

The building blocks of extinction and biodiversity loss in Victoria: Australian Wildlife Protection Council submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the extinction crisis in Victoria. June 2020.



**Australian
Wildlife
Protection
Council**
A voice for wildlife

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7 June 2020

Introduction:

Australian Wildlife Protection Council Inc (AWPC)

The AWPC is a not-for-profit wildlife education organisation and registered charity, founded by Arthur Queripel in 1969. The AWPC celebrates its 50th year of working on behalf of Australia's precious wildlife.

"Arthur Queripel remembers seeing smouldering piles of Mallee scrub and mounds of dead Kangaroos and Emus following the round-ups after clearing".

As the Mallee was cleared, Arthur witnessed mutilated Kangaroos on trucks as the commercial skin and meat trade got underway and saw too much casual cruelty. He sought help from the police, conservation departments and animal welfare organisations to no purpose, each organisation passing responsibility to the other. Arthur founded the *AWPC* with the aim of protecting Australian native animals from cruelty and exploitation. In the years following Arthur Queripel leadership, Maryland Wilson was the longest-serving president of the organisation. Maryland and many other notable wildlife defenders, here and overseas, worked tirelessly to help the most persecuted wildlife: Australia's national emblem, the Kangaroo.

The AWPC holds a significant historical archive covering half a century of the mistreatment of Australia's precious wildlife.

Peter Hylands, conservationist and film producer, is the current President of *the Australian Wildlife Protection Council* speaking on behalf of the national (and Victorian) AWPC committee and membership. Former Presidents include: Maryland Wilson, Peter Preuss, Arthur Queripel. Patron: Professor Peter Singer.

The natural world in Victoria

What appears to happen is that Australian native animals are continually pushed towards the brink, with all sorts of hideous claims about why they should be exterminated. Claims by the Victoria Government, even for animals like Koalas, were that they were overabundant. Prior to the 2020 fires the Victorian Government was suggesting that young Koalas should not be rescued from fire grounds.

The killing of native Australian wildlife is now so entrenched, and the sense of entitlement of governments promoting this behaviour and the individuals carrying it out, mean poor standards are applied. Just one example of many is

that in Victoria and following an extensive trial (from 2014) to turn Victoria's Kangaroos into pet food, the Government is not able to explain which species are being killed and consequently in what numbers.

So when Australian species have made that journey to the brink, many have gone over the edge, they become endangered, and then perhaps, if they are lucky, some attention and belated compassion is directed towards them. By then it is really too late.

So the trick is to stop endangering the native species that still remain and actually look after their habitat instead of ripping it down when every little bit of common sense provides a thousand reasons why the destruction should stop.

Learning about, and living with Australian wildlife, is an extraordinary privilege that must also be the right of future generations of Australians to enjoy.

Summary of recommendations

Climate change - Recommendation: Accelerate GHG emissions policies and review hazard reduction policies in Victoria based on scientific research. Apply pressure on Commonwealth Government to improve its performance. Key features here include questioning and moving beyond the idea that gas is a transitional energy source and improving governance and compliance (an active testing regime is required) in relation to building standards and energy codes in Victoria.

Economic structure - Recommendation: Within Victoria, urgently review those industries and activities that pose a significant threat to biodiversity in Victoria, the worst of all can either be replaced (coal), creating more jobs in renewables sector, are subsidised by the tax payer (many forestry practices) or are activities with no future that should cease with immediate effect, such as commercial harvesting of wildlife (Kangaroos) or hunting (Duck shooting) which contribute little to economic activity in the state and are significant actors in blocking out more beneficial knowledge based economic activity. Given that Victoria is currently very good at destroying its natural assets, a new way forward to help change current practices will be to develop a significant ecotourism industry. If we can do it for Penguins we can do it more broadly before it is too late.

The environmental impact v productivity of current farming methods in Victoria needs review, the Victorian Government should actively encourage farmers to learn to live with wildlife and more generally the natural world, the opposite is currently occurring.

Government - Recommendation: A long and deteriorating history of government conduct in relation to wildlife conservation clearly indicates that action is now required. In Victoria, that action is a restructuring of DELWP with the precise goal of extracting any responsibility for the care of biodiversity from this department and placing this vital task into the hands of a new department

with the sole purpose of protecting Victoria's environment and the plants and animals that live in it.

Human rights - Recommendation: Free from fear and threat - a new deal for wildlife carers and rescuers and proper protection for the lands surrounding wildlife shelters. The protection of people, their human rights and their property rights - for individuals and families investing in knowledge economy and conservation based activities and businesses in regional Victoria.

Protecting the web of life - Recommendation: Initiate proper and structured conservation activities and a state wide assessment of the current circumstances for Victoria's species, in doing so to build the understanding of how to avoid further endangerment of all species in Victoria. This should include state wide and cross state border plans and long term objectives for species with the resources to properly monitor the wellbeing of species against plans. We can no longer afford a situation where there is a conflict of interest between the organisations driving key threatening processes, organisations that are also the enforcer and legislator. This practice has been all too common in Victoria and has resulted in the poor outcomes we see today.

Building blocks of extinction 1: Climate change

The Victorian Government understands the importance of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions while Australia's overall performance remains poor. There are many issues relating to climate change in Victoria that need urgent action. While climate change is a key driver of biodiversity loss, in this submission we wish to concentrate on a range of other threatening processes of which the public have far less awareness. So in relation to climate change we make some top line comments only.

Performance is strongly driven by policies, in Australia's case these policies, driven by vested interests, have been inconsistent and can be described as generally poor. These shortcomings have a significant impact on wildlife and the natural infrastructure that sustains us all. Recent droughts, floods, heat and fire intensity describes the outcomes.

Australia's target of a 26 per cent reduction of 2005 GHG emission levels by 2030 is currently on track for only a genuine 7 per cent reduction (that is, without previous target carry-over "credits" being considered) in 2030. Poor policies mean that there continues to be limited action in transport, existing buildings, industrial processes, wastes and agriculture National Greenhouse Gas Inventory (NGGI) sectors. The Climate Change Performance Index, used by Climate Change Tracker, found that the best performing countries are Sweden, Denmark and Morocco, and the worst performing are Taiwan, Saudi Arabia and the US. New Zealand was ranked 34 and Australia 53 of the 58 countries assessed. If Australian fossil fuel exports are embedded into emissions it is likely that Australia's global share of emissions is somewhere in the region of 3.3 per cent.

Note: Latest GHG reduction figure for Australia provided by Graham Armstrong, Saturn Corporate Resources.

Flying Foxes in Victoria

Flying Foxes are a group of species that show extreme vulnerability to climate change because of mass die offs in heat events. This group of species is also harassed and still shot 'legally' in other regions of Australia. Populations of Flying Foxes are declining very quickly.

The Little Red Flying Fox and the Grey-headed Flying Fox are important to the local ecology of Victoria. Grey-headed Flying Foxes are permanent residents of Southern Victoria. Little Red Flying Foxes are migratory residents to northern Victoria. The Grey-headed Flying Fox is listed as threatened under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 and under the Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988.

Flying Fox species are at risk of extinction in Victoria and face a series of threats, including:

- Climate change and abnormal high temperatures causing mass deaths;
- High infant mortality;
- Slow reproductive rate of one young per annum;
- Being killed by farmers to protect fruit;
- Fatal injury from entrapment in fruit netting and fencing wire; and
- Ongoing harassment of roosting sites.

Flying Foxes are pivotal species in the ecology of Victoria, dispersing up to 60,000 seeds in a single night of foraging activity. Flying Foxes play a major role in the regeneration of hardwood forests and rainforests.

"The combination of extreme weather due to climate change and the particular heat sensitivity of these species mean that a pro-active management and support plan are essential to ensure the survival of Victoria's Flying Foxes into the future (cross border planning is also required). This work should be undertaken in collaboration with the extensive knowledge and skills of the Friends of Bats and Bushcare, the organisation led by Lawrence Pope". Peter Hylands

Conclusion: Key threatening process with poor remedial performance, driving questionable policies at Federal level, which impact circumstances in the State of Victoria.

Major concern: 2019-20 Australian wildfires may well account for one billion tons (US estimate) of greenhouse emissions. Full recovery of plant life is unlikely, partly for political reasons. COVID-19 lockdowns would have had some offsetting effect in 2020. But current trends and the patterns of fire in the landscape, including both wildfires and hazard reduction burns, increase the likelihood that the decline of plant life will impact the capacity of plants to capture carbon in the atmosphere.

Recommendation: Accelerate GHG emissions policies and review hazard reduction policies in Victoria based on scientific research. Apply pressure on

Commonwealth Government to improve its performance. Key features here include questioning and moving beyond the idea that gas is a transitional energy source and improving governance and compliance (an active testing regime is required) in relation to building standards and energy codes in Victoria.

Building blocks of extinction 2: Economic structure and lack of capacity for change and innovation

Like it or not exports shape economic performance. It is the type of exports that matter in shaping the outcomes for the natural world, as they do in shaping the kinds of employment available.

Harvard Economic Complexity Index 2019: *“Compared to a decade ago Australia’s economy has become less complex, worsening 22 positions to 93rd. This situation is driven by a lack of diversification of exports. Australia is less complex than expected for its income level. As a result, its economy is projected to grow slowly. The Growth Lab’s 2027 Growth Projections foresee growth in Australia of 2.2% annually over the coming decade, ranking in the bottom half of countries globally”.*

What the above statement from Harvard tells us is that, given current economic structures, Australia’s balance sheet can only be maintained by exploiting and degrading the environment.

As gas, coal and iron ore and other primary production dominate exports, instead of working towards diversification, the status quo has the strong support of the Commonwealth Government and this inevitably flows on to partly shape state policies. This lack of economic diversity puts the economy at increasing risk and charts a pathway to further destruction of the natural environment in order to maintain current levels of affluence. This in turn bodes ill for the future of biodiversity in Victoria and Australia generally. It reflects a way of thinking about place and this in turn is reflected in the other *building blocks of extinction* discussed in this submission.

Conclusion: The structure of the Victorian and Australian economies are therefore found to be a key driver of extinction and biodiversity loss.

Major concern: Given the way regional economic development is currently understood there are significant concerns about the ongoing likelihood of policies that further endanger biodiversity in an attempt to create the types of jobs and skills that politicians in Australia understand. In this way regional communities are wedged into unsustainable industries that damage the environment with few plans from government to chart a different future. Events surrounding the most recent Federal election in Queensland and the recent history (last 30 years) of the Latrobe Valley are just two such examples of many. Last minute attempts at economic fixes are very bad for communities, particularly so for regional communities, instead long-term planning is required.

Recommendation: Within Victoria, urgently review those industries and activities that pose a significant threat to biodiversity in Victoria, the worst of all can either be replaced (coal), creating more jobs in renewables sector, are subsidised by the tax payer (many forestry practices) or are activities with no future that should cease with immediate effect, such as commercial harvesting of wildlife (Kangaroos) or hunting (Duck shooting) which contribute little to economic activity in the state and are significant actors in blocking out more beneficial knowledge based economic activity.

The environmental impact v productivity of current farming methods in Victoria needs review, the Victorian Government should actively encourage farmers to learn to live with wildlife and more generally the natural world, the opposite is currently occurring.

Building blocks of extinction 3: The conduct of governments in Australia and specifically in Victoria

“Of wild animals there are not a great many in Egypt, but such as there are, are without exception held to be sacred. Anyone who deliberately kills one of these animals is punished with death. Should one be killed accidentally, the penalty is whatever the priests chose to impose. But for killing an Ibis or a Falcon, whether deliberately or not, the penalty is inevitably death”. Herodotus

ATCWs / commercial permits / duck shooting / rescue of wildlife from public fire grounds against a backdrop of international funding / culling of wildlife in state and national parks even as the fires burned

The combined result of all the above is catastrophic. Labor have escalated or allowed the assault on Victoria’s wildlife, near doubling the number of ATCWs when compared to the previous Liberal government, a trade in wildlife has been introduced for Macropods, duck shooting continues despite environmental conditions and rescues of wildlife have been blocked from state and national parks and other public lands. Despite the fires the killing of wildlife continues at scale.

- In Victoria in the ten-year period 2009-2018 inclusive a total of 32,147 ATCWs were issued for Australian species covering 1,513,605 animals.
- In Victoria, the total number of animals subject to ATCWs in the period 2016-2018 was 2.3 times higher than the number of animals subject to ATCWs 2009-2011.
- The number of ATCWs (permits) issued in 2016-2018 was 1.66 times higher than the number of ATCWs issued in the period 2009-2011.
- Victoria is also not the place to be if you happen to be a bird, 73 per cent of species subject to control in Victoria were bird species with a total of

397,549 birds, of which 182,721 or 45 per cent were from a range of Parrot species. We also need to remember that ATCWs are not the only way animals in Victoria die, so we can add another 4 million dead water birds (we are being modest in our calculations) in the last ten years to the tally in Victoria because of duck shooting in the state. So all up, that is around 4.5 million birds in the state in the last ten years.

- Politics and nature: The Victorian Labor Government was elected in November 2014 and has increased the number of animals killed across a range of mechanisms. The Labor tally in relation to ATCWs in the years 2015 – 2018 totals 16,010 ATCW permits covering 844,625 animals. In the previous four-year period the Liberal- National Coalition Government in Victoria (a government described to Peter Hylands by friend Dr Hugh Wirth, President of the RSPCA and WSPA (the world body) as extremely cruel) issued 11,146 ATCW permits covering 461,593 animals, 54 per cent of the Labor total.

Wombats in Victoria (Bare-nosed Wombat)

Here is an example of the unrelenting use of ATCWs despite the dire circumstances for a particular species. There is no understanding, or indeed empathy, in relation to knowing when to stop the killing. The history of Wombat species in Victoria is a terrible one.

Until a few months ago Wombats in a very large part of Victoria were not protected, and where they were protected in Victoria, in the period 2009-2018, Wombats were subject to numerous ATCWs (2,044) covering the control of 26,507 animals.

All this despite the desperate need for a statewide intervention for Sarcoptic Mange devastating the Bare-nosed Wombat population in Victoria.

"We need proper research to understand the threat level to Wombats in Victoria, concurrently with a well resourced support plan for active treatment now. There have been ecosystems in Tasmania with 95 per cent population loss from Sarcoptic Mange. The Bare-nosed Wombat in Victoria could be at threat of extinction and we just don't know". Peter Hylands

Impact of the Kangaroo pet food trial and subsequent trade in wildlife in Victoria

In Victoria in the years 2014 – 2018, 750,000 Kangaroos were authorised to be killed by ATCW / KPFT permits. The number of Kangaroos authorised roughly doubled once the pet food trial really got underway despite government statements that there would be no increase in killing rates once the trial commenced. 390,886 of these animals were authorised under KPFT of which around 212,000 were actually processed.

The reality, forget the spin, is that Kangaroo populations are being decimated across the State of Victoria, as are the family structures of these wonderful animals. The Kangaroos that remain are getting smaller, the larger animals are killed first, and the pouch dependent young are either killed in the most brutal of ways or die of starvation and trauma. And that takes out much of the next generation.

Red Kangaroo

Scamming the numbers example

In the 10-year period between 2009 and 2018 the Victorian Government issued permits to kill 49,141 Red Kangaroos in the State. That is more than 8 times their year 2000 population estimate. In 2010 the Victorian Government issued permits to kill a modest 15 Red Kangaroos, in 2017 they issued permits to kill a whopping 15,187 Red Kangaroos.

In the 2017 Victorian Government Kangaroo survey, they counted 23 Red Kangaroos (at vast expense) and this was then turned into a population estimate of 13,000 for that year. Having found very few Kangaroos at all in 2017, so desperate were the Victorian Government to turn Kangaroos into pet food, they had another go at a survey, this time they came up with a Red Kangaroo population of 44,000, having counted just 104.

The numbers become even more puzzling when we include young Red Kangaroos (joeys) which are killed by whacking them over the head with a bit of iron (that is if they are lucky). Young Kangaroos are not counted in the massacre. So lets say the permits the Victorian Government issued would be responsible for an additional 22,113 Red Kangaroos being massacred over the 10- year period described.

So all up, from a Victorian Government population estimate of 6,000 Red Kangaroos in the year 2000, permits were issued covering 71,254 Red Kangaroos including young. Add another, say, 6,000 Red Kangaroos for the permits issued in the years 2000 to 2008 plus young at 2,700. So all up the permits (estimate) issued to kill Red Kangaroos in the period since 2000 cover 79,954 animals. This killing of course also takes out the next breeding generation, as the Victorian Government requires that all dependent young must be killed.

So in 2018 we still end up with a Victorian Government population estimate of 44,000. This means there are still plenty more to kill? So given the evident inflation of the probable population the Red Kangaroo was removed from the commercial 'harvest' species list in Victoria in 2019.

Given the extensive exploitation of the Western Grey Kangaroo in Victoria in the last six years the situation for this species is likely to be similar to the one described for the Red Kangaroo in Victoria.

Victoria's Kangaroo quota system must be held to account

Along with the commercial industry exploiting wildlife come expensive aerial surveys, additional staff at tax payers expense to 'manage' this exploitation and a great deal of anxiety from residents living in the places where Kangaroos are butchered. Quotas are issued based on the survey numbers (which are extrapolated numbers analysed above for the case of the Red Kangaroo). This leaves two so called 'harvest' species in Victoria, the Western Grey Kangaroo and the Eastern Grey Kangaroo. Without (and see below) knowing which species are being killed and in what numbers it is impossible to set quotas for individual species. The quotas are therefore no more than a guessing game based on highly inflated population numbers. This is the road to extermination of species. The Victorian Government has been warned of these matters over and over again.

The killing of native Australian wildlife is now so entrenched and the sense of entitlement of governments promoting this behaviour and the individuals carrying it out mean poor standards are applied. Just one example of many is that in Victoria and following an extensive trial (from 2014) to turn Victoria's Kangaroos into pet food, the Government is not able to explain which species are being killed and consequently in what numbers. So six years after the commercial Kangaroo trade commenced in Victoria this time around, the following footnote appears in the commercially killed Kangaroo reports for 2020.

"Note: Note that the Western Grey (Kangaroo) figure is considered highly inflated, as the reporting tool only allows 'harvesters' to identify Western Greys which is creating user error – enhancements to the reporting tool will be implemented in 2020".

Note: AWPC President, Peter Hylands has already advised the Environment Minister (on several occasions) about his concerns regarding the decline in Western Grey Kangaroo populations. No specific response has ever been received.

State of play: Status of species of Kangaroo, Wallaby, Potoroo and Bettong in Victoria

Some simple facts for Victoria that tell a very grim story, yet the killing continues.

- Toolache Wallaby *Macropus greyi* EXTINCT
- Eastern Hare Wallaby *Lagorchestes leporides* EXTINCT
- Bridled Nailtail Wallaby *Onychogalea fraenata* EXTINCT
- Rufous-bellied Pademelon *Thylogale billardierii* EXTINCT
- Rufous Rat-kangaroo or Rufous Bettong *Aepyprymnus rufescens* EXTINCT
- Eastern Bettong *Bettongia gaimardi gaimardi* EXTINCT
- The Woylie or Brush-tailed Bettong *Bettongia penicillata* EXTINCT
- Long-nosed Potoroo *Potorous tridactylus* THREATENED – population in decline and fragmented populations highly vulnerable to fire

- Long-footed Potoroo *Potorous longipes* ENDANGERED – population in decline and fragmented populations highly vulnerable to fire
- Western Grey Kangaroo *Macropus fuliginosus* – when historical distribution records are compared the species is missing from almost 50 per cent of its former range, shot commercially since 2014. POPULATION IN STEEP DECLINE - AT SIGNIFICANT RISK
- Eastern Grey Kangaroo *Macropus giganteus* – former range fractured and fragmented, shot commercially since 2014 - POPULATION IN STEEP DECLINE
- Eastern Wallaroo *Macropus robustus robustus* ENDANGERED – extinct across 99 per cent of its former range in Eastern Victoria – REMAINING POPULATION IMPACTED BY WILDFIRES – CURRENT STATUS UNKNOWN
- Red-necked Wallaby *Macropus rufogriseus* – POPULATION SERIOUSLY IMPACTED BY WILDFIRES
- Red Kangaroo *Macropus rufus* – restricted in its declining range to far North West Victoria, the species used to occur in at least 50 per cent of Victoria. The species existence in Victoria is directly threatened by Victorian Government actions and has now been driven to the edge of EXTINCTION in the state. Removed from commercial industry list in the state
- Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby *Petrogale penicillata penicillata* - ENDANGERED – hunted to near extinction in Victoria, in 1908 alone 92,590 skins were marketed by a single company. LESS THAN 60 ANIMALS REMAIN in the wild in Victoria
- Black Wallaby or Swamp Wallaby *Wallabia bicolor* - POPULATION SERIOUSLY IMPACTED BY WILDFIRES

Education, propaganda and undemocratic behaviour

The conduct of DELWP is both secretive and misleading. The culture is a killing culture without responsibility and accountability. All matters relating to the care of biodiversity in the state must be the responsibility of a newly formed department with the care of and protection of biodiversity at its core. The Victorian Government is responsible for propaganda activities defaming wildlife in order to benefit cruel and out-dated commercial activities, **which disrupt other forms of economic development.**

“In early March 2020 I was working in the desert country to the west of Alice Springs, a remote place where I often stay. Coming in to see our friends in Hermannsburg I rang the Victorian ecodiv number 136 186 to inquire how the latest Kangaroo harvest quotas had been calculated for each Victorian region. I was put through to a staff member in Ballarat and initially told there had been surveys in both 2019 and 2020. I knew this to be incorrect so when I queried the response, I was given a lecture about how terrible these animals are and told that people (like me) living in cities do not understand the issues. Given that I have owned two significant rural properties, one in Central Victoria over many decades and another near the Endeavour River in Far North Queensland and I spend time working in the remotest places in Australia and I know a lot about numbers, these claims seemed pretty outrageous”. Peter Hylands

DELWP rescue from public land firegrounds

Victorian Government numbers provided to our President show that the number of native animals rescued from public lands as a result of the catastrophic fires in Victoria was 350 of which 257 (74 per cent) were Koalas. Of the 342 animals euthanised 293 (86 per cent) were Kangaroos and Wallabies.

Selective extraction of species already in dire trouble, the Victorian Government is saying they will spend \$2.4 million of the emergency fund of \$17.5 million on this program, perhaps covering some 34 species. 15 Eastern Bristlebirds have already been extracted from the bushland near Mallacoota.

What we do not need or want to see are the large amounts of money donated by the general public (for fire impacted wildlife rescue and rehabilitation) and by governments, because relatively so few animals have been rescued, being syphoned off to fund threatened species research in universities, which is occurring anyway, and given the catastrophic loss and decline in species in Australia, has had little impact on the overall situation. A proper state plan needs to be developed that addresses cross border issues, the interaction of native species with each other and their environments and the long-term goals and outcomes of such a plan. Ad hoc conservation does not and has not worked and that is clearly demonstrated in current circumstances.

There is a great danger here that at least some of these funds will have precisely the opposite impact the gifters of the money intended. Keeping wildlife alive now, feeding and preparing release sites must be the priorities.

Victorian government 2018 Victorian response plan for wildlife impacted by fire

To get an understanding of the culture of state government environment departments here are three extracts from the Victorian Government's wildlife fire response plan. There has been controversy over the plans to kill pouch / milk dependent young even if the animals are uninjured. Milk dependent young can be quite large and up to around 18 months old. Despite claims from the government that these plans were no longer current (some staff still claiming they were) this appears to have occurred by default. To date there is little evidence of the rescue of young animals across the species the government claim to be overabundant (that includes Koalas). DELWP quotes follow:

"The most common species that may be seen in the Victorian fire context are koalas, Brushtail and Ringtail possums, echidnas, and joeys of large kangaroo species (Eastern, Western Grey Kangaroos). Small macropods, adult wombats and reptiles are less frequently seen. Conservation and population status of affected wildlife needs to be understood as these may also impact decision making about triage. For example, an over abundant population with established health issues may require a closer consideration for euthanasia of compromised animals over treatment".

“All euthanised animals must be thoroughly examined for pouch young or the immediate area should be searched for young at foot (where applicable) after euthanasia. Where young are found, a decision must then be made on the appropriate course of action depending on the age of the young (either euthanised or transferred to an appropriately qualified carer for rehabilitation)”.

“Rehabilitation of orphaned milk-dependent pouch young of common species such as macropods and koalas is not supported as these animals require significant long term care and cannot be successfully returned to the wild”.

“The public and the media should receive accurate and timely information in order to maintain good public relations and prevent people from attempting to obtain the information from other sources”.

The use of Kangaroo meat in 1080 baits

One of the most concerning matters and an indicator for the contempt shown for the nature of Australia is the use of Kangaroo meat for 1080 baits. These are government funded programs where 1080 poison is dropped from aircraft across the Australian environment – this is occurring in fire grounds in both New South Wales and Victoria. Despite pretence otherwise, the poisoned bait is indiscriminate and a threat to native carnivores including reptiles, birds and mammals. The poison persists in the carcasses of dead animals, which in turn are fed upon by other species of wildlife.

The question in relation to these matters must now be how much additional Kangaroo meat is being used as a result of programs and additional government funding that was meant to assist wildlife in the fire grounds and has any of the money donated by the general public from around the world found its way into any of these disgraceful programs?

Education

Places such as Victoria’s RAMSAR sites should be places of education as they are in many other parts of the world and NOT places of violence, abuse and destruction, even engaging young children in the cruelty and killing of birdlife.

Conclusion: Government conduct, including standards of governance, in relation to the management and supervision of the ATCW system, the commercial trade in wildlife, protection of forests and other habitats and the conduct on Victoria’s Ramsar sites, including the hunting of waterbirds, can only be described as extremely poor and a major threat to the state’s remaining biodiversity. Communication of information from DELWP and government generally is a construct to attempt to defend the clear shortcomings in these matters. This in itself is damaging to good government and breeds an unwholesome culture of no accountability or responsibility for outcomes that are evident and often before an activity to damage wildlife populations commences. The inquiry should turn to its own reports in relation to duck shooting, the commercial trade in Kangaroos and the associated pet food trial and to forestry in Victoria.

Major concern: Despite the carnage of the fires and the drastic decline in birdlife more generally, the Victorian Government called both a full Quail shooting season and a modified duck shooting season, these terrible events, which last for many weeks each year, are a major slaughter of birdlife (in a 'normal' season this equals hundreds of thousands of birds including the death and suffering of protected species). Despite the fires and the terrible climate conditions, the staggering loss of biodiversity in the state and the exaggerated population numbers of these wonderful animals, the slaughter of Kangaroos continued, both for commercial and other reasons as expressed in the authorities to control wildlife, issued so readily by the Victorian Government. Taxpayers money is being spent in Victoria in promoting and facilitating the mass destruction of wildlife (including ATCW system, duck shooting and the commercial trade in Kangaroos) while at the same time, once species are endangered, taxpayers money is spent in an attempt to conserve species. The two opposite processes show no signs of co-ordination.

Recommendation: A long and deteriorating history of government conduct in relation to wildlife conservation clearly indicates that action is now required. In Victoria, that action is a restructuring of DELWP with the precise goal of extracting any responsibility for the care of biodiversity from this department and placing this vital task into the hands of a new department with the sole purpose of protecting Victoria's environment and the plants and animals that live in it.

Building blocks of extinction 4: Treatment of wildlife carers and rescuers and other human rights abuses in Victoria directly relating to biodiversity loss

Human rights abuses

One of the key threatening processes for wildlife and the environment more generally - and this goes for all states and territories are the cultures within government. That is politicians who either don't know or don't care and departments who endlessly defend and facilitate the mass killing of wildlife. This reflects on governance and management standards and process. All this leaves the people in our communities who care about their wildlife without rights and that extends to even defending their own livelihoods and investments from the kind of behaviours that are commonplace in regional Victoria.

Among our concerns are people and their treatment by government departments. In some states, the treatment of wildlife carers, who are mostly self-funded volunteers, is abysmal. Also, the level of or the lack of support, including financial support, from governments who see some of our carer community as a nuisance and an obstacle to the agenda of mass scale killing of wildlife, needs to change. Greater respect for carers is essential and this is also a matter of governance.

Also of concern are those Australians living in regional Australia who witness and are often harassed by the killing activities conducted by governments and industry. Because of state based legislation there are almost no avenues to complain about these horrendous acts occurring on their doorstep. We have heard many such stories from individuals whose houses and children have been hit by shot from hunting activities and from those witnessing the butchering of Kangaroos from their properties. These are the animals that they have come to love.

FOI requests are played with and answers are hard to extract.

Conclusion: The introduction of the commercial trade in Kangaroos has increased tension in regional communities in Victoria. High powered rifles and scenes of great cruelty have been introduced (and the Victorian Government knows this) into rural landscapes and at the edge of towns amid residential and hobby farm populations. For a growing number of people the killing and evident cruelty has become the last straw and is now a serious matter in terms of endangerment of regional populations, their investments and rights for peaceful and productive lives.

Major concern: A blatant disregard for residents in regional Victoria that do not want duck shooting or the commercial trade in Kangaroos on their doorstep. The behaviour of both politicians and public servants (including police) in relation to these matters is far from just. What this behaviour does is to create a sense of entitlement in those doing the killing, a few benefiting financially from their actions, which further opens up residents to abuse. The small numbers of individuals involved in the Kangaroo industry and in duck shooting activities does not justify their dominance in the landscape and the extensive harm being done.

Recommendation: Free from fear and threat - a new deal for wildlife carers and rescuers and proper protection for the lands surrounding wildlife shelters. The protection of people, their human rights and their property rights - for individuals and families investing in knowledge economy and conservation based activities and businesses in regional Victoria.

Building blocks of extinction 5: The web of life

The psychology of Terra Nullius

In Australia there is and remains a curious disregard and disinterest for those things that are truly Australian. While this has changed since the 1950s these attitudes are still deeply entrenched, the psychology here is to turn a blind eye to what has been done and to the history of the colonial period. The way Australian wildlife is and has been treated, too many species already lost to the world in the colonial period, are just one aspect of this cultural conditioning.

Accounting for nature

When measuring and protecting biodiversity, proper account needs to be taken of the full taxonomy of life. It is critically important that all classes of life, and how they interact with each other, are considered. There is clearly a taxa bias in Victoria in the way in which the conservation of nature is both considered and conducted.

What is on the land, is in the sky and in the sea

We should not forget the sea life that inhabits Victoria's coastline and coastal waters. There are worrying trends which include fish kills, algal blooms, declining numbers of coastal birds and bird deaths, for example, by the end of October 2019 fewer than 100 of the usual 40,000 mutton birds had arrived at Victoria's Griffiths Island. Recent seismic testing off the Victorian coast has led to reports from fishermen operating in the east of Victoria to report that their catch is down by as much as 80 per cent since the start of seismic testing in the area. This activity has an impact on the entire web of life.

“Although marine protected areas cover approximately 11% of Victoria's marine waters, their spatial extent is skewed to Corner Inlet / Nooramunga and Wilsons Promontory, indicating that the network is failing to meet the National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas principles of comprehensiveness, adequacy and representativeness across all five marine bioregion”. CES State of the Environment Report 2018.

“The sudden and unexpected death of masses of fish is known as a fish kill. In March 2017 there was a fish kill in far eastern Victoria, stretching from just south of Mallacoota up to the NSW border”. CES

“Changes to the Eastern Australian Current appear to have contributed to a stronger than usual upwelling and more dramatic changes in temperature. The East Australia Current now runs further south than it used to, and is more intense. The current has been affected by climate change, and projections show that the oceans in south-eastern Australia will have the greatest increases in sea temperature in our region. This may cause further changes to the current, resulting in more frequent and intense upwellings in the future”. CES

Conclusion: There will have to be a significant effort from the Victorian Government to change the current set of attitudes towards wildlife, both within government and among the general public, many of whom have little or no understanding of what is happening to wildlife in Victoria. The lack of empathy and lack of care for wildlife that is so obvious will only be changed by leadership and education in these matters. The opportunities around wetlands and particularly Ramsar sites in Australia are just one example of how things could be done better with the consequent improvement in economic output for regions.

Major concern: The trend in Australia is towards degrading environmental laws and protections, the intent to further weaken the EPBC Act is just one example.

Recommendation: Initiate proper and structured conservation activities and a state wide assessment of the current circumstances for Victoria's species, in doing so to build the understanding of how to avoid further endangerment of all species in Victoria. This should include state wide and cross state border plans and long term objectives for species with the resources to properly monitor the wellbeing of species against plans. We can no longer afford a situation where there is a conflict of interest between the organisations driving key threatening processes, organisations that are also the enforcer and legislator. This practice has been all too common in Victoria and has resulted in the poor outcomes we see today.

Peter Hylands
President
Australian Wildlife Protection Council Inc
On behalf of its committee and members

Attachments: AWPC archive

DR IAN GUNN EXPOSING OUR CONCERNS ABOUT VICTORIAN WILDLIFE

GUEST SPEAKER AT AWPC AGM June 14, 2003 AT 1 PM

1098 Stumpy Gully Moorooduc 3933 (Between Mornington/Tyabb and Graydens Roads)

Hear about the Issues and Problems Facing our Wildlife and the solutions we propose!

VICTORIAN WILDLIFE IS LEFT TO FEND FOR ITSELF UNDER ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY

The Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 now stands for conservation and 'Sustainable Use' of flora and fauna. The defined objectives of the Act include:

- To guarantee that all taxa of Victoria's flora and fauna can survive, flourish and retain their potential for evolutionary development in the wild
 - To conserve Victoria's communities of flora and fauna
 - To manage potentially threatening processes
 - To ensure that the genetic of flora and fauna is maintained
 - To encourage the conserving of flora and fauna through co-operative community endeavours
- Sadly the Victorian Governments administration and management of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act fails to adequately address these issues.**

IT IS EVIDENT THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY DOES NOT HAVE THE WILL, RESOURCES, STAFF OR FACILITIES TO ADDRESS THE CRITICAL HEALTH, WELFARE OR MANAGEMENT ISSUES FACING VICTORIAN WILDLIFE. BUT IT IS THEIR RESPONSIBILITY! AND IT IS UP TO ALL OF US TO ENSURE THEY UNDERSTAND THAT THIS IS WHAT THEY GET PAID TO DO.

" It is evident that the care, welfare and protection of Victorian native fauna by the **Department of Environment and Sustainability** (DNRE) has significantly declined over the last 10 years to today where it is failing to meet its charter and obligations which have been clearly defined in the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988. They expect the community, wildlife carers, veterinarians, RPSCA, individuals to administer and manage issues related to the conservation and protection of wildlife in Victoria. They expect them to have the experience, commitment and funds to adequately undertake this work for them. **One might ask, what is the current function of the Department of Environment and Sustainability?** It appears that they have failed and are failing to initiate and develop a proactive program to protect the health, welfare and biodiversity of Victorian wildlife".

We propose a complete review of the administration, management and supervision of Victorian wildlife is immediately implemented to address the critical issues currently facing the health, welfare, care and protection of our native fauna.

ISSUES that have precipitated the urgency for this resolution include:

1. The recent 'mis' management and care of Victorian possums, bats, wombats, kangaroos and birds
2. Wildlife carers have been directed to be responsible for care/ management of wildlife without resources or support from NRE
3. The mismanagement of kangaroos at the Puckapunyal Army Base and the disastrous situation facing our wildlife throughout Victoria, especially in urban areas.

Dr Ian Gunn B.V.Sc., FACV Sc

SOMEBODY'S PROBLEM: the 'errant' Roo
WHOSE ROO IS WHOSE? Michelle Rose Herald Sun 26.3.03

An errant kangaroo forced part of Fawkner cemetery to be shut off amid a stoush over who should remove it. Cemetery Management had to close a gate to stop the kangaroo bounding on to adjoining train lines or busy Sydney Road. "Our fear is it's going to hop out and either get killed or cause an accident," Fawkner Memorial Park technical services manager Dr Philip Bachelor said. " But attempts to have the animal removed had fallen on deaf ears."

He said cemetery staff had been asking the Department of Environment and Sustainability, Wildlife Victoria and volunteer rescuers to capture the kangaroo since the previous Saturday, (6 DAYS with no response.) "They're simply not interested. It's all not my Department".

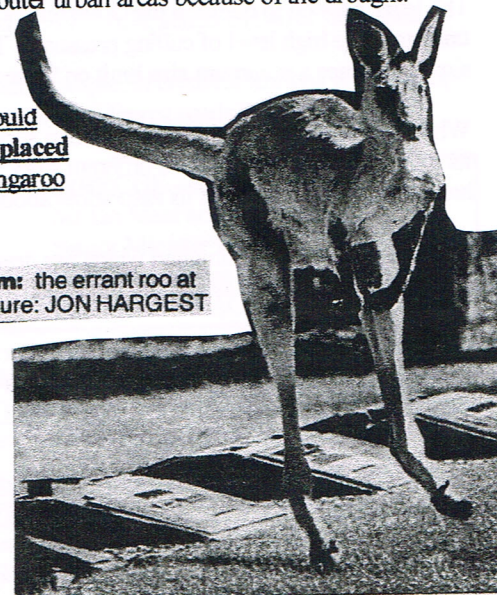
"Eventually we were put on to a consultant who told us he would charge around \$300 to tranquilise it. Otherwise, he suggested, we could call the Police and ask them to shoot it."

Spokeswomen from the Department of Environment and Sustainability and Parks Victoria said the departments were NOT responsible for wildlife rescues.

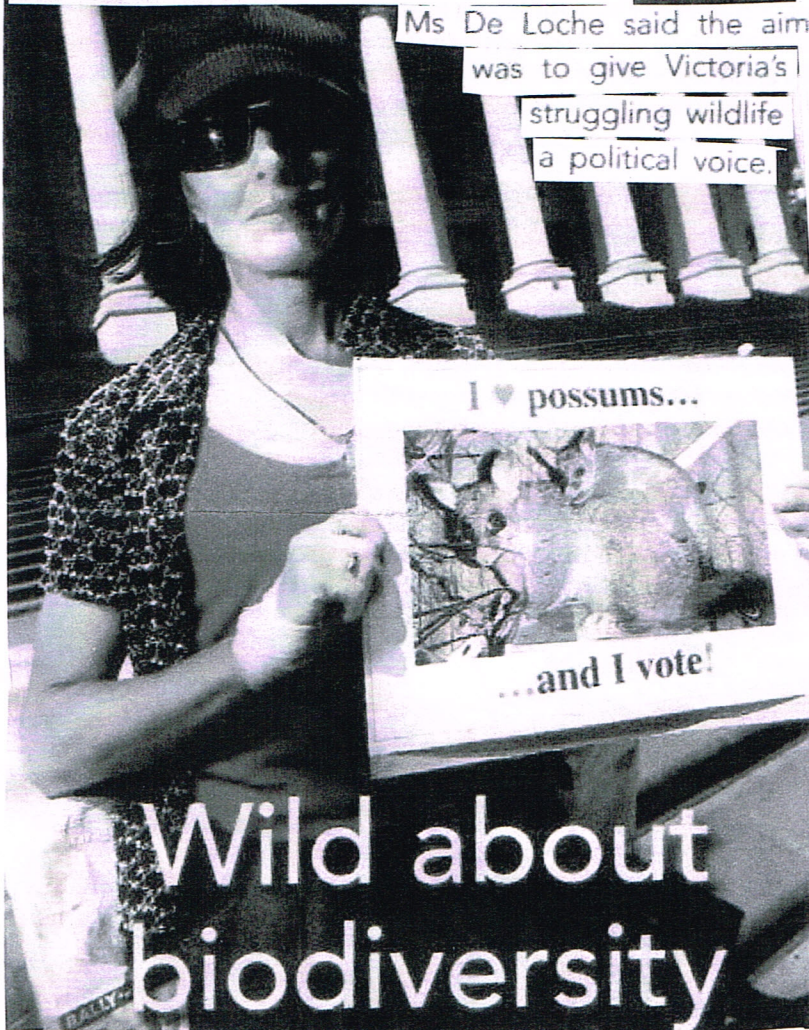
After 6 days of calls for help, the cemetery found a wildlife volunteer who helped remove the animal. Dr Bachelor was concerned the cemetery would face more problems from wild intruders. A black-tailed wallaby with a joey was discovered on the cemetery grounds 2 weeks ago. " The last we saw of it, was on the train line." Staff believes it followed the train line from outer urban areas because of the drought.

Journalist Michelle Rose should have used words such as displaced or lost instead of 'errant' kangaroo

Somebody's problem: the errant roo at Fawkner cemetery. Picture: JON HARGEST



FITZROY resident Irina De Loche held a solitary hunger strike on the steps of Parliament "In Victoria we have a shameful track record with the highest rate of biodiversity loss and species extinction," she said.



Ms De Loche said the aim was to give Victoria's struggling wildlife a political voice.

Women
For
Animals
And
Forests
Spiritual
Alliance

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This is a plea to women across spiritual divides, a plea to the broad spectrum of wildlife, conservation and animal welfare organisations

The voiceless of our planet are being pushed to the brink of extinction by human activity, economic systems and political structures that have as their raison d'être power, profit and greed.

This paradigm is anathema to a sustainable Earth, to compassion which is at the core of the great spiritual traditions and to the feminine psyche of caring and nurturing. Voices from religious groups have joined traditional defenders of wildlife and animal rights groups in confirming the intrinsic worth of every living creature and the cessation of exploitation.

Now climate change is pushing our fellow creatures further to annihilation. So with this level of awareness of impending catastrophe, why has so little changed? We need a holistic approach if we are to succeed.

Years ago women came together in an amazing spirit of kinship and solidarity to fight for their rights and to challenge the male paradigm. They succeeded because small differences were put aside and I feel that we are now uniquely placed in time to take up the banner for the Earth and our fellow sentient beings.

Women far outnumber men in conservation and animal welfare groups and if we come together we will be a force to be reckoned with; we will be a political force to challenge a Victorian government that buys votes from a Shooters' Alliance, and these same shooters murder our wildlife in the name of sport and greed and are sanctioned by that very government. What kind of Government acts in such a callous way?

We have a large number of protected species on that hit list. To put it in terms that a woman identifies with they allow animal mothers and babies to be brutalized simply because they are not human. This same government still allows them to be incarcerated in factory farms in most cruel conditions; it continues to log in old growth forests and the homes of other sentient beings. They are destroying the lungs of the earth.

We have received nothing from the major parties except cynical opportunism, lies and fear mongering to lead us away from our true nature which is to respect and dignify all life. It is time to take that power away. This can be achieved by women shouting truth from pulpits, public places, their local communities and by coming together in demonstrations of solidarity. Let us pray together for the animals, birds and our planet.

CREATURES OF THE WILD

'We need another and a wiser and perhaps a more mystical concept of animals... We patronise them for their incompleteness, for their tragic fate of having taken form so far below ourselves, and therein we err and err greatly; for the animal shall not be measured by man. In a world more complete than ours, they move finished and complete, gifted with extensions of the senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear. They are not brethren; they are not underlings, they are other nations, caught with ourselves in the net of life and time fellow prisoners of the splendor and travail of the earth.'

Henry Beston 1888-1968



Ron Pain

Aerial baiting could wipe out dingoes

Dingo Care Network

The resumption of aerial baiting in the Kosciusko National Park could quickly lead to extinction of the dingo. NPWS resumed aerial baiting in Southern NSW after a 10 year moratorium. The practice was stopped a decade ago after fears that dropping baits from the sky would kill native wildlife.

Colong Foundation Director Keith Muir says government's move will guarantee the dingo's extinction. "I would say less than a week..If you introduce aerial baiting into an area then populations will

crash. They will be the first animals to eat the bait and be wiped out."

"This is a tragedy- These animals will become extinct. How can the Department of Environment and Conservation exterminate an animal which is endangered and is becoming extinct?"

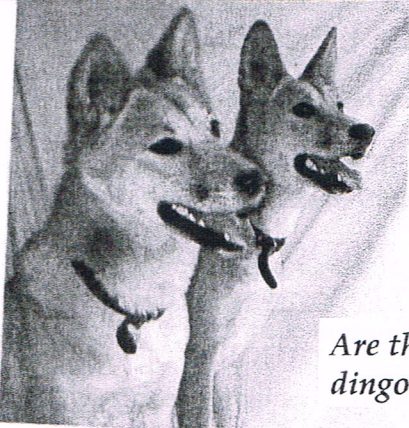
Meanwhile at Tehree Gordon's Barwon Heads wildlife rescue unit at Jirrahlinga, 8 Corio Bay senior college students & Dylan Mac Coy came to the rescue, taking over the rundown farm and nursing the dingoes back to health.

On hearing the tragic tale, eight woodwork students offered to lend a helping hand and build kennels for the dingo pups.

"Dingoes don't like pitched roofs, so they can lie on top of them in the sun, so the students paid attention to detail."

As a lasting reminder of their contribution, each student's name will be placed as a plaque and mounted on the kennel he built"

"They really care and we are just so proud of them - their community input has been amazing." Mrs Tehree Gordon said.



Are these the last pure dingoes you will ever see?

The Primary mission of the Dingo CARE network is to preserve the dingo *Canis lupus dingo* for future generations. We believe the dingo is at grave risk of extinction.

The dingo has been placed on the United Register for animals of threat of extinction in the wild.

The dingo is a unique Australian animal that existed in the Australian ecosystem for more than 5000 years before white settlement. During the past 200 years baiting, trapping, shooting and dilution of the pure gene pool, by interbreeding with domestic dogs, have threatened their existence.

Experts have predicted that there will be no more Dingoes left in the wild in 20 years. Dingo CARE Network Inc acknowledges that keeping dingoes in captivity is not ideal, yet this may be the only alternative if the dingo is to survive for the next 200 years and beyond.

Little is known about the impact of the dingo on the ecosystem. What happens when the dingo is removed from the Australian ecosystem? (To date we have argued that the dingo plays a crucial role as TOP order predator. Has this changed?)

EDUCATION

Many myths obscure and confuse interpretations of the nature of the dingo. Well informed education about its place in Australian ecosystems, for all levels of society, from lawmakers to school children, is essential for their survival.

DINGO RECOVERY PROGRAM

Dingo CARE was instrumental in initiating the recovery program for the dingo. This is a joint Initiative between the Animal Gene Storage Unit/ Norwood Animal Conservation Group at Monash University and dingo conservation groups.

OBJECTIVES

We aim to:

- Collect and store dingo genetic material
- Maintain a register of pure genetic material
- Facilitate movement of genetic material between captive bred dingoes and those living in the wild
- Encourage research into the role of the dingo in the ecosystem

Melbourne University *Australian Mammals Society* (July 5th 2005)

'Dingoes Protect Marsupials From Extinction'

C Johnson Isaac J Fischer DINGO IS TOP PREDATOR