



REPLY TO VICTORIAN KANGAROO 'HARVEST' MANAGEMENT PLAN 2023-2028

Gariwerd Animal Biodiversity Alliance, known as "GABA," is a robust community group comprised mainly of individuals residing, working, and engaging in activities in Gariwerd (Grampians, Western Victoria, Australia). Our region is home to Gunditjmarring, Eastern Marr, and Barengi Gadjin Traditional Owner communities, and we acknowledge their ongoing unceded sovereignty, along with the reciprocal relationship of care and connection with Country. Within our committee, a First Nations Representative provides guidance on matters concerning First Nations Law and Lore. We collectively and unequivocally reject the Federal Government's proposed Wildlife Trade Management Plan through the EPBC (1999) which is contrary to the Objects of that Act.

Colonial laws, introduced within the last 250 years, purport to protect the Kangaroo, but upon examination, subject her to multiple harms by seeking to draw her into the colonial project.¹

Our inception stemmed from the distress caused by the Victorian Government's kangaroo killing regime, particularly impacting Kangaroos, and the rural Victorians they live amidst. Kangaroos remain a focal concern, and we stand as their allies. Our objectives, centered around Kangaroos, include ensuring wildlife and their habitats are safeguarded for future generations, educating people on the significance of native wildlife to local ecology and biodiversity, informing individuals about all non-human animal species, and advocating for animals and biodiversity.

On behalf of the Gariwerd Animal Biodiversity Alliance, our members, and those we represent, we vehemently oppose the proposed Wildlife Trade Management Plan.

Sustainability of the 'Harvest'

Eastern and Western Grey Kangaroos, ancient native animals in the Australian landscape, have coexisted for millennia in ecological balance. They hold sovereign rights predating European settlement. The use of the term "Harvest" for actions that harm kangaroos and disrupt family groups is deceptive. The argument for ecological sustainability is deficient, and the government should reconsider its approach to provide respite to our environment, native species, and rural communities.

Monitoring

GABA members and allies, residing in regional areas, attest to poor compliance and the absence of proper monitoring in the killing of Kangaroos. Businesses are disrupted and locals traumatised. Transparency, oversight during killing, and advance publication of slaughter details would be essential for genuine compliance. This is too arduous for such an economically unviable and broadly harmful program.

¹ Ramsay, T. (2023). Kangaroo: Fields of Struggle. *Animal Law*, 29, 141.

Quota Setting, Licensing, and Welfare

The quota method is flawed, as evidenced by independent reviews.

Calculations [demonstrate] that, even in a very good year, a kangaroo population is unlikely to grow at a rate much exceeding 12%, let alone a rate of 200, 400, or even 500% as official tables sometimes state. Figures of the actual 'take' (kill count) over the last decade... suggest not abundance but populations in serious decline.²

Commercial Kangaroo killing is unsustainable and inhumane, as witnessed by those involved in wildlife rescue. The blatant irony of the government licensing some people to kill wildlife and others to rescue wildlife underscores the urgent need for reform. GABA exists to educate and advocate, emphasizing that wildlife Acts should not be exempt from cruelty prevention laws, a concern that remains unaddressed in the current regulatory framework.

Other Concerns

Every GABA committee member, including our First Nations Representative, resides in Gariwerd, actively participating in wildlife rescue or supporting such efforts. Permitting Kangaroo shooting undermines our community-building, peacebuilding, and awareness-raising initiatives. We support the Yuin Declaration for Kangaroos.³ Ceasing Kangaroo killing on Country significant to First Nations communities is vital, respecting their sovereign and cultural ties with the Kangaroo.

The notion of pitting Kangaroos against landholders is unfounded, as many landholders coexist peacefully with Kangaroos, especially considering their declining numbers. The alarming rate of injuries and trauma in Kangaroos highlights the inhumanity of the government-sanctioned Wildlife Trade, evidenced by any visit to a local wildlife shelter.

The Kangaroo is possibly the most powerful remaining demonstration that the colonial project has not yet been fully accomplished. She remains free and sovereign on this landscape and so is a threat when viewed through the colonial lens—from her propensity to travel along Dreaming tracks, through her sociology and kinship networks, to her mysterious biology, and the unique power and gentleness of her physical form. The Kangaroo does not respond to commands, and she cannot be controlled. Herein is a field of struggle between chthonic law, which respects her, and colonial law, which claims to protect her but in fact condemns her.⁴

In conclusion, the Kangaroo is a symbol of resistance to the colonial project. Existing laws, introduced within the last 250 years, claim to protect them but subject them to multiple harms. We urge you to cease the Wildlife Trade Management plan, and urgently re-evaluate the policies that impact these sovereign individuals.

Yours sincerely,

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² Brooks, D. (2022). The Number Game: Counting Kangaroos. *Animal Studies Journal*, 11(1), 1-36.

³ Dulumunmum Harrison, Uncle Max ((2021) Yuin Declaration for Kangaroos, *Kangaroos Alive* [kangaroosalive.org/yuin-declaration] Accessed 6 Dec 2023.

⁴ Ramsay, T. (2023). Kangaroo: Fields of Struggle. *Animal Law*, 29, 141.