

**Submission
No 155**

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

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NSW Kangaroo Inquiry – personal submission

Background

I am an experienced wildlife rescuer and carer, living just over the border into Victoria near Albury-Wodonga. One of our primary wildlife vets is based in Wagga Wagga and so I have reason to travel into NSW on a regular basis. I have a strong interest in wildlife, so I am always looking and observing whatever is there in the landscape.

My submission consists of 2 different style observations which highlight the current risks and predicament of kangaroos in NSW.

Road trips – Albury to Wagga Wagga return

During 2019 and 2020, I had reason to make two road trips from Albury to Wagga Wagga (128 km along the Olympic Highway) and then return via Holbrook (143 km on the Hume Highway). This trip traverses a significant area of pastoral development via 2 major arterial routes and is indicative of the southern NSW region in general.

Driving during the day, roadkill is good evidence of the presence of kangaroos in the area.

On my two most recent road trips, this is what I observed:

- One single kangaroo body ~100 kms north of Albury (toward) Wagga adjacent to a small nature reserve called The Rock
- Two kangaroo bodies on the outskirts of Wagga Wagga adjacent to the Kapooka military base
- A small mob of about 15 kangaroos on the last remaining bushland common on the outskirts of Holbrook on the Hume Highway

That is all the evidence I saw of kangaroos over near 270 kms of driving in what was their former woodland-grassland habitat.

Please note 3 main features of these sightings:

- Kangaroos adjacent to what remains of natural reserves
- Kangaroos existing in small numbers of the edge of urban areas
- Kangaroos are effectively exterminated from the large pastoral zones which dominate the landscape of southern NSW (what little animals remain will never stand out in the landscape because they are under constant threat of shooting by landowners as soon as they appear in any numbers)

Kangaroos landlocked by development

Within the urban area of Albury, there is a new ~50 ha light industrial development in progress. A small mob of ~35 kangaroos live, and have long lived, on that land. The four boundaries of the mob's territory are:

- A major regional airport
- The national Hume Highway (4 lanes divided high speed road)
- A dense suburban development
- A light industrial, mixed use area

The way that Albury is designated in planning regulations, development can happen without individual environmental reviews or impact planning.

The future of this small mob is very bleak.

The development has already begun, with earth moving machine and increasing noise and human presence forcing them to move into quieter areas of the 50 ha zone. Slowly, but surely, they will be forced to disperse across the crowded human landscape and face outcomes ranging from motor vehicle collisions through to starvation or shooting if they manage to make it outside the urban environment.

It is distressing to myself, and many others, to be aware of these poor animals and know the likely outcomes for them. I observe the tiny joeys looking out from the safety of their pouches and I despair for those little innocent beings.

NSW seems to be a place that does not give a damn about wildlife.

Both of my claims are very easy to verify, unfortunately, the situation is much the same everywhere ... and getting worse.

Relevance to the NSW state inquiry

The two case studies I have detailed above illustrate very well the major threats to kangaroos in NSW.

The common mythic belief is that kangaroos exist in the tens of millions, in 'plague proportions' even ... when the sad truth is that they are hanging on for dear life, on the edges of urban areas (no shooting is allowed), and they are grasping for life in parks and reserves and other scenarios like military bases and golf clubs.

Now, with so called conservation culling coming to the fore, even their tentative hold on parks and reserves is threatened.

Kangaroos, and other wildlife, get near to zero consideration in our planning processes. There are the appearances of consideration, but the results on the ground tell the truth. They simply don't matter. In most cases, they are simply pushed out of the way or killed.

Kangaroos are magnificent, iconic creatures perfectly designed for the NSW landscape. They have existed and thrived here for 25 million years. We arrived barely 250 years ago, invaded the land and began a series of relentless, destructive processes that bring us to the perilous state of the environment in 2021. Now we are blaming kangaroos for many of the problems. The bitter irony of the situation is at once comic and deeply painful to me.

I am imploring you ... to please look deeply into the myths about kangaroos and the propaganda supporting the killing industry. Find a place for this animal in your Aussie hearts. Let's restore their rightful place as masters of this land, let's learn to co-exist with these beautiful, gentle creatures and share them with the world through our tourism industry. Such a strategy could bring them back from the brink and warm the hearts of the world to NSW and Australia.

Christopher Lehmann

14th April, 2021