

Wildlife Act Review

Issues Paper questions – Response 54:

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Primary interests:

- Management and control of wildlife causing problems or damage
- Hunting of wildlife
- Wildlife welfare
- Other: As a fencing contractor I balance wildlife access and habitat with commercial or landholder's demands or pursuits.

Question responses

1.1.1 In what ways does the Act succeed or fail in representing contemporary expectations for, and values relating to, wildlife in Victoria? Please provide examples from your own experience.

As a rural fencing contractor I see first hand some issues relating to wildlife in victoria. I work and visit numerous rural properties across victoria and also here many stories of animal numbers such as deer, kangaroos, pigs, wild dogs and rabbits etc affecting farmers and property owners. Numbers seem to have slipped past a manageable amount and there seem to be very few sustainable options to control populations to manageable levels. Exclusion fencing or a derivative thereof is now a common occurrence but this is expensive and doesn't really fix anything as it only concentrates animals onto neighbours properties which can compound these issues.

1.1.3 How can the Act balance the diverse interests of Victorians in protecting, conserving, managing and using wildlife? How might such competing interests be better reconciled in legislation? Are there examples from other sectors or other jurisdictions (both in Australia and internationally) that may be useful?

Is there any avenue where we can look at sustainable harvesting some of these animals, clearly they prosper and do well in our state or they wouldn't be here otherwise. I think we need to seriously look at this where possible for kangaroo and even deer. Culling is a terrible option but sometimes its the only when the land is at vulnerable stage, ie planting tree shelter belts etc and they get chomped by kangaroos, deer, rabbits etc. Or newly planted crops or pasture that gets so targetted that plant density levels fall below an acceptable level and weeds abound or erosion kicks in. Surely 21st century australians can come up with some great solutions.

1.3.2 Should the Act recognise the cultural significance of Country and wildlife to Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians? Should the Act explicitly recognise the value of Indigenous Ecological Knowledge for the stewardship of Country and the conservation of wildlife?

Yes I think it should. It would be arrogant to think that "European westerners" that have been for 240 odd years know everything there is to know about this country. Surely we can form some powerful and productive teams and alliances to preserve, repair and let this country prosper into the future. Isn't this what this act is all about?

1.4.1 Should the Act prescribe a general duty of care related to wildlife conservation or biodiversity protection more broadly? Why or why not? How could it work in practice?

I think we have seen a decent swing to preserving biodiversity and wildlife in the last few years. I think the Act definitely needs to define a duty of care in this regard after all we all benefit from biodiversity. Surely people realize by know that a couple of "monocultures" don't give us much of a future. I think we need some form of localized knowledge center throughout the state where landholders can go and see, hear and learn and be advised on how the landscaped looked in the past, identify what flora and fauna are missing from their own landscapes and be supported and incentivized to pursue returning a portion or however much they deem available in a long term strategy to get our country somewhat reflective as to what it once was and a place where all can prosper.

1.5.2 Should any additional animal species or taxa (groups of species) be included in the definition of 'wildlife' or 'protected wildlife'? Should any species or taxa be excluded and therefore be exempt from some provisions in the Act?

Yes I think the classification of deer and kangaroos in particular needs to be redefined before we suffer serious consequences.

1.5.3 Should 'game' animals be defined as wildlife in the Act or defined some other way or excluded from the Act entirely?

I think as much as possible we need the act to cover all species, otherwise we run the risk of double standards, gaps in legislation or confusion when referencing several standards or Acts. Simplicity and ease of use needs to be at the forefront of any legislation that is developed going forward.

2.4.2 Should private landowners have greater rights to use of wildlife on their property?

Yes, numbers can quickly build on private property and there are very few options to deal with their impact sustainably.

3.1.1 Should the Act include statements of principle and criteria to guide regulators, duty holders and the public? Why are such principles important? If you do support including principles, what do you think they should be and why?

yes I think it should. Unfortunately at this time I don't feel like I have anything of value to add in this area.

3.2.1 Should the Act include provisions for consultation with the community on certain issues? What issues should undergo community consultation?

Yes definitely. Localized issues can occur quickly and can sometimes be quite small in area. I think there needs to be provision in the act for community consultation that can generate group discussion and actual outcomes that can be acted on quickly to give great responses. People that live in local communities have huge knowledge bases that we need to utilize.

3.2.2 How can community involvement in decision making under the Act be improved?

By naming key contact people that are specialized in these Acts and are divided across the state as a "phone a friends" to help manage local problem areas and that have an understanding of the area themselves and are empowered by the Act to make decisions and produce outcomes that meet the communities needs.

3.3.1 Should the Act enable wildlife management plans? What provisions should be included for such plans?

Yes. Acceptable density numbers for animals as applicable to their local area. The ability to bring all affected landowners together to participate in these wildlife plans. Some way of ensuring that all landholders do actually implement these plans. So often a targetted community approach is derailed to 2 or 3 landowners doing absolutely nothing to aid in a pest problem (plant or animal) and it seriously undermines what would often be a great solution.

3.4.1 Should the Act simplify and clarify the provisions relating to the various licences, permits and authorities? Is there scope to reduce regulatory burden without undermining the intended outcomes of the Act?

Yes I believe so.

3.6.1 Should the Act contain provisions that allow for issuing mandatory codes of practice, standards or guidelines?

Yes

5.6.1 Does the Act contain the necessary powers and provisions to enable authorised officers to enforce the Act? What powers and provisions should be available to authorised officers? Are there examples from other jurisdictions (both in Australia and internationally) that could also apply in Victoria?

I think its reasonable. Outcomes vary considerably depending on the individual authorised officer.

5.7.1 Does the Act provide appropriate provisions for the review and appeal of decisions?

I think this could be improved, often it is difficult to know who to approach or where to go when things may not have been interpreted correctly.

5.8.1 Should the Act provide for third-party civil enforcement under the Act? How might this make a difference in achieving the intended outcomes of the Act?

I don't think this will really help. There is often specialized knowledge required in this field and opening it up to 3rd parties is likely just to produce confusion and frustation.

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