

Wombatised Inc.

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Wombatised

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Wombatised Newsletter

Vol. 8 20201101

Dear Everyone,

*Thank you for your wonderful comments about the newsletters. We appreciate any feedback immensely, as it means people are reading about our wildlife! We have included our second **Phil's Corner** segment which targets specialists such as wildlife carers and vets.*

*In the October newsletter, I mentioned the **bear**-nosed wombat instead of the **bare**-nosed wombat. Wombats are very bear-like creatures, and **if** kangaroos evolved into deers eons ago when Gondwana broke away, maybe wombats evolved into bears! And the Latin word for wombat is **vombatidae** which means **bear like**!*

Here's something amazing. The other day I was driving along Range Road, Mittagong, half way up the hill to the roundabout when I saw a little brown banksia man-like creature walking resolutely along the side of the road. I made an abrupt U-turn and yes, it was an echidna! Bravely I grabbed some towels but that little creature suddenly did a left and walked away from the road, up a slight embankment into the adjoining paddock. What a relief! And then, a few days later, we saw another one crossing the road on the way to Berrima! Pity I didn't have my phone with me.

Wombat enclosure update

Talking of things amazing, a group of people from Sydney arrived at the end of September in a fleet of eight cars to work on our two roller door sanctuaries.



These lovely people had decided to adopt a wildlife project so, armed with huge pots of paint and a multitude of paint brushes, they

set to work to paint the rather ugly roller doors, both inside and out, so that the sanctuaries would blend in with the environment.



Some set to work planting fifty-one native shrubs around the complex which they watered from a huge tank they had also brought with them. Not only did the group bring their own

food, but they even had their own composting toilet in order to minimise their ecological footprint on the native bush.



And at the end of the day.....



....a marvellous transformation!

Now if this wasn't enough, another group of twenty-three arrived less than two weeks later to carry on the good, much needed work.



Now who, might you ask, is the inspiration behind this incredible gesture of goodwill?

*Meet **Beth Godwin**, whose philosophy is **where there's a need there's a responsibility for those who can help**. Beth inspires and mentors her friends and colleagues alike with this motto and urges people **not to be passengers in the train but to drive the train or engage in working on the tracks!***

Beth's friendship with Tania dates back thirty years when they were both teachers at the same school. Beth is from a Special Needs background and Tania, as we know, taught Visual Arts. Beth has a magical way of getting like-minded people together to achieve great things!



*Meet **John and Jessica Nyugen**. John is an ESL teacher who has been on Beth's staff for eighteen years. He is the International Co-ordinator and currently has 132 students from seven different linguistic backgrounds in his care.*

*Meet **Vivien Le** (left), co-ordinator of the yellow-vested Master Ching Hai Vegan group. These wonderful people not only worked like Trojans but provided a most delicious vegan lunch for everyone.*



*Meet **Chris** (Thanh Dat Pham), an animal lover who has been vegan since he was five.*

*Meet **Julie Pliesse**, Head Teacher of Science on Beth's team who loves Beth's initiatives and who loves nature.*



And meet

***Vince Pulham**, his wife Margie and nieces Monique and Rachel. Vince is the Careers Advisor at Beth's school. He wanted his nieces to see successful recycling first hand, to care for nature and to appreciate our native wildlife.*



Here they are – these wonderful, caring people!



*How can we ever thank these forty or more people altogether for giving us their time, energy and financial support to complete these sanctuaries??
There is only one way.....*



Time to be FREE!



Some orphan kangaroo joeys, lovingly reared by Wombatised President, Roma Dix, were ready for release. Months of weekly visits to the beautiful native forest which is now their home had enabled the joeys to know their range and to become familiar with the smell of the mob which they will be joining.



Feeding orphan joeys every day creates a strong bond between animal and carer and to say goodbye is always a wrench but it is crucial for the joeys to move on once they reach maturity and to identify with their own species rather than their foster carer.

First step was to practise walking away.



Next step was to watch them go!

Goodbye youngsters and GOOD LUCK!



Two weeks later, they are all still together! Can you spot them?



Operation Kookaburra



Gently rescued.... wrapped up safely in a baby blanket.....like swaddling clothes....

A kookaburra, lying in the middle of the freeway near Picton.....stunned but still alive.



Given some anti-inflammatories looking good but needing rest.



*Next morning looking **very** good..... wings checked nothing broken.*

Time for a test flight ... in a convenient bathroom ... Passed test with flying kookaburra colours.

Time for release ... back near where he/she was found ... home territory, very important...



*Going ... going... going ... **GONE!***

Not only are kookaburras a beloved Australian icon, they are truly amazing birds. They mate for life and caring for the young is a job not only for the parents but for the flock as a whole. When one of the flock is injured, it is quite common for other members to rally around trying to help.

It was important to return this wounded bird to its habitat in the Picton area as kookaburras are very territorial and a strange bird would not be welcome in another bird's patch. Their famous belly shaking laugh (which must have startled the early settlers) is their voice, not

only to proclaim the joys of life but also to remind other birds to respect their territorial rights.

Spring is always a challenging time for kookaburras and most other birds as they have to feed ferociously hungry chicks. Any bird in search of food who accidentally strays beyond its territorial boundaries is sure to meet with a reception far from pleasant.

Possum Magic!

Susy Porter shares her beautiful back garden with a ringtail possum and her two babies, a young male ringtail, and a brushtail with her baby.

Susy's love of possums began one night in February 2016. Returning from a Berrima Singers rehearsal she spotted a dead ringtail outside Corbett Gardens with her two babies still alive. She rang WIRES and was met with a recorded message telling her to keep the babies warm and to ring again in the morning.



After an agonising night of not knowing what to do, Susy rang Melanie Ison, the then possum specialist of Wild Life Rescue South Coast (W.R.S.C.). Sadly the two babies were too tiny to survive but the experience inspired Susy to enrol in a course offered by W.R.S.C. about how to save orphan marsupials. This is how Susy's love of possums began and subsequently prospered to the extent that she is now W.R.S.C.'s Possum Co-ordinator!



Louis the ringtail (pictured here) was found in



Louisa Street, Mittagong, hence his name. He had probably fallen off his mother's back when she was attacked by a dog or a cat. Ringtails' survival mechanism is to freeze when they are in danger which makes them so vulnerable to predation. Orphaned and alone, tiny Louis was only 67grams when rescued.

Ringtail possums are arboreal marsupials, spending their lives in the connected canopy and understory of the bush. The young love their milk and mothers often have two babies in the pouch. When old enough to cling to their mother's back with their teeth and hands they are called back riders. Ringtails are very communal and highly affectionate and they make great pets and apparently in America the ringtail is a sought after pet.

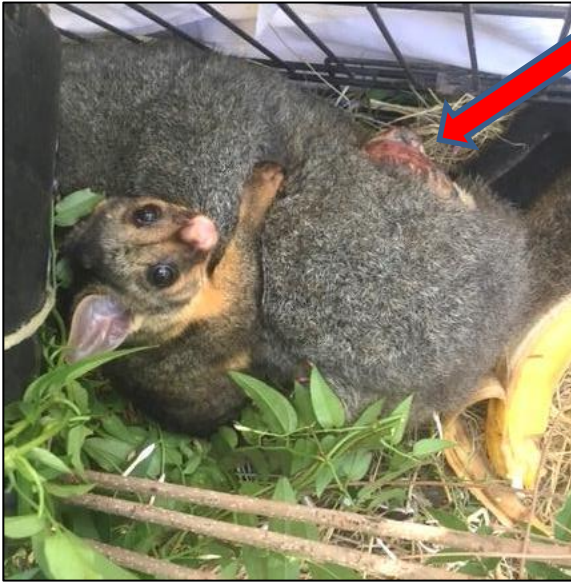


Ringtails live in little homes called dreys, made of vines and sticks which they cut with their teeth and then weave into a nest which looks just like a hanging basket. Introduced plants like privet and jasmine, usually the bane of gardeners, offer ringtails strong, dense foliage for their dreys, as well as flowers and berries to eat.

Ringtails also love grevilleas, plumbago and eucalyptus leaves. Interestingly, native bees also enjoy privet in flower which is perhaps some consolation for those of us losing the battle to control these plants. Because of their love of introduced plants, ringtails have fared reasonably well with human habitation and are quite mobile along powerlines, sometimes

sheltering next to buildings but unlike brushtails, they rarely take up residence inside a home or garage.

*Meet **Mother Posy** and **Baby Poppy***



Mother Posy, a brushtail, was badly injured by a dog and has a nasty gash on her back. She is responding well to medication.

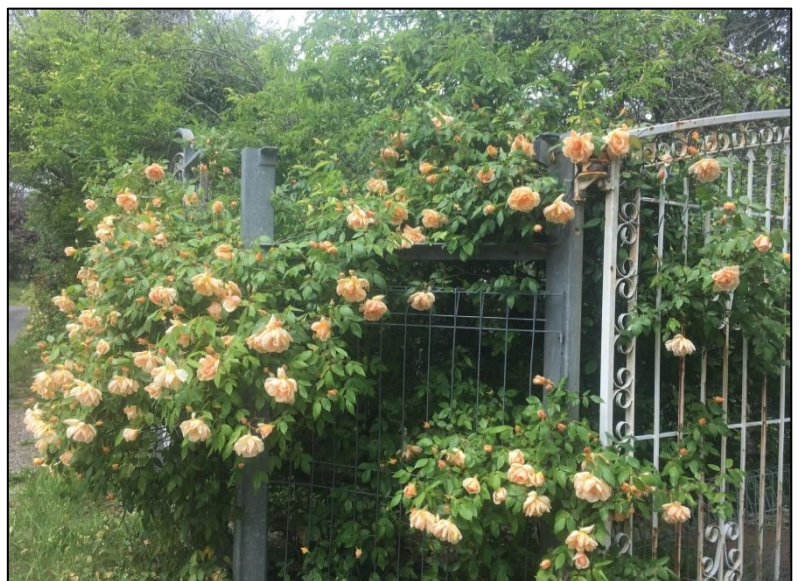
Arrow points to the huge wound on Posy's side.

Returning mother and baby to the wild is a priority but so often baby back riders fall off their mother's back when the mother is startled.



Right: Posy is licking her wound with her baby by her side

After some weeks in intensive care, Posy and Poppy have been returned to their home territory where they now temporarily reside in a magnificent aviary. Here, Posy can regain her strength and at the same time reconnect with the local possum population, subtly reminding them of their territorial rights.



The aviary is the protection Posy and Poppy need at the moment. They are due for release by about you are reading this newsletter.



How to remove a wombat from under a house

Wombats are like indigenous people who move with the seasons along riparian zones east of the great Divide, according to the availability of food and water. When heavy rain floods a burrow, wombats usually move to another one.

However, all too often their ancient burrows have been covered over and the animals are forced to find shelter elsewhere. Tania is frequently summoned to remove a wombat which has taken residence under a shed, house or veranda.



The area for this latest project had not seen a wombat for the past twenty years. Wombats had withdrawn due to receding rainfall and no doubt because nearby development had destroyed existing burrows.

However, recent rainfall throughout the Southern Highlands has encouraged wombats to return to this home range.

Before white settlement, there would have been a creek on this property, hosting at least one ancestral burrow but now this creek is a series of man-made dams. There is now no burrow within a kilometre, which means any wombat in the vicinity would be without protection.

The overhanging veranda on the homestead provided a safe and convenient entry point for this refuge seeking wombat, particularly after the torrential rain – until the resident dogs discovered him and began tormenting the ‘intruder’. Something had to be done.

The plan was to dig a burrow on the ancient riparian zone running through the property and encourage the wombat to own this burrow, before attempting to remove him or her from under the house.

With shovels and mattock in hand, Brendan, Wombatised enigmatic cartoonist and vice president, and intrepid Tania began digging a burrow between two magnificent paper bark gums.

Friendly, quizzical horses supervised the proceedings, both from over the fence and nearer to home!



The ground was soft and within an hour, a very comfortable looking burrow was ready for its first occupant (below!)

'Except for a wombat, no one can dig a burrow better than me!' said Brendan, proudly!



The finishing touch, a stroke of genius, was Tania scattering the newly dug up earth along the existing wombat track to guide the wombat to its future home. Who else would have thought of doing this!



A Job WELL DONE !!!

The next job is to measure the area where the wombat can enter under the house, and then cover it with reinforced mesh. This is then hammered into the ground, becoming a deterrent.

But now he has a beautiful new, much more suitable burrow to call home!



Wombatised LETTER BOX

Questions from our JUNIOR READERS

5 year old Maeve asks: *How long do wombats live?*

When wombats are born they are only about the size of a jelly bean and it takes about five months before they hop in and out of the pouch. It takes two to three years for a wombat to reach young adulthood.

In the wild they usually live a further fifteen or more years. However, only too often they die before their time due to mange, road collisions and attacks by wild dogs.

Patrick the oldest wombat in captivity, lived to the ripe old age of twenty-nine, in the Ballarat Wildlife Park, Victoria.



Above: A baby wombat about five months old

Right: Tallygang Mountain Mamma weighs 40 kilos and her baby Colo is now almost 16 kilos.



Maeve also asks: *Are wombats good at seeing, hearing or smelling?*

Wombats have little eyes and poor eyesight but their hearing is excellent and they have a better sense of smell even than dogs! They also have very good memories. They don't need to have good eyesight as they spend lots of time underground!



5 year old Heidi asks: *What happens when a wombat meets a kangaroo?*

Adult wombats and kangaroos co-exist well in the wild. They both are grass eaters but kangaroos sleep in woodland areas and graze in open grassland whereas wombats prefer the safety of the woodlands and the burrow.

Orphaned baby wombats and kangaroos (both called joeys) need to be kept apart in case of accidents. Kangaroos have very fragile arms and legs and wombats have very hefty bottoms. If a wombat were to sit on a joey kangaroo or tread on his hind legs, it could do a lot of damage to the little kangaroo!

Heidi also asks: *Do wombats eat anything other than grass? Leaves of little plants?*

Insects?

Wombats generally eat grass but they love to chew on bark, tree roots and even enjoy a bit of dirt. They also occasionally eat small insects.



Phil's Corner

*Phil Hazzard, the famous Cat Doctor from **Ironmines Vets**, this month discusses with Tania **bloat and associated problems** which may affect pinkie wombats in care.*

Discussions with Phil Hazzard are so liberating and we are grateful to him for generously offering his time and remarkable intellect. Thanks to Phil we can now scrutinise some observations which might need to be re-addressed and re-applied in order to improve our common practice.



Pinkie wombats are busy inside their mothers' pouch, grazing on the debris and continually cleaning themselves and the pouch. The mother wombat can't clean her pouch because it's backward facing, so the job is left to the infant.

Inside the pouch there is natural cleansing wax, excrement, humidity, dirt particles and faecal matter as the mother defecates close to the opening of her pouch. When caring for pinkies, we must try to replicate the inner

world of these animals and what they've been doing for millions of years.

Pinkie wombats lead busy lives inside their mother's pouch

Pinkie wombats when rescued from the mothers' pouch always have dark brown faeces, not mustard or grey, and it's full, fibrous and voluminous!

The carer must replicate this internal private world of baby



wombats as they can easily become constipated when only given milk. We need to add psyllium husks, dried grass and the dried faecal matter of a healthy adult wombat. Subsoil similar to the burrow, with very little organic matter, should also be included as Mother Earth is so important for their digestive system and their emerging teeth.

If the above items are not placed in the pouch, the pinkie will graze on the pouch's lint fibre which can be dangerous and very difficult to digest!

Generally speaking there are two types of bloat:

1) An obstruction or twisted bowel or even prolapse from straining often caused by a sudden change in diet or eating pellets without water or milk to soften the food. This type of bloat requires oil to dissolve and/or lubricate, or a compound to stimulate peristalsis. Products available for these problems include olive oil, Coloxyl, Cena extract, castor oil and Infacol for human infants.

2) A nutritional deficiency which causes bubbles to build up and expand like a foaming milkshake. This is the more common type of bloat. Just giving milk is inadequate as there is nothing left for the hindgut to digest so the poo becomes too tiny and constipation, due to the slow peristaltic movement, is the result. As the joey gets older, there must always be food and water close by, including bark, grass, carrots and sweet potato to encourage the joey to begin chewing solids.

Wombats are hindgut fermenters, turning cellulose into sugars and vitamins. The hindgut has its own nervous system independent of the brain and breaks down fibrous materials which we can't do. It converts cellulose into fatty acids and propionic acid, then turns these compounds back into sugars. Vitamin K and B are also obtained from the wombats sophisticated hindgut fermentation.

Some interesting comparisons:

1) Dogs can suffer severe constipation when fed a diet of just mincemeat. The mince is absorbed, then there's nothing left for the gut to contract upon.

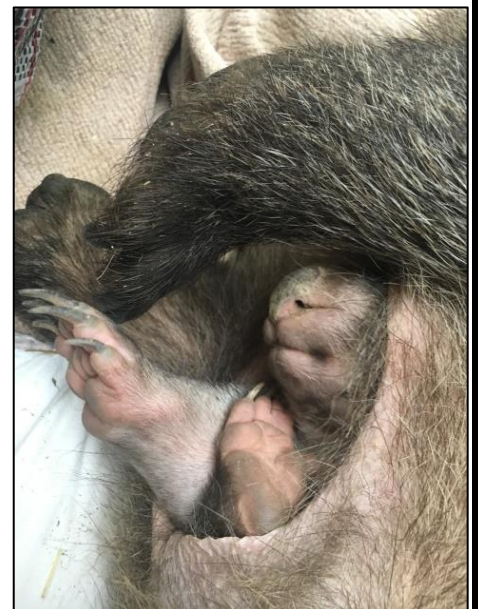
2) *In humans the microbiome is important for the immunity of a newborn baby. The mother's vagina gives the necessary immunity. Caesarean-born infants have contact only with the skin which does not provide the same degree of immunity. However, humans can function without their hindgut because there's not much fermentation happening. If our hindgut is removed it doesn't matter so much but our four legged hindgut fermenters imperatively need this function.*

There's no scientific support for giving probiotics from a jar but faecal transplants are now an accepted part of technology. Packaged freeze-dried bacteria save human lives, so now wildlife carers must try and replicate this need!

Perhaps the difference in the way we process food might be a reason we need to improve our practice when it comes to hindgut fermenters! The racehorse industry has it mastered in many ways. The horse is quite similar to the wombat in matters of faecal stools, hindgut fermentation, afflictions and disease.

The building up of bloat foam and bubbles might obstruct the renal system but otherwise is unrelated to it.

Exercise is also important. We have observed the pinkie wombat very busy in the pouch kneading the mother's mammary glands and constantly moving around the pouch (which is a sphincter with strong muscle contractions). The mother has a tactile relationship with the baby through the opening and closing in and caressing of the pouch, just like a hydraulic system – truly amazing to witness. The baby purrs with contented clucks and carers often experience this soft clucking sound when cuddling an orphaned wombat.



Physical jerks within the pouch!



The baby doesn't drink every two hours but rather when he or she is ready. The baby then falls asleep with the teat in the mouth, still suckling away for comfort. A flanged teat without a hole can often calm an orphan pinkie particularly in the first stage of losing mum. Marsupials are the only animals with constant contact with the teat at their will.

Therefore, if we can replicate the pouch life with an elastic, breathable fabric and firmly close it up, this will model as much as possible the world in the pouch (as in the photos below).



Caressing the baby is also extremely important. Love and contact should never be underestimated. The orphans' need to love and connect at such an early age cannot be overlooked as they are as yet unborn in the pouch, unlike placental animals. Human babies are much easier to manage.

*Humans should not be so brazen as to suggest that they're the only ones with the capacity for love and of course at such a young age we are certainly not over humanising our orphans. Marsupial orphans need protection, touch, custodianship and surrogate parenting. Alexandra Seddon explains this beautifully in the Youtube video **Every Wombat needs a Mum.***

This highlights the need for more community involvement and the importance of training many more volunteers. It's almost like a physics course to look after orphan marsupials but we need patience and we need carefully to train hundreds more people.

Bacteria

Many bacteria and germs are good. It is normal for salmonella and E.coli to cover our fingers etc. The overt reaction to the germ theory is inappropriately applied when the wombat carer sterilises everything. However, we must try to replicate their own micro environment, not ours. Bacteria from the sink or particles of old milk in the bottles are not good bacteria and particles of rotten milk can kill an orphan. Farmers with orphan cattle often face the same problem when their milk bottles are not cleaned out or left in the dirt.

Most germs are acceptable but it's the odd germ that knocks us off - a subtype of these deadly bacteria would be the superbug which could kill us and of course our orphan marsupials. We must be careful about our environment and the bacteria and germs which are products of our kitchen and our husbandry. Also we should be aware that these orphans must be exposed to what they have experienced over millions of years.

Stress

Stress upsets the hindgut so it must be managed and sometimes a sedative medication is necessary, especially with older orphans. A nice firm hug is usually enough to calm a little baby.

It is well known in the veterinarian industry that rabbits suffer physical and emotional stress after surgery and need their gut stasis restored. In other words, stress management is very important for hindgut fermenters. Contact and reassurance is a very effective stress management for little pinkies.



A nice firm hug is usually enough to calm a little baby wombat.

We are licensed with Wildlife Rescue South Coast, a 24 hour call hotline (0418 427 2140) servicing much of N.S.W. Many of the animals featured in our newsletters are from the wildlife Call Out Centre, including Posy possum, her baby Poppy and the Picton kookaburra. We donate to W.R.S.C. and appreciate their outstanding work with wildlife rescue.

Markets

On Saturday 18th October, Wombatised ventured into the market scene, at the Sydney Vegan Markets in Moore Park.

The day began before the crack of dawn as our unpacking time was scheduled at 7:00am sharp. Although most people were inclined to buy food rather than merchandise (after all, it WAS a vegan market!), it was a most interesting and reasonably profitable day for Wombatised.

*Our next BIG VENTURE will be a street stall at Corbett Plaza on **Saturday, 14th November**. This will be an opportunity for people to buy our unique soft Australian animal toys, our book, **Wombat Whiskers**, some all-occasion cards, featuring our flora and fauna, Jacqui's great masks, all kinds of bric-a-brac and heaps of delicious home-made cookies, slices and cakes.*

So, if you can, come to Bowral for

Wombatised Wonderful Street Stall

Corbett Plaza

Saturday 14th November

from 9:00am until 2:00pm

and do all your Christmas shopping in one hit!!



SOME of our MERCHANDISE!!

WOMBAT PLANTERS
MADE from TREATED PINE
ONLY \$65

*Every wombat-friendly home needs one of these!
Drainage holes allow for direct planting*

***Place your order before the Christmas
rush or
buy on the day!!***

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



*Adorable
hand crafted kangaroos and
koalas
\$20*

*Unique hand crafted
little wombats
and cockatoos
\$15*



Wombatised fridge magnets

key rings \$5





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.