

Submission
No 339

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

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Submission to the Legislative Council Inquiry into the health and wellbeing of kangaroos and other macropods in New South Wales

25th April 2021

To Portfolio Committee No 7:

Ms Cate Faehrmann MLC (Chair)

Hon Mark Pearson MLC (Deputy Chair)

Hon Mark Buttigieg MLC

Hon Catherine Cusack MLC

Hon Ben Franklin MLC

Hon Shayne Mallard MLC

Hon Penny Sharpe MLC

Committee:

Particularly at this time of global awareness, conversation and action relating to climate change, deforestation, encroachment on and impact to wildlife habitat, the increased awareness of the impact to the populace resulting from interactions with wildlife, and with the memory of Australia's recent devastating bushfires still present in our community and the feeling of concern, helplessness, horror, sadness I still hold, I feel compelled to write a submission to this enquiry.

In my lifetime vast tracts of Australia have been cleared and/or altered forever for farming, housing, development, mining and for many other reasons mainly associated with "development" and "progress". NSW, and other states, have suffered significant drought with devastating impact on people, communities, livestock, wildlife, the health of our land and soil, our finances and in many many cases has led individuals to alter the path of their lives and governments, at all levels, to make decisions and implement actions in an attempt to control, reduce, stabilize, manage the impact of environmental change, and often to allow some within the community, be they individuals, organisations or industry sectors to take "advantage" of and profit from a situation whilst wider impacts of an event or action may be "politicised", miscommunicated through media, ignored, mismanaged.

Our laws relating to wildlife exhibit double standards, allowing mass "culling", allowing farmers to "control pests", allowing destruction of habitat, food sources, pollution of water sources and soil, allowing developers to clear vast areas of natural resource, whilst our wildlife are "protected" in NSW. One cannot relocate a possum without licence, but mass slaughter under permit of kangaroos is permissible. Local government must authorise private city landholders to remove a single tree within guidelines, but developers can destroy hectares where approval was given decades before.

Animal cruelty laws are invoked, rightly, for cruel treatment to domestic pets or livestock, but farmers can erect fencing that denies wildlife access to water, food and habitat. Our laws sometime require “community consultation”, or information provision, but not community education or understanding, so the community can easily remain unawares of the true impacts of some of our legislation and actions, on our wildlife.

Science, fact and research appears not to be a key influencer of many decisions and action, often taken for expediency or appeasement. The “easiest” solution to a problem is implemented, without analysis of impact on individuals, others, community and longer term.

Our laws are not in line with community opinion. Regulations must be imposed on farming. Legal action must be taken against those who breach requirements. All level of government enterprises, agencies, and departments together with private and public companies must be held accountable.

Community silence does not mean acceptance. It simply shows the nature of todays busy society. It should never be taken for acceptance of behaviour or actions. If people do not know or are not aware or do not provide input, or do not agitate, or do not “get involved”, then this should not be taken as approval.

No-one can deny that land culling, clearing, farming, environmental change (man made or otherwise), has affected the habitat and health of our wildlife and wildlife numbers and must be addressed.

An immediate stop on intentional culling and killing, for any reason, must be legislated. The mass kill of all macropods in NSW must immediately stop.

The “quota” process should not exist. Any rare approval for any killing of any wild animal should only be done by exception and if benefiting the health of a given wild (not farmed or domestic) animal population or euthanasia where no other option exists. The impact of any kill on a single or a population of young or joeys must be considered prior to any authorisation of a kill occurring.

Licences to kill wild animals should only be provided to those charged with veterinary care, with significant training and qualifications, which are accredited and overseen by a body of qualified and experienced individuals without vested interests and conflicts of interests. There must be recourse to annual audit of licence holders in terms of documents held and approval given prior to any kill and other auditable review to ensure illegal and/or unethical culling occurs.

A ban on the exports of all wildlife products must be implemented. Our wildlife are not livestock to be farmed. Our community is horrified at the pictures of culled Tasmanian devils and whale slaughter. The export of skins, the processing of wildlife meat for domestic consumption, whether for human or pet must be phased out as soon as possible.

I appreciate the committee is charge to review the “mechanisms in place to ensure commercial and non-commercial killing of kangaroos is undertaken according to the *Biodiversity Conservation Act* and other relevant regulations and codes”. It is unfathomable that we should continue to simply allow killing, by whatever means, exclusion fencing, habitat loss without budgeting, planning and implementing solutions that will allow for native wildlife to continue to live for our next generations.

I own a property in Nowra, on the NSW South Coast. The impact of the 19-20 bushfires on the south coast and other regions of NSW, QLD, SA and beyond, was devastating and cannot be denied. I encourage all committee members to travel to various regions (ie not just one or 2 locations) to witness the dryness of the earth, the lack of insects and birds, to see the green weeds growing, to

view the brown twigs of trees that do not provide shelter, that do not support biodiversity, where truly health habitat and ecosystem does not exist. There are certainly areas where there is regeneration, however there are vast areas with only a green tinge, where life in the soil and air, and within our marsupial macropod population may barely exist, if at all.

We need systems that consistently, reliably, regularly monitor wildlife populations, so impacts can be seen, not assumed or ignored. We must apply effective practices using current and up to date methods and technology.

NSW must look at macropod movement, especially where exclusion fencing is used. Farmers and developers should not be permitted to build exclusion fencing. Farmers and developers must plan for habitat corridors and allow for preservation of minimum habitat. Habitat corridors (including over or underpass options should be legislated for all new state road builds and upgrades.

I do not want our next generation to only see macropod species in a zoo or a museum. I do not want our ecosystem that relies on all our wildlife for health, to be destroyed whilst billions are spent to reverse the effects. We should seek out solutions, look at best practice where livestock and wildlife co-exist, understand and facilitate implementation of effective land and habitat management practices, of which we can look locally for some solutions, but should also look overseas. I acknowledge that other countries also have seen devastating reduction of wildlife numbers, but where there are clear indicators of tipping points” where wildlife numbers cannot recover, where practices are in place that support health populations of wildlife, where informed studies and research are available, we must avail ourselves of these, and I urge you to put aside ‘politics’, and use this committees time, resources and influence to prioritise the saving of our wildlife, our macropods, to repopulate areas with keystone species.

The government should look at tax and other incentives for private landholders wanting to gift or will property or estate to land trusts or conservancies.

The government should better support and provide for initiatives in local communities that are directed to wildlife conservation, management, habitat regeneration, safety with perhaps an opportunity to partner with organisations and private companies to develop and implement effective solutions (perhaps similar to the federal research & development tax incentives or

Where funding is provided or announced by the NSW Government, it should have clear, measurable, accountable deliverables in place.

Financial support for licenced wildlife carers should be provided without monies being issued or granted, by or through a single body, but engage in a minimum six monthly, consistent, open, mandatory consultation between peak wildlife and environmental bodies and key government departments and agencies, which will assist all parties to remain accountable but also to inform, educate, share, perhaps similar to the “G10”, at a local state level.

Financial support or incentives could be made available for landholders to conserve key habitat on their land or incentives such as reduced stamp duty or nil stamp duty upon purchase, of land deemed a) in a wild life corridor or b) deemed key habitat (according to local zoning guidelines). Eg. Stamp duty on the 20% of land deemed wildlife corridor habitat is waived for 5 years (where an inspection is made perhaps or evidence must be provided of conservation), and waive in perpetuity if bi-annual conservation evidence/declarations are submitted). This may be applied to small landholdings also in areas deemed to have critical habitat or critical food sources (eg grasses) or other support for biodiversity or water conservation.

A similar principal might apply for a state based tax offset for developers who retain (not destroy and replant elsewhere) critical habitat or species.

Financial support should be provided for innovative methods to manage roadkill in all areas, but significantly in areas where macropod numbers have seen significant decline. Significant conservation and wildlife protection measures should be supported by government where the benefit is to our community state wide.

Finally, I want to convey my support for this enquiry into macropod numbers and encourage committee member to fairly and factually review all submissions, consider recommendations, be courageous towards implanting change as we, I believe, are at a point where we will not only lose more species, but our own quality of life, health, lifestyle, ability to enjoy the natural environment, are at a tipping point. The care for our environment, our fellow creatures, rests with us. I implore you to work towards ending the culling and authorised killing of macropods. Ending this practice can only have positive outcomes. Land and animal management practices that work alongside wildlife and environmental management are essential and should not be a choice or a rarity but a mandatory.

Regards and best luck