

Dear Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of our beautiful wildlife; to be a voice for the voiceless; to stand up for the rights of vulnerable beings; to help bring about a more just, kind world for all living species on this planet. A review of the 1975 act is long overdue, but thankfully it is now in hand. Please give these vulnerable animals the regard and rights that they deserve, and please ensure that the review of this act is a reflection of a society that has become increasingly aware of much needed change for, not just our wildlife, but for all animals that are at our mercy and desperately need our kindness and help.

This is their story, this is my story, and this is our story collectively as living beings that share this planet – and we all deserve to be treated with regard, respect, compassion and kindness. In every way that matters – in their capacity to feel pain and suffer, to love and care for their babies, to seek companionship and to live free from human inflicted cruelty and suffering, non-human animals are no different to human animals. No one was born to be cruel; cruelty is a learned behaviour passed down from family, culture and societal norms. Our inherent nature as human beings is to be kind, compassionate and ‘humane’, and it is everyone’s responsibility to ensure that all living beings that inhabit this planet are treated justly – that cruelty and exploitation become the totally unacceptable in an ethical society.

We SHARE this planet (‘share’ being the operative word), and just because we have come to believe we have the right to assert dominion over every other species on this planet, doesn’t mean it is right or justifiable to exploit, use and abuse them any way we see fit for our own entertainment or gain, or decide to eradicate them because they are an annoyance or pest that gets in our way. We are so very lucky to have their beauty, uniqueness and contribution; the planet’s future relies on them to maintain equilibrium, and an ecosystem that thrives and depends on the interrelationship and interconnection of all living beings on the earth. An intelligent, evolved race should and could find ethical, kind solutions to any problem presented that involves the wellbeing of a fellow species. Instead, humans seem to always want a quick fix and their quick fixes almost always mean extreme pain and suffering for a more vulnerable species.

“Mahatma Gandhi observed that “The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.” To seek to reduce the suffering of those who are completely under one’s domination and mercy, and unable to fight back, is truly a mark of a civilized society. How can a society ever expect to evolve in justice, when the most vulnerable beings on this planet are constantly exploited in every possible way. Sir David Attenborough, the famed British naturalist and television presenter describes humanity as “a plague on this earth”. We are constantly wreaking havoc on every other species on this planet and are slowly but surely ruining our amazing environment - one that has been foolishly placed in our reckless care. If the human race became extinct, the planet would surely thrive without us.

Every day when I walk around my community, I am in awe at the beauty of the nature that surrounds me; ducks, swans and cormorants living in peace with humanity – it is truly an amazing thing to be a part of and I feel very lucky. There have been times when I have had

to call Wildlife Victoria to report a duck with something entwined around its leg, or another day when I noticed a fledgling cormorant at the edge of the lake that appeared to be in distress – these are the times when my faith in humanity is restored. I have learned a great deal about wildlife through my interactions with Wildlife Victoria; what an incredible job they do to protect and help our wildlife.

But, not too far away, the scene is so much different. On wetlands in Victoria and in other states that still have legal duck shooting, the deafening sounds of gunfire can be heard, and the violent massacre and thrill killing of our beautiful wildlife is in full force. Gentle creatures being brutally maimed and left to suffer an agonising death – a bloodbath of pain and suffering that is unmistakable and heartbreaking to the witnesses and rescue groups that desperately work to help the injured and distressed birds, in the midst of violence and chaos that is legal and acceptable in a so-called ethical, ‘humane’ society. How can human and humane even be considered to be one in the same? Violence breeds violence! How can Governments, or any of us for that matter, ever expect or hope for a less violent society when this type of brutal slaughter continues to be legal. There is no justification for this cruelty and suffering – humans have no right to invade the peace and tranquillity and homes of our wildlife, to satisfy their thrill-seeking egos. Research tells us that people who get pleasure out of killing, maiming and inflicting suffering on innocent animals are more likely to be violent toward their own race. In a world where violence should be unacceptable in all its forms, there is definitely an imbalance and a set of moral standards that constantly exclude the most vulnerable and deserving of mercy and compassion.

Non-human animals do not have a voice like us, but their constant, relentless screams of pain and agony at the hands of humanity, heartbreakingly echo through our world and seemingly fall on the majority of deaf ears. Why don’t people know the truth? Why are there so many cover ups? Why are violent acts against innocent animals legal in so many industries that profit and gain from their misery?

In Victoria alone, there are thousands upon thousands of our kangaroos legally slaughtered in the most gruesome and barbaric ways – little joeys bludgeoned to death or left to starve to death because their mums have been brutally killed at the hands of hunters who could not care less for the suffering they cause. These magnificent animals only exist in this country (which is why they are on our Coat of Arms), yet they are hunted down callously, because they have become ‘just’ another commodity; another industry that profits from misery.

The review of the current wildlife act desperately needs to highlight the hidden, dark secrets of industries that are willing to decimate our iconic wildlife in the pursuit of profit and gain, Governments who legalise it and the farmers who see them as a pest to be eradicated, and who think nothing of erecting ‘exclusion fences’ that entrap these poor animals and cause them to die an agonising death; hanging by one leg, baking in the hot sun in excruciating pain or freezing to death against the elements. How can this sickening cruelty be legal! How can humanity call themselves “humane!” True transparency is needed in the development of a new Wildlife Act that will hopefully set a precedent for transparency in all places and industries where non-human animals are exploited and suffer at the hands of humans. The majority of people, if they really knew the truth would be horrified at what happens to our

wildlife – they would want cruelty and suffering to be eliminated – they would want governments to stop covering up the truth.

We desperately need to change our relationship with all other living species on this earth – we need to see ourselves as the caretakers of this amazing planet we share with so many others. We need to show kindness, compassion and justice, and the more vulnerable the victims before us, the more deserving and needy that are of our mercy. Our planet is in rapid decline, our wildlife is disappearing at an alarming rate and pandemics are emerging at a terrifying rate. The human race is 0.01% of all life on earth, yet we are 100% responsible for the impending devastation of the ecosystem we so desperately rely on for continued survival. Humans have eradicated 80% of all wild animals on this earth and the future for them is looking very bleak if we don't change something now. It is only a matter of time before the unprecedented impact we are having on the planet will ensure the unthinkable.

The review of the Wildlife Act can be a beginning – it can set a precedent – it can ensure that humanity start doing what is right for the well-being of all living beings on this planet.

Please watch the following links – They highlight the crucial information we all need to heed.

<https://www.facebook.com/ajpvic/videos/232533028260177>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-m-hFe9mjql>

Kindest Regards

Kim