

Submission
No 356

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

Name: Ms Zeri Hudaverdi

Date Received: 26 April 2021

Submission to the Enquiry on the health and wellbeing of Kangaroos and other macropods in NSW.

Thank you for your time and attention. I imagine you will read quite a few harrowing and truly revolting stories among the many submissions you receive. I'm very aware that you are human beings and some of the details will be difficult to read and am sorry for the distress you will experience. I really don't want to relive my experiences in detail and record them, however, as this is an important Inquiry that doesn't seem to matter much. I am not sorry that you will now become aware of how poorly we are treating our native animals when Economic interests are given priority over everything else.

My name is Zeri Hudaverdi, I'm 62.

I live at _____ Armidale NSW. This is a 16 hectare property which has been in my family since 1999. We have not run stock and have planted many trees in an attempt to regenerate degraded sheep country. We became part of the Citizens Wildlife Corridor which was established in the area soon after we arrived. My parents live in a dwelling 50m away, across a garden, and over the years bird and wildlife numbers have increased markedly.

Until 3 years ago this was a very quiet area and our creek flat was often visited by mobs of Eastern Greys numbering 60+ adults. We can see along Donald Creek as most of the land has been cleared for stock and while we would have a mob on our flat there were other mobs visible here and there all along the creek valley. Then two adjoining properties across the creek were sold and two new landholders moved in. This was a year into the latest drought and they promptly stocked their properties with sheep, cattle and horses. Shortly thereafter the shooting of kangaroos began.

We had become members of the Northern Tablelands Wildlife Carers some years before and had our first orphaned Eastern Grey joey in care.

My partner* went to visit the new neighbours to let them know we raised joeys and that we would appreciate them not shooting near the boundary. During the visit to the closest he was informed that the fellows' occupation was commercial Roo Hunter and that he mostly worked 'out west' but would be culling roos on his property. We have enjoyed weekly sessions of multiple test shots at his home-made range on the hill ever since he arrived. It is a weekly nightmare of repeated loud booms, usually late afternoon and a constant reminder of his activities elsewhere.

The other new neighbour also has a licence to shoot roos on his place and was doing so.

Then the neighbour on this side of the creek to the north gave permission for a chap to come shoot roos, now and then, for dog food. This young chap assured my partner that he only took 'old males', as though that makes any difference and as though he was fully conversant with the population in this valley and how mobs socialise in general. He is in fact from a sheep property in Uralla that prides itself on its environmental stewardship for future generations. I can provide you with their web address if you wish. So it's apparently fine to use the wildlife here to feed his dogs but the wildlife at his place must have a different and higher economic value, perhaps Propaganda?

When my first joey, Lilly, was about 12 months old I would take her out mornings and evenings for exercise and she was beginning to occasionally go for a small wander on her own. One morning my mother, who was 87 at the time, came for a walk to visit and on her way discovered a young female roo dead in the garden on the creek side. Mum was very upset when she arrived and quietly asked me if Lilly was OK. By this time my partner had seen too many shot roos and we were trying to shield him a bit. He was also engaged in writing a PhD on Climate Science and Change that was taking its own toll.

Lilly was OK and I went to move the dead roo so we could try and bury it without fuss. It had been shot in the gut. I don't have a photo of her, I was a bit upset and I was dealing with my mothers' distress as well.

The drought continued, I got called out to too many 'rescues' that ended with all being euthanized if they were still alive when I reached them. Mostly these were car victims however, one was as a result of being caught on a new exclusion fence. She was a large female and there should have been a joey around but we couldn't find it.

In late August 2019 I took two more joeys into care and although this is not the best of places long term there were too many joeys coming in and too few places for them. Dale and Abby joined us, Dale's mother had been a car victim and Abby's mother a fence victim.

The drought eased a bit and I continued to be called to 'rescues' that weren't. The shooting continued.

Every now and then there are the days when there's a young joey, now orphaned because of shooting, that moves about crying and distressed for hours or days before it dies of starvation or predation. I don't know if you've had to live with days of listening to a young joey crying for its mother while slowly dying? Do you have any idea how that erodes your sanity when it happens again and again? We have attempted to catch these joeys on several occasions without success. Chasing for any length of time is problematic as kangaroos can develop Myopathy from the chase

stress and this can be a slow and painful way to die or the cause of a sudden death in what appeared to be a healthy animal months after the stress event.

My partner left our home on the 15th March 2020, partly because of the shooting neighbours.

Lilly grew up and left home in Jan 2020 and would visit now and then. She was struck and killed by a vehicle on 25th April not far from our gate and is buried in our yard. Abby and Dale continued to grow.

Since April/May 2020 with the available feed and greatly reduced road victim numbers there are very few Joeys coming into care and this year I've only been called to three road hits near here.

There is now ample food on our creek flat and has been for almost a year however the only mob of roos we've seen numbers 8. That's 8 roos anywhere up and down the creek flats in this little valley, and this number now includes joeys, not just adults.

In October 2020 Abby and Dale were released here as there is nowhere better available close by. Dale was a daily visitor gradually diminishing his visits to once a week. Abby has chosen to have her nights out and about but returns to spend the day around the house yard.

The latest visit by the chap who gets his dog meat was 6 weeks ago. He shot a roo right at the corner post by the creek boundary. Dale was sort of expected in the next few days but I haven't seen him since and attempts to find out what was shot (old male, female, young something) have proved fruitless as the shooter won't answer my enquiries. I choose to live in hope that Dale is just out there somewhere healthy and growing. I don't know if any of you have had close contact with a joey. They are an extremely pleasant creature to raise and care for and my heart has now been broken too many times by the reality of human actions and cruelty and indifference. If I were to believe Dale was the one shot I'd be useless for days while dealing with the impact and I can't afford to lose days.

I respectfully insist that the shooting of Kangaroos by landholders under the current licencing system be halted. Drought and vehicle accidents will continue to take many creatures but the shooting does not need to. There is so little information available on population sizes and distribution that no one could honestly say if shooting is sustainable or not - even if there were some spurious economic justification to continue.

I contacted every government agency or department that has anything at all to do with the granting of Licences to landholders for the shooting of Kangaroos in NSW. At the end of what proved to be an exercise in fury and futility I discovered that in reality there is no oversight of how many roos are being shot by whom and where. No notice seems to be taken of how many licences are held in

specific areas so the situation arises where apparently it is perfectly legal for three adjoining landholders in one small valley to all shoot roos from the same mobs.

I have checked the regulations on what should happen if a Non Commercial cull is to take place and we have never been notified by our neighbours that they were about to cull which I believe they are required to do.

I drove along Donald Rd and Herbert Park Rd, which are the roads either side of Donald Creek, yesterday. One of the call outs I did a few years ago was on Donald Road where a roo had been caught between two new fences either side of the road and had ended up being struck by a car. Her joey had then been caught after an extended chase.

There has been an increase in human population along Donald Road and many people have put in new, tall, net and barbed wire fencing. The fencing is not just along the roads but all over the landscape effectively fracturing travel paths across it.

There's an argument I've heard about Kangaroos dying in their hundreds during drought. I put it to you that there's a great difference between dying of thirst in a drought and dying of thirst because of an exclusion fence. Or dying upside down while your broken leg is trapped in an exclusion fence.

And then there's Cluster Exclusion Fencing. What an abomination against the natural environment. I have only just become aware that 18 landholders with the assistance of the NSW Government have established an area encompassed by Exclusion Fencing that totals 1,770,000 hectares, Cluster Fencing. I simply don't understand how the economic desires of 18 landholders can completely override everything else. If this was a Mine there would have to have been extensive environmental Impact Statements prepared for a project with such an enormous footprint on the landscape. After all the entire purpose of Cluster Exclusion fencing is to HAVE an effect on the environment.

It leaves me speechless that the Commercial Hunting folk think they have any sort of social licence to operate, even if they were to adhere to Best Practice. Best Practice includes the brutal killing of joeys by either bashing out their brains or some other manual process. If this were more generally known in the community, the broader community that doesn't stand to gain economically, any claim to Social Licence would be howled down. What has real, demonstrated Social Licence is the efforts made by ordinary people to assist native creatures in distress. The recent fires in NSW saw the most amazing outpouring of assistance to wildlife groups. Our one group has more supplies of pouches and bags and blankets and 'gear' than we can comfortably house. We even received a donation of small soft brushes (very useful as it turns out) from a makeup company in the USA, dozens of them! I can't list the amount and variety of donations we received from all over Australia and the world.

Dear Committee members,

Please understand that this submission has taken days to prepare because each day as I do a little more I have to contend with the constant throbbing pain in my chest where I used to have a whole heart. I wish I was being dramatic or poetic but I'm being truthful. I cry and rage and swear and sob as I remember and write. I'm a practical sort of person who kills roosters if necessary and understands that life is not all sunny and fun. Life is actually red and raw and nothing gets out of here alive.

What we are deliberately doing to our environment and the impact this has on the plants and creatures that MAKE our environment is so shameful.

It's also mind-bogglingly incomprehensible but

you have a chance to 'clean up' one small area of human mess and destruction by changing the way Kangaroos are treated in this State.

*My partner is studying Climate Science. This in itself would have been enough to have a serious impact on his mental health but the almost daily shooting on one neighbouring property or another and the regular finds of wounded or dead roos tipped him into a serious mental health condition. He found it no longer tolerable to live near humans and has been an itinerant forest dweller since March 2020. Winter here in New England is cold and yet camping in very basic conditions is better for his mental health than having to live here and be exposed to our neighbours activities.

While he resided here for 13 years he assumed responsibility for keeping Rabbits and Foxes under control. doesn't like killing anything at all but has always kept the bigger picture in mind and so while he had to kill creatures he always took great care to do so humanely.

He was out most mornings and evenings. He came across over a dozen creatures he had to euthanize over the first year as a result of the shooting, sometimes cruel and negligent, by the neighbours. One that had been shot 5 times, none immediately fatal and several had been gut shot and just left, yet another had had one rear foot almost shot off and was found around 10am on our bottom flat. The shooting always occurs in the evenings so these animals had often suffered for hours before being found.

Given one of these neighbours portrays himself as a professional I fear for the cruelty being dealt out at his hands in the course of his 'work' given his lack of accuracy witnessed by my partner. On

Tuesday

20th April I was about to upload my submission when I received a call about a joey needing care.

This Joey had been found on Mt Duval beside his recently deceased mother by two researchers. Mt Duval is attached to Newholme and both are controlled by the University of New England. The entire large area is closed to the public. Researchers visit several times a year however for this joey to have been found on the morning he needed rescue is amazing. The researchers contacted friends of mine who live in a cottage on Newholme seeking assistance. I was called and we arranged for the joey to be brought down and then driven out to the main gate where I collected him. Next stop was the Vet to have him checked and the Macropod coordinator from NTWC met me there with the appropriate formula.

So altogether 8+ people interrupted their busy mornings to assist this exceptionally lucky little eastern grey joey.

I'm telling you this so you get a picture of the level of care that exists in the community for our native wildlife. This is a small community but still many people dropped everything to help.

It's now Thursday, the joey is now called Lucky Little Daniel and seems to be doing well. He's got the hang of feeding from a bottle and can forward roll into a pouch. He is about 220 days old so this is the time he would begin to leave the pouch for short lengths of time. I've included this story, and a photo, just because I thought it might be a small happy interlude in your work for this Inquiry. I also wanted you to know that the people who care are all out here doing what we can, many won't write a submission but they are out here doing it anyway.

Thank you so much for your time and efforts

Zeri Hudaverdi