

Submission to “The Independent Review of Victoria’s Wildlife Act 1975”

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. While I prefer to think of “free living non-human animals” rather than “wildlife”, I will use the latter term in the following comments.

It is timely for the Wildlife Act 1975 to be reviewed. The Act must be modernised and reforms implemented to better protect our wildlife and their habitat.

General comments:

It is now scientific consensus that non-human animals experience sensations such as pain and suffering, comfort and joy. Our knowledge of animal sentience and cognition is constantly increasing. Thus, animals deserve moral consideration and it is our obligation to protect them from human-inflicted pain and suffering. For example, animal use for sport and entertainment that results in pain, suffering and/or death is morally indefensible and has to stop. Overall, we need to stop treating nature as a commodity.

Issues of particular concern to me:

- No wildlife should be hunted or used for human entertainment. Some states have already banned duck shooting, and it is time that Victoria follows.
- Commercial use of wildlife such as kangaroos should stop.
- We need to ensure that new developments in land use provide for conservation of wildlife habitat and do not negatively impact wildlife.

Governance:

- The precautionary principle should be used where wildlife is at risk. For example, no permits for native timber harvesting where it might destroy or damage wildlife.
- The quality of decision making needs to be improved – increased transparency and accountability around decision making, and decisions based on scientific evidence.
- We need stronger enforcement of the legislation. Compliance and enforcement relies on adequate resources. The compliance and enforcement system needs to be better funded and supported to do its important work.
- The Act should allow for significant sanctions/punishments to deter offenders.
- Importantly, we need a **nonpartisan office of animal welfare** with the power to enforce the Wildlife Act (and the POCTA). This office of animal welfare has to be independent of industry and other groups with an interest in the commercial or recreational use of animals.