

30 June 2021

Chair - Dr Deborah Peterson
Wildlife Act 1975 Review Panel
Department Environment Land Water Planning

WILDLIFE ACT 1975 REVIEW SUBMISSION

Dear Dr Peterson,

We welcome the Wildlife Act 1975 Review. We hope our own personal contribution to the support of wildlife on our forested property can in turn be supported by changes that will be proactive in the protection of Habitat for native species.

Feral Deer are causing phenomenal damage through our mountain ranges, Yarra Ranges and on our own property. Deer are regularly sited, in herds, strolling through the [REDACTED] through to the Yarra River in Greater Melbourne. It is more common to see deer as roadkill than Kangaroos out here. Many friends from right across the Valley complain of citrus trees denuded of leaves, saplings vanishing, fences destroyed and gardens stomped to trash. Its completely out of control.

We ourselves are on [REDACTED] forest. We have an [REDACTED] drive and have to be careful not to hit deer that jump in front of us almost daily. Constant honking metres from the house tell us there is a herd close by. We have discovered endangered species such as Greater Gliders. The 80+ year old trees they live in are being "rubbed" which ringbarks the trees and inevitably kills the tree but also knocks it over. The deer eat through the understory which supports native wild birds and the ecosystem as a whole. They also consume native grasses and carry weed species in their hides and hooves that then spread through the forest. Their faeces raise pH levels in soil which support weeds taking over and smothering native species. This is invasive and obliterates delicate native herbs and orchids. Their hooves are crushing the soil that special and, in some cases, rare orchids and other herbs fungi, mosses and lichens grow. Our Native fauna cannot survive without the native flora in a combined symbiotic ecosystem. If we fence our property, it would take tens of thousands of dollars and we are a part of the native biodiversity that is a wildlife corridor. Placing tree guards around thousands of trees is also out of the question as the biodiversity supporting all of the fauna community couldn't function and the cost again in the tens of thousands.

We have found our forest to be a dangerous place due to illegal deer hunting. Locals and non-locals have been seen with high powered bows or heard with guns hunting on our property. We have had deer dumped down our ravine with only the back straps taken. Once all of a deer was taken and used. Now due to the abundance of feral deer, only the "choice bits" are removed and the carcass left to rot. This feeds foxes, wild dogs and feral cats. We have been using wildlife cameras to monitor carcasses. We employ a licenced hunter to shoot and remove deer. Our cameras show herds of them. It is all a huge cost both financially, environmentally and emotionally, not just for us but the whole of the Yarra Ranges is suffering with deer invasion.

It is an assault on our community to protect deer as "game" for the purpose of recreational hunting as a sport. It is no longer a sport but a harvest in the back garden. The deer are eating us out of house and home.

Deer are a farming and forestry bio-hazard, carrying fungal spores, toxins and diseases that can poison humans, infect livestock and cause dieback in trees. They are a pest species in plague proportions. They should be listed as a pest species.

Our Native ecosystem needs to be protected as does our farms and private dwellings from deer and other feral pests in plague proportions.

There needs to be clear definitions for wildlife and increased protections for native species through out Australia that is concise and uniform.

Local and State Governments along with Communities need to be supported to be able to protect our native species and changes to the Act will do this.

Thank you for the chance to comment on the Wildlife Act 1995 Review

Kind Regards

