



Photo by Stella Reid, Wildhaven

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the review of Victoria's Wildlife Act (1975). For many years I have been extremely concerned that native wildlife in Victoria is not receiving the protection it deserves. There is a number of issues pertaining to wildlife which concern me, with one in particular which I will go into considerable detail to explain. I hope that the Act will be significantly updated and strengthened for today's Victorians.

I am extremely fortunate to live in an area where native wildlife abound. Kangaroos, wombats and the occasional wallaby visit my four hectares of bushland in St Andrews, with two different lots of possums separately in residence. The birdlife is varied and numerous. St Andrews lies within Nillumbik Shire Council's municipality, one of Melbourne's Green Wedges. There is a lot of native vegetation on private properties in the area, and many bushland reserves plus parts of Kinglake National Park. Most of the land is used for rural residential "lifestyle" living, with only some cleared land which, more often than not, has horses on it. So in general, there is excellent habitat for native wildlife in this area and wildlife is treasured as an important part of the area by the overwhelming majority of people who live here.

Yet our precious wildlife, even on a Green Wedge, is at risk of being killed. One property owner can, and does, ruin the whole neighbourhood by being able to kill wildlife on their property through the Authority To Control Wildlife (ATCW) permit system. Neighbours of adjoining properties, who welcome the same animals, have no say in this. The people in this area who are granted a permit to kill wildlife generally do not earn a living from their land, they are not farmers, and the wildlife is no way threatening their livelihood.

I would like to give you an example of one individual case which perfectly illustrates our local situation. A "land manager" of an eight-hectare property in Pantom Hill was granted a ATCW permit to cull kangaroos. (The owner did not live in the area.) This property adjoined a covenanted Trust for Nature property of the same size. On one side of the fence the kangaroos were welcomed and intentionally protected, on the other side they were shot. This is not a broad-acre farming context; the property in question was seriously overstocked (with eight cows and three horses) for its size and its poor pasture, and the lack of grass had absolutely nothing to do with any visiting kangaroos. The permit to kill kangaroos was granted on very dubious

grounds, was not related to a loss of livelihood, was not properly monitored ... indeed the whole issuing of this permit was ludicrous.

There are many such instances, here in Nillumbik's Green Wedge, unfortunately. It is not right that one property owner can shoot wildlife that is enjoyed by the rest of the neighbourhood. In all of the instances I've witnessed locally, I've been shocked by how easy it was to apply and be granted a permit. There was no evidence needed to back up any claim, and even little detail required of the actual problem. In the cases that I have been involved in, there was completely insufficient checking of the validity of the claim, and no non-lethal methods were first tried as is meant to be the case.

Several years ago, I saw the numbers of animals and birds killed as part of the ATCW permits (under FOI) and was completely shocked to see kookaburras, magpies and eagles listed amongst the statistics.

I believe strongly that ALL native animals and birds should be protected under Victoria's revised Wildlife Act. Currently native wildlife is being killed through the very dubious ATCW permit system and also through the existence of a duck hunting season. Both are barbaric and are inappropriate for contemporary Victoria.

In short, I strongly recommend that: -

- **All** native animals and birds should be protected under the Act, without exception
- The licensed destruction of thousands of native birds and mammals must stop and the Authority To Control Wildlife permit system abolished
- There should be no duck hunting season in Victoria
- Native animals need to be protected from further habitat destruction by ending native forest logging in Victoria immediately
- An independent regulator should be established to enforce the Wildlife Act with stronger penalties for offences
- Stop the aerial baiting of native dingoes
- Ban the use of 1080 poison and fund the research and development of non-lethal alternatives

Warm regards,
Liezl Shnookal
6/06/21