"The kangaroo life balance

It is understandable people like Jenny Andrews (Letters, May 25) might believe kangaroo populations in Australia are suffering from the lack of a predator, that they are "devastating local grasslands", and that the alternative to shooting them is letting them starve.

This is the pseudo-ecology that the ACT government has been spouting for nine years. However, the actual science shows nothing of the kind. The CSIRO Plant Industries report, based on the ACT government's own data, concluded unambiguously, "This study could not identify any upper limit of kangaroo density beyond which vegetation richness, diversity and overall condition declines."

What the study found was that one kangaroo per hectare is much better for the environment than none, that three kangaroos per hectare is no worse than one, and that more than three kangaroos per hectare were simply not present on any of the reserves where the government collected its data.

Studies have also shown that foxes have fully replaced dingoes as the main predator on kangaroos. However, it is food, not predation, that is the primary regulator of all wild animal populations.

A 20-year longitudinal study (Coulson, Ramp et al) at Yan Yean Reservoir in Victoria confirmed this understanding.

The kangaroo population, when spared management slaughters and commercial hunting, ultimately stabilised in equilibrium with their environment.

Kangaroos are luckier than many other species in the way their populations stabilise. They simply stop breeding when food is scarce; they do not wait until they are starving.

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