

Submission
No 398

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

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

Dear Parliament,

Within this letter I would like to give a personal account of issues relating to the health and wellbeing of macropods in NSW, in particular my local area of Bathurst (and surrounds) NSW. I am not representing any organisation, I am simply trying to let you know that I think our native Australian wildlife is very special and deserves protection. I hope this letter assists in your enquiry of macropods in NSW. My name is _____ and I worked as a full time nurse until my passion for kangaroos interrupted my career path and I decided to devote my time and energy to these animals. I am obsessed with understanding the kangaroo brain. I believe that these animals show amazing affection for those in their mob. I see the bonds between mother and baby and the grief expressed when they are separated. I also have had the privilege to observe the role of the alpha male and the care he has for the females within his mob. I have seen how my orphaned joeys bond and connect with one another which assists in their recovery and rehabilitation and I am also very privileged in being able to bond with the joeys as they grow. Over the past few years my success in raising the joeys is from commitment, intensive care around the clock and long hours spent with them. I also am regimented with feeding times and obsessive with cleanliness of utensils. I can't leave the house for more than a couple of hours, I have no holidays and get little sleep. Usually the sleep I have is with a joey in my arms or on my chest so he or she can listen to my heartbeat for comfort. The washing machine is constantly going, cleaning endless pouches, towels and wipes and the sink is always full of glass bottles and teats to be scrubbed and sterilised for use again. There are always little surprise nuggets on the floor and the home has a comforting wild aroma. The reason for me telling you this is not for a pat on the back, I am letting you know this because most of the time these joeys come into care because of the reckless behaviour, actions and quick thrills of people who in one bullet for example can leave devastation on mobs and tie me down for months.

I would like to personally thank you for instigating an enquiry into macropods in NSW and I believe that you will find that there are massive problems on many levels and complexities within NSW in regards to the health and wellbeing of macropods.

Health and wellbeing issues affecting macropods that will be addressed in this letter include the following:

Decline in numbers

Human interactions with macropods - ignorance, roads & guns.

Kangaroo & Death of joeys in care

Release site bottleneck

Decline in numbers - I live in the small village of Rockley, 30 Kilometers south of Bathurst. Over the years of living in Rockley, I have traveled extensively throughout the surrounding area for work. I usually travel within the hours of dawn and dusk which are the times where kangaroos are most active. In the past three years in particular, I have seen a dramatic decline in numbers of both mobs of kangaroos and individual numbers within mobs. The most common macropods in the area are Eastern Grey Kangaroos. There are also Wallaroos, Swamp Wallabies and Red Necked Wallabies. Three years ago during travel time, I would pass mobs exceeding 50 eastern grey kangaroos in some places such as Rockley to Newbridge, Blayney to Orange, Rockley to Oberon via Black Springs. In the past six to twelve months I am lucky to see three or four individual kangaroos in those same areas. Almost daily I travel from Rockley to Bathurst via Rockley Mount which is a suitable habitat and corridor for macropods and other native Australian species. During the past few years I would be pulling on average one macropod carcass off the road every two to three days. In the past year even the number of road kill has declined. This is not due to driver awareness, it demonstrates the dwindling number of macropods in the area. I have a grave concern for the future of macropods in the local area.

Human Interaction with Macropods -

Ignorance - The Central West NSW is well known for its agricultural purposes. I am amazed how many people in the local area believe a common misconception that kangaroos are responsible for widespread devastation of crops and that they are in "plague proportions". When people visit from local and far places, almost every time there is a conversation of kangaroos I hear questions such as "aren't there too many kangaroos around here?" or "I thought kangaroos are a pest" and "they are such a problem for farmers". I blame this on generational rumors which have not moved with the times, lack of education and ignorance. People in the local area do not want them on their land at all and many have gun licences and shoot them when they see them- just because they are there. The local people need educating on the importance of protecting our unique Australian Fauna, how to exist harmoniously with it and I feel that if they knew how special these animals are, they would be more reluctant to harm them. Education is a very easy solution if funding is available such as educating children in schools, TV commercials, billboards on roads, social media to name a few examples. Koalas have had a lot of media exposure and people are now aware of the decline in numbers, they are not aware that Kangaroos face extinction on a local level.

Roads - Kangaroos cannot move freely around central west NSW. Kangaroos have to face ignorant locals with guns, busy roads and fences. Even though roads and fencing cannot be changed, drivers need to become more aware of slowing down during dawn and dusk and through kangaroo corridors. I doubt anyone notices the small diamond shaped yellow and black kangaroo signs. Drivers also need to understand the

importance of checking the welfare of the kangaroo if they collide with it and understanding that this is their responsibility. Drivers also need to learn how to check a pouch and the steps to follow if they find a joey. These things should be taught when drivers are passing their driver test through the Roads and Maritime Services NSW. I have driven on occasions at times such as 11 am and have pulled cold kangaroo carcasses off the road which would have been struck that night or early in the morning. By this time of the day presumably thousands of cars would have driven straight past the kangaroo carcass maybe avoiding re striking it, however more responsibility needs to be put on drivers to move it off and check the pouch. I believe that if drivers can check a pouch they can potentially halve the kangaroo road toll. It would be ideal if speed limits could be reduced in places of abundant wildlife or known corridors during times of dawn and dusk - similar to that of school zones.

Guns - I can say without a doubt that kangaroos are being slaughtered inhumanely and this includes female kangaroos with joeys in the pouch. I can confirm this because in the last little orphan group of 8 Eastern Grey kangaroos that I released, 4 of those were found in their mothers pouch. Their Mum's had been shot and joeys left to die. Some of these joeys don't make release. They come in physically healthy, however because they are too traumatised, they give up in care. I can see they have given up by their eyes. Prior to that group of 8, I released a group of four Eastern Greys and two Wallaroos. Out of that six, two (including a wallaroo) were in care because of gunshot. I now have a group of seven Eastern Greys and one of those has entered care because of someone with a gun. This little Eastern Grey is only 800 grams. Her mother was shot in the hip and suffered. Because of mum's suffering the joey has fractures in almost every rib down the left side and a fractured sternum from being rolled on by her dying mum. Her name is Hope. I will be caring for Hope for the next 8 months while she grows independent. Wildlife carers receive little to no respite from the constant suffering that these animals endure. Every day is a reminder of the cruelty inflicted upon these innocent creatures at the hands of the Australian people. I implore parliament to look into the reality of what happens to kangaroos when no one is looking - at night, in our bushland and on properties. We should be protecting them. I would like to see more restrictions around gun licences. NSW should have authorities patrolling the national parks, pine plantations and reserves because these people do not care what and where they shoot. I am not going to comment on harvesting kangaroos for sales purposes as I don't have personal experience with this. I have heard and read about how inhumane commercial harvesting is and I hope that other letters and experiences will have enough of an impact for change and to put an end to this industry.

Kangaroo and death of joeys in care - There are a number of wildlife organisations within NSW which assist to organise and coordinate the care needed for injured, orphaned and sick wildlife. While these organisations have good intentions, they fall short in some areas. Education of members is one issue I have noticed. There is a macropod course which runs for one day allowing the recipients of this one day course to be able to attend to and care for orphaned joeys. The complexities of joeys is such that there is absolutely no possibility one could learn all there is needed in a day. The result is carers with very sick and dying joeys. or , carers who, through "trial and error" have managed to work out how to look after joeys with *some* success. I am also a culprit of this "trial and error" method which is devastating for me to look back and know that some of the deaths in my care could have easily been avoided if I was more informed. As a carer I know other carers

around the central west NSW and have witnessed shocking practice leading to further suffering of the already traumatised joey and ultimately death of the joey. The most alarming problem is that carers seem to have no insight into their wrong doing. This, however, is not all the fault of the wildlife organisation or the carer. There seems to be little to no information/research done in the area of macropod care and macropods in general. I have heard so many carers and veterinarians say that “sometimes they just die” I don’t at all believe that this is a true or fair statement. There is always a reason for the death of a joey in care. I believe that all macropod carers should legally undertake a recognised accredited course on caring for macropods prior to being able to take on joeys in care. I have had many experiences with taking sick or injured joeys to veterinarians. Veterinarians who mainly have dogs and cats as clients and really don't understand how to treat macropods. There is no depth of understanding in treatments of pain, suitable antibiotics, resolution of fractures and wound management for the macropod. There is also difficulty or lack of knowledge in diagnosing problems leading to guess work in treatment. Veterinarians' decision to euthanize macropods are quick. Kangaroos and joeys are euthanized when there is an unclear outcome and a lot of the time a chance to survive is not even contemplated.

I am aware that large macropods are difficult to manage, especially when they are scared, hurt or disoriented. Within the Central West NSW there are two people that I know of who are licenced to dart macropods and a handful of people who are licenced to euthanize macropods with firearms. Everyday there are multiple alerts for macropods needing these services and a lot of the time they go without because there is no availability. Darting and relocating is a very successful event in most cases, however because of the lack of people who can attend to this, the end result is not as desirable and the wellbeing of the macropod suffers. An easy solution to this problem is educating/ training willing people to assist with and attend to darting to relocate and euthanizing with firearms. I myself would be willing to learn both of those skills and I am sure many others would be too.

Release site bottleneck - As mentioned, I live in Rockley which is a beautiful part of the Central West NSW. Unfortunately I cannot release my kangaroos here when they are independent enough to leave. Rockley would be a suitable habitat for macropods to be released, however because of the risk of human contact (shooters and roads), they cannot stay here. If you look at the Central West NSW, where would you release a kangaroo that you have raised for months? There is suitable habitat everywhere, however nowhere that isn't populated by people and risk of being run over or shot. This is a widespread problem for carers who get their macropods to releasable size. I take my kangaroos to a place which is safe. It is the only place where the owner of the land has had his land protected by law. Many other people take their macropods there too. It is up to the carer to find a suitable release site for the animal. Wildlife organisations such as WIRES do not assist with this. There is no land which is for the purposes of release. This is a major issue for the longevity of the macropod which has been in care or in need of relocation. I am concerned that there are no safe areas for macropods leaving them vulnerable to harm.

These issues are just a handful of issues surrounding the health and wellbeing of macropods in NSW.

I hope I have provided some insight and assisted with your enquiry.

Once again I thank you for giving me the opportunity to be an advocate for one of the most amazing creatures on this planet and I hope that this inquiry will prevent NSW from extinction on a local level and also assist in the prevention of cruelty of these iconic creatures.

Sincerely and regards

Below - Photo of Hope.



