



“Animal Welfare by the experts – those who keep, care for and breed animals.”

www.animalcareaustralia.org.au

28th June 2021

RE: Review of the Victorian Wildlife Act 1975 (the Act)¹

Animal Care Australia Inc. (ACA) represents the interests of all hobbyist and pet animal keepers nationally.

Our members are comprised of most major animal keeping representative bodies including all species such as, dogs, cats, birds, small mammals, reptiles, fish and native mammals.

For the purpose of this submission ACA has only responded to the sections and questions dealing with the keeping of native animals. ACA has responded to similar reviews of native animal licensing and we are recognised as a key stakeholder in ongoing animal welfare Act reviews in all other states and territories.

The keeping and breeding of native animals has continued to change since the current Act was implemented. Previous attitudes of wild trapping, both commercially and privately have given way to an emphasis on conservation, protection against species extinction and the preservation of genetic diversity, resulting in vast improvements in husbandry, animal keeping and breeding techniques all with the ultimate goal of greater welfare outcomes for the animals.

With this in mind ACA would like to remind the Review Panel that animal welfare is not and should not be the primary concern of this review. Animal welfare concerns are the focus of the current animal welfare act review being conducted by Agriculture Victoria. Equally animal rights ideologies have no place as a part of this review and most certainly should not be provided a voice in matters relating to the reviews of legislation or regulations.

The current Act focusses on regulation, compliance and enforcement, with policy and current attitudes of DELWP staff reflecting that focus. This needs to change with the new Act strongly encouraging and supporting native animal keeping and breeding.

ACA strongly supports the recommendations expressed by other animal keeping based stakeholders such as the Canary & Caged Bird Federation of Australia, the Victorian Herpetological Society and the Marsupial Society/Wildlife Australia.

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this review and draw your attention to the attached recommendations.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'M Donnelly'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Michael Donnelly
President, Animal Care Australia.
0400 323 843



Independent Review of Victoria's Wildlife Act - 1975



JUNE 28 2021

**ANIMAL CARE AUSTRALIA
STAKEHOLDER SUBMISSION**

The Independent Review of Victoria's Wildlife Act 1975

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For the purpose of this submission ACA strongly supports the recommendations expressed by other animal keeping based stakeholders such as the Canary & Caged Bird Federation of Australia, the Victorian Herpetological Society and the Marsupial Society/Wildlife Australia.

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this review and draw your attention to the comments and recommendations below.

What is currently working for you?

The current Wildlife Act allows the keeping of native wildlife by individuals however it focusses on regulation, compliance and enforcement. This needs to change. The new Act should encourage and support native animal keeping. The continued ability to keep native animals has a positive impact on conservation and provides the opportunity for younger generations to understand and respect our native animals. This in turn leads to the development of empathy towards and a passion to conserve our wildlife. There are 'new' ideological claims that someone can be satisfied by viewing animals on a television or computer screen. This could not be further from the truth – there is nothing more satisfying and life changing than experiencing and keeping native animals in real life.

With this mind, ACA supports the following recommendation:

“To promote the keeping of native animals” should be included as a purpose within the Act, as:

- a. Keeping native animals is a precursor to developing an appreciation of our Australian wildlife.**
- b. Caring for native animals directly develops empathy with wild animals.**
- c. Native animal keeping leads to a strong desire to protect and conserve our environment.**

What is currently not working and what are the opportunities to improve?

- The management of the licensing system is cumbersome and maintaining up-to-date records is difficult due to wildlife schedules being part of the wildlife regulations which are only reviewed every ten years - this needs to change. In addition the process for updating the schedules needs to be made easier for all stakeholders.
- Ongoing consultation with key stakeholders is lacking. Meetings could be held virtually making it easier for stakeholders to attend.
- An online record-keeping and application process also needs to be implemented – the reliance on manual processes is outdated in an increasingly paperless world.
- One single license for all native wildlife keepers would be more suitable instead of the species' separation currently utilised.

Therefore, ACA strongly recommends the implementation of the following recommendation:

Form an advisory committee specified within the Act to represent native animal keepers interests. (Similar to the previous Wildlife Possession and Trade Advisory Committee (WPTAC)).

Legislating within the Act itself ensures ongoing political and bureaucratic support. Responsibilities as follows:

- a. Representation of native animal licensees including the maintenance of licence conditions.**
- b. Assessment of applications to move species on and off licence or between licence categories.**
- c. Manage and oversee collaborative educational initiatives.**

WPTAC used to meet quarterly bringing together key stakeholders including herpetological, mammal and bird keeping groups, along with zoos, dealers and the DEWLP. This should never have been stopped.

Final recommendations:

- **Processing by veterinary practitioners or DEWLP officers of injured wildlife deemed unviable and unable to be returned to the wild. These could be placed into private collections, instead of the current mandatory**

destruction of these animals. This would improve genetic diversity in insurance populations

- **The “Key review date” listed on page 6 of the issues paper states “A further phase of consultation on the report and government response is anticipated after the panel delivers the final report to the Minister”**
This phase of consultation must take place and be communicated to all key stakeholders allowing them the time needed to review and provide feedback.
- **Ensure animal welfare concerns do not unreasonably influence this review. The Wildlife Act is about protection and conservation of wild populations.**
- **Right of entry to check licence conditions must require permission and an advance appointment, except when a warrant has been obtained.**
 - a. **Refer Section 22(3)(c) in the current Wildlife Act 1975.**
 - b. **Privacy at one’s place of residence is a fundamental right.**
 - c. **Unfettered right of entry to property should not be given to officers lightly and certainly not without substantive evidence proving good cause.**

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this review and encourage the Panel to contact us should you have further questions relating to this submission.

Kind regards,



Michael Donnelly
President and Native Mammal Representative
Animal Care Australia.
0400 323 843