

**INQUIRY INTO HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF
KANGAROOS AND OTHER MACROPODS IN NEW SOUTH
WALES**

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Ref: Inquiry into the health and wellbeing of kangaroos and other macropods in New South Wales.

I live in Culburra Beach on the south coast of New South Wales and I am concerned for the health and wellbeing of the kangaroo population in this region, as well as NSW as a whole.

Ten years ago it was a common sight to see kangaroos grazing in many locations in the broader Nowra region. In and around Culburra Beach township it was an almost daily sight to see the local mob in the fields as one drove into town. But I haven't seen any kangaroos in their usual locations for about a year now. Since the fires of 2019/2020, it seems they have disappeared from our area. I'm scared they are no longer breeding viably or worse, that they are dead due to shooting by local farmers. I have not seen any kangaroos in over a year.

Other locals have told me that kangaroos have been killed (shot) as pests by the local landholders, especially during the last 12 months. Their disappearance is a loss for our environment and a pain on the mental health of local residents.

I fear that the reported shooting of local kangaroos is the reason I have not sighted any in the last year. Furthermore, I have not seen any dead kangaroos on the roads since the bushfires of 2019/20. This is unusual because it was fairly common to see dead kangaroos killed by cars or other traffic. No evidence of roadkill combined with no local sightings of living kangaroos makes me wonder if Culburra's local population still exists. A combination of geographic isolation and encroachment caused by land clearing for urban development could also be threatening kangaroo breeding.

Although historic, I would like to share my personal experience of cruelty and deliberate targeting of adult males to render a local population

unviable. I also have had related to me, directly by the shooters themselves, cruelty towards female kangaroos and their joeys. My direct experience is as follows:-

During I was invited by a fellow teacher and his brother-in-law (a farmer) on a night time kangaroo shoot. On the way to the site of that night's shooting, they told me stories of how they had virtually wiped out the local mob of kangaroos and that its members numbered only 20-30 at the time of my visit, which prior to their 'culling' (shooting activities) had been more than 200 in number. They told me how they killed males in preference to females to prevent breeding health, but also that they had shot almost all of the females too, and that many times joeys had been in the pouch or at foot and were simply left to die or shot when possible. I was shocked at their harsh attitude towards kangaroos. They regarded the animals as vermin and in need of 'culling' and both men regarded their culling as a 'fun' activity, similar to sport. Their attitude was careless and cruel and yet they were aware of the impact they were having, telling stories of shooting mothers with joeys and how these killings affected the social behaviour of the mob on their property. The night I went with them the men killed a large male and pursued the mob along a ravine in their 4WD with purpose built lighting to aid their shooting. Only one kangaroo was shot that night. The large male was left in the paddock bleeding, lamely hobbling around but still alive because it was too difficult to shoot it a second time from where they had parked their car. The kangaroo was shot with a rifle from the back seat. I was sitting in the front passenger's seat. It was a harrowing experience and I never again accepted an invitation to join them on a shoot. I could not even accept their invitations to lunch or dinner after that night. The family was aware that compared to previous historic farming practices, their activities had impacts which were harsh. I know this because their family had occupied the land for at least 70 years and I heard the grandfather telling stories of how things were in his day and how the land and its management had changed over time. Native animals and habitat were no longer allowed to exist on their land, and actively killing kangaroos was considered an important part of 'running the farm'. This harsh attitude towards nature and the farming practices and behaviours which precipitate from it is a disgrace. It needs to change.

Here in Culburra, if our local mob still exists, it's facing the loss of many hectares of virgin bushland near the town due to an urban expansion plan. Kangaroos have used this location for millennia and all surrounding areas have already been cleared for pasture. Where is it safe for them to go? Thinking back to the time before the fires in the second half of 2019, I watched many instances of road kill due to car traffic. I remember watching a mother kangaroo stay by the site where her joey had been killed. She waited nearby for four days! I passed on my bicycle each day as part of my morning commute and it broke my heart to see her waiting anxiously for her dead offspring to return to her side. And even though her joey was clearly dead, she stayed there. Was she mourning? She could not leave the scene. She had a second joey which waited behind her. It grieves me that we as a people clearly ignore that these animals have feelings which we ourselves share.

Kangaroos obviously have feelings and are highly social beings like we are. It's not possible for many people, including myself, in rural communities like Culburra Beach and Inverell to witness such events without suffering emotional pain, anxiety and distress. The harmful experiences cause negative psychology impacts which have consequences for the mental wellbeing of people. And does the NSW government take account of these harms on local people and how they are able to enjoy their lives in country areas? Each one of these episodes is a tragic event and personally speaking, each has negatively affected my mental and emotional well-being.

Where are the safe places for kangaroos in NSW? Exclusion fencing is a blight on our landscape and a threat to our natural heritage. Urban expansion around St Georges Basin has caused kangaroos to flee the area and be struck by cars and face other dangers.

I'm concerned by the secrecy surrounding the treatment of kangaroos in NSW. I have no confidence that the NSW government is properly protecting kangaroos, managing their welfare or assessing their population. I'm greatly concerned that the population figures are vastly over estimated. I have no confidence that cruelty towards kangaroos and their joeys will be prevented by the processes and procedures used by the NSW Government, or that issuing licences to kill kangaroos to local landholders is done in a way assesses the needs of the kangaroos health and wellbeing in a given

area. I have no confidence in the NSW Government's policy of commercial exploitation of kangaroos for meat and skin industries, including whether quotas are appropriate and cruelty is avoided. I have no confidence that any independent oversight to ensure the protection and humane treatment of kangaroos in NSW even exists, let alone is well done. I have no confidence in NSW government policy with respect to land use and exclusion fencing and its impact of kangaroo well-being and management. These matters cause myself to be worried and anxious all the time which directly affects my health and consequently I speak to my local neighbours about these issues which in turn worries them.

The kangaroo is Australia's national symbol. But our country does not appreciate kangaroos. They are highly social animals and love their joeys just as much as we love our children. Government policy betrays kangaroos and has played a strong role in the destruction of NSW's kangaroos. I urge the government to enact policies to save kangaroos from cruelty and destruction. The plight of the kangaroo is now dire and it's a direct consequence of the exploitative practices of the agriculture industry. The two phenomena cannot be separated. Unless substantial changes are made to agricultural practices, the rapid decline of kangaroos in NSW will continue along with the rest of our natural heritage, and future generations will reflect on our generation's behaviour with disgust and shame.