

NSW Inquiry into Licences to Harm Native Animals

Victorian Kangaroo Alliance Submission

January 2026



Kangaroos: iconic and integral. Credit: Szumai Anderson.

Dear Committee Members

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry on behalf of Victorian Kangaroo Alliance Inc.. Though we are based in Victoria, we believe we have a valuable perspective to offer having extensively catalogued the impact of shooting both on kangaroos and communities.

Whilst our responses will focus on kangaroos, we emphasise that our principles of respecting wildlife, upholding animal welfare, and promoting non-lethal coexistence applies to all wildlife.

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Introduction

Victorian Kangaroo Alliance Inc. is a volunteer organisation dedicated to safeguarding kangaroos from persecution and exploitation. We provide education and advocacy, and support communities to defend their local mobs. Our goal is for these magnificent beings to be treated with respect, and inherently valued as a totemic keystone species worthy of full protection.

We do not support killing kangaroos unless humane euthanasia is deemed necessary by a vet or wildlife volunteer on an individual case-by-case basis. This is because we value their lives, and respect their inherent right to live freely on this land which has been their home for many millions of years. When killing is no longer considered an acceptable option, we know other solutions will be found because we have the resources and ingenuity to do better. As such, we are staunchly opposed to shooting kangaroos whether commercially or non-commercially.

Terms of reference

(a) the species and number of animals affected by licences to harm native animals

Kangaroos are the most persecuted native species, killed in huge numbers both for commercial and non-commercial reasons. The killing is fuelled by myths that have passed between generations since colonisation, and promulgated by those who profit from killing kangaroos. Whilst there are many myths about kangaroos, a foundational belief is the claim that ‘kangaroos are better off since colonisation’ (due to clearing, artificial watering points, and removal of dingos). This simply does not stack up. Artificial watering points have been repeatedly proven to have little impact on kangaroo distribution and abundance.¹ Dingos aren’t a major predator for kangaroos except during drought, and they did not even exist in Australia for millions of the years macropods have been evolving here.² Kangaroos are a woodland species so mass clearing and filling those clearings with competing introduced herbivores is also not beneficial.³ The result of colonialism for kangaroos was fragmented and degraded habitat, commercial and non-commercial shooting, poisoning, introduced toxic grasses, cars, fences, dogs, foxes (they take up to 50% of emergent joeys⁴) and the effects of climate change like worsening droughts, fires and floods.

Whilst myths prevail, and lethal options are the norm, we are fighting an uphill battle to progress toward non-lethal coexistence strategies that would bring us in line with other nations that are leading the way with wildlife coexistence. Though studies have shown kangaroos are soft on soil and improve native grasslands, disperse seeds, eat and drink far less than introduced herbivores and only compete with them during severe drought, kangaroos continue to be treated as ‘pests’ as long as the government and society perpetuates their unjust demonisation.⁵ The pervasive misinformation about kangaroos must be combatted at a government level so kangaroos are perceived as valued wildlife, and citizens are supported to establish non-lethal solutions to any issues.

¹ Montague-Drake R and Croft DB, 2004, p.87; Lavery, 2018, p.31; Fukuda, p.497, Letnic & Crowther, 2013.

² Marrant, 2017, Doherty, 2019a; Thompson, p.1265; Doherty, 2019b, p.39

³ Scroggie, Maloney, Ramsay (2025) <https://www.publish.csiro.au/wr/Fulltext/WR23133>

⁴ Banks, P.B., Newsome, A.E. and Dickman, C.R. (2000), Predation by red foxes limits recruitment in populations of eastern grey kangaroos. *Austral Ecology*, 25: 283-291 (p.286).

⁵ Eldridge, David. (2018). Livestock activity increases exotic plant richness, but wildlife increases native richness, with stronger effects under low productivity. *The Journal of Applied Ecology*, 55(2), 766–776. [Link](#); Grigg, Gordon. C. (2002). Conservation benefit from harvesting kangaroos: status report at the start of a new millennium, a paper to stimulate discussion and research. *A Zoological Revolution. Using native fauna to assist in its own survival*. D. Lunney and C. Dickman. Mosman, Royal Zoological Society of NSW: 53-76.

(b) the welfare impacts of lethal control methods prescribed under licences to harm native animals, including consideration of whether current requirements adequately safeguard animal welfare and species identification

Compliance with the National Code of Practice for the Humane Shooting of Kangaroos and Wallabies for Non-commercial Purposes 2008 ('the Code') is offered as a safeguard against cruelty. However, this Code is deeply flawed and serves only as a smokescreen to make kangaroo shooting appear more palatable to the public, despite the inevitable cruelty. To quote the RSPCA submission to the 2021 Parliamentary Inquiry into Health and Wellbeing of Kangaroos and Other Macropods in NSW, there are '**inherent animal welfare risks associated with the practice**' of shooting kangaroos.⁶

Sentience

The sentience of non-human animals is abundantly clear and long overdue for legal recognition. The sentience and sapience of kangaroos is obvious to anyone who takes a moment to observe their rich social lives and familial bonds. Wildlife carers describe their emotional connection with kangaroos in care as deeper than those we form with other companion animals such as cats and dogs.

In the words of the Australian Veterinary Association:

'Animals are sentient beings that are conscious, feel pain, and experience emotions... Animals have intrinsic value and should be treated humanely... They should not be used... for purposes where suffering, injury or distress is likely to be caused.'⁷

Victorian Kangaroo Alliance respects the inherent value of kangaroos, and believes they have the right to live on their ancient homeland free from persecution and exploitation. The terrorising, maiming, killing and orphaning of kangaroos is an affront to community members who share our deep respect and love for this remarkable native species.

Wounding

It is an incontrovertible fact that kangaroos are regularly horrifically wounded by shooters and die slow, painful deaths as a result.⁸ The Code acknowledges this inevitability and recommends shooters make 'reasonable efforts' to euthanise wounded kangaroos (p. 8), but in reality this is often not possible as they can flee long distances running on adrenaline. There is also no specification of what constitutes a 'reasonable effort'. Wildlife rescuers will spend days in pursuit of wounded animals, but shooters have no such intrinsic motivation.

⁶ RSPCA Australia and RSPCA NSW. (2021, April 23). *Joint submission: Parliamentary Inquiry into Health and Wellbeing of Kangaroos and Other Macropods in NSW*. [Link](#).

⁷ <https://www.ava.com.au/policy-advocacy/policies/animal-welfare-principles-and-philosophy/ava-statement-of-principles--animal-ethics/>

⁸ See VKA *Graphic Overview* and testimony from wildlife rescuers available [here](#).

The commercial Code of Practice also acknowledges wounding, in spite of the proficiency testing required for commercial shooters.

'Adult animals that are shot but not killed (or are injured in another way during harvesting e.g. hit by a vehicle, fence entanglement) should be found and promptly euthanased. If left, wounded animals can escape and suffer from pain, distress and the disabling effects of the injury.' (p. 11)

The fact is that mandated accuracy testing cannot mitigate the inevitability of human error when field conditions involve targeting unpredictably moving wild animals at night in potentially windy and rainy weather.⁹ Shooters cannot always ensure death is confirmed as the kangaroos can be lost in vegetation or escape with injuries.¹⁰

A forensic analysis submitted to the 2021 NSW Inquiry into the Health and wellbeing of kangaroos and other macropods found that approximately 40% of shots from by licensed shooters were not headshots (ie. they were neck and body shots) and did not result in instant death, but inflicted catastrophic wounds from which animals would suffer in agony at either the scene or elsewhere after fleeing, and die over subsequent days.¹¹ Consistent with this finding, Wildlife Victoria has reported a 55% increase in requests to attend kangaroos with such gunshot wounds (including non-fatal open facial fractures and avulsions) inflicted by shooters since the commercialisation of kangaroo shooting in Victoria.¹²

The following are graphic images showing the sort of gunshot wounds attended by Victorian rescuers. It is a small selection of what we have on file, which is in itself only the very tip of the iceberg as most wounded kangaroos will never be found.

⁹ "Many times you line up an animal, and from the time your brain says pull the trigger, that animal moves or flinches, and you miss" - quote from commercial shooter, Glenn Cole at the Victorian [Inquiry into Wildlife Roadstrike](#).

¹⁰ Kangaroo Industry - Dirty Graphic Truth [industry exposé]. [Link](#); VKA *Graphic Overview*.

¹¹ NSW State Government (2021), Health and wellbeing of kangaroos and other macropods in New South Wales, <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/inquiries/2707/Report%20No%2011%20-%20PC7%20-%20Health%20and%20wellbeing%20of%20kangaroos%20and%20other%20macropods%20in%20NSW.pdf>

¹²

<https://www.wildlifelifevictoria.org.au/media/wildlife-victoria-flags-major-animal-welfare-concerns-with-states-kangaroo-harvesting-program>



The immense and often protracted suffering of wounded kangaroos is unacceptable, and a major reason (amongst many others) why kangaroo shooting should be outlawed.

Lack of monitoring

Despite frequent claims that commercial non-commercial kangaroo shooting are 'highly regulated', the reality is that kangaroo shooters are virtually unmonitored in the field, at the point-of-kill. Bureaucrats developing written regulations and managing licensing and tags is simply a performative drain on the public purse when there is no means of ensuring compliance in any meaningful way. Compliance with the Code relies on shooter self-regulation, which is woefully inadequate and effectively useless. The humaneness of each kill is entirely down to the skill, luck and ethics of the shooter who is active at night in broad, often remote geographical range, usually alone or with just an offside. Shockingly, some

shooters find it appropriate to take young children offside on their overnight shoots.¹³ The lack of adequate in-field monitoring means there is no way of enforcing the Code of Practice, rendering it largely redundant.

If the government fails to abolish kangaroo shooting, there should be an urgent overhaul of the compliance system where shooters' movements are tracked, and their activities monitored with body and rifle-mounted cameras. Real time footage should be available publicly and subject to rigorous scrutiny. The cost of this compliance should not be worn by taxpayers.

Long-term impacts

As the primary native herbivore, kangaroos should be abundant, and we do not know the broader genetic, ecological and welfare impact of decimating the numbers of this keystone native species. The following are a selection of quotes from an interview with Simon Mustoe, Australian expert ecologist and author of *Wildlife in the Balance: Why Animals Are Humanity's Best Hope*.¹⁴

*'We don't know for sure which native animals might be essential for our future so we cannot presume to kill any. **The consequences of our kangaroo culls will be predictably dire though.** Megafauna like kangaroos systematically transfer, concentrate and amplify energy -giving nutrients that underpin entire rural economies based around farming.'*

*'As costs and tensions rise, it's no surprise that conflicts occur between people and animals. It's happening all over the world. But **killing more animals is not the solution**, because we need them more than ever, to rebuild what we've lost.'*

*'Ecosystems and biodiversity are so complex we will never be able to describe or understand them completely. The traditional way to do ecological studies, therefore, is to break a problem down into manageable units. **This can, however, lead to conclusions that are easily misinterpreted by the layperson, leading to the opposite of what we need to know at the landscape scale.** For example, it's common for ecologists to do 'exclusion' studies. This is a controlled experiment where you might, for instance, create an area with no herbivores and compare that to an area with herbivores. Naturally the area without herbivores flourishes. This is a linear study that could be used to conclude that herbivores reduce vegetation cover. This is far from true however, as vegetation is not an ecosystem.'*

*'**Conservation scientists rarely consider that these animals were solely responsible for creating stable ecosystems in the first place.** The same places that delivered soil, water and climate for humans for tens of thousands of years. The reason why we must supplement land with water*

¹³ 'Children in killing fields'. Kangaroo Industry - Dirty Truth.

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.102469752210106&type=3>

¹⁴https://www.animaljusticeparty.org/kangaroos_are_australias_key_to_surviving_the_ecological_crisis_heres_why

and fertilizer today, is because of a decline in ecosystem health. The soil that existed when Europeans settled was created by native wildlife and kangaroos were among the most notable of our country's fauna (people also had a very significant role too of course). **We need kangaroos and other wildlife to rebuild and sustain soil across the whole continent and the sooner we start, the quicker we will see results.'**

*'Kangaroos, and other animals, are key to recreating viable farmland. We already know what a balanced ecosystem looks like, and with their help, we can restore this, probably within 20-30 years. The only thing that is stopping us from achieving this, is that we have allowed ourselves to become convinced that we will be better off without kangaroos. **This vendetta against wildlife is not a good situation to put ourselves in when animals are the only mechanism that can restore whole ecosystems fast and affordably.** Unless our leaders help create a change in human values and call for more protection of wildlife we may have little time left to recover our recent losses.'*

In 2023, we spoke to another wildlife ecologist, Dr Holly Sitters, based in regional western Victoria.¹⁵ She shared similar concerns to Mustoe, and provided the following quotations:

*'Government-approved destruction of native wildlife makes a mockery of the international 'Nature Positive' movement and is outrageous in the context of a global biodiversity emergency. As a quantitative ecologist, **I do not consider 'sustainable use' of a native animal appropriate or feasible during an extinction crisis and at a time of ecological collapse.** The complexity of natural systems combined with unprecedented rates of environmental change and major uncertainties surrounding current population densities mean that **it is impossible to predict the impacts of future threats on wildlife with confidence.** Common species can become rare very quickly. Therefore, the only logical approach is to remove as many threats as we can. **It is imperative that hunting pressure on kangaroo populations is removed.'***

*'Valid ecological reasons for killing kangaroos do not exist. Effective, non-lethal alternatives to killing are always available where it is necessary to actively manage wildlife. **I strongly believe that the precautionary principle should be applied in matters regarding wildlife if future generations are to experience the joy of viewing animals in their natural habitats.'***

¹⁵ Regional ecologist condemns kangaroo trade (2023).

https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/a5643baa-d4d8-4ba8-988b-7006e9477449/downloads/Regional%20Ecologist%20condemns%20kangaroo%20trade_131.pdf?ver=1745720630786

(c) the extent to which orphaned young are affected by licences to harm native animals and how these impacts are tracked or mitigated

Cruelty to pouch joeys

The Code of Practice includes the bashing ('a blow to the head') of furred pouch joeys. Whilst the Non-Commercial Code is brief, the Commercial Code notes the correct method is difficult as the shooter must bash the correct part of the joey's head, and *'the efficiency and humaneness of this method depends on the operator's skill and determination'*.¹⁶ In reference to the euthanasia of wildlife, the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) similarly states, *'in the event that other options are not available in the field, and as a last resort, blunt trauma if properly applied, can result in rapid death but is dependent on the knowledge and experience of the operator'*.¹⁷ There is no joey bashing proficiency test, and errors in the field are inevitable.

The Code also prescribes decapitation or cervical dislocation for the killing of unfurred pouch joeys. The AVA states, *'procedures such as cervical dislocation or decapitation are problematic and there are inadequate guidelines for their suitability in some species. More research is needed to establish and evaluate more suitable methods of euthanasia for wildlife.'*

In all cases, the joey must experience the terror (and potential injury) of falling as their mother is shot, and being pulled from the pouch (further potential for injury) before being harmed in one of the horrific methods listed above. As all the methods of killing pouch joeys come with a significant likelihood of distress and suffering, it stands as a key reason why kangaroo shooting can never be considered humane or acceptable.

Cruelty to dependent at-foot joeys

At-foot joeys are also supposed to be euthanised but often escape to die slowly from exposure, starvation and predation, suffering great distress after the loss of their mothers.¹⁸ This reality was captured in the disturbing research of McLeod and Sharp (2014), and has been borne out in Victoria with a major wildlife rescue network, Wildlife Victoria, announcing they recorded 'a staggering 600% increase in orphaned joey cases' since the introduction of the commercial kangaroo industry.¹⁹

The Code claims that *'any dependent young at foot must be shot as soon as possible to avoid Dispersal'* (p. 11), but again, there is no specification of what constitutes reasonable measures in the likely case that highly mobile at-foot joeys do escape.

¹⁶ AgriFutures Australia. (2020). National Code of Practice for the Humane Shooting of Kangaroos and Wallabies for Commercial Purposes. [Link](#).

¹⁷ <https://www.ava.com.au/policy-advocacy/policies/euthanasia/euthanasia-of-injured-wildlife/>

¹⁸ McLeod, Stephen and Sharp, T. (2014). Improving the humaneness of commercial kangaroo harvesting. *Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation*. [Link](#); Parliament NSW, (2021a).

¹⁹

<https://www.wildlifelifevictoria.org.au/media/wildlife-victoria-flags-major-animal-welfare-concerns-with-states-kangaroo-harvesting-program>; <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1XCZDPF5RD/>

The Commercial Code states:

*'Orphaned dependent young-at-foot that are likely to experience severe suffering and have a poor chance of survival, should be euthanased wherever possible... **Euthanising young-at-foot can be problematic as they are usually mobile and will often flee** after the female has been shot. However, harvesters must make every reasonable effort to euthanise dependent young-at-foot. This could include shooting the young-at-foot first or waiting until they return to the location where the female was shot.'*

Dr Elaine Ong AM, founder of Vets for Compassion, has decades of experience in animal rescue and spoke to us about why the above segment of the Code's is totally impractical. Dr Ong said:

*'It takes a lot of perseverance, time and luck to capture orphaned joeys. When a mother has been euthanised or killed by shooters, the dependent joey is extremely difficult to catch. Without their mother's milk they will starve to death, unless taken into care. There have been many times I have hidden for three days (sometimes camping inside shrubs) near a dead mum's body waiting for a joey to return so I have a chance to dart them. **There is no chance a commercial shooter [or indeed any shooter] would spend that amount of time and effort searching for a joey.**'²⁰*

Dr Ong's message was echoed in the Australian Government Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation report that informed the wording in the Code, *Improving the humaneness of commercial kangaroo harvesting* by McLeod & Sharp in 2014.²¹ Here are some quotes from their report:

*'Our research has demonstrated that **the welfare impact on young-at-foot can be severe when they lose their mother.**' (p. xvi)*

*'It is not known what proportion of orphaned young-at-foot are euthanased. **It is possible that many are not euthanased but are left to fend for themselves.** This is because the shooting of young joeys can be problematic. Shooters state that in some instances they don't see young-at-foot or they flee before they can be euthanased (RSPCA Australia, 2002) and they can be difficult to kill because of the safety issues associated with shooting at close range.'* (p. 60)

*'During [in-field] observations, 24 young-at-foot were seen. One was euthanised by a shot to the head, in accordance with the Code. Atypically, this joey was shot before its mother was shot (and she was successfully shot after). Another young-at-foot was shot at twice but both shots missed and the animal escaped. **In all the other instances when young-at-foot were seen, there was no attempt to euthanise them.**' (p. 110)*

²⁰ <https://vickangas.org/blog/f/the-code-of-practice-impractical-inevitability-cruel>

²¹ McLeod & Sharp, (2014).

'When the alarmed young-at-foot took flight, none of the harvesters pursued or searched for the young-at-foot or waited to see if they would return to the location where their mother was shot. If a young-at-foot was not seen, but the female had a long teat indicating she was likely to be suckling a young-at-foot, none of the harvesters spent time searching for a young-at-foot, nor did they wait to see if a young-at-foot returned to the location where the female was shot.' (p. 19)

This research means the state, territory and federal governments are well aware that compliance with the Code is rare regarding at-foot joeys, and that the slow suffering of countless youngsters is inevitable. Therefore it is deeply disingenuous to promote kangaroo shooting as 'humane' and 'regulated'. This demonstrates the broader issue of government complicity in sanitising the reality of kangaroo shooting that would be unacceptable to the majority of Australians and the international community.

(g) the extent to which First Nations communities and Traditional Owners are consulted prior to the issuing of licences to harm native wildlife, and how cultural values and responsibilities are incorporated into decision-making

Kangaroos are an ancient Totemic species holding deep spiritual, cultural and ecological significance to many Aboriginal people. There are several articles in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)²² that relate to access for Indigenous Peoples to significant animals, spiritual property and resources – all of which can be applied to kangaroos. Given the minimal engagement with First Nations stakeholders regarding the 'management' of kangaroos, there may be grounds for First Nations people to claim restitution for the loss of these vital animals, and the damage to the deeply interconnected relationship they share.

VKA has been fortunate to learn from Aboriginal Elder Aunty Janet Turpie-Johnstone about how the mass slaughter of kangaroos is an ongoing facet of colonialism that undermines Aboriginal stewardship with a culture of exploitation and profiteering.²³ Aunty Janet calls the shooting of kangaroos '*a mass killing of creatures that do not belong to them*', and a continuation of '*the base history of this country which sits in multiple narratives of slaughter.*' Below are important quotes from Aunty Janet:

²² United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007).
https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

²³ VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL ELDER CALLS OUT "MASS KILLING" OF KANGAROOS AS COLONIALISM (2022).
https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/a5643baa-d4d8-4ba8-988b-7006e9477449/downloads/VKA%20Media%20Release_Aboriginal%20Elder%20calls%20out%20k.pdf?ver=1745720630814;
<https://vickangas.org/blog/f/precious-not-pest>;
<https://lilydale.mailcommunity.com.au/2023/01/07/local-environmentalists-elders-outraged-at-increased-kangaroo-harvesting-quota/>

*'As an Aboriginal Elder, plus researcher/academic, I totally abhor the way ongoing invasive colonists have taken this Country and her creatures and **absolutely destroyed the very spirit of this land, and harmed our Kin the Kangaroos.**'*

*'The colonial invasion of Australia was basically a grab for land and resources with those breaching the frontiers having little sympathy for all its native inhabitants, from human to the smallest native mouse. Of course, land was first along with forests to support habitation for the ever-growing immigrant populations. Sheep, cattle, horses, camels etc., were imposed onto the landscape. These supported the migrating populations and the colonial economy that belonged to Europe. Almost as quickly, **native creatures became the victims of these colonial extractive industries**: whales, seals, birds, Koalas, Possums, Bats and of course, Kangaroos. **Kangaroos were labelled 'pest' by an invading human species, but Kangaroos only became a 'pest' when the land grab invaded their once peaceful countryside. I wonder who the real invasive pest really is?'***

*'Never forget the colonial invasion was an invasion that saw everything in this Country up for grabs as part of the greed that drove the invasion. It was cruel, it has harmed this Country, and it has put so much of our biodiversity at serious risk. **Was colonisation good for Aboriginal people, their Country and her creatures? No, it has been, and continues to be devastating for all these. The indiscriminate slaughter must stop.**'*

Another important First Nations voice is the Yuin Nations conservation organisation, Back To Country,²⁴ which published the Yuin Declaration for Kangaroos, a formal statement that recognises the long term connection, lore and respect the Yuin nation have for kangaroos. The Declaration is a series of articles created by Yuin Elder, Uncle Max Dulumunmun Harrison, seeking protection of kangaroos and the recognition of their sovereign rights on the Australian landscape.²⁵ The heart of the document is that, **'all kangaroos shall be justly protected from all harms caused by human abuse and exploitation'. This critical document should be read carefully and in full by all decision makers.**

It is clear that there has been a lack of consultation with Aboriginal people regarding the treatment of macropods, and their spiritual and cultural connection to these animals has been cavalierly overlooked. There is clearly scope for much further investigation and restitution for this shameful and ongoing colonial injustice.

²⁴ <https://www.backtocountry.org.au/>

²⁵ 'The YUIN DECLARATION FOR KANGAROOS was created by Yuin Elder Uncle Max Harrison 1936-2021. He recognised the need to publicly acknowledge the importance of kangaroos as a living totem. He campaigned for their protection on a local and international stage. Uncle Max committed to providing a way for others to understand Aboriginal culture's connection to Country and all living beings.', <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/62429ad92423051fa85f1eca/t/648a9bef9ef4974aedb88b85/1686805487987/Yuin+Declaration+Protocol+Letter.pdf>

(h) Any other related matters.

Human harms of kangaroo killing

The information we provide in this section is largely from a Victorian perspective, but we believe it is absolutely relevant and transferable to the NSW context.

Wildlife rescuers and carers

We regularly hear from volunteer wildlife rescuers about the psychological, physical, logistical and financial toll of rendering assistance to the wounded and orphaned left behind by kangaroo shooters. They are highly distressed and traumatised by the cruelty they witness, as well as the knowledge that the government is actively undermining the critical work they do improving outcomes and instilling community respect for our wildlife.

The following is a quote from a Victorian rescuer sharing experiences also faced by rescuers in NSW:

***'Myself and other rescuers have come across dozens of kangaroos that have been shot and left wounded. We've seen kangaroos with half their face missing, kangaroos with bullet holes in their rumps, legs, and abdomens. They are called in by concerned residents who find them suffering unimaginable pain and fear, and slowly dying of infection... seeing these kangaroos being deliberately slaughtered and maimed is absolutely soul destroying. We dedicate our lives to helping wildlife while our neighbours call in shooters to needlessly kill them.'** ~ Stringybark Wildlife Shelter, Kangaroo Ground, Vic.²⁶*

Community distress

Kangaroo shooting inflicts harm on residents who value kangaroos and are faced with their beloved local mobs being constantly in danger. The information we provide in this section is from a Victorian perspective, but we believe it is absolutely relevant and transferable to the NSW context.

Recently, VKA conducted a community survey on thoughts and experiences regarding kangaroo shooting in the Shire of Yarra Ranges (SYR).²⁷ We received a huge volume of responses from community members showing that many found kangaroo shooting in their region objectionable and distressing. These responses echo those of the many NSW residents who are deeply traumatised by the government's kangaroo shooting regime.

²⁶ <https://warrantydiary.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Warrantyte-Dirary-April-2022-Download.pdf> (p. 9).

²⁷ Victorian Kangaroo Alliance. (2025). RESULTS OF KANGAROO SHOOTING IN SHIRE OF YARRA RANGES SURVEY. <https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/a5643baa-d4d8-4ba8-988b-7006e9477449/downloads/3adf8b0c-b081-4b72-a64-4490aef3c41b/EXECUTIVE%20SUMMARY%20VKA%20SURVEY%20SYR%20MEDIA%20PUBLIC.pdf?ver=1745720630754>

Responses included:

- *"Kangaroos should NOT be shot! We take their land and call them pests. We are a disgrace for how we treat wildlife."*
- *"[Kangaroo shooting is] abhorrent and should not be allowed."*
- *"Kangaroos have limited areas to live and move and they should be protected. They are a beautiful part of the native wildlife in the area and should be protected at all costs. We love the mobs that live around us, it's part of the beauty and appeal of the area for our family and those around us."*
- *"[Kangaroo shooting] makes me sick. Disgusting and it's not right how we treat our native animals."*
- *"I witnessed the absolute devastation of a mob of kangaroos at the end of my street. So many things concerned me regarding stumbling on this carnage, not least of just how close to residential properties this had taking [sic] place. This mob were regular visitors to our and surrounding properties. We protect these Kangaroos, only to find they are being slaughtered right next door... Please for the love of god don't allow this practice in our backyards, the mobs that live off Victoria road are our Kangaroos, we love them. Please let them live in peace."*
- *"Found remains, orphaned joeys and shots did not always resulting a clean kill, leaving animals to suffer a prolonged & painful death."*
- *"Occasionally finding a kangaroo that has been shot in the face and left for dead. It's criminal."*
- *"Witnessing the carnage and aftermath of a "authorized" kill still makes me feel sick to the stomach, a small mob has regrouped and are often in our front paddock grazing or laying in the sun. The thought of the same fate happening to our kangaroos is devastating"*
- *"The unrelenting extreme cruelty and massive lack of respect for a native animal that has every right to be living here without fear and derision. This has impacted my mental health..."*
- *"My mental health is at breaking point. Never, ever been this bad. And im [sic] not alone, the trauma caused by this is huge and widespread"*
- *"Yes... have seen the declining roo numbers in our area. Not good when you are running a BnB Have also seen some that have obviously been the victim of an unsuccessful kill shot. 3 recently... It's distressing also for tourists/guests to see this in our area."*

To the question: How have you been impacted by your experience? e.g. impacts on mental health, wellbeing, amenity, community relationships, etc.

140 respondents indicated that the shooting activity program had impacted them personally with:

- 75 indicating isolated feelings of distress
- 2 cases of exposure of the deceased and butchered animals to children
- 5 exposures to evidence of cruelty
- 7 reports of feeling less safe
- 4 exposures to traumatic scenes
- 38 instances where mental health has been adversely affected

- 15 instances indicating an adverse effect on community connections.

Children

We have been advised that in Victoria it is legal for children to attend kangaroo shoots. This horrific practice has been documented extensively around the country, with images showing children, often very young, allowed to witness kangaroo shooting and handle kangaroo carcasses with little or no personal protective equipment.²⁸ Whilst we have been unable to confirm the legality of this in NSW, it is a widespread practice, and we strongly recommend that the committee take action to legally protect children from these traumatic and dangerous situations. Below are extracts from developmental psychologist and academic, Dr Eleanora Gullone, that highlight our concerns with the long-term ramifications of exposing children to kangaroo shooting:

*'It can be argued that the endorsement of hunting through its legal status provides **societal endorsement to engage in acts of cruelty and violence**. Such endorsement is likely to manifest in a circular manner both by being acted upon by those with compromised levels of empathy and by **increasing individuals' levels of desensitisation to others' suffering** through such legally endorsed acts of cruelty.'*²⁹

*'Given that **engaging in cruel or abusive behaviours toward animals (and that the witnessing of such behaviours by children in particular)** is not only associated with engaging in those behaviours toward humans but also with desensitization to the suffering of others generally (including that of humans), it would seem that the only logical, and indeed responsible, position for a society to take would be one that eschews all behaviours deliberately intended to bring about the suffering and/or death of sentient beings.'*³⁰

*'There is increasing evidence that a significant co-occurrence between animal cruelty and human violence exists. It has also been reported that deriving pleasure from killing or causing suffering to other sentient beings is predictive of low empathy levels, as has been shown to be the case in hunting behaviour.'*³¹

No civilised society should allow children to be exposed to experiences which may result in reduced empathy and desensitisation to cruelty.

²⁸ 'Children in killing fields'. *Kangaroo Industry - Dirty Truth*.

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.102469752210106&type=3>

²⁹ Gullone, 2005, p.16

³⁰ Gullone, 2005, p.20

³¹ Gullone, 2005, p.20

Alternatives

Ending kangaroo persecution

Protecting animal welfare is important to most Australians, and a cornerstone of progressive and moral societies.³² The shooting of kangaroos is incongruent with public expectation (both domestically and internationally) on the humane treatment of animals, so the only reasonable action is to outlaw this archaic practice. Any social license remaining for kangaroo shooting will continue to diminish as the Information Age makes it increasingly difficult to avoid public scrutiny of previously secretive behaviour, such as the systematic terrorising, maiming, killing and orphaning of healthy wild kangaroos. International censure is rapidly increasing, so it would behoove NSW to show ethical leadership by disavowing cruelty and promoting humane wildlife custodianship.

Reeducation

There is a critical need to reeducate the population regarding kangaroos, and dispel the myths that have persisted since colonisation.³³ Popular narratives about destructive and ‘over-abundant’³⁴ kangaroos have been founded on historical biases conferred over generations by landholders to ultimately become cemented into popular culture. In reality, kangaroos are an essential keystone species critical for biodiversity, imbued with cultural significance, slow breeding, compete minimally with farmed animals and eat and drink comparatively very little. The government-led promotion of this positive narrative would significantly reduce hostility, increase tolerance and the ‘moral value’ of kangaroos, making them less likely to be persecuted.³⁵ This theory is explained by Dr Eleanora Gullone:

‘It is easier to transgress the moral code of behaviour (i.e. kill or create suffering) if the moral value of the target is redefined so that an individual’s or a society’s moral standards no longer apply. Another mechanism is to blame the victim (i.e. the kangaroo is a pest) and in this way justify the perpetrator’s behaviour (i.e., the kangaroo industry). Pejorative stereotyping and indoctrination aid in the use of this mechanism.’³⁶

Importantly, we need to combat the mindset that kangaroos *need* to be ‘managed’ (i.e. killed). We know macropods are well adapted to this country’s conditions; they and their common ancestors have had 20 million years in which to evolve their unique biology. Breeding to the conditions (including embryonic

³² For example, a Victorian Labor survey in 2016 showed 98% of Victorians believed protecting animal welfare was important (see p.12:

https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/562386/Animal-Welfare-Action-Plan-Dec-2017.pdf).

³³ Mjadwesch R (2011) *Nomination to List the Large Macropods as Threatened Species under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*. <https://www.kangaroosatrisk.net/6-kangaroo-myths--legends.html>

³⁴ There is no technical definition for how many kangaroos are too many, so ‘overabundant’ is a subjective label given to however many kangaroos are not wanted by land managers.

³⁵ Croft et al., ‘Thought again’

³⁶ Gullone, E. (2012). Profile of the Australian Kangaroo: A Media Analysis. *Voiceless*. p.12.

<https://voiceless.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Gullone-FINAL-Kangaroo-Report-for-Voiceless-June-2012.pdf>

diapause in some species) along with breeding controlled by the alpha male have enabled kangaroos to manage their own populations over millions of years, with very little top-down predation. This is why undisturbed kangaroo populations in optimal natural conditions tend to stabilise, rather than continually increasing.³⁷ Of course, kangaroos also die of natural causes: disease, injury, stress myopathy, age, predation, natural disasters, and human factors such as vehicle collisions. We need strong leadership from the top that accepts the right of macropods to exist in abundance in their natural state as our primary native herbivore, and to change the narrative from 'plague' to 'natural wonder' when one has the good fortune to see a mob bounding across their range.

In a time of mass extinction and biodiversity decline, we should be doing our utmost as a society to overcome colonial attitudes and prioritise the wellbeing of our keystone native species. Once killing has been taken off the table as an option, we can commit to developing innovative coexistence methods. With the financial resources previously dedicated to upholding lethal kangaroo 'management', the NSW government could commit to world-leading research and implementation of non-lethal coexistence solutions. One need only look to CHERRP as an example of what intelligent people can achieve when they are committed to wildlife-friendly solutions. Instead of killing kangaroos, NSW could repurpose those funds towards coexistence and eco-tourism.

Additionally, we need to support innovations that will reduce rates of road trauma, mandate wildlife-friendly fencing, maintain habitat and wildlife corridors, and increase penalties for cruelty.

Ecotourism

Ecotourism Australia defines ecotourism as: *'Ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation'*.³⁸

According to the Australian Trade and Investment Commission: ***'Demand for nature-based tourism experiences has grown. Visitors are choosing to connect more with Australia's many unique natural and cultural assets. From 2014 to 2023, nature-based activities among Australians has seen an overall growth of 47% in demand.'***³⁹

With the rapid growth of lucrative nature-based tourism, VKA suggests that there are far more jobs and money for NSW through the development of infrastructure for quality ecotourism experiences where visitors can safely view and learn about wild kangaroos. This would also provide opportunities for

³⁷ Kangaroos at Risk (2015) www.kangaroosatrisk.org/biology;

<https://vickangas.org/blog/f/mythbusting-with-the-yvlc-mob>

³⁸ <https://ecotourism.org.au/community-resources/what-is-sustainable-tourism/>

³⁹ Tourism Research Australia, via Austrade.

<https://www.austrade.gov.au/en/news-and-analysis/news/the-rise-of-nature-based-tourism-in-australia>

Aboriginal-lead education programs for residents and tourists to understand the spiritual, cultural and ecological importance of this ancient species.

Kangaroos are iconic to Australia, and a key draw card for international visitors. With guided kangaroo-watching experiences scarce, there's vast potential for developing a world-class ecotourism industry that respectfully showcases these incredible and engaging animals in their natural habitat.

Recommendations - Part 1

We recommend the NSW Government take the following actions to make the state a leader in ethical wildlife coexistence:

- Immediately end the commercial kangaroo industry and cease the issuance of licences to harm kangaroos.
- Establish and fund a taskforce to research and implement innovative wildlife coexistence measures in both urban and rural areas.
- Ensure landholders and land managers are supported and incentivised to live alongside kangaroos.
- Invest in kangaroo-friendly tourism, e.g. kangaroo walks and talks, wildlife ecotourism stays etc..
- Improve human and wildlife safety by providing crossing infrastructure and collision mitigation measures. These upgrades should be implemented as a matter of urgency, particularly at collision hotspots. We recommend reviewing the considerable work done on this topic by a recent Victorian Parliamentary [Inquiry into Wildlife Roadstrike](#).
- New urban developments must maintain habitat connectivity and include safe road crossing options. Coexistence must be the primary goal when addressing the kangaroos who will be displaced by the development.

Recommendations - Part 2

As long as licences to harm kangaroos continue to be issued, we recommend the following actions:

- Shooters must use body cameras and firearm mounted cameras, with footage made publicly available.
- Shooters must be required to pass rigorous accuracy and proficiency testing.
- End the commercial industry, and outlaw any commercial use of kangaroo body parts, given the clear evidence that commercialisation dramatically increases the number of kangaroos targeted. See page 2 of [this report](#) for more information on how this has played out in Victoria.
- Reporting must specify the number kangaroos killed, including any dependent young.

Conclusion

In light of the arguments presented, Victorian Kangaroo Alliance strongly asserts that the commercial and non-commercial killing of kangaroos in NSW is unsustainable, unethical, distressing to residents and culturally disrespectful. Given the escalating biodiversity crisis, climate change, and mass extinction event, prioritising coexistence must be central to any wildlife 'management'.

Kangaroos have an inherent right to thrive in their native habitat, and it is our moral responsibility to protect and conserve them. We urge the NSW Government to focus on developing strategies for coexisting with our unique wildlife and promoting education and nature-based tourism that values and respects kangaroos. NSW has the opportunity to lead Australia in this regard.

We look forward to a future where kangaroos are justly valued and protected, before it is too late.

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We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands where we live and campaign, recognising sovereignty was never ceded. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge their deep spiritual connection to Country and their customs that have nurtured this land. We honour their Creator Spirits and Sacred Totems and the one we are sworn to protect, the majestic Kangaroo.