



Kangaroos ACT : Summary of the environmental con job

This paper is a short summary of why the ACT government's program for annually killing kangaroos on ACT reserves has no basis in plausible science.

No baseline or ongoing data available to support the killing

- The ACT government's annual massacre of kangaroos on ACT reserves began in a complete vacuum of any baseline data on how many kangaroos under what environmental conditions are needed on the reserves to maintain the keystone function of kangaroo grazing.
- Since then, there have been two ACT Kangaroo Management Plans.
- The first of these, in 2010, recommended monitoring of the impacts of the killings and adaptive management based on the data derived from this monitoring.
- There has to date been no monitoring of the impacts and certainly no adaptive management.
- In fact, the second Kangaroo Management Plan of 2017 does not even mention adaptive management.

Counting now by desk-top program

Now, kangaroo populations are estimated by a desktop calculator program which is:

- devoid of baseline data;
- employs erroneous parameters; and
- requires absolutely nothing resembling ground truthing.

Errors in the Kangaroo Management Plan as revealed at ACAT 2013

Neither Kangaroo Management Plan provides any plausible scientific evidence that kangaroos on ACT reserves have ever had any deleterious impacts on any other plant or animal species.

- There has never has been any scientific basis for KMP's assertion that "current knowledge" indicates that one kangaroo per hectare is a desirable density.
- In fact, at ACAT 2013, the government spokesperson admitted that this figure was "wrong" and "a guess", explaining that it was just a starting point for working out the correct figure.
- Since then there has been no research whatsoever to the support the use of this wrong guess in estimating a desirable kangaroo density.



Threatened species, revelation at ACAT 2013

There has also never been any scientific basis for the ACT Government's repeated assertions in press releases that any threatened species is in any way threatened by kangaroo grazing.

- At ACAT 2013, the government spokesperson was confronted with the fact that no threat abatement plan or recovery plan for any of the threatened species identified in the government's press releases even mentions kangaroo grazing as a threat.
- At this point, the government spokesperson at the ACAT hearing admitted that this list of threatened species was just "PR".

No evidence of any threat to biodiversity, revelation at ACAT 2013

At ACAT 2013, the government spokesperson admitted that the ACT government's only indicator for biodiversity is volume of grass. The entire basis for the government's assumption that kangaroo grazing has a deleterious impact on the reserve ecosystems is that kangaroos eat grass.

It is a basic to the understanding of the science of ecology that diversity of vegetation enables more general biological diversity, not volume of grass.

Kangaroos, by every aspect of physiology and behaviour, maintain diversity of vegetation: numerous plant species, some high grass, some medium grass, some low grass, some bare soil.

- Their extraordinary mobility, and water and energy efficient metabolism, enables kangaroos to cover vast distances to reach food or water.
- This mobility prevents them from overgrazing any one area, and maximises the diversity of structure of vegetation across their extensive ranges.
- Their manner of locomotion also minimises damage to soil, groundcover and stream banks: soft feet, bounding motion, one long claw leaving holes in the ground for seeds to fall into.

Efficacy and extinction

Another admission by the government spokesperson at ACAT 2013, and perhaps the most telling of all, was that the KMP's recommendation to kill 30-40% of kangaroos every year was in fact killing kangaroos three to four times faster than it is possible for kangaroos to reproduce themselves.

- To explain this, the government spokesperson admitted that this level of killing was needed not because of reproduction - given that this population replenishment was impossible by reproduction - but because populations were being replenished by inward migration.



- He admitted that this was contrary to the evidence he had given to ACAT under the same Tribunal president in 2009.
- The shocking thing about this admission is that, if inward migration is always going to replace the kangaroos killed, then the killing is clearly achieving absolutely nothing.
- Even more chilling is the fact that this inward migration can only continue as long as there are kangaroos outside the reserves available to move in.
- Given that all the ACT's kangaroo habitat outside the reserves is being systematically devoured by developments of various sorts, this inward migration simply cannot continue much longer.
- Recruitment from outside the ACT is also likely to dry up very soon because of the recent fires and unregulated slaughter now underway on rural lands in surrounding NSW where the entire population of Eastern Grey Kangaroos is estimated, on the basis of lost habitat, to have been reduced to only 11% of the population at the time of European settlement.

Conclusion: What is in fact happening is that the ACT reserves are being used as sinks to draw in all the ACT's surviving kangaroos to a place where they can be easily exterminated - a neat and permanent final solution.

KMP 2017's alleged evidence of kangaroo damage

The Kangaroo Management Plan of 2017 finally got around to at least attempting to proffer some evidence that kangaroo grazing is damaging to other species inhabiting the reserves.

- It refers to "8 papers" – although there are actually only seven since one of them does not even mention kangaroos.
- These seven papers are, in fact, by only five primary authors since one of the authors is responsible for three of them.
- This particular author is in fact a former employee of ACT Parks and Conservation, and, on two of these papers, one of his co-authors is the ACT government chief ecologist.
- Most of these seven papers have co-authors, and most have at least a couple of shared co-authors. Between them, all these authors and co-authors represent an extremely narrow field of research.
- Without prejudice to the competence and integrity of this narrow field of authors, they also represent a field of research that is substantially funded by the ACT government, and most of the primary authors acknowledge that they are in some way beholden to the ACT government.
- Several of these authors or co-authors are also connected with the ANU Fenner School of the ANU, and thus with the "resource" use and "pest" animal management industry which are affiliated with the Fenner School – industries that have a vested pecuniary interest in killing animals.



- None of these papers can be regarded as independent of the ACT government and/or the "pest" management industry.

Despite this narrowness of research and the lack of confidence we must have in their independence, none of these papers even claims to provide unequivocal evidence that kangaroo grazing is impacting on other native species.

At worst they merely confirm the keystone role of kangaroos in managing other plant and animal species in keeping with variable environmental conditions, as they have done for five to fifteen million years.

The paper which was suppressed

What is even more telling than the "8 papers" is the one paper, funded by the ACT public, that is not even referenced in the Kangaroo Management Plan of 2017.

We would not even know we had paid for this study if it had not been released under Freedom of Information in 2017, presumably because the poor junior clerk who released it had no reason to assume there was any reason to redact it.

This report, by CSIRO Plant Industries, showed:

- that at least one kangaroo per hectare on the ACT reserves was better for vegetation richness and diversity than none;
- that there was no difference in impact, either positive or negative, between one and three kangaroos per hectare; and
- that larger densities than three per hectare did not occur on any of the reserves studied.

Summary of the summary

In short, every premise that is currently being used to justify the ACT government's annual kangaroo massacre on ACT reserves is either dead wrong or seriously flawed.

At this stage we can only speculate on the real reasons for the ACT government's campaign to completely annihilate Canberra's kangaroo population.

We would like to see a completely independent audit of the government's kangaroo killing policy, including a thorough investigation of the real reasons for it.