

Wildlife Act Review Submission

I am a wildlife rescuer and I believe that the Act requires an urgent review. The community response to the bushfires of 2018/2019 showed that there has been a shift away from viewing our wildlife in terms of how we can “use them” towards a respect for them. I see firsthand every day compassion from members of the community to injured wildlife and I believe this is representative of the broader community as less people now engage in hunting than ever before, indeed, hunting is now relegated to a fringe minority.

Climate change presents a real and significant risk to our wildlife, as does urban development. Loss of habitat through both these factors is causing native species to be put under significant pressure. Australia has one of the worst records on extinction of native species and the Wildlife Act is one of the key mechanisms by which this extinction trajectory can be improved.

We need much harsher penalties, and enforcement of them, for those who breach the Act by harming wildlife. The community was horrified by the poisoning of wedge-tailed eagles, our magnificent largest bird of prey, in such vast numbers by one individual in recent years. Our native wildlife is unique, and diverse, but through a lack of protections for them, and climate change and urban development, we are removing their nesting grounds, their foraging and food sources, and fencing off their migratory patterns. The time of using them for human purposes is over, people want to engage in a meaningful way with wildlife and know that they are safe for generations to come.

We need to prevent the use of 1080 poison due to the secondary poisoning that is happening to our birds of prey. The slaughter of our kangaroos must cease. Where a kangaroo mob has to be relocated due to development, we must allow professional and experienced wildlife rescuers to relocate them instead of just shooting them. Our wombats, possums, birds, platypus, all of our wildlife deserve to be recognised in terms of their sentience and their future depends on the Act protecting them from human intervention, human harm and human destruction. Where possible, the animals must be left to live their natural lives. We have foisted climate change and urban development upon them and this alone is decimating their numbers.

All wildlife must be protected and the capacity of farmers to apply for a cull must be reduced and made more stringent. Hunting must also be more controlled where native species are concerned. In particular, recreational duck shooting which serves no meaningful purpose, instead shooters are disrupting broilgas as they begin their slow pairing and mating process, and the decimation of our freckled duck species. Climate change alone is massively impacting our wetlands, to allow the indiscriminate shooting of waterbirds on top of that is to ensure that we will lose species of waterbird.