One minute she's with Rosie, the next she's sleeping with Lochie. It's so funny to watch their behaviour. The shelter is protecting them well, thank goodness. We went through bales of hay and food, to keep them snug and comfy. We will revisit her release process when the surrounding landscape is drier.



This photo shows Gwen on the left, Lochie behind in the middle and Rosie with mud on her face.

Finding a suitable release site is can be fraught with difficulties. A few days ago we checked a possible location suggested by one of our members. It was sheer paradise, with a running creek, beautiful bush and a wide grazing area - ideal for wombats - but in amidst

of the grazing area were multiple tyre tracks indicating it was a favourite spot for wheelies, and hidden in the bush were a number of squatters' huts. One of the wombat burrow on the site had been filled in with rocks, but in less accessible areas they were lots of safe places.



However, when suddenly a wombat wisdom and its habit are under threat, this place would be an ideal site for mass evacuation for adult wombats to disperse as there only a handful of wombats in this areat. We would have to do this under National Parks and Wildlife



compliances and this will be something Wombatised must be ready to do.

Wombats are always in need of help and support. This will be a beautiful haven for refugeee adult wombats who can quickly hide away when danger threatens.

Wombat and Wildlife Magnetism Seminar

Saturday 1st May 2021
From 9.30am for a 10.00am start.

Where: Mittagong RSL Club
Cnr Hume Highway and Bessemer Street, Mittagong NSW 2575

This seminar will provide a unique opportunity to learn about

- Protecting wildlife habitat
- The challenges of wildlife rescue
- A farmer's view of wombat management
- The importance of connectivity and habitat corridors
- And much more....

Come along to engage with presenters to discuss ideas and concerns. Also, to learn more about how you can help and/or what you can do at home.



For more details, ring 0429 042 721



Possums with a Ring!

*Ringtails make their own dreys by biting twine and weaving it into a lovely, round home (below right). They fare well in the suburbs because of power lines (convenient overhead thoroughfares) and introduced tree species such as *Leylandii* which provide both fodder and shelter.*



Dreys can be made from a variety of garden supplies such as two garden pots fastened together with an opening at one end. Twin ringtails can be seen enjoying this type of drey in the photo on the left.

Hanging basket frames and liners made from coconut fibre also make comfy dreys (below).





And there are possum boxes (left) with internal ladders so that baby possums can exit easily.



Ringtails move from one drey to another quite frequently, to keep their home clean from bugs, debris and other rotting matter.



Ringtail baby possums usually come in twos. If you come across a baby ringtail which has been mauled by a cat or a dog, it's important to locate its twin which could be key to its survival. They need a connective canopy to jump from tree to tree as they can't glide or fly. Sadly timber felling and land clearing have destroyed much of the remnant population of ringtails.

The above drey is in a Sasanqua Camellia tree in Bundanoon

Wombatised LETTER BOX

Questions from our Junior Readers

7 year old Archer from Bowral has asked lots of questions about wombats. This time he asks

‘How do wombats look after themselves when there’s danger?’

*Wombats run into their burrows when danger threatens. They growl, hiss and chitter as warning signs. And **surprise, surprise!!** They squash intruders such as foxes and dogs with their rump on the roof of the burrow! How clever is that!*

They are extremely fast runners and are excellent swimmers and can bite with their four sharp incisors if necessary.

Archer also asks ***‘How many wombats live in the wild?’***

This is difficult to answer. Every time you see trees being cut down and houses and factories being built means less land for wombats and koalas and other native animals to live in and less food for them to eat.

The number of burrows is not necessarily an indication of how many wombats there are as lots of these burrows are thousands of years old and are not occupied. Looking for scats (wombat poo) is the best way to check if a burrow is occupied or not.

There used to be many more wombats before our grandparents and great grandparents came to Australia. Some animals, like the Tasmanian Tiger (also called the Thylacine) have disappeared. We need people like you, Archer, to tell people to protect our native animals and save their land! Wouldn’t it be terrible if there were no wombats, platypus and koalas left when you become a grandfather! You might only have pictures of these animals to show your grandchildren if we don’t protect them.



There used to be many of these beautiful animals, called the Tasmanian Tiger (because of his stripes) or Thylacine in lots of areas of Australia, not only Tasmania but now there are none left. This is because people used to shoot them and destroy the land where they lived.

Wombatised's new Vice President



Our super-duper handyman, Michael Parrett, who works tirelessly for wildlife welfare, is now our new Wombatised Vice President. His dedication and skills in creating amazing constructions using recycled material have been documented in many previous Wombatised newsletters. With his physical strength and expertise, Michael is a driving force, helping Wombatised in so many ways and we are indeed indebted to him.

Michael has been an avid bushwalker, ever since he was a little kid when he used to explore the length and breadth of Sam Conlon's property in Bulio. He grew up in Moss Vale, studied Wilderness at Chevalier College and has walked most of the Southern Highlands bush tracks, often camping overnight. Meryla with its water holes is a favourite haunting ground along with the track from Kangaroo Valley, via Fitzroy Falls to Nowra, from Yerranderie (an old gold mining town at the back of Hill top) to Wombeyan Caves, and the 18 hour Gibberganyah walk, starting from the Box Vale Track, then down the escarpment to Mt. Alexander and then over Mt. Gibraltar. If this isn't enough, he also snow boards and has walked extensively in Andorra, Spain, France, Ireland, England and Japan.



Bush walking for Michael is his means of meditating, of connecting with wildlife and of becoming in tune with nature. He is sensitive to European impact on the environment, and is gravely concerned over the destruction of land and habitat. He loves animals and feels a deep, spiritual connection with wombats in particular. His lifelong ambition is to continue working and caring for our native animals. We at Wombatised are so fortunate to have Michael, with his many skills and dedication to our cause, as our Vice President.

Concreting entrances and exists to teenage pens, evacuating wombats in the floods, digging burrows, building compounds, erecting a portable pen are only some of the ways Michael helps Wombatised.



Phil's Corner
Discussions with Phil
When to use anti-inflammatories



When wildlife is injured, we often have to deliberate whether to use anti-inflammatories or not. Inflammation is the second stage of healing and begins right after the injury when the wounded blood vessels leak transudate (water, salt and protein) causing localised swelling.

When bones are broken, bone cells migrate down to the broken area. Inflammation controls bleeding, prevents infection and allows repair

cells to move to the site of the wound. It also allows damaged cells, pathogens and bacteria to be removed from the wound. White blood cells, growth factors, nutrients and enzymes create the swelling. Heat, pain and redness are commonly experienced during this stage of healing.

Inflammation is problematic if prolonged or excessive so anti-inflammatories should be used with caution, as a means of preventing swelling which could strangle blood supply and nerves. Excess use of anti-inflammatories can be counterproductive, hindering the healing process which is why we always need veterinary advice for each individual injury.

Wombatised Corbett Plaza Street Stall
Saturday 3rd April (Easter Saturday)

We would love contributions of

- **cakes, slices and biscuits**
- **jams and chutneys**
- **fresh produce (veggies and fruit)**
- **bric-a-brac or anything else suitable.**

Please email adriennebradneysmith@gmail.com if you can help!

SOME of our MERCHANDISE!!



WOMBAT PLANTERS

MADE from
TREATED
PINE
ONLY
\$65



*Adorable hand crafted kangaroos and koalas \$20
and unique hand crafted little wombats and cockatoos \$18*



Wombat Whiskers!! *by Adrienne Bradney-Smith*

Wombat Whiskers is produced entirely on home soil. It is an educational book for young children and adults of all ages, which asks questions about what wombats really look like. This little book creates an awareness of how precious and unique our wombats are.

*All proceeds go to Wombatised Inc.,
which means **directly to the protection of our wildlife.***

Copies are \$25 each

Not many copies left!



Vision and Mission Statement

Who are we ?

Wombatised covers an ever expanding network of people dedicated to the welfare of our native animals with a strong focus on education, conservation and community inclusion. We work for all wildlife with an emphasis on wombats.

Our vision is

- to continue raising healthy wombat orphans, guiding them to appropriate release sites to ensure their prosperous future.
- to improve hospital facilities and medical provisions for native animals.
- to maintain treatment in the field of diseases such as mange and other parasitic afflictions introduced by early settlers.
- to provide financial support for veterinarians, willing to explore the often untravelled path of wombat health.
- to cultivate effective means to relocate wombats, saving them from all too common atrocities such as road accidents, being buried alive at development sites, being shot and poisoned etc.
- to educate people on the very real need to help our wildlife.

How can you help?

We would welcome any donations to Wombatised Inc. However, we are still awaiting our tax deductibility status. Our bank account details are:

BSB 802 101
Account No. 100075892
Account Name Wombatised
Reference: Please use your full name

Please advise us of your donation by sending this form
The Secretary, Wombatised Inc.
22 Payten Street, Mittagong NSW 2575.

or by emailing wombatisedinc@gmail.com or adriennebradneysmith@gmail.com . We will then send your receipt / membership e-certificate.

Hands-on Assistance

Hands-on skills would be also greatly appreciated such as **construction skills** (e.g. building pens), **technology** (e.g. making cards, sharing information), **the arts** (e.g. photography, film making), **tailoring** (e.g. sewing animal bags, making burrow flaps, making items for sale), **domestic duties** (manning stalls), **animal husbandry** (cleaning enclosures), **conservation work**, **marketing**, as well as work on the field.

Because of licensing regulations and duty of care, we need interested persons to have working with children accreditation, character references and to demonstrate a willingness to acquire new skills.

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Thank you so much for your interest in Wombatised Inc.