

Response to Independent Review of Victorian Wildlife Act 1975 Bendigo Family Nature Club June 2021

Across Millennia first nations peoples have developed cultural and intrinsic understanding of Wild life and Habitat. The Wildlife Act Review is an opportunity to develop contemporary legislation that reflects first nations knowledge and respects future generations.

For the past decade Bendigo Family Nature Club (BFNC) has provided, free nature based activities, for children and minors accompanied by an adult. Through science, art, culture and fun we encourage them to care for the Box Ironbark forest, Mallee and Bushland , which is on Djadjawurrung country.

Consequentially BFNC sees the impact of humans on the Bendigo Bush, i.e. Revegetation projects, Fire management systems, reserves and amenities, prospecting and mining, restoring wetlands, dumping rubbish, firearms use, installation of habitat boxes, firewood collection, off road bush bashing. Observed Evidence of feral animals, and invasive weeds.

BFNC supports the expansion of Parks Victoria, State-wide “Community Engagement Ranger program”(CERP). This program could further engage with diverse parks user groups and schools.

- We need legislation that stops a person (s) from damaging, disturbing or destroying wildlife habitat”. Backed up with well-resourced National Parks.
- Native timber harvesting must not be exempted from legislation. There must be accountability for damage and destruction of wildlife habitat. Support firewood plantations.
- Legislation must support “the duty of care” and “avoid harm”. Children must be given knowledge about the respect that underlies “The Act” via connection with wildlife and habitat.
- Native ducks and quails must be protected in native wildlife legislation.

- Knowledge of the Legislation to protect wild life and habitat needs to be part of the school curriculum. This must include more school excursions and junior ranger programs etc. to foster the long-term appreciation for the need of conservation.
- We need Legislation to support adequate levels of qualified Rangers. I cannot convey enough, the need for commitment from DELWP, and thereby Government to substantially increase qualified Ranger numbers and presence including at school holidays and weekends.

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