

Supplementary
Submission
No 280a

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

Organisation: Pastoralists' Association of West Darling

Date Received: 8 September 2021

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Pastoralists' Association

of West Darling Inc.

Registered under NSW Government Fair Trading

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

Supplementary Submission.

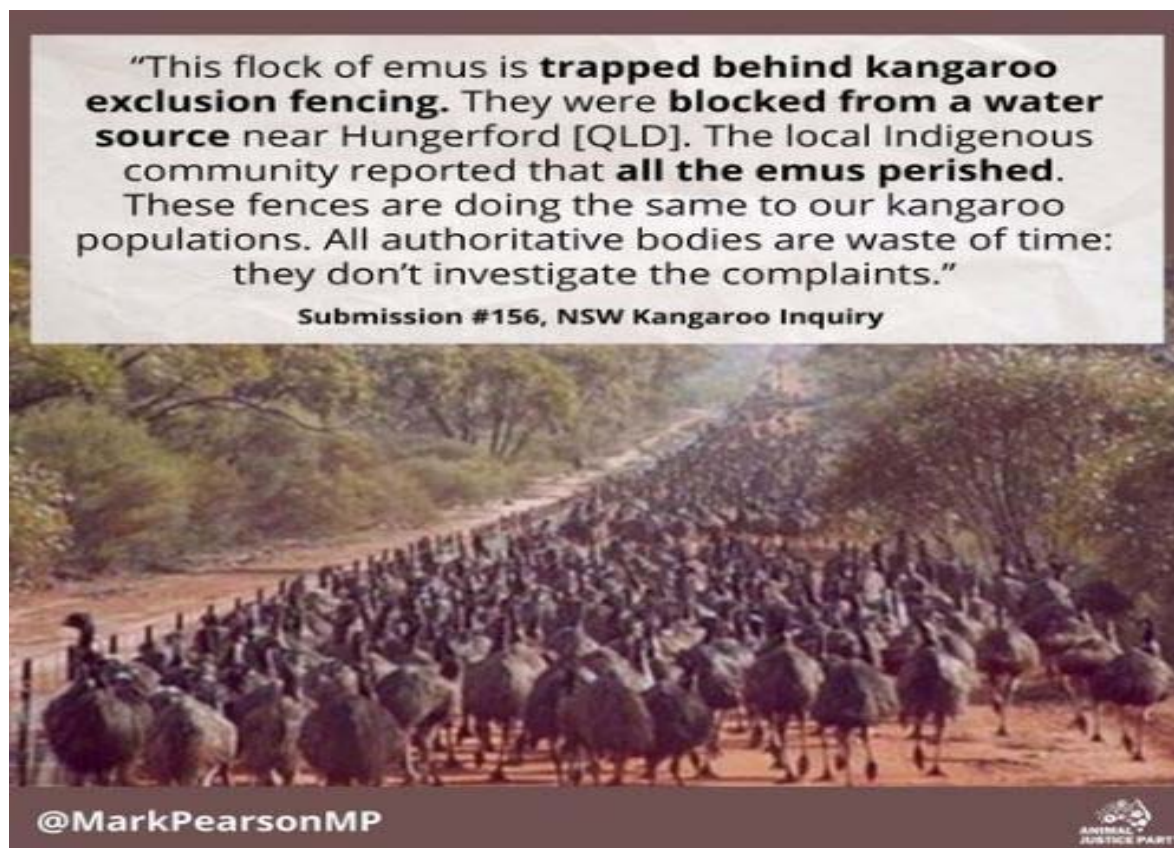
The Pastoralists' Association of West Darling (PAWD) has taken a close interest in the evidence presented to the inquiry into the health and wellbeing of kangaroos and other macropods in New South Wales by way of reading submissions and watching the public hearings. A lot of accurate evidence has been presented to the inquiry, but equally a significant quantity of misleading, and in some cases completely inaccurate evidence has also been presented. This is deeply concerning, as the value of the Inquiry's findings and recommendations could be diminished by the principle of "[garbage in, garbage out](#)", and some of this inaccurate evidence has subsequently been distributed and shared via social media. PAWD suggests that it is incumbent on the Committee Members to identify and dismiss evidence that is inaccurate. Below are several examples of inaccurate evidence presented to the Inquiry.

Example one: [Evidence](#) presented by Mr Mick McIntyre stated that "*kangaroos do not prosper from land clearance or the installation of watering points*". This is misleading on two counts. Firstly, vast swathes of western NSW (where many of the State's kangaroos live) are not cleared. [Satellite data](#) actually demonstrates that there has been a massive increase in vegetation across western NSW over recent decades. Secondly, as referenced in PAWD's initial [submission](#) to this Inquiry, only areas within 10kms of permanent water are permanently habitable by kangaroos, and there are very few natural permanent sources of water in the landscape west of the Darling River. Without access to artificial waters the distribution of kangaroos in western NSW would be extremely limited. The location of natural and artificial water sources in the White Cliffs area, and their impact on kangaroo distribution, is very well documented on pages 28-29 of [Living with kangaroos](#): a guide to kangaroos and their management in the Murray-Darling Basin. Mr McIntyre's evidence that kangaroos do not prosper or benefit from artificial waters is undermined by every drought in western NSW, when kangaroos die around drying waterpoints (as depicted in this photo of bogged kangaroos predated by pigs on NPWS managed land during the recent drought).



Example two: [Evidence](#) presented by Mr Raymond Mjadwesch - and repeated by others - stated that maximum kangaroo population growth rate is only ~10% per annum. However, evidence of peer reviewed research that found much higher population growth rates was presented to the Inquiry in [answers](#) to supplementary questions by the NSW Department of Planning Industry & Environment (DPIE). Indeed, Mr Mjadwesch subsequently quoted a maximum population growth rate of 55%, attributed to Caughley, in [supplementary notes](#) tendered the Inquiry Committee. PAWD recommends that Mr Mjadwesch's evidence regarding maximum kangaroo population growth rates be peer reviewed, and in the event that his evidence is found to be misleading then it should be disregarded by this Inquiry and struck from the record.

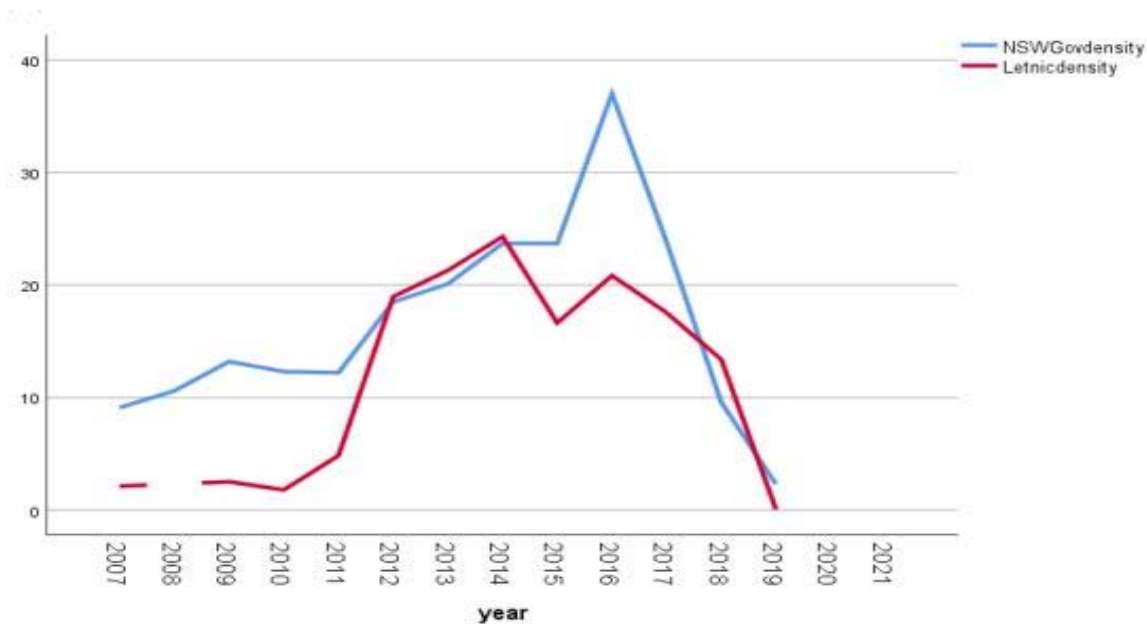
Example three: A photo included in [evidence](#) submitted by an anonymous person – and subsequently distributed online by Inquiry Deputy Chair Mark Pearson MP as a [post](#) on his Facebook page – is improperly captioned as showing a flock of emus congregating along exclusion fencing near Hungerford, QLD.



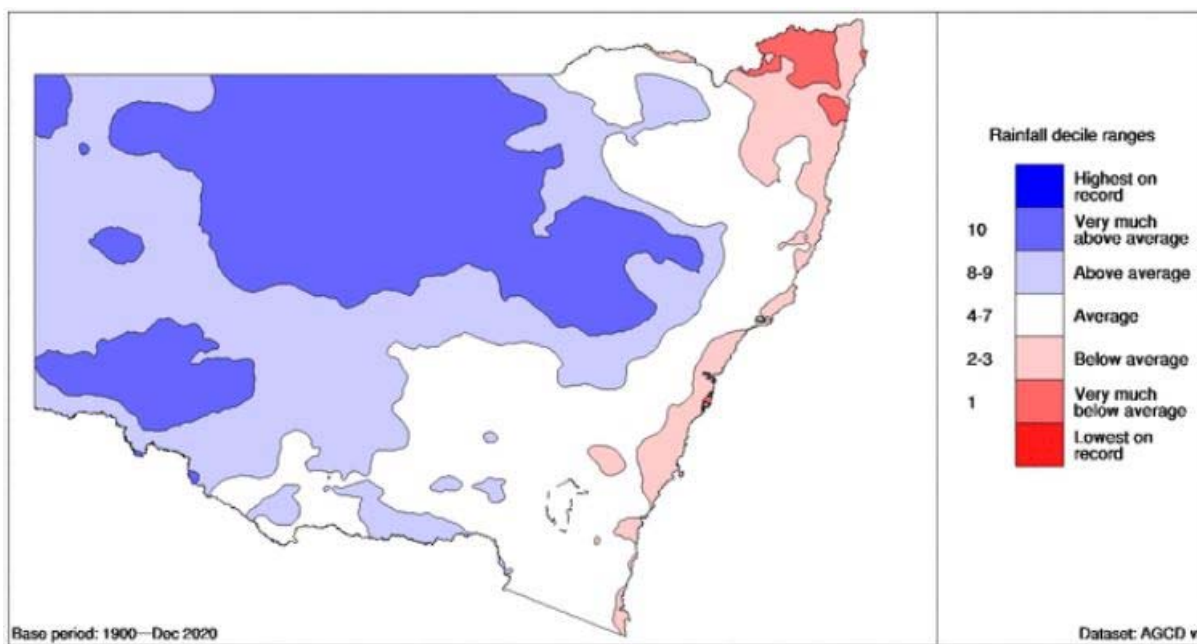
This photo actually depicts a flock of emus congregating on the State Barrier Fence in Western Australia, and was posted online by the WA Department of Agriculture and Food during or before 2013. It can be viewed online with references to the correct source [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#). The WA State Barrier Fence prevents wild dog attacks and crop damage by emus in agricultural areas of Western Australia. It is important to note that the emus in the photo had enough resources to survive and reproduce to these numbers outside the fence, and if they turned away from the fence and walked in the opposite direction there is no man-made barrier that would prevent them from walking all the way to Queensland.

As noted in PAWD's [responses](#) to supplementary questions, the Committee should exercise caution as to the reliability and usefulness of evidence presented to this Inquiry by animal rights activists. It is most concerning that the Committee should accept evidence that is clearly misleading. Furthermore, publishing misleading material to social media, from where it has been subsequently been shared, serves to undermine the credibility of this Inquiry, and raises questions as to whether members of the Committee are applying the necessary due diligence to separating fact from fiction in the evidence the Inquiry has received.

During the course of the Inquiry the accuracy of kangaroo population estimates and the veracity of associated population graphs produced by DPIE (and predecessor Departments) have been called into question by a number of stakeholders. As noted in PAWD's [answers](#) to supplementary questions and by other stakeholders, falls shown in the population graphs correspond with drought in NSW, which is a good indication that the population estimates are reliable. Furthermore, [evidence](#) tendered in answers to supplementary questions given by Professor Michael Letnic included a graph that demonstrated a correlation between kangaroo population data collected by him and kangaroo population data collected by DPIE (see below).



Professor Letnic's data and correlation of DPIE data with wet and dry years provide an important counterpoint to claims that the DPIE data is inaccurate. Conversely, PAWD is not aware of any stakeholder who disputes the DPIE data having offered an alternative dataset that is scientifically robust and peer reviewed. Furthermore, Inquiry Chair Cate Faehrmann MP was incorrect to state that 2000 was a drought year in the [Hearing](#) on 19 August. Rainfall across commercial kangaroo harvest zones in NSW during 2000 was well above average (see below), with record flooding experienced in parts of western NSW. Resulting pasture growth was sufficient to support breeding by kangaroos through to the end of 2001, and this is supported by the DPIE population graphs.



PAWD notes the evidence of Mr Mjadwesch to the [Hearing](#) of Friday 11 June included a statement indicating that kangaroo populations typically exhibit a 70% bias towards females. This is in line with personal observations of pastoralists across western NSW, who have repeatedly reported a high percentage of females in populations of kangaroos on their properties. The male bias in the commercial harvest sits at a long term average of higher than 70%, and importantly, larger males are more likely to perish during drought due to their higher feed requirements (given that droughts kill far more kangaroos than commercial harvesting does). These factors go to supporting the female bias stated by Mr Mjadwesch and observed by pastoralists, which in turn sustains high rates of population increase when seasonal conditions are favourable. Kangaroos are opportunistic grazers, and move to areas where pastures have received effective rainfall. Accordingly, kangaroo numbers in any particular area can rise (or fall) quite dramatically over time, and are reflected in what would appear to the inexperienced observer as impossible rises and falls in kangaroo population data.

A line of inquiry in supplementary questions put to DPIE by the Committee explored whether commercial harvesting was sustainable during drought, and DPIE's [response](#) is particularly noteworthy, namely: *"Populations can be harvested during a drought because there is compensatory mortality. Animals that would likely have perished during a drought are harvested, and those that remain have more resources, which improves their survival."* PAWD agrees with this assessment. It reflects what pastoralists do with their livestock numbers as seasonal conditions deteriorate – they sell livestock to reduce demand on diminishing resources, thereby giving remaining livestock a better chance of survival. The irony of not commercially harvesting (or non-commercially culling) kangaroos during times of severe drought is that it serves to put the whole population of kangaroos in a region at greater risk of death. This is reflected in population data gathered during the course of the recent drought, whereby the population of kangaroos in Sturt National Park recorded a more precipitous fall than the population of kangaroos on private lands in the surrounding Tibooburra Zone, where commercial harvesting and culling is permitted. Importantly, instant death associated with a head shot is infinitely more humane than a slow agonising death from starvation and/or thirst. The Committee needs to recognise the terrible animal welfare outcomes associated with drought, and be aware that inappropriate management decisions only serves to increase the number of kangaroos dying in these unacceptable circumstances.

Evidence presented to this Inquiry expressing disapproval of exclusion fencing has not gone unnoticed by PAWD. The principal role of exclusion fencing is protecting domestic livestock from the predations of wild dogs, but it can also be used to manage kangaroo numbers. Pastoralists don't generally seek to erect exclusion fencing as it is expensive and much of the terrain in western NSW is unsuited to this style of fencing, but it is an option if other control methods (eg: shooting) are rendered ineffective by regulatory intervention. Suggestions that hundreds of kilometres of exclusion fencing has been erected all over NSW are inaccurate. Most exclusion fencing is to be found in Queensland. PAWD reminds the Committee that [evidence](#) presented by Dr Benjamin Allen actually demonstrated that exclusion fencing benefitted kangaroos. It is curious that Inquiry Deputy Chair Mark Pearson MP has expressed strong disapproval of exclusion fencing throughout this Inquiry, but recently called on the NSW Government to install exclusion fencing to protect koalas in this [post](#) on his Facebook page.

The Inquiry Committee has taken a good deal of accurate and compelling evidence from a small number of reliable witnesses. It is incumbent on the Committee and in the best interests of kangaroos to disregard misleading evidence given to the Inquiry. It should be clear to the Committee that failing to support commercial kangaroo harvesting would have the perverse outcome of encouraging non-commercial culling, illegal shooting and exclusion fencing, as well as increasing road kills, environmental and agricultural losses, and population wipe-outs during drought. PAWD made a number of recommendations designed to encourage commercial harvesting of kangaroos in its initial [submission](#) to this Inquiry. These recommendations are a place for the Committee to start when drafting the Inquiry's recommendations.

This submission is made in good faith.

Lachlan Gall.

PAWD Kangaroo Management Representative.

8th September, 2021.