

## WILDLIFE ACT REVIEW SUBMISSION

### Protection and conservation of wildlife and habitat

I live in rural South West Victoria During the last 15 years I have witnessed the continued felling of precious habitat in rural, semi rural and urban areas. There appears to be not ramifications for cutting down habitat trees

There appears to be no rules or regulations for the clearing of land or removal of trees in rural, semi rural or urban areas where I live in South West Victoria. No permits required for removing habitat trees, regardless of their importance to many species. I was recently told by an arborist who had just moved to the area from Gippsland that he was told by the local arborists that permits were not required here, you can cut anything you like.

The ridiculous reasons used to justify the removal of healthy, solid trees that have reached an age that supports a multitude of species is absolutely pathetic. The total lack of interest of local government that are supposed to be responsible for this must be addressed.

Arborists who also sell firewood are hardly nonbiased when assessing trees if they also stand to financially gain from selling firewood. This happens all the time.

Developers also appear to have no regulations as to what they may or may not remove and the public open spaces that must be provided in a development are often small spaces with a playground and non-native vegetation if any. Nature strips are no longer planted with natives but whatever happens to be trending in local government landscaping ie date palms and ornamental pears.

My parents live in Sydney on the Northern Beaches where there are very strict rules around pruning or removing of native trees in the entire area. Permits are required and penalties are enforced for unlawful removal. 40 years on and even with development the area still retains important habitat, some areas look largely unchanged. Proof that it can be achieved.

Clearing of habitat on farm land also appears to go unreported and if it is, as I and my husband have done many times it is not acted on and there is no feedback as to what action was taken.

The importance of the need for trees for air quality and our existence seems to have been forgotten. Maybe if there was a tax rebate or reduction in rates for residents that have habitat on their properties, both rural and urban this maybe an incentive to protect, plant and maintain.

Without habitat there will be no wildlife so the two go hand in hand.

Strong rules and regulations that are enforced now not in 10 years time when there is none left. Serious fines and the forcing of repairing the damage is a deterrent to others. If the local government authorities are not capable of doing this then state government should take it back or give incentives to local government to do it.

The flow on effect of habitat removal is displace wildlife that find themselves at the mercy of dogs and vehicles in an attempt to find an alternative. This problem is left to members of the public and wildlife volunteers, carers and shelters to deal with.

Rehabilitation of sick, injured and orphaned wildlife.

Rehabilitating wildlife is a privilege and should always be treated as such. It is a lifestyle not a hobby and cannot be approached as a hobby if it is to be successful.

Yes mandatory codes are appropriate there have been far too many instances of registered carers and shelters not meeting minimum recommended standards resulting in appalling outcomes for wildlife. It is not easy dealing with such a high number of animals requiring euthanasia however that is the reality of being a rehabilitator and those who struggle with this should not hold an authorization to do so.

Currently there is no training, experience or demonstrated knowledge required to become a rehabilitator just a shelter operator who is willing to take on the responsibility of training a foster carer. In my 15 years of wildlife rehabilitation I have met very few people who would be appropriate in this role. Financially it is draining, physically demanding, emotionally confronting and extremely time consuming. Site location is also something that needs consideration, it is not appropriate to try to rehab wildlife in a city environment.

It seems to be very difficult for the authorities to remove an authorization from a shelter or foster carer either due to staff availability or unwillingness to get involved due to the difficult nature of the person.

Better scrutiny of applicants applying for a permit would alleviate this problem. Possibly a probationary period ie drivers license P plates. Officers having greater powers to inspect properties without prior warning would reduce the suffering of animals being inappropriately cared for.

Some species of wildlife require specialized care and should require further licensing as they are in other states ie Koalas, Birds of Prey and Seabirds.

There is a lack of understanding in the difference between Private Licenses and Wildlife Rehabilitator Authorisations. I have had many discussions with people who genuinely believe they are permitted, legally, under their private license to also care for wildlife.

Wildlife coming into care and not being taken to vets for prompt assessment is common. Sometimes the reason is financial – some vets charge for wildlife. The belief that vets just put all wildlife down and poor diagnosis by the vet are others.

This could be improved by education for vets who are willing to see wildlife and financial assistance in some way for vet clinics that see wildlife and are not charging.