



## ANIMAL WELFARE & MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2017 – 2022

### Key points for submissions

1. As suggested in the Strategy, a review of animal welfare and animal management laws is needed and this ‘action’ should be supported. However the review should include all the ways in which all laws and all other government activities impact on animals, not just those that are about animals.
2. The Strategy repeatedly implies that adoption and/or adherence to an animal welfare code of practice will result in ‘best practice’ in animal welfare. This mistakes the purpose of codes of practice (section 20 of the ACT Animal Welfare Act) which is to excuse acts of cruelty that would otherwise be prohibited under the Act.

Worst (but not only) examples:

- *The Code of Practice for Humanely Killing Kangaroos* permits the bashing to death of pouch joeys, the orphaning of at-foot joeys, and the general terror and distress inflicted on entire mobs subjected to mass slaughter.
  - *The Code of Practice for the Humane Control of the Fox* permits the use of 1080 poison and other painful measures to control foxes;
  - *The Code of Practice for Domestic Poultry* allows hens to be crowded in barn and free range establishments at more than ten per square metre.
3. On several occasions the Strategy refers to ‘managing’ native species, such as kangaroos and appears to approve the government policy of developing and implementing management plans for controlled native species under the Nature Conservation Act 2014:
    - *The Code of Practice for the Humane Killing of Kangaroos* ensures that this killing is, in fact, inhumane.
    - The government has presented no plausible evidence that kangaroos (or any other native animal) are overpopulated or causing any environmental damage in the ACT.
    - Kangaroos in the ACT are being killed faster than their population can grow.
    - Reducing kangaroo numbers from their natural densities is harming other native animals who share their habitat and rely on kangaroos to maintain it.
    - If kangaroos did need to be managed to protect certain areas (for which there is no evidence), there are readily available alternatives to killing them (fertility control, translocation, fencing).
  4. The Strategy seems to imply that improved animal welfare and management outcomes can be achieved through the same government agencies that currently have responsibility for these matters. This is unrealistic because animal welfare will never be the core business of these agencies.



There is urgent need for an independent office or commissioner dedicated to animal welfare in the ACT.

5. On several occasions the Strategy refers to government dictated cat containment as though it were a good thing, and even seems to support extending cat containment legislation to established suburbs.

Extending legislated cat containment to established suburbs is unacceptable because:

- It would cause great distress to cats who are accustomed to having their freedom (at least during the day).
- It would cause great distress to cat custodians who have never budgeted for building cat containment, or whose home is not suitable for cat containment and/or who have ethical/compassionate objections to imprisoning their cats.
- Even though few domestic cats hunt after they reach the age of two or three, suburban wildlife is adapted to the presence of cats. If the young cats that do hunt are confined, urban native animals are likely to suffer, either directly from overpopulation, or indirectly from the success of other native or non-native species due to the absence of predators.

Introducing cat containment in new suburbs is pointless because the suburb itself, along with its fringe impacts on the surrounding area, has generally exterminated any local wildlife. Any homeless, starving survivors among the native wildlife, will die whether cats arrive in the area or not.

6. The Strategy seems to consider Canberra to still be the 'Bush Capital' and it identifies maintaining "urban environmental amenity" as one of its objectives. But nowhere in its suggested actions for achieving this objective does it mention any measures to reduce the recent infill and urban expansion occurring in the Territory, or to minimise the impact of this rampant development on the environment or the native animals that inhabit it.