

Submission
No 75

**INQUIRY INTO HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF
KANGAROOS AND OTHER MACROPODS IN NEW SOUTH
WALES**

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Submission
Health and Wellbeing of Kangaroos and other Macropods in NSW.

Stephen Powley.

Dear Committee Members.

From my own observations, I have noticed what was a steady to a much more rapid decline in macropod numbers in the area where I live and the roads that I travel.

Some fifteen years ago I spoke with a person from National Parks and told her of my concerns of the lower numbers of macropods that I was seeing. We had an open discussion and she told me that the National Parks had no idea how many kangaroos and wallabies were in the more heavily timbered areas, she said that they did a fly over to count the numbers on the Western Plains, but in the New England region because of the trees, it was a complete guess.

There is what I think is a misguided belief, that because of introduced pastures and increased water storage on rural properties, the natural reproductive system of the macropods has been tricked into responding to a never ending series of good seasons. Hence there are always going to be huge numbers of macropods in Australia. I feel that this is a very dangerous belief for the survival of macropods and it is a myth that makes people feel okay.

Before 1788, the dangers that macropods faced were, disease, Aboriginal hunters, drought and other natural events. Since the arrival of the first fleet, hunting methods have come a long way from spears , automobiles kill who knows how many native animals every day, fences restrict the movement of macropods and kangaroos in particular get hung up on them and die a very slow and painful death. I would hazard a guess that there are more wild dogs in Australia now, than there were dingoes in 1788 and of course there is still disease, drought, numerous competition for pastures from introduced animals, lost natural pasture to urban development, broad acre cultivation and other natural events. So even if there were some truth to the macropods reproduction increasing, that would be negated by the massive increase in threats to their survival.

It should also be recognised that before hard hooved animals were introduced into Australia and compacted the soils, water moved much more slowly across the land and through creeks and rivers. The natural water systems held water for a longer period as well as there being a lot more permanent water holes. A series of unfortunate events happened after the introduction of hard hooved animals into Australia:

First: The soil was compacted:

Second: When it rained, water flowed more quickly across the ground, picking up soil and depositing that soil in waterholes:

Third: The waterholes became shallow:

Fourth: The fast flowing water through the system, eroded the creeks and rivers beds turning them into drains, rather than a series of long lasting and permanent billabongs. (*For more information on this subject refer to Peter Andrews books, 'Back from the Brink' and 'Beyond the Brink'*)

I would say that Australia's native animals had a good supply of water and native pastures and no favours have been afforded them by our agricultural practices.

We like to sell Australia as a 'clean and green' country. It is a very bad look to be claiming this and at the same time having a kangaroo meat industry that beggars belief as to how it meets any hygiene standards. As well as unrestricted shooters, and I say unrestricted, because there is no policing of the shooting of macropods on rural properties. When I see on some shooters websites and see the term 'drop and rot', I feel sorry for the animals as well as Australia Tourism public relations people.

What we hear of a lot is the amount of money that the kangaroo industry is worth in exported products, however I have never heard what living macropods are worth to the tourism industry I know that if they become extinct, they won't be worth anything to anyone.

Despite there being an official count of macropods / kangaroos, we all know that it is a made up number and it appears that it is calculated more on the basis of how many kangaroos the kangaroo industry wants to process and working out a total number of animals from that.

The fact there is concern over the wellbeing of macropods, I would suggest that there be an immediate ban on the shooting/ killing of all kangaroos and other macropods and a honest review done on the health and wellbeing of these animals.

In the case of overpopulation of macropods in a specific area, use the Agile Project in Cairns Qld as a guide on how to deal with that issue. They are relocating 400 wallabies with a lot of community effort. From what I have seen of this project, it would be a good place to start, to form an operational plan on how to deal with overpopulated areas. Canberra could learn from this.

Thank you for taking the time to read this submission, and I do apologise for not strictly keeping to the terms of reference.

Yours Faithfully

Stephen Powley.

