

Submission
No 334

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

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially
Confidential

RE: SUBMISSION TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, NSW Parliament

Inquiry into the health and wellbeing of kangaroos and other macropods in New South Wales.

To the Committee:

I have lived in Sydney since 1974 and have experienced rapid growth of our city and suburbs in all directions as a resident of the Eastern suburbs, the Western Suburbs and for the last 6 years, Sydney's South West Macarthur / Camden district. Presently I live in the last remaining semi-rural pocket of our area in Catherine Fields, locally known as Catherine Fields Village, where properties are all roughly 2 acres in size, the final frontier in this area against creeping housing estates from all sides. A sea of dull, grey roofing over a warren of packed cookie cutter houses crammed into lots under 500m square at the expense of iconic native trees, local creeks and waterholes, areas of native bush and vegetation, and every living animal. This is the backdrop to our lives.

A daily occurrence on the drive to work is a procession of roadkill lining our back roads as more and more heavy traffic carve out shortcuts from their estates to the arterial freeways at peak hour. Water hens, wood ducks, cockatoos, galahs, frogs, snakes, turtles, wombats and foxes make up the carnage, and increasingly wallabies and kangaroos. As the development of new estates and now the devastation caused by the new Western Sydney airport marches forward in earnest, we are experiencing the presence of more wildlife being squeezed out of the remaining pockets of wild spaces in our area, the terror in their eyes when they try to navigate their way across lines of single minded humans in oversized vehicles ploughing through everything in their path.

To say that the stress of seeing scenes like this in daily life has become distressing is an understatement.

Please find below my comments in response to the Terms of Reference for this inquiry.

(a) historical and long-term health and wellbeing indicators of kangaroos, and other macropods, at the local, bioregional and state levels, including the risk of localized extinction in New South Wales,

On my drive to work over the last few years, I would see huge mobs of kangaroos in open woodland along the Northern Road, in the Luddenham/Orchard Hills area. Now there are none. Please see more detail in part C. As a casual teacher working at TAFE NSW Kingswood campus, I have experienced a large, seemingly healthy mob of kangaroos that frequent the TAFE grounds. Known as the "Werrington Kangaroos", they are now under threat by the new development in that area by Western Sydney University/ TAFE. Please see more detail in part C and these links:

<http://www.environmentblacktown.com/initiatives/werrington-kangaroos/>

<https://www.change.org/p/department-of-planning-industry-and-environment-protect-western-sydney-s-kangaroos-at-werrington>

(b) the accuracy with which kangaroo, and other macropod, numbers are calculated when determining population size, and the means by which the health and wellbeing of populations is assessed,

(c) threats to kangaroo, and other macropod, habitat, including the impact of:

(i) climate change, drought and diversion and depletion of surface water sources,

(ii) bushfires,

(iii) land clearing for agriculture, mining and urban development,

(iv) the growing prevalence of exclusion fencing which restricts and disrupts the movement of kangaroos,

I have witnessed extensive land clearing for the purposes of urban development and have seen kangaroos displaced, being forced onto roads and fleeing development. I have seen mobs being cut off from one another and nature corridors severed.

One morning last summer I opened my front door to see a large grey kangaroo in my front yard just metres from me. He appeared confused and distressed, bounding left and right, looking for a way to get across our property. We felt powerless as there was no way through for them except for the usually quiet back road that passes on the corner, which was now busy with speeding morning traffic. The kangaroo managed to find his way back out and joined his partner who had been waiting further down in the cul-de-sac. We saw them disappear into the trees between two properties, knowing that they only had a very thin strip of native bush area before it became part of the newly widened Bringelly Road, and no way for them to cross. It was a terrible feeling knowing they were there, possibly looking for food and water with no way out. They were trapped in an ever-decreasing habitat.

In the past month I drove past a dead kangaroo on our street – the first time ever so close, since the latest new developments in the extension of Oran Park into Catherine Fields, and the new Catherine Park to the south. This one had the joey cut out of her pouch so it was clear that WIRES had attended to her. But it was alarming to see one so close to the houses, in what was once a sleepy back road now become a major thoroughfare to the Camden Valley Way from part of the new estate, and it will only continue to become busier with more lots sold and more houses going up rapidly. I have heard neighbours talk about the tens of thousands of new homes that are coming to our area, and in response many of our neighbours are selling up their lots to developers. With the tsunami of new housing development and the new Western Sydney airport project now in full swing, the area has completely lost its rural character, and that includes losing essential habitat for local wildlife. It is fast becoming a sea of black and grey roofing with spindly saplings planted in clumps along the motorway and Bringelly Road to make up the “offset” replacing the iconic trees coming down at an alarming rate.

The sight of the dead kangaroo, sprawled on the side of the road with the pouch cut out clearly visible, was a distressing experience. It had an impact on me, which compounded the anxiety of seeing the trees coming down in all directions on a daily basis. It feels as if nature and all the wild animals are just an afterthought to mindless progress. There has been no communication at all with us the community, about the fate of our local wildlife, no precautions in place for their safety, no signage or acknowledgement, no guidelines. It is as if these animals don't factor at all. It feels like we are meant to pretend that none of this is happening. I personally feel a sense of

dread that I am living in the midst of all of this destruction called “development”, witnessing first hand, the extinction of all that is beautiful and natural about our area – the local wildlife, the epic, iconic trees – the very things that led me to live here in the first place.

These observations of roadkill in my local area are becoming more frequent. A few weeks ago, when developers began to clear sections of bush along Raby Road, for even more new housing development across from the new Emerald Hills estate, I witnessed a large grey kangaroo lying by the side of the road on Raby Rd, near the corner of Carnelian Street. I stopped to check and discovered he had lain there for a while, obviously hit by a car, and was a male. I was shocked to see one in that location as officially there are not meant to be kangaroos in that area as far as I know. But it had obviously tried to cross Raby Rd looking for foraging grounds, as it's regular terrain is rapidly chewed up by the bulldozers. I wonder where the larger mob is and how they are faring with food and water resources. Obviously single 'roos are being separated from their mobs in the search for viable habitat and killed in the process. It is heartbreaking.

For three years I drove from Catherine Field to TAFE Kingswood Campus near Penrith one day a week for work as a casual teacher there, and it has been absolutely devastating to experience the death by a thousand cuts of the last remaining nature along the Northern Road through Luddenham and into Orchard Hills to make access roads and more motorways into the new Western Sydney airport. Prior to the works beginning, I would see large mobs of kangaroos roaming freely along the Northern Road, on what may have been part of the Military Base land. During the initial devastation of bushland along the Northern Road expansion, I began to see with horrifying regularity, dead kangaroos along the side of the road on my way to work. Often I would stop to check them for signs of life, or a joey in the pouch. I have attached photos at the bottom of this document. It was absolutely distressing to see kangaroos being squeezed out of their traditional bushland at the outset of the airport construction, and it did have a cumulative impact on me. For months I had anxiety in the lead up to Fridays, knowing I would have to drive alongside the carnage and stop where I could. There were many times when I could not stop, due to fast moving traffic or not having a safe place to pull over, or just out of time, and that increased the dread, not knowing if there was a live joey in the pouch that could be saved or if the driver had called WIRES. Many kangaroos were obviously victims of hit and run as the body was lying where it obviously fell, with cars driving around it. The whole experience for those months was upsetting, distressing, stressful and incredibly disturbing. Nothing was done. No signage was put up, no warning for drivers to look out for kangaroos. Often I would see three dead kangaroos dead on the roadside in one day. On one stop I could see the dead kangaroo was a female and had the joey ripped from the pouch, left to die on the ground beside its mother. Over time the number of kangaroos along the Northern Road have dwindled until now I have not seen one kangaroo in months.

On one particularly disturbing day, along Bringelly Road, I witnessed peak hour traffic simply plough through a large flock of native ducks crossing the road. During a lull in the traffic, the adults were quickly herding their broods of chicks in a mad dash across to the waterhole on the other side, when I noticed, to my horror, cars speeding up to cut down the entire flock. Myself and the car behind me pulled over at the site and while we were trying to assess the carnage and slow down the traffic, cars continued to stream past running over the remaining live ducks until all that was left were the flattened carcasses and bloody feathers stuck in the bitumen. The man who had pulled over told me he was with the roadworks company and that he would address it with management to get signage put up, but that never happened. I called Camden Council who told me to call Liverpool Council, who told me it was an RMS issue and nothing they could do about signage on roads. I called the RMS and after many calls, finally located the correct contact for my concerns. After letters and emails, nothing at all was done, not one thing, not an

acknowledgement, not a reassurance, not even the most basic response. And so for the last couple of years while the roads and airport development continue, the wildlife remain vulnerable and nothing at all was done to protect them or to at least make the public aware of wildlife travelling through the area.

My drive to work took me through Orchard Hills where I turn right on Homestead Road from the Northern Road and then north through Claremont Meadows and into the TAFE site. On many occasions I have seen kangaroos trying to cross Homestead Road south to north, or bounding erratically along the housing there looking for ways back to their mobs. It is extremely stressful to see, and my anxiety goes through the roof, driving along, knowing that, that kangaroo will be eventually hit by a car. I have seen many dead on the side of the road along Homestead Road on my way to work or in the afternoon on my way home. I have called WIRES but they can't do anything if the kangaroo is loose but still alive. They can only intervene if the kangaroo is actually injured. I called Penrith council about signage along there but they did not seem to have any satisfactory process for requesting wildlife signage in that area, especially for non-residents like me. I have heard from locals of the area that council will not put up kangaroo warning signs in the area because doing so would admit to there being kangaroos in the area, forcing them to address the problems they face.

My observations of kangaroos does not end in my drive to work. At TAFE's Kingswood campus, a large mob of kangaroos has existed there peacefully for as long as anyone can remember. The giant mob are regulars on the campus grounds, lounging in family groups with their joeys under the trees on the oval, or gathering to forage along the back of the Arts and Design building where I work or between the carparks. They are a common delight for staff and students and co-exist peacefully, blending into the landscape and enriching the experience for anyone who sees them. Known as the Werrington Kangaroos, they are now at the centre of a desperate campaign to save them from certain slaughter, as the TAFE and Western Sydney University proceed with development plans for new buildings on the site. It is stressful to consider the plight of this large, peaceful mob, with many joeys and kangaroos of all ages and sizes, just trying to survive, at the mercy of yet more development that threatens to wipe them out in the name of progress.

I no longer work at the TAFE Kingswood campus. I could no longer face the stress of the drive through the devastation of the Northern Road, dreading the sight of dead kangaroos along the way.

- (d) current government policies and programs for kangaroo management, including:
 - (i) the method used for setting quotas for kangaroo culling,
 - (ii) the management of licences to cull kangaroos,
 - (iii) temporary drought relief policies and programs,

In terms of the shooting of kangaroos, I have heard from a neighbor that he regularly shoots kangaroos on a friend's property. He is not a commercial shooter and I have no idea what type of firearm license he would have. He proudly bragged about shooting fifty kangaroos in one hour on the property in the name of saving his friend's crops. He also began to talk about shooting dozens of cockatoos but I could not listen any longer and ended the conversation. It was distressing and uncomfortable to listen to. I wondered, was it legal? Did they have a license? Were they really allowed to shoot and kill so many? I researched the license to harm law and was shocked by the number of license to harm applications that were on the public register – over 14,000 licenses for kangaroos alone since 2017. How can kangaroos possibly survive when so

many can be killed? I personally want the government to be more responsible for our wildlife and to make a commitment to treat our animals better.

(e) current government policies and programs in regards to 'in pouch' and 'at foot joeys' given the high infant mortality rate of joeys and the unrecorded deaths of orphaned young where females are killed,

Twice I have experienced dead female kangaroos with the joey removed from the pouch and left to die. One had been obviously twisted so that its spine was snapped broken. It was still in a shape that looked like it had been wrung like a rag. Another had been taken out of the pouch and left to die next to the mother in the freezing weather. They were obviously hit by cars, and the drivers had stopped to check the pouch.

(f) regulatory and compliance mechanisms to ensure that commercial and non-commercial killing of kangaroos and other macropods is undertaken according to the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 and other relevant regulations and codes,

(g) the impact of commercial and non-commercial killing of kangaroos and other macropods, including the difficulty of establishing numbers killed by landholders since the removal of the requirement for drop tags, and

(h) current and alternative measures to provide an incentive for and accelerate public and private conservation of kangaroos and other macropods.

I believe we need to educate the public about kangaroos and their benefit to the land, our culture, our national identity, the fact that they are a crucial part of our unique ecosystem. We need to change the perception that they are a pest. Can we build back some national pride for the kangaroo as our national icon, our “mascot”? So that more people are invested in their survival.

In general, we should revisit the laws around “license to harm”. We need to find ways to co-exist with wildlife. Why do humans think they can simply destroy anything that doesn't fit neatly with their plans for progress? Can we adopt the same measures taken by other countries and set aside untouched a large percentage of the continent just for wildlife?

Can we look at restrictions for human expansion? Can we help farmers and landholders to design their properties so that they can co-exist with wildlife? Putting up fences and trying to force a solution is not sustainable or intelligent.

It is impossible to fathom how in a civilized society, the government still considers it humane to kill our iconic wild species. It is barbaric and outdated, not in touch with current community values.

There is so much pressure on this species and many others. It is in our hands to secure their future now. If we do nothing, nothing will happen and the kangaroos will continue to die in their millions until none are left.