

Submission – Review of Wildlife Act 1975 – Victorian Government  
June 2021

To Expert Advisory Panel:

**Re: Support for stronger protection of Australia's unique wildlife**

I write to express my support for stronger protection of Victoria's (and Australia's) wildlife and their habitat, to reduce their harm, protect biodiversity and to build healthier eco-systems that will also help to mitigate climate change.

There will be many experts who will have submitted scientific reports so I will comment on factors that I believe are impacting the wildlife in my area, and why wildlife should be given greater protection.

**1. The changing environment.** I have lived in Australia for 36 years, 30 of those on the edge of the Wombat State Forest. My property comprises 22.2 hectares of forest adjacent to other forested properties.

In the 30 years I have lived here there have been noticeable changes to the flora and fauna. When I first moved here my forested area was abundant with large mobs of kangaroos of all sizes, echidnas, possums – brush and ringtail, swamp wallabies and koalas. The forest supported many birds – large and small; some were here all the time, others were seasonal, such as the Yellow-Tailed Black Cockatoo. The forest is the most southerly habitat for the endangered Greater Glider. The forest floor produced many small orchids and various fungi and mosses.

However, over the years, the koalas have gone, the mobs of kangaroos have shrunk to a small mob with few large animals, the large flocks of smaller birds are rarely seen, such as the Superb Blue Wren and I have not seen the Yellow Tailed Black Cockatoos for a couple of years. The orchids flower occasionally but nothing like they used to and the plant the 'Naked Lady' is now never seen.

There could be a number of reasons such as climate change, people and dogs have moved in, shooting is incessant, or perhaps the animals have returned to the larger forest when logging ceased (which could return) However, the change is noticeable in such a short time period, and worrying.

**2. Animal agriculture.** I have been a vegetarian for nearly 50 years for ethical reasons and more recently for climate change reasons; it is another way I can play my part. Animal agriculture has a huge impact on the land involving clearing for grazing and growing crops for animal food. We are continually losing precious habitat for this purpose. I believe that this needs to be addressed with farmers supported to move away from animal farming or to different farming practices. In regard to kangaroos, since I moved here 30 years ago, approximately 220 acres of their limited grazing land has been turned over to agriculture and horses.

**3. Intentional killing of wildlife.** I find it totally unacceptable that the government sanctions killing kangaroos for pet and human food, and many other animals and birds for reasons that they are 'a nuisance'. We have to move away from this mentally and very backward notion that wildlife is here for our convenience and should they be inconvenient or we can 'make a buck' from them, they are killed. Europe and the UK my country of origin is far more progressive in its attitude and protection of nature; it is embarrassing how backward we are in Australia in 2021. The killing and permits to kill is hidden from communities that do not have the opportunity to object or challenge, and often it is cruel. I believe the Game Management Act has encouraged hunting as a pastime, and young lads come here regularly, some in battle fatigues with high-powered weapons to shoot "anything that moves" as one farmer said recently. I keep a log and shooting occurs often, about 50% of the time and mostly at night.

**4. Lack of recognition of the science.** It is now clearly established in the scientific research that nature and access to nature is good for our physical and mental health, and that includes mine. My mental health is dependent on nature, and the greatest impact is the distress of seeing so much disregard and feeble action by governments in the protection of nature and wildlife. I despair for the future of our environment and the earth without strong action from government. There are some great environmental organisations that are doing amazing work but without government support their achievements are insignificant.

**5. Governments not giving equal importance to nature.** Better policy, laws and regulation at all levels of government that gives priority, or at

least equal importance to nature is critical if nature is to survive. There is a lot of investment in science and reports on our natural world but then poor uptake and regulation of recommendations. This has to change. To give an example, in Melbourne a new suburb is planned – Arden. There is not one section in the proposal that talks about the place of wildlife in the new neighbourhood, yet we know that the city supports a lot of wildlife. And considering this neighbourhood includes sections of the Moonee Ponds Creek, this is so shocking and disappointing. The Shire of Moorabool along with other neighbouring rural Shires does not have a wildlife strategy in regard to ecology, planning or management except “ring this number if they are a nuisance”.

**6. Lack of recognition of their value (alive).** The greatest excitement for my overseas visitors is to see the wildlife, not the cities or museums or markets. Once upon a time it was easy to show them a mob of kangaroos or a group of koalas in the Brisbane Ranges. Echidnas wandering along the verge. Not any more. The last visitors saw 3 kangaroos in the distance over their entire stay. We risk losing our tourists if we do not protect our wildlife. I don't think Australians understand just how unique it is, and how every child grows up wanting to see a koala.

I choose to live in Australia for the flora and fauna; not the jobs or the cities or health system but for this unique place that exists nowhere else in the world. I support Landcare, Wombat Forestcare, Land for Wildlife and donate regularly to several animal welfare and environmental organisations.

I welcome this review of the Wildlife Act and look forward to hearing of a strong commitment to wildlife and habitat protection as well as seeing it adequately resourced.

Yours faithfully,  
Stephanie Jones, PhD

**My recommendations:**

That all forests and critical ecosystems are protected and appropriately resourced now, to support healthy ecosystems and bio-diversity into the future.

Stop killing kangaroos and other wildlife. All wildlife should be protected.

Support farmers to move away from animal agriculture or change practice.

Change of mindset from all levels of government; give equal importance to nature and our environment.