

Submission
No 257

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

Organisation: Badgerys Creek Wildlife Sanctuary Inc
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Submission To:

Health and wellbeing of kangaroos and other macropods in New South Wales
Parliament House Macquarie Street SYDNEY NSW 2000

From:

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President

Badgerys Creek Wildlife Sanctuary INC.

My Background

I am located in a remote and forested part of NSW. My Wife and I run a wildlife sanctuary which is surrounded by the Tantawangalo State forest and South East Forests national park. We have been rescuing and rehabilitating native wildlife since 2015. During that time, we have rescued and rehabilitated over 70 animals, mostly macropods and wombats, including 22 macropods rescued and treated during the recent fires. My wife and I are currently licensed to manage native wild through a local wildlife group, LAOKO and have been active in the organisation for just over 12 months. Prior to this, I was a licensed member of . I have completed numerous advanced macropod rescue and rehabilitation courses, including a chemical immobilisation and tranquilliser course, with the intention of obtaining a permit to tranquillise with a firearm. Humane Society International Australia are funding the building of an emergency wildlife triage centre at the sanctuary - I expect the centre to be functioning by the end of April 2021.

Animal cruelty with little to no regulatory oversight or enforcement.

Kangaroos are killed in their natural habitat, on farms and other rural properties without any veterinary oversight, government monitoring, or any other type of animal welfare audit to ensure animal welfare laws, including the code of conduct for the commercial slaughter of macropods, are being adhered to. By comparison, domestic livestock slaughtered in commercially registered slaughter houses are strictly controlled, monitored and audited to ensure animal welfare compliance. When a female macropod has been shot and killed, the regulation states that in pouch and at foot joeys must be killed as well. The brutal methods employed are, bashing their heads in, slitting their throats, or decapitating them, all whilst fully conscious. This not an acceptable humane means of killing puppies, or kittens, or any livestock young, yet it is an accepted way of killing young macropods. The RSPCA do not condone this practice and have been calling for the killing of female macropods and their joeys to cease, yet this practice continues.

According to the code of practice for killing macropods, a single bullet to the brain or heart is the only acceptable means of slaughter. Current professional kangaroo shooters regularly claim that they cannot guarantee a head or heart shot each time they shoot a macropod. It has been stated that mis-shot macropods need to be shot again, which means that they are suffering horrendous wounds waiting for the shooter to get to them to finish them off. Shooters admit that some mis-shot macropods escape into the bush and are not found by the shooter - they are left to die painful and long deaths. These mis-shot animals are not recorded, so we don't know how many are left to suffer this way. With regards to the commercial shooters, they will only take to the meat works, macropods that show no signs of being mis-shot. Heads of the macropods are cut off, so the meat works doesn't know if the macropod was shot in the brain and died instantly, or had a jaw shot off and died slowly.

Why is the killing of a protected native species that is found nowhere else on earth, not treated with the same compassion and standards as the killing of livestock, or domestic pets?

Inaccurate estimation of actual macropod numbers

The methodology of calculation macropod numbers in NSW is obviously flawed and does not give an accurate estimation of macropod numbers. I have witnessed many parts of NSW where macropod numbers have declined massively. On a recent drive from my property in the mountains of Cathcart, I travelled along the Monaro Hwy to Willamsvale, just south of Canberra, a 2.5 hour drive. I left at dawn, a time when macropods are more active, yet I did not see a single kangaroo, wallaby or wombat. I left Willamsvale at

dusk to return home, a 2.5 hour drive and didn't see a single kangaroo, wallaby or wombat. What also stuck me, was that there were no dead macropods, or wombats on the side of the road. There were a number of dead foxes and rabbits, but no dead macropods. Last week I drove from Ballina NSW to Cathcart, entirely at night. I left at 6pm and arrived home at 3pm the next day. A 1000km trip and I didn't see a single live or dead macropod. The main road my property is located on, is a main unsurfaced 60km road between the towns of Bombala and Bega. The road passes through the South East Forests National Park. This area was heavily impacted by the black summer fires. Since the fires, I rarely see any macropods or wombats on that road. Most of the time, I can drive the entire length, either at night or during the day, and not see a single macropod. Before the fires, my wife and I would regularly check dead wildlife for joeys - we couldn't drive long before we needed to stop and check a cadaver. After the fires, young foreign travellers volunteered to help rebuild the fencing destroyed by the fires. Most were volunteering for Blazeaid. The common comment I received from them was, that after working all summer and winter on farms and rural properties across southern NSW, they had not seen a single live kangaroo - numerous dead ones on the side of the road, but no live ones. When they came to the sanctuary, they were so excited to see them here. They commented, we don't come to Australia to see farms and mines, we come to see koalas, kangaroos and Australia's unique wildlife.

The black summer bushfires

During the 2019-2020 bushfires, I was rescuing and treating native wildlife in the surrounding forests and nearby farms. I led search and rescue operations in the local area. During the crises, a temporary treatment facility was established in my home, where volunteer veterinarians treated the survivors. I oversaw the release of treated animals at the sanctuary. The ABC reported on these rescues. <https://youtu.be/fjxJR8wkVYg>. A New Zealand NGO, HUHANZ, set up treatment facility here. They produced a documentary which was shown on NZ television. <https://youtu.be/kGIkgw7D3bo>.

It took over a week for veterinary help to arrive at the sanctuary. Up till then I had been treating the survivors myself. The wildlife group I was a member of and licensed under, was [redacted]. They refused to assist. I repeatedly rang requesting assistance, however my pleas for help were ignored. A few days after the fires and before any veterinary assistance was forthcoming, A NSW Dept of Primary Industry veterinarian visited the sanctuary. He was asking if I had any livestock that needed veterinary attention. I told him no, that this was a wildlife sanctuary, but that I did have burnt kangaroos and wallabies that urgently needed to be seen by a veterinarian. He refused to even look at the injured animals and immediately left. Eventually, HUHANZ, a New Zealand NGO animal welfare group arrived. They brought with them Australian veterinarians and immediately started treating the survivors. Whilst I was thankful for the help, I was shocked to see that none of the Australian vets had any wildlife experience. They would often prescribe medications unsuitable for macropods and weren't confident on treating them. Euthanasia was an easy way out. I refused most euthanasia requests as I knew the vets weren't in a position to know. 2 weeks later a [redacted] disaster response team arrived at the sanctuary and took over from HUHANZ.

It was obvious from the start that [redacted] had no intention of continuing the treatment of any macropods and started to call for the remaining survivors to be euthanised. It was clear that [redacted] were not interested in the medium to long term treatment of macropods and were prioritising euthanasia over treatment. This explains why [redacted] were so slow to provide assistance. [redacted] knew that if a macropod suffered burns, there is only about a 3 week window to treat - outside this, infections are too difficult to treat. By delaying assistance, [redacted] knew there would be very few survivors to spend money on treating. I terminated my membership with [redacted] and they left the sanctuary. I continued to rescue and treat the survivors with the help from Humane Society International. All of the animals [redacted] wanted to kill, recovered from their injuries and have been released back into the wild. They are monitored regularly and are doing very well.

Conclusion

With the combined affects of the recent long drought, the black summer bushfires, a weakening of the kangaroo management permits for landholders (they are no longer required to tag and leave shot macropods where they lay and permits are available online with little to no oversight), an increase in the number of macropods that can be commercially killed and an expanding of the commercial killing areas, I strongly believe that the remaining macropod species face further local extinctions, if not complete extinction.