

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Friday 2 June 2023**

## **Devastating results from Kinley Kangas translocation**

**CONTACT:** Alyssa Wormald, [info@vickangas.org](mailto:info@vickangas.org)

**IMAGES:** Please [click here](#) for relevant images



An Arthur Rylah Institute seminar given by Dr Graeme Coulson on 22 May unveiled devastating results from the translocation of kangaroos landlocked inside the Kinley Development site in Lilydale.

In mid-2020, horrified Lilydale locals learned their beloved mob would be shot, and the community outcry prompted a team of highly-qualified veterinarians and wildlife experts to form a working group called Save the Kinley Kangas (STKK), which has since been reorganised as Victorian Kangaroo Alliance (VKA). Pro bono, the STKK team produced a highly professional, best-practice translocation protocol that was submitted by the developers. When the proposal was nearing final approval, the developers suddenly ceased contact with STKK and opted for an alternative proposal from Dr Coulson. STKK warned extensively that the methodology of this new proposal was likely to result in high mortality, potentially entrenching the government's outdated views on kangaroo translocation. Despite this, the now called Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) approved it as a study.

A major concern was that Dr Coulson's project opted for 'hard release', rather than 'soft release' as proposed by the STKK experts. Kangaroos must be darted for transport, and soft release provides a safe enclosure for them to rouse from tranquilisation and, under the supervision of a skilled carer, reorient and regroup as a family mob before release. Hard release involves leaving translocated kangaroos directly in the wild where they regain consciousness in unfamiliar surrounds, inevitably distressed, disoriented and vulnerable. Dr Coulson's presentation noted that soon after hard release, three Kinley kangaroos fell into the Woori Yallock Creek and drowned, whilst others quickly moved on, falling victim to fences, cars and shooters. The survival rate in the first year was just 41-47%, and now only 38% of the mob remain alive.

News of the high mortality rate for these kangaroos has been heartbreaking for those who lobbied for the STKK proposal. "We predicted a terrible outcome because of this experiment's methodology, and sadly our fears have been realised", said Alyssa Wormald from VKA. "Kinley was an opportunity to document the known benefits of soft release, and we are devastated that instead the kangaroos were subjected to stress, suffering and death that we believe was largely avoidable. I was shocked that the alternative of soft release was not even mentioned in the presentation."

Dr Elaine Ong AM BVSc from Vets for Compassion, and Manfred Zabinkas OAM BSc (Environmental Management) from Five Freedoms Animal Rescue, have decades of combined experience in macropod behaviour and humane capture in suburbia and during natural disasters. They supported the methodology of the STKK translocation proposal and, despite sadness at the outcome of the Kinley study, were able to find reason for hope.

Dr Ong said, "in 2023, community expectations are that all animals be treated humanely. Killing of kangaroos to make way for development is not aligned with humane treatment as it is not possible to shoot them all humanely. We have had to capture dependent joeys that are left behind. DEECA's trial is a positive step forward. Despite the 50:50 results of the Kinley translocation, it paves the way for another translocation trial that can prevent the problems of the first trial. Progressive action brings with it improved welfare for our kangaroos."

Mr Zabinkas added, "the suggestion that kangaroos are better shot than relocated is based largely on mortality resulting from factors such as poorly managed recovery, illegal shooting and interference from dogs. As a scientist, I do not accept that a conclusion of failure is warranted, and as an expert in kangaroo rescue and behaviour, I believe this study offers hope for further research into successful kangaroo translocation. These trial results show significant improvement over previous attempts and lays a solid basis for further improvements on methodology, particularly utilising soft release, and a more considered choice of release location."

VKA calls on Victorian Labor to ensure future translocations are driven by those with hands-on kangaroo rescue expertise, and most importantly, to avoid landlocking kangaroos in the first place. Kangaroos must be considered when approving new developments, mandating habitat preservation and wildlife corridors.

**-END-**