

SHIRE OF YARRA RANGES KANGAROOS – AN OVERVIEW

Kangaroos are killed commercially in the Shire of Yarra Ranges (SYR) which is part of the 'Gippsland Harvest [shooting] Zone'. This zone was created in 2025, further obfuscating the data. There are many commercial shooters active in this zone, shooting and field dressing (beheading, eviscerating and dismembering) wild kangaroos. This is in addition to non-commercial shooting under permit.



ABUNDANCE

The true abundance of kangaroos in SYR is unknown. Expert biostatistician, Clare Galea, has previously analysed the methodology used to count kangaroos in Victoria and found it so flawed that it threatens the ongoing viability of Victorian kangaroo populations.¹ They are now no longer providing LGA specific counts, but the analysis below shows the problematic nature of previous SYR counts.

The Victorian Kangaroo Survey in 2018 estimated there was 14,500 kangaroos in SYR. In 2020, the Survey estimated there was 34,600 kangaroos in SYR. This is a 139% increase. The biology of Eastern Grey Kangaroos allows for a ~10% population increase per annum under ideal conditions (with no shooting).² So, if the 2018 survey was correct then over two years we would struggle to get a ~20% increase in population (*at the most*) by the 2020 survey. This means the 2020 survey is showing an increase that is roughly five times the biologically possible rate of increase. This is even less plausible given the harsh conditions from 2018-2020. These incongruous figures mirror those in the Mornington Peninsula where the 2020 Victorian Kangaroo Survey estimated 7000 kangaroos, yet a rigorous citizen science project run by Dr Greg Holland found only 2200 in the region.

GRAZING PRESSURE

Kangaroos contribute minimally to the overall grazing pressure and prefer different foraging situations to livestock with minimal competition except in times of extreme drought.³ One cow has the grazing pressure of sixty kangaroos, and one sheep has the grazing pressure of five kangaroos.⁴ Kangaroos are a keystone species, improving native grasslands by dispersing seeds, aerating the soil with their long claws and fertilising with nutrient rich dung.⁵

REDUCING WASTE?

KANGAROOS 'APPROVED FOR CONTROL'			
PRE-COMMERCIAL		POST-COMMERCIAL	
Year	Quota	Year	Quota
no earlier data		2015	135,887
		2016	169,544
		2017	189,086
		2018	168,992
		2019	136,502
		2020	137,800
2009	64,152	2021	191,200
2010	39,559	2022	185,850
2011	34,721	2023	236,350
2012	45,717	2024	236,350
2013	75,139	2025	207,800
Average	51,858	Average	181,396

*excl 2014 (quota 84,100) as commercial system started in April

The Victorian commercial kangaroo industry was sold as preventing waste from 'culling' but since then **average quotas have more than tripled**.⁶ This demonstrates the dangers of a financial incentive which was acknowledged in the government's own review of the commercial Kangaroo Pet Food Trial, which warned that commercialisation was lawless and a threat to sustainability.⁷ It is simply a profit-driven industry.



The image on the right is one example of many Facebook posts soliciting for kangaroos in the Yarra Ranges region. There have also been community reports of shooters doorknocking and leafletting. This demonstrates increasing desperation to find kangaroos.

¹ <https://au.news.yahoo.com/shot-to-extinction-concern-for-kangaroos-after-damning-report-released-045546980.html>

² Mjadwesch, R. (2011). *Nomination to List the Large Macropods as Threatened Species under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*. MESS, Bathurst. www.kangaroosatrisk.net.

³ Mjadwesch, R. (2011).

⁴ Grigg, G. 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.; Mjadwesch, (2011).

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](#); Kobayashi, T., Jordan Iles, & Lisa Knowles. (2011). Are the faecal pellets of kangaroos (*Macropus* spp.) a source of nutrients and carbon in an inland floodplain wetland during flooding? A preliminary experimental inundation study in the Macquarie Marshes, New South Wales. *Australian Zoologist*, 35(3), 458–462.

⁶ <https://vickangas.org/blog/f/damning-truth-back-online>

⁷ Kangaroo Pet Food Trial Evaluation Report, 2018. <https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/a5643baa-d4d8-4ba8-988b-7006e9477449/downloads/KPFT-Evaluation-Report-Dec-2018.pdf?ver=1652104574304>.

LOCAL ABORIGINAL ELDER CALLS FOR KANGAROO PROTECTION

Aunty Janet Turpie-Johnstone, an Aboriginal Elder, academic and researcher based in Lilydale has condemned kangaroo slaughter as an ongoing facet of colonialism that undermines Aboriginal stewardship with a culture of exploitation and profiteering. She says, “never forget the colonial invasion was an invasion that saw everything in this Country up for grabs... It was cruel, it has harmed this Country, and it has put so much of our biodiversity at serious risk... The indiscriminate slaughter must stop.”⁸

IMPACT ON RESCUERS

Stringybark Wildlife Shelter

“I have been rescuing kangaroos in Nillumbik and Shire of Yarra Ranges for almost four years now. In that time myself and other rescuers have come across dozens of kangaroos that have been shot and wounded and left to die. We’ve seen kangaroos with half their face missing, kangaroos with bullet holes in their rump or legs, and even bullet holes in their abdomen. They are called in by concerned residents who find them suffering and slowly dying of infection. The pain and fear they must feel is unimaginable. As wildlife rescuers we deal with suffering every day - road trauma, dog attacks, fence hangers etc - but 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. There is no justification needed, no reason. Studies have shown time and time again that kangaroos do not compete with livestock in any measurable fashion, and that damage to fences can be avoided with some very simple and cost-effective modifications. And yet our government continues to encourage the persecution of our beautiful native fauna. I live in what should be kangaroo heaven but I will not release my hand-raised joeys here because I often hear shooters in nearby properties.”

IMPACT ON RESIDENTS

Katarina Ivanovic, Chirside Park resident, found remains of commercial shoot

“We didn’t know they were killing the kangaroos, they slaughtered them... There was heads cut off, there were feet cut off, there were innards everywhere... I was physically sick... it was horrific. This is not out in the country, we’re in Chirside Park, this is suburbia. How can they be shooting next to our properties? We’ve got kids here. These are our kangaroos, we love them.”⁹

Iris Balish, Chirside Park resident, faced threat of commercial shooters for months at Heritage Golf and Country Club

“We have a special place in our hearts for ‘Scar-face’, a big fellow that suffered an injury some years ago. It’s absolutely devastating that he was rescued, went through rehabilitation at a wildlife shelter and was brought back to the golf course, only to face a firing squad... These are incredible animals. We get to see the joeys climbing out of their mums’ pouches, bouncing around, learning to stand up and skip about. It’s an absolute joy to watch. The idea that the little ones might lose their lives is just devastating.”¹⁰



Locals protested against the shooting of the Heritage Kangaroos and kept overnight vigils for months. Victorian Kangaroo Alliance (then Save the Kinley Kangas) fielded a huge amount of community anxiety and distress over risks to this mob. Many sought assistance from specialist mental health service, WildTalk. Extensive human harms of kangaroo shooting have recently been documented and WildTalk report that calls regarding commercial kangaroo shooting remain consistent across the year totalling nearly 10% of calls in Victoria alone.¹¹

⁸ <https://vickangas.org/blog/f/victorian-aboriginal-elder-condemns-colonial-kangaroo-industry>

⁹ Dahlstrom, Michael. (2021, December 24). 'Traumatic': Dog walker makes 'horrific' find in Melbourne suburb. *Yahoo News Australia*. [Link](#).

¹⁰ Wildlife Victoria. (2021, April 27). Planned stealthy kangaroo cull outrages local residents. [Link](#).

¹¹ Anderson, Kyahl. (2022). *Human Harms of Kangaroo Killing*. University of Melbourne Parliamentary Internship Program Report. [Link](#).

Susan White, Lilydale resident

“I’m disgusted by kangaroo shooting and feel really anxious that it is happening in my area and near to homes. I’ve even gone out at night looking for shooters because I want to protect the kangaroos in my area. I will do what I can to protect these defenceless animals.”

Sarah M, posted on Facebook that she followed a shooter ute from Cockatoo to Yellingbo

“Unfortunately I was driving behind a vehicle that has been out overnight... There were approximately 20 kangaroos on the back of the ute... I was in a bit of shock over just how graphic and also how bloody it was and how they were transporting them... There was nothing to prevent other road users from seeing what they’d been doing and it was extremely distressing...I spent the remainder of my drive in tears and I can’t stop thinking about the poor kangaroos and what happened to them.”

Tamsin Ramone, Kilsyth resident

“A few years ago we walked the Warburton Rail Trail at dawn and enjoyed seeing kangaroos grazing. We did the walk again this April at the same time of day and saw no kangaroos at all despite walking past prime habitat during what should be their most active hours. We are really concerned.”

DISENFRANCHISEMENT OF COUNCIL

Kangaroo shooters operating in a Local Government Area (LGA) are not obliged to seek approval from that authority to operate a commercial interest. A commercial operator would ordinarily face statutory obligations, requiring permits or financial contributions to Council. There would be health, safety and biosecurity requirements in dealing with bulk animal slaughter, butchering and storage, as well as waste and hygiene. None of these are applicable for commercial kangaroo slaughter, with shooters essentially operating pop-up abattoirs near homes and businesses with no requirement to hygienically dispose of fluids and offcuts (body parts) left behind.

There is virtually no compliance monitoring in the field at time of shooting. Residents therefore have unmonitored shooting activity near their homes potentially leading to frightening and confrontational interactions with shooters. Any complaints by residents of safety concerns, spotlighting, excessive noise, non-compliance or reports of carcass offcuts dumped in public places are dealt with by local police and council, adding more pressure to both agencies.

Whilst shooters create an administrative burden and contribute to wear and tear on roads, they are operating at night when most local service providers are closed, therefore not spending their money within the LGA to benefit local businesses.

WHAT CAN COUNCIL DO?

We acknowledge that Council is not responsible for the management of wildlife. However, we believe it would send a strong message if the Shire of Yarra Ranges Council formally requested to be removed from the ‘Central Harvest Zone’. If respected by government, this would improve peace and safety for residents, promote ecological values and ensure kangaroos are safe for locals and tourists to enjoy.



Eastern Grey Kangaroos,
Chirnside Park.
Katja Gutwein, Wild Wombat
Photography