

Wildlife Act Review

Submission Comment 279:

Contributor: Individual – Ben Schultz

Primary interests:

- Offences and penalties relating to wildlife

Comment

Part 5: Are current enforcement and compliance mechanisms adequate?

5.1 It's not clear whether the Act creates the appropriate offences

5.2 Do maximum penalties deter or sufficiently reflect the seriousness of offences?

5.3 Continuing offences and additional penalties could be strengthened

5.4 The sentencing process does not provide sufficient guidance for judges

5.5 The Act could also contain a number of other sanctions and remedies to help achieve its objectives

The short answer is there is a lot of work to be done to make current enforcement and compliance mechanisms that are in line with community expectations.

A recent example of where current enforcement and compliance mechanisms have fallen short of community expectations was demonstrated by the public's absolute outrage in response to the sentences handed down to the farmworker and landowner responsible for poisoning 400+ wedge-tailed eagles in East Gippsland between October 2016 and April 2018 - the worker was sentenced 14 days and fined \$2,500 in 2018. The landowner was fined \$25,000, received a 12-month good behaviour bond and given a 12-month community corrections order.

I moderate the social media pages for an organisation whose followers come from a range of backgrounds. They were all saying the same thing when asked "Do you think 14 days jail time and \$2500 is an adequate punishment for causing such horrific suffering and eventual death?"

The 200+ responses included:

"Nope. He had no right to do this. At least 12 months (jail) and \$5,000 to an animal charity"

"A ridiculously short sentence"

"Agree 100% that these punishments are not enough and the law needs to change"

"I agree, the penalty is not a deterrent"

"If he was given 14 days for each eagle he killed, it wouldn't be enough!"

"Strong laws and penalties. Then, mandatory sentencing. This slap on the wrist judgements are disgustingly inadequate."

"This behaviour is criminal & so are the Government departments who do nothing about it. "

Provided June 30/2021

