



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEES

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2019-2020 Supplementary Questions

Portfolio Committee No. 7 – Planning and Environment

ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

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ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

Questions from the Hon Mark Pearson MLC

Dingoes as apex predators.

1. Could the Minister please provide the details of the research that is currently being undertaken by your department in regards to the role of dingoes as apex predators and their impacts on ecosystems?

ANSWER:

I am advised the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment's Science Division is not currently undertaking any specific research into the role of dingoes as apex predators.

2. Are there reports available from the department showing the progress of these studies and are they available to the public?

ANSWER:

I am advised no Departmental reports have been prepared.

The impact of exclusion fencing on kangaroos and other native animals

3. Can the Minister advise what role his department plays on the interagency Kangaroo Management working group, what agencies are represented and whether the working group's minutes and reports are publicly available?

ANSWER:

The interagency Kangaroo Management working group includes representatives from the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, including:

- Department of Primary Industries
- Game Licensing Unit
- Local Land Services
- Environment, Energy and Science (EES).

Specifically, from EES there are representative from Policy, Strategy and Science Division, Biodiversity and Conservation Division (administering the commercial Kangaroo Management Program) and the National Parks and Wildlife Service (administering non-commercial licensing). Local Land Services provides secretariat support for the working group. Minutes and reports are not made publicly available.

Non-commercial kangaroos - drop tags

4. What accountability mechanisms are in place now that the requirement for drop tags has been removed and how are the new tally systems monitored for accuracy?
5. Now that drop tags are no longer required, does the Minister think that leaving corpses in the paddock is counterintuitive in terms of providing food for introduced animals such as foxes, cats, wild dogs and pigs.?

ANSWER Q4 - 5:

Drop tags were not an effective method for monitoring non-commercial kangaroo licensing compliance. The National Parks and Wildlife Service previously relied, and continues to rely, on returns from licensees to monitor the number of kangaroos culled under non-commercial licences.

No other Australian jurisdiction requires drop tags for non-commercial kangaroo culling.

Under previous non-commercial licensing conditions, landholders were required to leave carcasses where they lay. The requirement to leave carcasses in the place they were shot was removed in August 2018, at the same time as drop tag requirements were removed. In addition, under new licensing conditions, a landholder can now use carcasses for non-commercial secondary purposes (such as feral animal baits or pet food). This enables landholders to utilise carcasses if they have a legitimate approved need or concern.

Commercial kangaroo licences – removal of head from carcasses.

6. I understand the Minister's previous answer regarding inspections for body wounds, but this does not address concerns that the head shot was a clean kill. With the head being removed before inspection, how can the Minister be confident that an unknown percentage of kangaroos are not suffering from jaw and face wounds before being killed?

ANSWER:

I am advised:

Commercial kangaroo harvesters will not be licenced unless they have Firearms Accreditation AMPG306 - Use Firearms to Harvest Wild Game and Commercial Kangaroo Harvester, provided by a registered training organisation.

Licensed harvesters are accredited shooters and their business is based on humane harvesting of kangaroos. If kangaroos are not harvested humanely, the carcasses are condemned by the receiving animal dealer and the harvester will not receive payment.

7. Can the Minister explain why the evisceration of kangaroo carcasses in the paddock, leaving behind entrails and heads, is an acceptable industry practice given that it creates a food source for introduced animals?

ANSWER:

I am advised:

Carcasses are dressed in the field to minimise the risk of food contamination prior to consignment. I understand that the University of Sydney is investigating interactions of wild animals with animal carcasses and its work may provide some insights.

8. The commercial kangaroo harvesting industry relaxed its male-only policy last year.

Would the Minister consider introducing a ban on gender selection for commercial hunting of kangaroos, as a precautionary measure given that no research has been undertaken in the impacts of male only kills?

ANSWER:

The Kangaroo Industry Association Australia (KIAA) relaxed its male only policy during 2018. Industry members not affiliated with the KIAA did not impose the male only policy on their business. Genetic studies on kangaroos have shown kangaroos have high genetic diversity and gender selective harvesting will not affect the national populations.

Licence conditions for kangaroo commercial harvesters.

9. Is the minister concerned that the Kangaroo Management Taskforce is proposing to reduce carcass weights given that a kangaroo below the 14kg weight is a juvenile and not of breeding age or size?

ANSWER:

I am advised:

The Department is aware of a proposal by the Kangaroo Management Taskforce to reduce minimum carcass weights. Current commercial harvester licence conditions state that a licensee must not sell a kangaroo carcass that weighs less than 14 kilograms (from which the heart liver, lungs, tail, forearms (below elbow) and feet - below tarsals/fibula joint, have been removed), or 15 kilograms where the body parts are still attached.

A decision to reduce carcass weights would only be made following an assessment into the potential impact on the population, and if the Department has confidence it would be able to monitor and report on the impact of reducing weight limits on population health, welfare and ecological sustainability.

The industry has not proposed to reduce minimum weights. Representatives from the Kangaroo Industry Association Australia and Australian Game Meat Producers Association on the Department's Kangaroo Management Advisory Panel have previously stated the economic benefits of harvesting small animals are reduced.

The Environment, Energy and Science Group will work with the Department of Primary Industries on an environmental assessment and research program involving proportional harvesting of smaller kangaroos as necessary.

10. Kangaroos killed by NSW land holders with non-commercial kangaroo licences for the periods:

- 8th August 2018 to 23/9/2019: 279,454
- 1st January 2018 to 7th August 2018: 135,886
- 2017: 134,345
- 2016: 107,575

Minister, are you alarmed at the dramatic increase in kangaroo slaughter since the removal of drop tag and the easing of licensing requirements?

ANSWER:

I am advised regular monitoring of licence data indicates that the total number of kangaroos authorised for non-commercial culling and commercial harvest has remained within ecologically sustainable limits.