

## To the Independent Review of Victoria's Wildlife Act 1975

Daphne Hards BSc App.Sci. (Med.Sci) RMIT

Treasurer of Warringal Conservation Society.

My interest in birds started in the 1970s and it was not long till I realised that bird sightings are linked to the environment they live in. Since 1977 I have been a member of the Bird Observers Club which became Birdlife Australia, and I was delighted when camping events incorporated some land management activity (mostly weeding). As a member of Warringal Conservation Society (WCS) since 2006 I have been attending work-bees to recreate a natural environment at Banyule Flats and Warringal Parklands, Heidelberg. I have been Treasurer for eleven years and held the post of President for three years. Beside our restoration activity I have contributed to submissions to government, the most notable being to the Public Environment Report and the Environment Effects Statement for the North East Link Project (2019). I am a volunteer at the Latrobe Wildlife Sanctuary, a pocket of native bushland in Bundoora.

**The protection of wildlife must be linked to preservation of ecosystems.** Our knowledge is that all life has evolved together over millennia and is interdependent. I have been following and supporting the Federal Court case of Friends of Leadbeater's Possum v. VicForests, which has highlighted the need to:

1. Protect wildlife habitat,
2. Prevent the destruction of wildlife habitat by the forestry industry, and
3. Preserve whole ecosystems

**There needs to be a clear definition of wildlife.** Animals such as deer, which have multiplied to plague proportions in Victoria's alpine country, are now appearing in Melbourne suburbs. One has been seen at Wilson's Reserve, Ivanhoe (Robert Bender (pers. comm.)). As the conservation of natural systems gains traction throughout the State we develop ideal habitat for feral animals. WCS's experience at Banyule Flats and Warringal Parklands has seen a fox explosion as a wetland system provides an easy food source.

Victoria's Traditional Owners must be consulted about species that are culturally significant. The Act needs to align with the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006, the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 and other wildlife legislation.

I am a supporter of the abolition of duck shooting. Victoria's current Wildlife Act treats some native wildlife, such as ducks and quail, as sport for recreational shooters. **Victoria needs legislation which protects all native wildlife.**

**An independent statutory regulator is needed** to oversee activity under the Act. There has been a decline in public trust in the government as authority; an independent regulator would rebuild confidence that the Act is administered correctly.

Along with clarity **there needs to be enforcement of the Act**. Compliance can only be reviewed by the monitoring of Victoria's wildlife. If enforcement fails there need to be significant penalties.

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