

## Wildlife Act Review

### Submission Comment 206:

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#### Primary interests:

- Protection and conservation of wildlife and habitat

#### Comment

As a member of the Latrobe Valley Field Naturalists Club Inc (Past president and currently vice-president) and also current President of the South Eastern Australia Naturalists Association, I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the need for a new Wildlife Act for Victoria. The focus of a new Act must surely be on protecting all native wildlife and ensuring their long-term viability, addressing the observed major declines in abundance of many faunal species over recent decades. In this connection, it is important to note that the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act relates only to threatened faunal species. It needs also to be said that, in line with an ecological perspective, there needs to be a focus on biodiversity conservation rather than simply on individual native species. As just one of many examples, the koala population of the Strzelecki Ranges in South Gippsland is of critical importance because of its genetic diversity, by contrast with the progeny of small translocated groups of the animals in the rest of Victoria. This in turn means that habitat protection is vital. It follows that protections for destructive non-native species (including so-called “game” species) should be removed from the Act. Two obvious examples are the Sambar Deer and feral horses. Evidence is that the feral deer population is growing by at least 200,000 per year, from an estimated current population of perhaps one million. It makes no sense that they are still protected under the current Act. A further point to be made is that the mechanisms to ensure compliance with the Act need strengthening, preferably incorporating an independent regulator. Along with that, the penalties for breaches such as harming or killing native wildlife need to be reviewed. In summary, the Review is critically important if the new Act is to better reflect contemporary community expectations and play a part in slowing (and hopefully gradually reversing) the losses of so many of Victoria’s native fauna

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