



81 Morrison Street Kambah ACT 2902

Mr Andrew Barr MLA
Legislative Assembly for the ACT
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Barr

We are writing to you, as a member of the ACT Legislative Assembly, to draw to your attention the report of CSIRO Plant Industries¹ regarding the ACT government's annual kangaroos slaughter. The report evaluated the data and research (from 2009 to 2013) on which the ACT government has attempted to justify its continued kangaroo killing program for the last eight years.

We would be grateful for your assistance in investigating the failure of the ACT government to review its kangaroo killing program in the light of the CSIRO's findings. The CSIRO report was recently released by the ACT government in response to a FOI request from *the District Bulletin*. A full analysis of the FOI material can be found at:

http://animalprotectors.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/APA_Analysis_of_FOI_documents_on_Kangaroo_22Cull22_Oct_2017.pdf

The Bulletin requested the information because three ACAT hearings, two Kangaroo Management Plans and the ACT's State of the Environment Report had all failed to provide any substantive scientific evidence to support kangaroo 'culling' in the ACT.

The CSIRO evaluation found that, contrary to ACT government's assurances, the government's research had failed to demonstrate that any deterioration in vegetation structure and composition was due to kangaroos at any density. The following are exact quotes from the CSIRO executive summary.

- A positive relationship existed between kangaroo density and native species richness and Floristic Value Score at lower kangaroo densities. **No relationship was evident at densities above 2 kangaroos per ha.**
- This study could not identify any upper limit of kangaroo density beyond which vegetation richness, diversity and overall condition declines.
- This study could not identify an optimal kangaroo density that maximises richness, diversity and condition. Richness and diversity tended to be highest when at least some kangaroos were present.

The CSIRO findings confirm the views expressed to the government repeatedly by the Animal Protectors Alliance, the Regional Friends of Wildlife, and Animal Liberation ACT. The findings also confirm the comments provided to the government, during the Kangaroo Management Plan 2017 (KP2017) public consultation, by these organisations as well as by Animals Australia, the Humane Society International, the Animal Justice Party, and numerous individual members of the ACT public.

The CSIRO findings show that the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) was in error on the three occasions (2009, 2013 and 2014) when it found in favour of the evidence provided by a partisan ACT government ecologist over the evidence provided by independent and highly qualified and/or much more experienced ecologists such as Dr Dan Ramp and Mr Ray Mjadwesch.

We note that the CSIRO evaluation is not even cited in the KMP 2017's bibliography. Instead of accepting the review of the highly respected CSIRO Plant Industries, it appears the government sought a second review from Kurahaupo Consulting, a NZ private company whose business and livelihood is killing animals, and who could therefore, one might suppose, be counted on to support the killing of animals irrespective of the reasons for the killing.

Aside from the government's failure to demonstrate that there is any environmental reason for killing kangaroos in the ACT, members of the public are deeply concerned about the cruelty of the killing:

- the (undisputed by the government) orphaning of unweaned joeys²;
- anecdotal reports by eye witnesses of the length of time after being shot that wounded kangaroos are left before being euthanased by a close-range head or heart shot;
- the sustained panic and disruption to kangaroo families that necessarily must occur throughout the annual slaughter as family structures are destroyed, the mob's communal knowledge is lost or fragmented, and mob members are kept in a state of complete unnatural panic and terror, night after night, year after year;
- anecdotal reports by reserve watchers that far more motor vehicle collisions occur on nights when panicked kangaroos are fleeing from the shooting than on nights when no shooting occurs.

We regard it as dishonest for the government to claim the killing is humane because it adheres to a code of practice for killing kangaroos (even when it adhere to it – there is plenty of evidence that it does not³). We assume you are aware that the purpose of a code of practice (under Section 20 the Animal Welfare Act) is to exempt from prosecution any acts of cruelty that would otherwise be prohibited under the Act. The Productivity Commission⁴ recently confirmed that the purpose and the primary use of codes of practice across Australia is to permit cruelty.

In addition, we note that the current rate of kangaroo extermination in the ACT is unsustainable. Each year, kangaroo populations are being reduced at three to four times the rate it is biologically possible for them to grow⁵. This must soon lead to local extinction. Coupled with the persecution of Eastern Grey Kangaroos by farmers and commercial shooters throughout this species' range, we are likely to see the end of this species, and of its vital (keystone) contributions to the survival of other native species, within a matter of decades.

The risk to human life from kangaroo shooting appears to be growing every year. It began with anecdotal reports of shooting within metres of protestors on certain reserves in 2012, but more recently the risks to the public appear to have escalated with:

- the illegal use (and more recent permitted use) of silencers on firearms for killing kangaroos close to human residences⁶;
- the failure of the relevant government agencies to give the public any warning or signage of kangaroo shooting on non-reserve public land, and its refusal to release such information even under Freedom of Information⁷;
- the reported shooting in 2016 within metres of Mugga Lane⁸; and
- the removal, this year, of any requirement for the licencing of shooters on ACT reserves (and presumably the removal of any of the requirements formerly imposed by a licence)⁹.

In addition to the risk to human life, we urge you to consider the huge emotional toll the annual slaughter is taking on people who live near the reserves and many other people who are personally acquainted with the individuals and mobs that are being destroyed¹⁰.

In summary, the ACT annual kangaroos slaughter represents:

- a mass killing of keystone wildlife in the absence of any environmental imperative;
- terrible cruelty to uncounted individual animals;
- a sure route to local extinction of both kangaroos and the other native species which depend on them, along with a major contribution to worldwide species extinction of kangaroos and their dependent species; and
- an ever-increasing risk to human life and toll in terms of human welfare.

We ask that you, as a member of the Legislative Assembly, demand an explanation from the relevant Ministers and their relevant agencies as to why the killing of kangaroos has proceeded in the absence of any data suggesting that it is in any way beneficial to the environment. We urge that you do not accept an assertion that killing without supporting evidence is somehow consistent with the Precautionary Principle. Quite the reverse is true.

The Precautionary Principle is a strategy to cope with possible risks where scientific understanding is yet incomplete, such as the risks of nano technology, genetically modified organisms and systemic insecticides. The government's claim that, in the absence of evidence, this Principle justifies vast scale killing of a native species that is known to be a critical component in the survival of its entire ecosystem, is a cynical abuse of the Principle.

Beyond that, we urge you to do everything within your power to shut down the ACT government's kangaroo killing program forever.

Yours sincerely

Frankie Seymour
Co-founder

10 November 2017

References:

1. CSIRO's 2014 *Final report for ACT Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate: Relationships between vegetation condition and kangaroo density in lowland grassy ecosystem of the northern Australian capital territory: Analysis of data 2009, 2012 and 2013*: http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0019/1115452/17_11169-DOCUMENTS-1-4.pdf
2. (a) Expert witness evidence provided by Dr George Wilson to *ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal 2014* (challenge to the ACT government's kangaroo 'cull' by Animal Liberation ACT)
(b) Statutory Declarations in *A Paper Trail Of Administrative Shame: 2015 Shooting on the Rose Cottage Horse Paddocks*: pp98-103
<https://warmandwildblog.files.wordpress.com/2016/08/dossier-final-b.pdf>
3. *Autopsy by Dr Howard Ralph in Regional Friends of Wildlife Submission to the ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, 2013* pp158-161
<https://warmandwildblog.files.wordpress.com/2016/05/regional-friends-of-wildlife-submission-2013.pdf>
4. Australian Government Productivity Commission: *Regulation of Australian Agriculture Productivity Commission, Inquiry Report No. 79*, 15 November 2016 p208
5. (a) Peter B. Banks, Alan E. Newsome and Chris R. Dickman, 2000, *Predation by red foxes limits recruitment in populations of eastern grey kangaroos*, in *Austral Ecology*, 25(3) p283, (re maximum kangaroo population growth rate)
(b) *ACT Kangaroo Management Plan, 2017* p25, (re ACT's now legislated kangaroos population reduction rate)
6. (a) *Government 'probably' used illegal weapons during Canberra kangaroo cull*
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-06-11/government-probably-used-illegal-weapons-during-kangaroo-cull/7502206> (re use of illegal silencers)
(b) *Gun silencer ban modified in ACT after government staff break law*:
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-12-19/government-overturns-complete-ban-on-firearm-silencers/8130554> (re allowing the use of silencers)
7. (a) Freedom of Information Request and Review pp32-35 in *A Paper Trail Of Administrative Shame: 2015 Shooting on the Rose Cottage Horse Paddocks*
<https://warmandwildblog.files.wordpress.com/2016/08/dossier-final-b.pdf> (re government refusal to release information about shooting on non-reserve public land)
(b) *ACT Delivers Bike Trails and Death in the Afternoon* in the *District Bulletin*, July 2016, p5 (re failure of government to notify Isaacs Ridge residents of shooting in Isaacs Ridge Reserve)
8. Animal Protectors Alliance Press Release, May 2016 - *ACT kangaroo shooters continue to endanger people's lives*: http://animalprotectors.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/APA_Press_Release_Public_Safety_at_Risk_Again_July_2016.pdf
9. *ACT Nature Conservation Act 2014*, S 130 (4) (b)
10. *ACT Delivers Bike Trails and Death in the Afternoon* in the *District Bulletin*, July 2016, p5