

Submission 22 June 2021

I'd like to submit the following comments for your consideration:

An end to the commercial "Kangaroo Harvest Program"

The Australian Wildlife Protection Council and the Coalition for the Protection of Kangaroos both agree that the 2019/2020 bushfires decimated kangaroo numbers. Macropod specialists state that Kangaroo numbers can increase by up to 10 per cent *in a really good year* – ie with no catastrophic fires and plentiful grazing. Taking the above into account, the Victorian Government's assertion of a 40 per cent increase in Kangaroo populations since 2018 is simply not true.

These animals suffered from the recent bush fires and yet Victoria allows commercial hunters to kill Eastern Gray / Western Gray Kangaroos. Regulations state that kangaroos with obvious dependents must not be shot yet mothers are killed each and every night across the state in large numbers; their young are left to be killed by predators or will starve to death. Who polices these shooters? No-one it seems judging by the fact that not ONE shooter has been prosecuted. These animals have suffered through bushfires, overdevelopment/land-clearing and are now being hunted commercially – it's a disgrace and reflects badly on Victoria. Not only is this wildlife slaughter barbaric, it will hurt tourism. We have wildlife that is unique to Australia, yet we have one of the highest rates of extinction. Fact: more than 10 per cent of the 320 land mammals in Australia in 1788 are extinct. This shameful record is unsurpassed.

Kangaroos are not pests, they are not food, they are not pet food, they are not rugs, they are not footballs, they are living beings - **who have every right to exist** - simply trying to survive in a world that seems to be hellbent on killing as much wildlife as possible. If we are to save the species, things must change drastically – they must be afforded real protections in all areas including National and State Parks.

It is a fact that of the 16 species of Macropod that existed in Victoria, 7 are now EXTINCT, 3 are on the verge of extinction.

Wombats

Wombats are protected across Australia except for Victoria where Bare-nosed Wombats are considered a pest to farmers, this has to change. Habitat loss, kill permits, mange ... just a few of the issues affecting populations. Wildlife Victoria states the numbers of Common Wombat are severely declining, with the 2019/2020 bushfires having a significant impact on their habitat. Add to that the Permits allowing farmers to "control" them. It's relatively easy to apply for a permit to kill wildlife – that has to change, we cannot allow farmers to exterminate animals who are simply trying to survive in Australia's harsh climate.

It was only last year that the Victorian Government overturned a decades-old legal loophole which allowed people to hunt Wombats for fun.

Duck hunting

Duck shooting has been banned in Queensland, New South Wales, and Western Australia. It needs to be banned in Victoria. It's shocking that the Andrews government approved a duck hunting season this year despite waterbird populations being lower than 2020. 5 out of 8 "game" species are in significant long-term decline. Waterbird population numbers are plummeting yet the Victorian government continues to ignore an independent, scientifically-validated survey highlighting this.

Recreational shooting must be relegated to the history books. At least one in every four ducks will escape and die a prolonged, painful death. It is a fact that protected species are wounded and killed each year. Shooters couldn't care less, they just want to kill animals. It has to stop. Shooting ducks for fun is animal cruelty, it is not a "sport" and pandering to neanderthal shooters is just wrong. It's time to end duck shooting.

Independent Office of Animal Welfare

An IOAW needs to be established now more than ever. Animal welfare outcomes should not be determined by Depts of Agriculture. It is the 21st century and our animals/wildlife require protection more than ever.

Exotic Species

Many many pet shops keep exotic animals (such as bearded dragons and snakes) in conditions that are unacceptable – these animals are stuffed in glass tanks with little enrichment, incorrect heating and lighting, and no food or water. I've seen reptiles kept in tanks with other dead cage-mates, just left to rot. The penalties for this type of neglect needs to be much stiffer. Reptiles have all of the necessary neurotransmitters and anatomy to feel pain yet many are exploited by breeders and pet shops. Pet shops especially need to be policed. In a perfect world, no wild animals would be kept as pets. Until that time, as stated, there needs to be stiffer penalties for abusing or neglecting wildlife and the Licence fees should be increased significantly which would allow wildlife inspectors to undertake checks on pet shops and aquariums with powers to seize animals considered at risk.

I'd also like to see a ban on barbed wire and enforcing the use of wildlife-friendly fencing and netting. So much of our wildlife is needlessly killed on our roads, or suffer injuries from barbed-wire, it is heart-breaking, especially when we have the technology to reduce the death toll.

There needs to be a regulatory requirement for every Planning Scheme to carefully consider and provide for conservation of wildlife habitat and corridors, to ensure new developments do not negatively impact wildlife. Animals should not have to suffer from over-development and land-clearing. The land, forests, lakes and rivers are their home – they have nowhere else to go, and we have no right to take this from them.

We need to stop viewing wildlife as pests to be controlled. These animals have every right to exist on this planet and it cannot be stressed enough.

Thank you.