

**Submission  
No 355**

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

**Name:** Ms Dianne Lane

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

My name is Dianne Lane I am both a cattle farmer and a wildlife carer. I grew up on a grazing property in north West NSW.

I predominantly rescue macropods and see the worst of the damage done to our Kangaroos in road kills, fence entanglement and a range of other catastrophic human interactions. As a cattle producer I can see that wildlife can live in harmony with livestock producing a kinder balance. As a macropod carer I see their gentle natures and the strong bonds that they develop with their peers.



The NSW Wildlife Rehabilitation Annual Report 2018–19 notes that one in five mammal rescues were eastern grey kangaroos yet they had the lowest rehabilitation rate with only 7% of animals being released. This is mostly attributed to 73% of macropod rescues being due to collisions with motor vehicles.

As the second most rescued wildlife Kangaroos are in need of special consideration and it is time we moved beyond the mythology of “plagues of kangaroos” and “population explosions” to publicise the true stocking densities and reveal the cruelty of this pet food industry that practises cruelty that no livestock producer would contemplate using on their sheep or cattle.


**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,**

National Code of Practice for the Humane Shooting of Kangaroos and Wallabies for Commercial Purposes, 3 page 15 states:

*Any dependent young (pouch young or young-at-foot) that are orphaned after their mother has been killed will need to be euthanased to prevent future suffering due to lack of maternal care.*

This is brutal and its should be totally unnecessary. Shooters should be well trained in recognising whether a doe has pouched young or not, they should have no need to shoot her.

This section should be withdrawn altogether with shooters required to take the Joey to a licenced carer. The number of joeys coming into care would indicate whether retraining is needed for each individual shooter in recognising what they are shooting. Currently there is no requirement for reporting the numbers of joeys killed, and like many aspects of this slaughter, goes unreported.

	Stage at orphaning	Welfare impacts from orphaning	Preventative measure	Comments	Example photo
AT-FOOT	<p>4. Young-at-foot permanently out of the pouch but still suckling frequently</p> <p>The importance of milk varies with the quality of the forage available</p>	<p>Severe suffering, high likelihood of death when conditions are unfavourable (i.e. poor quantity and quality of forage available)</p> <p>Severe suffering, lower likelihood of death when conditions are favourable (i.e. adequate amounts of high-quality forage available)<sup>d</sup></p>	Euthanase by shot to head or chest wherever possible	<p>May need to shoot YAF first</p> <p>If not possible then wait until YAF returns to the site where the female was shot</p> <p>Young-at-foot require good quality forage to meet the high daily energy requirements for supporting growth during this period<sup>e</sup></p>	 <p>Source: Stephanie Jackson-Australia Wildlife Collection/Alamy Stock Photo</p>

Another heinous aspect of this Code of Practice notes that *Euthanasing young-at-foot can be problematic as they are usually mobile and will often flee after the female has been shot. However, harvesters must make every reasonable effort to euthanase dependent young-at-foot. **This could include shooting the young-at-foot first** or waiting until they return to the location where the female was shot.* (page 14)

To suggest they shoot the joey first is just barbaric- they should not be shooting mothers with joeys evident.

**And who in their right mind believes a shooter will wait around for a joey to return when they are only in this barbarity to make money?**

Juveniles are not by-products to be so cruelly disposed of. No other animal industry does this – nor should the pet food industry.

**Euthanasia of partially-furred to fully-furred pouch young**

*Concussive blow to the head*

- The most suitable method that is currently available for the euthanasia of partially-furred to fully-furred young is a **concussive blow to the head** (also called **blunt force trauma**)<sup>h,j</sup>. This method is considered acceptable as the skulls of pouch young are small, soft and thin. When it is applied correctly, unconsciousness and death will occur rapidly.
- A single sharp blow to the central skull bones induces death by physical (or mechanical) damage to the central nervous system and disruption of brain activity. Death then occurs as a result of respiratory and cardiac failure.


Remember when the *Australian cattle' being bludgeoned to death in Vietnam sparks Government investigation* (ABC, 16 June 2016) The practice of bludgeoning a cow was described by the federal government as videos showing “abhorrent animal cruelty” and launched an immediate investigation, disrupting supply chains. Alison Penfold, the chief executive of the Australian Livestock Exporters’ Council, said the video footage was some of the most graphic she had ever seen. “This is slaughter at it cruellest and most sickening,” Penfold said. “Of course we don’t condone this practice. Australian livestock exporters agree sledgehammering is an abhorrent inhumane practice that has no place in a modern society and must be stamped out.” Gareth Hutchens ( 16<sup>th</sup> June 2016)

So this method of killing an animal is abhorrent and inhumane for one species but is the designated best practice for Kangaroos. It is not and is totally avoidable.

**Juveniles are not by-products to be so cruelly disposed of. No other animal industry does this and it can be completely avoided.**

**Perhaps the most scientifically disturbing aspects of this Code of practice is the statement that unfurred joeys feel no pain**

Page 30. “Since unfurred young (with closed eyes) are considered to be still in a state of unconsciousness (and therefore not capable of experiencing pain), these methods are unlikely to cause suffering and are therefore considered acceptable.”

	Stage at orphaning	Welfare impacts from orphaning	Preventative measure	Comments	Example photo
IN POUCH	1. Unfurred pouch young (eyes still closed)  Dependent on pouch environment and milk for survival	Certain death, though unlikely to suffer prior to death	Euthanase using acceptable method  (See Appendix 5: Standard operating procedure for euthanasia of pouch young)	Females may be associating with other adult females  Young usually attached to a teat  Available evidence indicates that unfurred young are not capable of experiencing pain and suffering until they start to develop fur and have opened their eyes <sup>a</sup>	  Source: Trudy Sharp

Notice the use of a barely discernible bump in the code which a shooter would not even register in the dark. The reality of what a shooter might recognise is in the following pictures.

As a wildlife carer, first licenced in 1995, I have cared for many pinky joeys and it is patently clear to anyone with an ounce of logic that these joeys are capable of feeling pain. In an Eastern Grey kangaroo their eyes open at about 160 days and it is ridiculous to presume that sight and pain sensations are not developed earlier and are somehow linked to sight.



Images Courtesy Sandra Boldiston 2021

**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.**

It is clear that the calculation and reporting of macropod population size is compromised by mixed methodology as well as commercial and political influence.

For this section I would recommend a thorough reading of Mjadwesch, R. Kangaroos at Risk (2011), Chapter 3.1 Problems with counting kangaroos-<https://www.kangaroosatrisk.net/3-counting-kangaroos.html>

Some key points he notes is

- There must be some problem with counting kangaroos – every time OEH-NPWS or their consultants do it, they **change the methodology.**
- **He analyses the quality of the data and questions“** Can anyone explain what happened between 1997 and 1998, when the population increased almost four-

fold? Are there any kangaroo researchers out there who can explain to me ... how this population increased by **269%** in a single year?

- He cites the challenges of identification of similar species such as the eastern and western grey kangaroo and wallaroos. He “wondered how reliably a shooter can differentiate between the Western and Eastern Greys, by spotlight, at distance. After reading the 2011 quota report, the author figured they can’t tell the difference, because now there are only 433 Western Grey Kangaroos in the Narrabri KMZ. Unless the OEH can suggest an alternative explanation for the 1/3 decline of this species in a 1 year period, I would suggest that the “trained” shooters really could not care less what they shoot, so long as they get paid.”
- **There is also the strategy of not counting** where Mjadwesch questions “what has happened in harvest zones in western NSW like Broken Hill, Narrabri, and Coonabarabran, where species have dropped out of the quota? Of these the Narrabri KMZ is the real showcase. All four species were being shot out there until 2002, when the last 46 Western Grey Kangaroos were shot. In 2003 the Wallaroo was also shot out there for the last time. Nowadays these species are not even mentioned in the Narrabri harvest zone / quota / monitoring reports – why not? If it was good enough to shoot them in 2002, and this is a sustainable industry, why isn’t this sustainable activity continuing? In fact, **why are numbers not even being provided for these species in these “management” areas any more?**”

This lack of accuracy in counting kangaroos has a political and economic motivation. More recently (2021) Wildlife groups have accused the Victorian Government of "massively overinflating" numbers in order to support a 65 per cent increase in the number of kangaroos that can be killed for commercial purposes under the Kangaroo Harvesting Program. Population increases cited are a "biological impossibility" without even considering the decimation of wildlife during the bushfires.

In the 3 February 2021 article titled *Wildlife groups criticise Victorian Government's kangaroo count amid 65pc harvest quota increase*

Overstating the numbers is driven by a commercial motivation, both to slaughter for pet food or to clear from farmer’s lands.

**Much has been written lately about the threats to kangaroo, and other macropod, habitat, especially given the the impact of climate change, drought and bushfires,** but by far the greatest threat to kangaroos and our biodiversity is land clearing for agriculture, mining and urban development. Simply put CLEARING OF NATIVE VEGETATION was listed as a KEY THREATENING PROCESS in NSW under the TSCA 1995 (NSW Scientific Committee 2001) and this is exacerbated by disastrous political decisions. Peter Hannam I July 2, 2020 notes that NSW farmers accelerate land-clearing rates, doubling previous decade

*The Berejiklian government replaced vegetation laws in August 2017, prompting a surge in land clearing by farmers. The 29,400 hectares cleared in 2018 was up about 8 per cent on the previous year but more than twice the 12,300 hectares removed on average during 2009-17.*

*Only about one-fifth of the 2018 total land cover change was formally authorised. Some 73 per cent was listed as "unexplained", although some of that would have been lawful clearing that did not require approval, the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment said. (Hannam, 2020)*

There is little political appetite to investigate the large increase in unexplained clearing or to suspend the two-year statute of limitations on prosecutions for illegal land-clearing and the use of environmental offsets has been shown to be ineffective.

The NSW Audit Office, the Natural Resources Commission and the official vegetation clearing figures published by the NSW Government all confirm a regulatory failure to achieve environmental outcomes and effectively administer the law. While the law has certainly reduced regulatory requirements on landholders, the balance has tipped significantly against ecologically sustainable development, with the laws resulting in a return to broadscale land clearing in NSW. (Hannam)

Clearly the **impact of commercial and non-commercial killing of kangaroos** and other macropods, is unknown because of the difficulty of establishing numbers killed by landholders since the removal of the requirement for drop tags, and lack of regulatory and compliance mechanisms. Farmers and others are free to kill at will or to organise kangaroo drives as our neighbours in the Kyeamba Valley did last year. Surrounding farmers got together to shoot as many as they felt. There was no thought to ever facing prosecution as this is unheard of.

Just as the New South Wales Police force have a Rural Crime Squad politicians could also appoint an Environmental Crime Squad if there was any political willingness to regulate environmental regulation breaches so that Glenn Turner's death would not be in vain and kangaroos and other wildlife would have the smallest chance of not becoming extinct.

## **Conclusion**

Australia is widely seen as committing the 'biggest mass slaughter of wildlife on the planet and countries overseas are staring to take action. Programs such as [Kangaroos Are Not Shoes](#) and California's bans on animal products show the world is no longer accepting our cruelty and disregard for our national symbol. Further detail is available from [https://www.kangaroosatrisk.org/california\\_background.html](https://www.kangaroosatrisk.org/california_background.html)

There is plenty of protein available for pet food that is not treated so cruelly or killed in such an uncontrolled manner. Technology developments mean we no longer need to target kangaroo leather for our clothing and footwear.

Our politicians seem to have no appetite for protecting our biodiversity and they would do well to remember the Passenger Pigeon from North America whose flocks were frequently described as being so dense that they blackened the sky. Estimated to have numbered three to five billion at the height of its population, it was hunted to extinction by 1912, victimized by the fallacy that no amount of exploitation could endanger a creature so abundant.

Dianne Lane 2021





KANGA WATCH INC <https://www.facebook.com/groups/238870973513858>

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VIDEO: America considers banning Kangaroo leather in football boots by Nassim Khadem

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