

**Submission
No 304**

INQUIRY INTO WILDLIFE ROADSTRIKE IN VICTORIA

Organisation: Defend the Wild

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Submission to the Inquiry into Wildlife Roadstrike in Victoria

Submitted by: Defend the Wild

Date: 30 May 2025

Acknowledgement of Country

Defend the Wild acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our organisation operates – the traditional Country of the Mununjali, Migunberri, Wangerriburra and Ugarapul Peoples of the Scenic Rim region, the Bundjalung peoples of the Northern Rivers region and the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong Boon Wurrung peoples of the Eastern Kulin Nation.

We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present and emerging, and further pay our respects to First Nations Peoples long surviving connection to Country, their Totem animals, songlines, and sacred culture. We further recognise that Indigenous knowledge and leadership is vital in the pursuit of preserving wildlife and their habitats. Sovereignty has never been ceded - this always was, and always will be Aboriginal land.

Introduction

Defend the Wild is a grassroots charity dedicated to protecting Australia's native wildlife and their habitats. We are dedicated to transforming how we connect with and care for wildlife in Australia, fostering a future where humans and nature thrive together. By working collaboratively with diverse partners and honouring the knowledge of First Nations people, we aim to inspire deep-rooted respect and proactive stewardship for wildlife and their habitats, guiding a shift in collective values to protect and sustain our shared environment for generations to come.

We are dedicated to the preservation of wildlife and habitats across Australia by:

- Highlighting the greatest dangers wildlife face, particularly apex predators.
- Supporting the ambitions of Traditional Owners in protecting and managing culturally significant animals and Country.
- Supporting the development of solutions that benefit both rural communities and wildlife, particularly apex predators.
- Highlighting the importance of ethics-centred conservation efforts that respect the integrity of individual animals' lives, while exposing conservation greenwashing that attempts to legitimise unethical industries.



We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry into Wildlife Roadstrike in Victoria.

Wildlife-vehicle collisions are a significant yet preventable cause of animal mortality and human trauma in our state. It is imperative that we transition from reactive responses to proactive, systemic solutions to prevent wildlife roadstrike across Victoria.

Key Concerns

1. High Rate of Wildlife Roadstrike:

Each year, it is estimated that around [20,000 wildlife-vehicle collisions](#) occur annually in Victoria, affecting species such as kangaroos, wombats, echidnas, and possums. These figures are just a fraction of the national toll – more than [10 million native animals](#) are killed on Australian roads annually, a staggering number that reflects the urgent need for systemic change.

At the heart of this crisis lies the fragmentation and destruction of native habitats. As cattle grazing expands, native forests are logged, and urban areas sprawl, vast tracts of once-continuous ecosystems are cleared, leaving wildlife with diminishing space to forage, breed, and migrate. Animals are often forced to navigate across roads in search of food, mates, or shelter – placing them directly in the path of vehicles.

This growing overlap between human infrastructure and wildlife territory also puts drivers at significant risk, especially in rural and regional areas where large animals such as kangaroos can cause serious accidents. The current approach, which often treats these collisions as isolated incidents, fails to acknowledge the broader environmental, infrastructural, and behavioural factors at play.

2. Lack of Comprehensive Data:

Currently, there is no centralised database for wildlife roadstrike incidents, hindering effective monitoring and response strategies. We would like a unified system in place to track when, where, and how these collisions occur, or what species are most affected.

This data gap severely undermines the capacity of wildlife rescuers, researchers, government agencies, road planners, and wildlife advocates to:

- **Identify collision hotspots**, seasonal patterns, and emerging risks;
- **Deploy targeted mitigation efforts**, such as signage, reduced speed zones, or wildlife crossings;
- **Measure the effectiveness** of interventions over time;
- **Understand species-specific impacts**, particularly for vulnerable or threatened native animals;



- **Coordinate cross-agency responses**, from local councils to state transport authorities and environmental bodies.

Currently, much of the available information is gathered through insurance claims, local council reports, citizen science apps, and wildlife rescue services. While these sources are valuable, they lack consistency, standardisation, and integration, making it difficult to build a clear, state-wide picture of the problem.

Without reliable data, policy decisions are based on assumptions rather than evidence, and opportunities for preventative action are often missed. For example, road infrastructure projects may proceed without adequate wildlife risk assessments, and emergency response services may be unequipped to deal with high-incidence areas. This centralised database should be a foundational requirement for any serious attempt to reduce wildlife roadstrike and its devastating toll on biodiversity.

3. **Insufficient Infrastructure Planning:**

A key driver of wildlife roadstrike in Victoria is inadequate infrastructure planning that fails to account for the movement patterns and habitat needs of native species. Many roads cut directly through critical wildlife corridors and habitats, often without implementing appropriate mitigation measures to reduce the risk of collisions.

Many transport routes intersect with bushland, forest edges, water sources, and migratory paths essential to species such as kangaroos, wombats, koalas, echidnas, gliders, and reptiles. When roads sever these habitats, animals are forced to cross busy highways to access food, water, mates, or shelter – placing them in direct conflict with moving vehicles.

Despite well-documented risks, few roads are built or upgraded with embedded wildlife-safe design features, such as:

- **Wildlife underpasses and overpasses**, designed to provide animals with safe crossing points;
- **Fencing that guides animals toward safe crossings** and away from traffic;
- **Speed-calming infrastructure** and signage in known wildlife hotspots, including AI signage that can detect wildlife approaching roads.

A leading example of successful wildlife crossing infrastructure comes from Canada's Banff National Park, where a major section of the Trans-Canada Highway intersects rich wildlife habitat. To address high collision rates with species like grizzly bears, elk, and wolves, Parks Canada implemented a network of over 40 underpasses and 6 overpasses, accompanied by roadside fencing to guide animals safely across. Since their construction began in the 1990s, more than 230,000 wildlife crossings have been recorded, and collisions with large mammals have dropped by over 80%.



Without forward-thinking planning, road networks will continue to fragment wildlife habitat and escalate roadstrike incidents. In the face of the climate crisis and urban sprawl, where animals are already under pressure from habitat loss, the cost of inaction will be both ecological and human.

4. Overburdened Wildlife Rescue Sector:

A critical yet often overlooked aspect of Victoria's wildlife roadstrike crisis is the immense pressure placed on the volunteer wildlife rescue sector. These dedicated individuals are frequently the first responders to incidents involving injured or orphaned animals, especially those resulting from vehicle collisions. Operating predominantly without financial assistance, many volunteers bear the financial burden of rescue operations themselves, covering costs such as fuel, medical supplies, and equipment. This self-funding model, coupled with the emotional toll of constant exposure to animal trauma, has led to widespread burnout within the sector.

In response to these challenges, a petition has been submitted to the Victorian Parliament proposing a modest \$2 levy on vehicle registrations to establish a dedicated fund for emergency wildlife care. This initiative aims to provide consistent financial support to volunteer rescuers, ensuring they have the necessary resources to continue their vital work. The proposed levy could generate over [\\$10 million annually](#), significantly enhancing the capacity of the wildlife rescue sector.

Integrating such a funding mechanism into the state's infrastructure and environmental planning could alleviate the strain on volunteers and improve outcomes for wildlife affected by road incidents. By acknowledging and addressing the financial and emotional burdens faced by these volunteers, Victoria can take a significant step towards a more sustainable and effective response to wildlife roadstrike incidents.

Recommendations

1. Legislative Reforms:

Amend the Wildlife Act 1975 and Road Safety Act 1986 to establish a legal duty of care requiring motorists to stop, assist, and report injured wildlife.

2. Infrastructure Enhancements:

- Require ecological assessments and wildlife corridor mapping in all road planning processes;
- Prioritise investment in wildlife-safe infrastructure, particularly in high-collision areas;
- Ensure ongoing monitoring and evaluation of mitigation measures;



- Establish cross-departmental collaboration between transport, environment, and planning bodies.
3. **Data Collection and Transparency:**
Establish a centralised, open-access wildlife roadstrike database, requiring mandatory reporting from road maintenance crews, local councils, emergency services, and insurers.
- Allow for real-time reporting and mapping of incidents;
 - Be accessible via mobile and web platforms to encourage public participation;
 - Integrate with existing environmental and road safety databases;
 - Inform the design of preventative strategies and policy interventions.
4. **Support for Wildlife Rescue Organisations:**
Provide funding and resources to volunteer and paid wildlife rescue and rehabilitation organisations to enhance their capacity and effectiveness.
5. **Public Awareness and Education:**
Implement driver education programs focusing on wildlife collision prevention and response.

Implementing targeted driver education programs that focus on wildlife collision prevention and response can play a significant role in changing behaviours behind the wheel. These programs should inform drivers about high-risk areas and times (such as dusk and dawn), explain how to respond safely if an animal is on the road, who to call, and encourage reporting of injured wildlife. This will allow drivers to feel better equipped to prevent harm to native animals.

Conclusion

Addressing wildlife roadstrike requires a multifaceted approach involving legislative reform, infrastructure planning, data transparency, and community education and engagement. By implementing these recommendations, Victoria can significantly reduce wildlife mortality on roads and enhance safety for all road users.

We urge the Committee to consider these recommendations seriously and take decisive action to protect our native wildlife.

Thank you for considering our submission.



Contact Information

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