

General

I believe the Wildlife Act must be prepared to actually protect the welfare and health of our indigenous animals from the smallest insects to the largest macropods, they are all vital parts of our ecological communities and play a crucial role in the survival of each other, indigenous flora and even human life.

The Act must be assessed as a “whole of ecosystem”. With Australia a world leader in extinctions, this is proof that a better and more protective Act is vital. As we all know, when one part of an eco-system is lost, that impacts many other parts, leading to a decline in eco-systems, which is indicated in Victoria with the current parliamentary enquiry into ecosystem decline. Habitat must also have protection under the wildlife act.

Currently community education regarding the importance of wildlife and the natural environment are lacking. The Wildlife Act reform should be able to be used to address this lack of understanding and encourage positive promotion.

While Australia uses native wildlife as tourism a drawcard, the reality of how we treat our wildlife is deplorable. This Act must follow through and prove that we actually value our wildlife, surely this would be better for not only the environment, but also community, amenity and financial economics.

The Victorian “Protecting Victoria’s Environment – Biodiversity 2037” states things like “*The furthering of Victoria’s reputation as a national leader in native wildlife and habitat recovery will be a beacon to interstate and international visitors keen to experience an abundance of unique Australian animals and plants.*” and also discusses the economic benefits to be gained by protection. The Wildlife Act must reflect this respect and ideals, currently I believe Victoria has a abysmal global reputation in this regard, not a leader at all, which the Wildlife Act does have an opportunity to begin to repair if done responsibly.

Fauna

The Victorian government’s heinous policy of mindlessly culling kangaroos for pet food and human consumption is an example of a failure of overarching policy to protect our indigenous wildlife. Promoting feral deer for this purpose instead would be much more ecologically sound, by removing a threat to wildlife. The Act must be re-written to protect not exploit our precious native wildlife. Deer and other feral game species have no place in the Wildlife Act other than to include them as a threatening process to be eradicated – not for protection.

Recent breaches by farmers and others killing hundreds of wedge tailed eagles, with next-to-no penalties being forthcoming are another example of why this Act must be prescriptive and severe penalties must be introduced – the actions of these people are endangering entire ecosystems and without enforcement and discouraging penalties, there is no incentive to conform to the law. This should be classed and enforced as a criminal offence.

Another Victorian damaging and threatening process is the continuation of the duck shooting season. Other states have outlawed this awful killing spree, why has Victoria continued to support this ecologically destructive promotion of mindless slaughter? The Wildlife Act reform has an opportunity to outlaw duck shooting season.

This misguided promotion of killing is also continued with the COVID app containing links to find kangaroo harvesters – totally irrelevant to COVID, but promoting slaughter and mismanagement of our treasured wildlife?

Suggestions for removing feral and domestic pests from the damage they cause to Wildlife should include a legislated state-wide 24-hour curfew on all domestic (especially cats) and livestock animals where they are only allowed outside owners property on a leash or under complete control of owner in specified areas. This control/curfew should not be left to individual councils to decide.

I was pleased to read the non-approval of baits to address the mouse plague, as this action would have had devastating impacts to wildlife which predate on mice, which would have had the eventual result of less predators giving way to the proliferation of mice in the future. The Wildlife Act should also legislate against detrimental pest control methods and in favour of pest management which is not detrimental to indigenous wildlife and ecological communities.

Flora - Habitat

Recently in Victoria we have had major fires, only this month we had the winds that destroyed many trees of habitat importance, then added to that we have VicForests illegally destroying our forests and Forest Fire Management are inappropriately and unnecessarily burning so much more. There needs to be laws to replace the damage done – both by natural and human causes, and laws to stop the damage caused by so-called “authorities” including the state and local governments.

Dreadful autumn leaves festivals in Victoria are currently promoted, leading to loss of habitat and glorification of unnatural, introduced trees which are not suited to the Victorian environment and which interrupt natural processes. These must be considered to be threatening processes. Where is the promotion and protection of natural assets like forests along with all the wonderful indigenous wildlife they are home to? There appears to be a paranoia in the community regarding the natural environment in Victoria – almost to the point of being a hatred and fear of all

things Australian, this must be rectified and this Act is a good opportunity to start this positive attitude process. Early settlers and acclimatisation societies made many mistakes and caused ecological carnage, we need to learn from these mistakes rather than perpetuating them.

Summary

The Wildlife Act must be ecologically responsible and sustainable. It must not be restricted to crown land, but cover all private and public land equally. Precautionary principles must be enshrined in the document and must favour ecological responsibility over and above pressures of development, commercial and financial interests of those that have no environmental regard or qualifications.

It is unfortunate that an animal needs to be declared as critically endangered (or other classification) to be recognised as under threat, this formal classification is often too late, all our indigenous wildlife deserve protection as they are all vital parts of our ecosystem and all under some sort of threat.

The Wildlife Act must be reformed to protect, not exploit and justify slaughter. Wildlife is not a pest, it is a vital component of Australia.