

## BORN TO BE WILD – NOT DOMESTIC PETS



We all know how cute and adorable baby wombats are. The temptation to want to keep a wombat as a pet is something many of us as wombat carers or simply someone who is captivated by their behaviour has at some time pondered.

The question is not whether people could make wombats into "good" pets - the question is, should we? Do we really want to rob them of their freedom?

We need to step back and look at the big picture it's not about us its ALL about the wombat and its future and welfare. We can't possibly provide their basic desire and that's to be FREE and not be locked away in a cage or enclosure. When wombats are kept as pets, they often escape resulting in disastrous outcomes. Wombats are extremely good diggers and climbers and have the reputation of being the "bulldozers of the bush". This all points to the fact that they do not want to be confined.

Many escapees are set on by dogs or hit on the road or shot as they are seen to be a nuisance. Most of all though, these wombats that have been kept and overly humanized, often die of stress as they are unable to cope with life in the wild, not having learnt basic wildlife skills.

As young joeys' wombats crave one on one attention and this is when we as humans find them most endearing. In the wild joeys spend the first 18 months of life with their mother learning proper wombat code of behaviour.

By the time wombats are nearing maturity 2–3 years they can become aggressive and certainly very destructive. Wombats naturally know they should be underground, so there is always the issue of digging. A wombat's diet consists of native grasses and they eat lots, so there is the ongoing commitment to pick a variety of grasses every day.

Wombats are nocturnal and when adult this is their natural active time. So, unless you are a night owl and are prepared to be active after dark you aren't going to be able to interact anyway and this is when the novelty is likely to wear off. Many pet wombats have been taken into the bush and dumped thinking it's wild it will know what to do. This is a death sentence. You will have taken all its wild instincts and learning experience away from it.

The solution is to let our wildlife be wild. Check out [www.wild4life.org.au](http://www.wild4life.org.au) to further your understanding.

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