

MEDIA RELEASE

13 January 2022 - For Immediate Release



Save Rockingham's Little Penguins

Solutions to save Rockingham's little penguins are on the table, we now need action from the WA government

There is still hope for the declining little penguin population on Rockingham's Penguin Island if the WA government follows the advice of scientists, says the Covenor of Save Rockingham's Little Penguins community action group.

Dawn Jecks, who is also a City of Rockingham councillor, said the silence from the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) following [an article](#) in the Guardian which revealed the full extent of the disastrous recent breeding season, was deafening.

"It was very upsetting to hear that DBCA rejected an emergency feeding program put forward by scientists which might have saved as many as 20 chicks in the latest breeding season," said Ms Jecks.

"To know those chicks likely died of starvation needlessly beggars belief, especially because every single one of them would have been vital to maintaining this declining population. Considering this solution was first put forward in September, their lack of action looks like negligence/carelessness.

"Looking to the future, we know that scientists have met with DBCA and put forward a number of solutions aimed at helping this population recover. We now need to hear that these solutions have been put into action."

A combination of other management actions have been put forward to DBCA, including habitat rehabilitation; the proper planning of the new \$3.3m tourism facility, including a proviso for the development to be postponed and potentially relocated to the mainland if it is found to be too intrusive on the population at sensitive times; and a scheme that will boost the numbers of Little Penguins' prey – white bait – in nearby waters.

Ms Jecks added: "The community of Rockingham is especially proud of this population and would be devastated to lose it. It would be incredibly damaging to tourism in our city if we were to let this population wither away without trying."

Notes to editors

The little penguin population on Penguin Island has plummeted by around 80% across just 12 years thanks to climate change impacts, boat strikes, food scarcity and disturbances to their habitat on Penguin Island.

This last breeding season (21-22) was disastrous for the penguins with only seven chicks fledging over the weight that gives them a chance of returning to breed. Over the period 2012-2020, an average of 31 (range 17-47) birds fledged from artificial nest boxes.

There are a number of human-induced pressures on the penguins of Penguin Island, including climate change, boat strikes and disturbances to their habitat

ENDS

 **Contact:** Dawn Jecks (Campaign Convenor)

 **Email:** dawnjecks@gmail.com

 **Mobile:**

 **Web:** @SaveRockinghamLittlePenguins