

Wildlife Act 1975- Review Submission

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Volunteer: Warriors for Wildlife, Member: Coalition Against Duck shooting, Animal Justice Party.

Groups I am supporting: Animals Australia, Australian Conservation Foundation. Wildlife Victoria, Save the Kinley Kangas, Australia's' Kangaroos, Save the Greens Beach Wallabies, Save the Bilby Fund.

Concerned citizen and supporter of wildlife rescuers and carers.

Major Points Urgently for Review:

1. Stronger Oversight for the 'Authority to Control Wildlife'.

Decision making under the Act is fundamentally flawed. Lethal control i.e., killing of Wildlife under the ATCW (Authority to Control Wildlife), contradicts the very Act itself which is supposed to promote and protect biodiversity conservation.

A recent example is a permit that was issued to "cull" kangaroos here at the Heritage Country Club in outer Melbourne citing over population and they were making a "mess" on the courses. What was extremely disturbing was the underhand and sneaky way the permit was issued with the killings to take place in the middle of the night and then even worse they were to be "harvested" i.e., slaughtered for pet food. So much for strict criteria and transparency.

The kangaroos have been living in harmony with the locals and were there before the golf course was built which adjoins the Warrandyte State Park, their home. The golf course has no fences or deterrents installed yet the owner has decided that its perfectly ok to shoot these clearly beloved kangaroos because its easier and cheaper and this current Act allows it.

2. Stronger Penalties for harming Wildlife.

Compliance and Enforcement ie penalties for Wildlife killings are very rare, are a complete failure and require major reform.

An example of this was the Cape Bridgewater koala massacre last year where a local farmer near Portland in the Western District of Victoria killed hundreds of koalas on his land bulldozing the trees with koalas in them into the ground. The fine hardly matched the awful crime.

In 2018 400 protected Wedge Tailed Eagles were illegally poisoned down in East Gippsland and in 2020 the farm worker was fined a mere \$2500, and the owner was never punished despite being clearly complicit in the killings. That is \$6.25 per eagle. Hardly a disincentive to stop committing more atrocities. Even the Victoria Environment Minister Lily D'Ambrosio claimed that the Wildlife Act was the problem and that it needed to be improved to remove weaknesses and increase penalties.

Changes to the Wildlife Act should include greater powers of investigation and arrest and specially to reflect the current times and not 1975. (Authorised Version No.125 Wildlife Act 1975)

3. Protect Diversity of Wildlife Species.

-The Acts definition of Wildlife is outdated and needs redefining.

Under the Act invasive non-native species are included. A typical example of this is the introduced deer which is a major problem to fragile ecosystems including wetlands as well as other habitats across much of Victoria. Renaming the Act to "Native Wildlife Act" would properly protect native species. All native wildlife should be protected so the ability to declare some as "unprotected" should be removed from the Act.

-We need to identify and protect keystone species which have an important role to play in our ecosystems.

For example, the dingo is a keystone species protecting mammal biodiversity by hunting foxes and feral cats which have caused mass extinction or near extinction of our smaller mammals such as the Eastern Barred Bandicoot and the Mountain Pygmy-possum here in Victoria.

-Finally, we need to identify Wildlife that is culturally significant to Traditional Owners

For example, in last weeks' NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the Health and Wellbeing of the kangaroo population we heard damning testimony from Indigenous Elders on the distressing effect on their mental health and wellbeing when witnessing cruelty to kangaroos which are connected to them spiritually through "kangaroo totem."

4. Cruelty Acted out under the murky "Authority to Control Wildlife" permit system

There is clear evidence of cruelty being inflicted on native animals during culls and other 'control' measures. Animal rescuers and carers are faced with the grim task of euthanising or long-term care of victims and survivors of culls.

For example, kangaroos.

The kill is supposed to be a head shot with one clean shot but of course this is not always the case with moving targets. The reality is:

Jaws blown off

Limbs blown off

Chest shots

Half head shots

Torso shots

Left to die suffering if they hop off.

Pouch joeys: Ripped out of their dead mothers pouch they are swung by tails, legs onto bull bars, rocks repeatedly until they are dead, or their heads stomped on.... or they are just left to die.

At foot joeys: These joeys are highly mobile and there is no meat value in them, so they are not worth a bullet, so they are left all alone to fend for themselves. No family as they have all been slaughtered.

Kangaroos are a native species found nowhere else in the world and are our **national emblem** and yet here we are treating them with barbaric cruelty that simply must stop. Domestic and farmed animals sent to slaughterhouses are treated better because of stricter controls under codes of conduct and regulated systems.

Under the current Wildlife Act, government is failing our precious native fauna.

Thank you,

Catherine Pisani.

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