

# Parliamentary Submission to the Victorian Roadstrike Inquiry

Submitted by: Vets for Compassion

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## Introduction

Every day across Victoria, native animals are struck and killed on our roads. From wombats and kangaroos to echidnas, birds, and gliders—no species is immune. Roadstrike is one of the most widespread but least talked-about causes of wildlife death in the state. But for every statistic, there's a story: a joey left orphaned, a driver left shaken, a rescuer arriving just moments too late.

Wildlife collisions aren't just tragic for the animals—they impact people too. Drivers face trauma, vehicles are damaged, and responders are stretched to breaking point. But these incidents are preventable. With the right infrastructure, better laws, and support for the rescue sector, we can reduce roadstrike and the mental load dramatically.

This Inquiry is a rare and critical opportunity for the government and response teams to shift from crisis response to proactive prevention. With your leadership, we can help embed wildlife protection into road planning, expand proven technologies like virtual fencing, and ensure our laws reflect the value of animal life.

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## Our Role

Vets for Compassion provides a unique and essential animal welfare and public safety service to the Victorian public. We are the only **veterinary** rescue group in Melbourne that responds to *all* species—24/7. Our work includes:

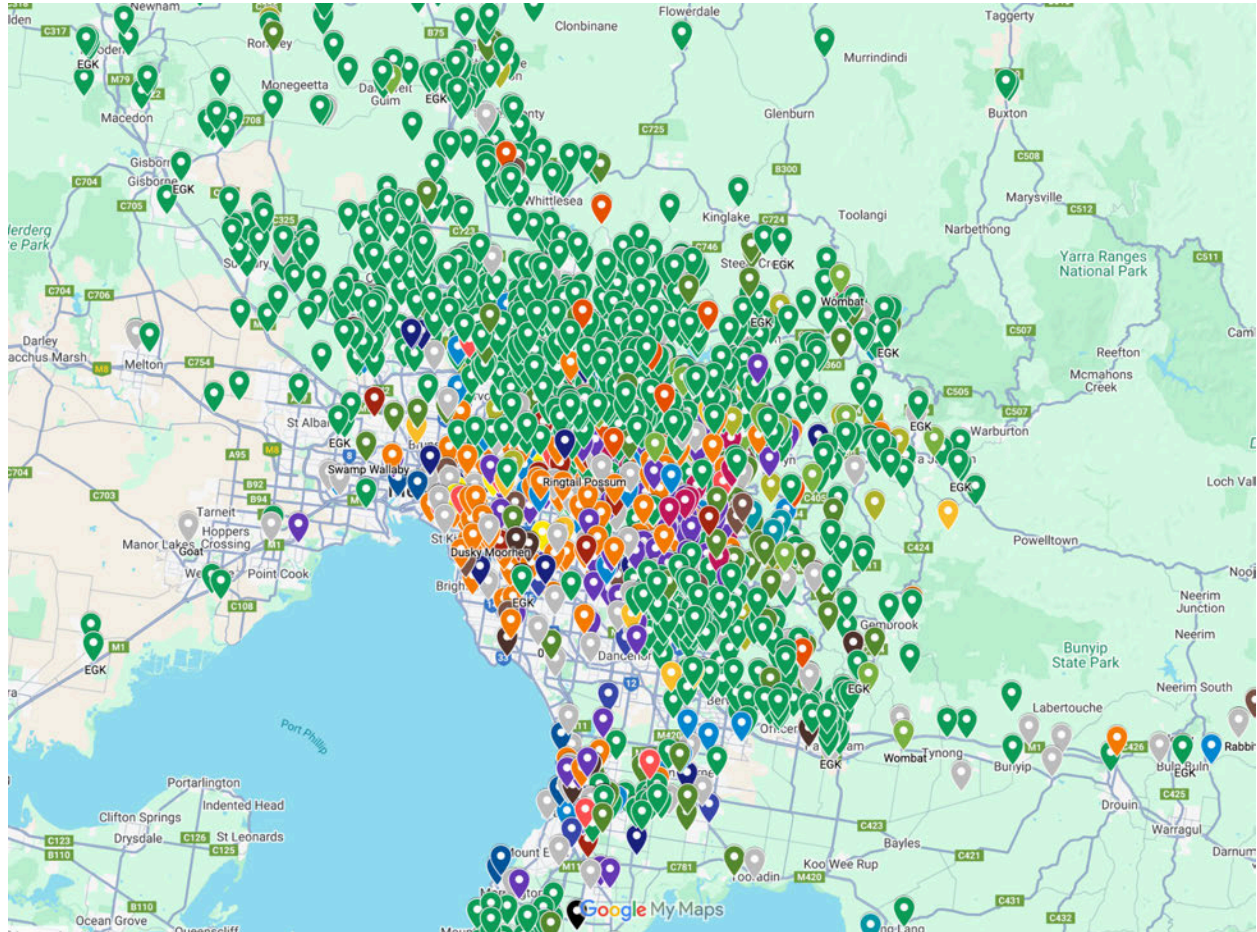
- Darting and capture of displaced wildlife, especially macropods, deer, and large injured animals in high-risk environments like highways, schools, and residential areas.
- Emergency surgery and veterinary care for treatable wildlife.
- Collaboration with government agencies, councils, CFA, SES, VicRoads, VicPol, Eastlink, and Wildlife Victoria.

Our highly skilled veterinary team regularly operate in dangerous situations, including stopping traffic on freeways, scaling aqueducts to retrieve trapped animals, and attend truck rollovers. Despite the intensity and professionalism of our work, we continue to run as a volunteer-based organisation.

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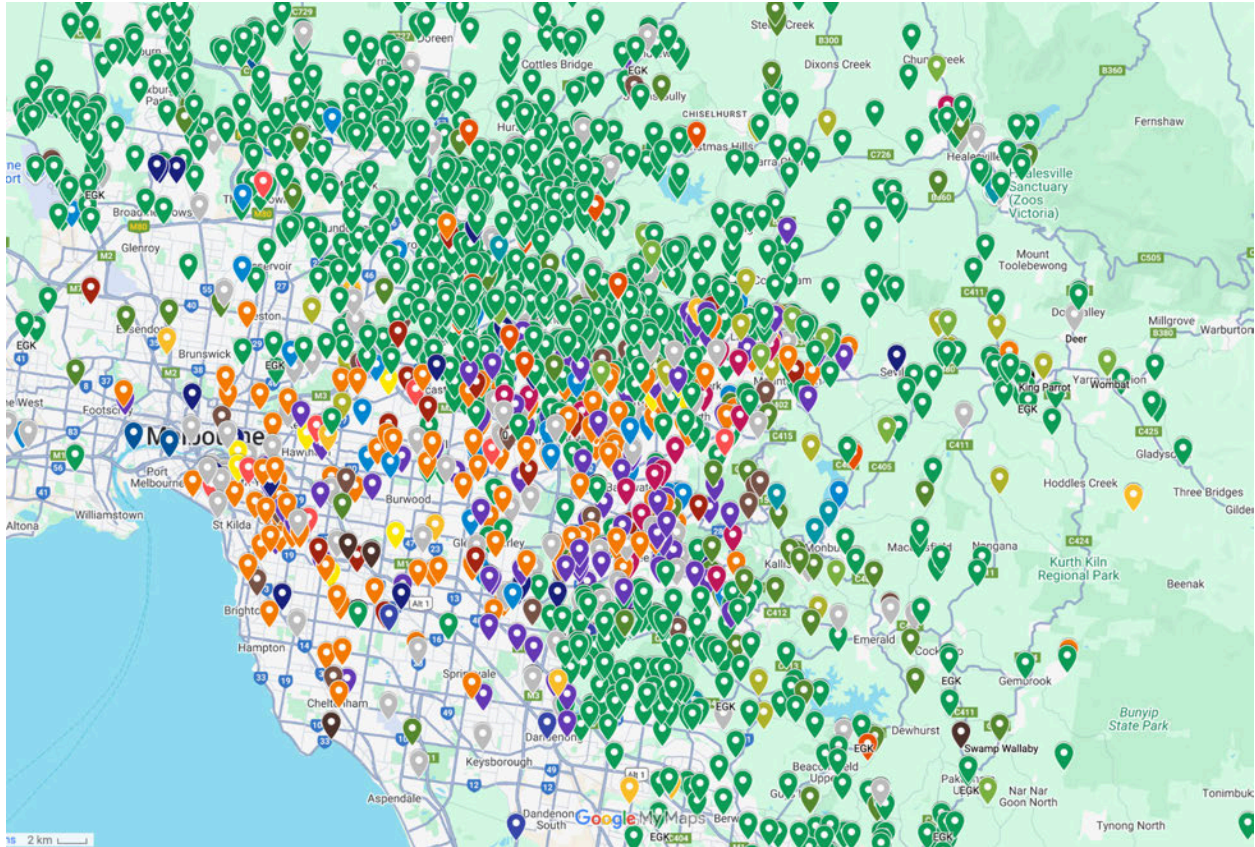
## Image Support & Data Visualisation

**Image 1: Overall Callouts for 2023-2024 Financial Year**



**Image 2: Zoomed In View for Scale**

These images clearly illustrate the magnitude of our service delivery and the increasing demand on our team.



### **Image 3: Joey Clinging to Deceased Mum on Roadside**

This powerful photo encapsulates the emotional depth of the animals we fight to protect. Macropods are sentient beings. They feel, grieve, and love just as humans do. Joeys who lose their mothers wait beside their lifeless bodies in fear and confusion, not understanding that they will never wake up. This is not only heartbreaking—it is unacceptable.





If a human child were found clinging to their mother in the middle of the road, emergency services would respond without question — immediately, and with urgency. But when it's a joey holding on to its lifeless mother after a roadstrike, all too often there's no one there. No lights, no sirens. Just silence.

We would never leave a human child in that situation. So why are we allowing it to happen to sentient, feeling animals? Kangaroos, wombats, koalas — they form bonds, they grieve, they experience fear and distress just as we do. The only thing separating them from us is species — not emotion, not worth, not pain.

This is exactly why we need systemic, government-supported emergency wildlife response services. Because help should come for all those who suffer — not just the ones that look like us.

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**Data Doesn't Lie: Escalating Workload**

The data speaks for itself. There has been a significant year-on-year increase in the number of animals needing assistance:

- **July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023:** 1,357 total calls
- **July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024:** 2,562 total calls
- **July 1, 2024 – May 31, 2025:** 3,268 calls and rising

This growing demand reflects not only the rapid urban expansion and habitat fragmentation but the increasing public reliance on rescue services like ours. The numbers of road-struck animals are similarly alarming:

- **July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023:** 749 suspected vehicle-strike deaths/euthanasia
- **July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024:** 1,256
- **July 1, 2024 – May 31, 2025:** 1,571

The current 2024-2025 figures also exclude the majority of our team being deployed to the Grampians bushfires for 2 months. These annual figures would be significantly higher had that not been the case.

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## The Human Cost: Burnout, Risk, and Inequity

This is a service the government is responsible for supplying—but currently does not. While a call centre exists to *record* incidents (Wildlife Victoria), no government body is responsible for the actual **response** work. The overwhelming and dangerous expectation that this responsibility falls solely to volunteers is not just unsustainable—it is unethical.

Our volunteers have already provided **8,376 unpaid hours this financial year**, with veterinary darters alone working approximately **150 hours per week**—the equivalent of four full-time roles—*on top of* their existing paid employment. They are sleep-deprived, emotionally stretched, and putting themselves in harm's way daily.

- Scaling aqueducts to reach animals
- Darting 80kg kangaroos in backyards to protect residents
- Removing injured wildlife from 100km/hr freeways to keep the public safe.

These are **not safe jobs** to be performed by unpaid volunteers.

We ask the government: Would you be able to do *your* job if you weren't being paid for it? Could you do it to the same high standard, day after day, without financial support? If not—why are wildlife responders expected to?

Some of our team members have had to forgo paid work altogether due to the constant demands of rescue. They have lost homes, families, and livelihoods, all because there is no funded alternative. Volunteers are being crushed under the weight of the government's inaction.

How long until one of them crashes after a 2am rescue, sleep-deprived and mentally drained? Is that what it will take for change to happen?

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## **The numbers don't lie**

We strongly urge the Government to investigate the number of wildlife emergency calls that go unanswered each day. The current system is stretched beyond capacity—resulting in countless animals left to suffer for hours, often six to eight or more, before help arrives—if it arrives at all. Many die slow, painful deaths without ever being attended to.

This is not due to a lack of will, but a lack of resources.

Now imagine what could be achieved if the Government established and funded a professional, trained wildlife emergency response team. The impact would be profound—not only for the animals whose lives could be saved, but for the Victorian public's confidence in a system that currently relies almost entirely on unpaid volunteers.

This is a critical opportunity for the Victorian Government to lead with compassion, responsibility, and foresight. Establishing a dedicated response team would not only be the right thing to do—it would make Victoria a national leader in proactive wildlife protection and emergency response.

And it would send a clear message: that native animal lives matter, and so do the people who work tirelessly—often at great personal cost—to protect them.

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## **Our Request**

We are calling for:

1. **Government-funded response teams** to manage wildlife emergencies, especially in peri-urban areas.
2. **Financial support** for frontline rescuers doing dangerous and essential work.
3. **Formal integration of wildlife response services** into emergency response infrastructure and funding.
4. **Legislative recognition** that roadstrike is a public safety issue as well as an animal welfare one.
5. **Invest in and implement targeted virtual fencing solutions**—including acoustic deterrents, AI-powered wildlife detection systems, and emerging organic communication technologies like Cherrp™—at known wildlife collision hotspots.
  - In Victoria, pilot “virtual fencing” systems (e.g. along Jumping Creek Road and Frankston near fauna reserves) show early success in reducing roadstrike incidents [sustainablemacleod.org.au](https://sustainablemacleod.org.au).
  - NSW Transport & others are trialling AI and LiDAR detection systems, triggering speed alerts or driver warnings when animals are detected near roads [transport.nsw.gov.au](https://transport.nsw.gov.au).
  - Research (MDPI Sensors) highlights that sensor networks integrated with AI can predict animal–vehicle collision risks, enabling real-time alerts [mdpi.com](https://mdpi.com).
6. **Legislate the inclusion of fauna-sensitive infrastructure** (such as wildlife overpasses, underpasses, exclusion fencing, and responsive signage) in all new road projects intersecting native wildlife corridors.
  - North America and Canada’s Trans-Canada Highway wildlife crossings demonstrate high effectiveness: nearly all monitored species use overpasses and underpasses [online.ucpress.edu/transportecology.info](https://online.ucpress.edu/transportecology/info).
  - Specific studies show **amphibian underpasses reduce mortality by over 80%** in migration zones [uvm.edupapers.ssrn.com](https://uvm.edupapers.ssrn.com).
  - Structural design recommendations and adherence to best practices in crossing construction significantly enhance wildlife passage and ecological connectivity [peerj.com/fs.usda.gov](https://peerj.com/fs.usda.gov).
7. **Retrofit existing high-risk roads** with essential mitigation measures such as escape ramps, speed-reducing devices, dynamic wildlife warning signs, wildlife-proof fencing, and the removal of hazardous rub rails.
  - Colorado’s infrastructure investments include **61 escape ramps, wildlife-proof fencing, underpasses, and dynamic warning signage**, effectively preventing roadstrike [intertraffic.com](https://intertraffic.com).
  - U.S. studies confirm earth escape ramps allow trapped animals to exit fenced highways safely [conservationevidence.com](https://conservationevidence.com).
  - One controlled Tasmanian study found installing **wildlife warning reflectors, speed bumps, rugby strips and fins** reduced quoll and devil road mortality [conservationevidence.com](https://conservationevidence.com).

8. **Require VicRoads and local governments** to conduct wildlife risk assessments and implement ongoing monitoring during all road planning, construction, and upgrade activities.
9. **Legally recognise wildlife rescue and response** as a formal emergency service within Victorian legislation, acknowledging its public safety and animal welfare roles.
10. **Mandate comprehensive Wildlife Impact Assessments** for all new infrastructure and housing developments that occur within or adjacent to native habitat zones.
11. **Incorporate green corridors and designated fauna movement pathways** into the Victorian Planning Scheme to reflect and extend existing Retained Environment Networks (RENs) and ensure landscape connectivity.
  - The University of Melbourne identified over **1,600 km of underutilised green corridors** across Greater Melbourne—ideal for enhancing biodiversity and linking fragmented habitats [unimelb.edu.au](http://unimelb.edu.au).
  - Green or ‘biolinks’ provide visible, effective connectivity, helping species move safely across landscapes [biodiversitylegacy.org.au](http://biodiversitylegacy.org.au).
  - Global planning research shows that integrated green networks (e.g., biolink strategies) significantly improve wildlife movement in urban environments and reduce habitat isolation

Together, these evidence-based measures provide a practical, scientifically validated roadmap for reducing wildlife roadstrike and aligning Victoria with global best practices.

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## Final Thoughts

We will continue to do this work as long as we can because the animals need us—but we should not have to do it alone. And it has become evident over the last few months that unless something changes and fast, our team **can not** continue to provide this service. The government must step up. The public assumes someone is out there helping these animals. The truth is—there is. It’s us and other volunteers like us. But without ongoing guaranteed funding, training, and support, we may not be able to keep going.

We urge the Victorian Government to take meaningful action and ensure that those saving lives—both animal and human—are given the respect, protection, and support they deserve.

Submitted by:

Vets for Compassion

[operations@vetsforcompassion.org](mailto:operations@vetsforcompassion.org)

[www.vetsforcompassion.org](http://www.vetsforcompassion.org)