

My name is [REDACTED] and our natural environment and native animals are very special to me personally. I care about these places which I often visit with my family – especially my grandchildren and we have all learned to love them.

It is because of this that I take this opportunity to make my submission to the Independent Review of the Victoria's Wildlife Act 1975.

This Act is very much outdated, and you now have the opportunity to correct past harm to Victoria's wildlife. While I believe that there are many areas of the current Act that are not suitable in today's climate, I focus mainly on the following points –

Decimation of our wildlife will have serious long term impacts. The current legislation does not provide direct protection of our native animals. They and their habitat are in critical need of protection. At the moment, I believe Victoria's wildlife laws are enabling their decline, rather than protecting them.

The Authority to Control Wildlife is a non-transparent permit system which allows the killing of our native animals, some of which are harvested for pet food. The current Act's objectives and scope are not appropriate – they should show clear and concise differentiation so that native animals are not included with feral ones. I would question why more protection is given to the feral or game animals like deer – despite the very significant damage they do to our wildlife and their habitat. They do not belong in the Australian bush and are detrimental to natural growth and waterways.

The impact of the current Act is showing that, when it comes to actually prosecuting illegal acts of harm to wildlife, this Act is ineffectual. I would ask why the logging industry are given exemptions and why they are not held to account when they kill native animals. It is critical for the protection of our wildlife, which are in serious decline, that land clearing be severely curtailed especially in areas which are known habitats of native animals. Logging breaches should be investigated and halted, together with severe fines.

These areas of the Act need to be strengthened for better protection of our wildlife. I well remember and was appalled at the killing of a number of beautiful Wedge-tailed – and Koalas, which brought about little or no penalties. This new Act must have 'teeth' and severely penalise people who destroy our precious wildlife. I therefore request that in the new Act, wildlife crime should be shown to have extremely harsh penalties if we are to prevent eventual extinction.

If we add the deliberate cull or destruction of our wildlife to other serious threats like climate change and pollution, it spells a future of further suffering, death and extinction. In my humble opinion, the link to higher emissions is also not taken into account. It is more important than ever to also take drastic action to halt logging, which is linked to climate damage - and save our native animals

The matter of tourism is also an important reason why we should preserve our unique animals. Internationally recognised fauna, such as Koala, Kangaroos, Wombats, echidnas – and our wonderful birdlife – all who require their natural spaces and the protection of a strong new Act. We need to protect these beautiful places for us to visit but more importantly, places which are crucial for their survival. Tourism will be affected if our iconic animals disappear forever and we will also be condemned worldwide.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Review on the Victoria's Wildlife Act 1975. It is my fervent hope that the new Act will give the biodiversity of our natural places and our iconic wildlife that come under this Act, the respect that they deserve.

Sincerely,

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