

I have worked with wildlife for over six years as a volunteer at various shelters, a rescuer, a foster carer, and now manage a shelter from my home.

Most weeks, and often daily, I am confronted by injured and orphaned wildlife, of which many would have not required assistance had the Wildlife Act protected them and their habitat.

I refer to building and development, which involves 'clearing' trees without care or concern for wildlife. I have attended nests of kookaburra chicks and magpie chicks crushed, possums losing tails as trees are chainsawed around them as they desperately leap from branch to branch trying to escape, pouch young dropped as adults flee....often into the yards of domestic animals and becoming preyed upon.

During the last twelve months I have also received an unprecedented amount of nectar eating birds in late stages of starvation. Never encountered prior to 2020.

Where I live wildlife is competing for limited resources and presenting with illness and injury as a result. And with habitat disappearing at such a fast rate they are also more likely vulnerable to predator attacks and negative encounters with people.

These animals and birds I speak of may not be endangered, may be classified as 'least at risk', but are they not entitled to the same protection as those on the endangered list? I have seen so much suffering.

I share these experiences to show that the Act as it stands is weak and is overridden by building permits with no regard or responsibility for the assessment of habitat and active nests.

There is not one body eg delwp or local council who can supply resources for this.

Over twelve years of seeing bush blocks cleared all around me, investigating if any wildlife officers or carers have been asked to attend, I have discovered an apathy and total disregard for the lives that inhabit the trees to be cleared or those that rely on them for food. The fact that someone has a permit to remove trees or to build should not override the protection and consideration all wildlife deserve.

There is no consequence, and therefore no planning or pre thought for preventing harm and death to wildlife in this manner.

The current penalties under the Act not only fail to prevent the horrendous crimes against wildlife we have seen in recent times, such as the mass poisoning of wedge tailed eagles, the deliberate running down of emus and kangaroos by vehicles, the massacre of koalas with bulldozers, they fail to prevent people from giving any consideration to habitat and wildlife when building and removing trees. In short, the cases above have shown the public that wildlife doesn't matter and are not important, and it's ok to be cruel.

The Act provides no direct protections for habitat under the legislation.

The Act does not account for indirect threats to wildlife through destruction of habitat.

The Act provides no definition of habitat.

The Act does not specify the obligations of landowners relating to habitat on their land.

The Act is void of any obligations and accountability of arborists, and for that matter, local council who hand out permits allowing the destruction of habitat.

When writing new legislation please consider these daily experiences of wildlife suffering.

I feel it is imperative to take into account human impact on habitat loss and biodiversity, and the current regulation that a person is "not to damage, disturb or destroy any wildlife habitat" needs to be upgraded to legislation.

Wildlife and wildlife habitat require increased protection.