

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Wildlife Roadstrike in Victoria

Bendigo – Wednesday 6 August 2025

MEMBERS

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WITNESS

Glenn Cole.

The CHAIR: I declare open the Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee's public hearing for the Inquiry into Wildlife Roadstrike in Victoria. Please ensure that mobile phones have been switched to silent and that background noise is minimised.

I would like to begin this hearing by respectfully acknowledging the Aboriginal peoples, the traditional custodians of the various lands we are gathered on today, and pay my respects to their ancestors, elders and families. I particularly welcome any elders or community members who are here today to impart their knowledge of this issue to the committee or who are watching the broadcast of these proceedings. I also welcome any other members of the public watching via the live broadcast.

To kick off, we will just get committee members to introduce themselves, starting down the end with Ms Broad.

Gaelle BROAD: Hi. I am Gaelle Broad, Member for Northern Victoria.

Richard WELCH: Richard Welch, Member for North-East Metro.

The CHAIR: Georgie Purcell, Member for Northern Victoria.

John BERGER: And John Berger, Southern Metro.

The CHAIR: Great. Thanks for appearing before us today. All evidence taken is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act 1975* and further subject to the provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders. Therefore the information you provide during this hearing is protected by law. You are protected against any action for what you say during this hearing, but if you go elsewhere and repeat the same things, those comments may not be protected by this privilege. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament.

All evidence is being recorded and you will be provided with a proof version of the transcript following this hearing, and then transcripts will ultimately be made public and posted on the committee's website.

For the Hansard record, can you please state your full name and any organisation you are appearing on behalf of.

Glenn COLE: Glenn Cole, on my own behalf – I am a semi-retired professional shooter in Victoria under the kangaroo harvest program and a local landowner approximately 30 k's west of Bendigo.

The CHAIR: Wonderful. Thank you. We now welcome your opening comments but ask that they are kept to around 10 to 15 minutes to ensure plenty of time for discussion and questions.

Glenn COLE: Thank you. Thank you for the opportunity. My presentation will probably not be similar to others, but anyway. Kangaroos being killed on the roads: I believe a very high percentage is owing to the overpopulation to feed available, thus they come to the roadsides to feed and are getting hit by vehicles. Populations have to be controlled. Managers of Crown land have to take control of kangaroo numbers on Crown land and not rely on landowners to control numbers through authority to control wildlife permits, or ATCW, as they do not own or control wildlife. Wildlife is owned by the Crown, thus needs to be controlled by the Crown.

Authority to control wildlife permits are a farce. The official numbers controlled are nowhere near accurate; I believe it would be fivefold to the numbers reported. Also with that, there is no reporting back to the department on how many animals are actually being controlled under that permit. A permit may be issued for a figure of 100 kangaroos, but there is nothing reported back to say that one is being controlled or 100 are being controlled.

I do not believe there is any economical way to stop or greatly reduce the roadside killing of kangaroos other than by controlling numbers. Roadside exclusion fencing is cost prohibitive. My local council area has some 4000 kilometres of road. The Calder Highway has exclusion fencing for most of its length between Bendigo and Melbourne, but we still see a high number of wildlife killed on the freeway. When VicRoads tried to remove kangaroos from a section of the freeway, the do-gooders blocked the escape points, thus resulting in kangaroos not being able to be removed from the area.

Management of roadside vegetation needs to be improved. Scrub, small trees and grass need to be managed to a greater distance from the road edge. On a recent trip to Cape York and return we noticed that where the roadsides were managed, with vegetation removed to a large distance, 10-plus metres, there was very little roadkill of native wildlife. I have noticed on local sealed roads where uncontrolled vegetation is, there is a greater number of roadside kill. There is no simple solution to this problem of roadside kill.

The current kangaroo population is far greater than I can remember in my 65 years, and I have lived in the same area all my life. Speaking to people of a greater age than me, they said to me that when they were a child, if a kangaroo was sighted, it was a district event. The reason, I believe, as with many others in my area, that we have seen a large increase in kangaroo numbers in my lifetime is that we landholders have supplied wildlife with water in areas, whereas in the late 1800s, early 1900s, there would only be seasonal water. Through digging dams and installing water points throughout the landscape and better pastures and feed, we have supplied better conditions for wildlife to increase in numbers. Because we have created this problem of overpopulation, we have to control numbers. We do this all over the world where populations of wildlife are too large for the environment.

Landholders who hold pastoral leases have to manage livestock and vermin numbers by law, to protect native plants and environment. But government land managers do not seem to control native or feral animals to protect the environment, thus damaging the environment. Landholders who are adjacent to government-controlled/managed land are getting overrun by wildlife – i.e. kangaroos in particular – damaging fences, crops and pastures. Landholders try to lock up pastures to let feed grow for their livestock, only to see it eaten by a large number of kangaroos from government-managed land.

Authority to control wildlife permits are available to landholders to control wildlife numbers. Their carcasses lie where they fall or are buried, only to rot. Prior to 2014 a shooter who could see the waste with these controlled kangaroos and a knackery owner had the opportunity to meet with a local government development officer, and from that meeting the pet food trial commenced in eight local government areas in 2014. With the success of that trial, the kangaroo harvesting program commenced in October 2019, covering most local government areas. The people who oppose the kangaroo harvesting program are not seeing the whole picture. I can see where they are coming from, but we all need to open our views on wildlife management. Using authority to control wildlife permits/kangaroos is a tool, but we are wasting a great protein that the world needs. Kangaroos living in urban built-up areas have to be controlled as well. They get familiar with humans, and large males get territorial and very protective, thus becoming a danger to both humans and pets. That is basically what I have got at this point.

The CHAIR: All right. We will go to Mr Berger for questions.

John BERGER: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Glenn, for coming in today. Glenn, I have asked a couple of questions today about roadside vegetation to the councils, and some of their views were that with some of the recent winds and trees coming down, it has made it impossible to keep up with clearing the trees and all that sort of stuff. I just wondered, where you are out in the west of Bendigo, from my recollection of that land out there it is not heavily timbered along the roadsides in certain areas and there are a lot of pastures and grazing areas. What is the vegetation like on that side?

Glenn COLE: Well, out on the road between my place and Kangaroo Flat, I suppose the best way to describe it is there is forest, and on one side of the road there is farmland, and along that road the small trees, suckers, saplings and grass have grown right up basically to the edge of the bitumen. In New South Wales and Queensland up there, it is over 10 metres from the edge of the bitumen out to where that stuff is, so the animals have a chance to see the vehicles and the vehicles have a chance to see the animals. The main roadkill we saw up there was wild pigs and goats – very, very few kangaroos or any other wildlife.

John BERGER: And would it typically be at fence-post height, your grasses and saplings and that?

Glenn COLE: Around home it is getting even higher than that. Greater Bendigo City Council went through a number of years ago and did a good job cleaning up, but they have not maintained it, and other shires are the same wherever you go in the state that I see, and I believe that is one tool that is there that should not be a big problem. Probably once a year you go through with a machine – i.e. a slasher, a mulcher or something – and mulch that down, right through the table drain and up. There is a lack of maintenance on roadsides at the moment.

John BERGER: And typically you might get some farmers that want to cut firebreaks through there to ensure that their own fence lines are protected all the way through.

Glenn COLE: Are clear, yes.

John BERGER: That would be one way of mitigating it. You spoke of the permits. I am interested to hear a bit about that. Are you issued a particular permit –

Glenn COLE: Authority to control wildlife. The property owner applies to DEECA – the department of changing names, but DEECA. As I understand it, the department is supposed to assess the problem – whether they do or not, I do not know. They then issue a permit to the property owner and then the property owner either controls the roos themselves or gets somebody else to control them. The property owner usually, as I understand it, because I have never actually applied for one personally, says how many kangaroos they believe they have and the number they wish to control, and what they get is up to the department.

John BERGER: So that number is stated on the permit. Are there instances where the numbers have, anecdotally, exceeded the permit?

Glenn COLE: I am hearing all the time of people going over that number five or six times and still not getting in control of them. I know of one property that, when the bloke took it over, he went over at least five times the volume for a number of years, probably six or eight years, and was still not on top of the kangaroos. Laanecoorie is where I grew up most of my life, and now I have moved up to Newbridge. On the west side of the river at Laanecoorie you would see a kangaroo, more when I was younger. When I started, got my licence and started shooting, I never saw a kangaroo on the east side of the river. Now there is a mob of, when I last saw them, probably a hundred kangaroos around the township of Laanecoorie. Back in April or May, probably the last property that I did as a commercial harvester, I went onto the property. The area I was controlling kangaroos in was about 10 hectares, and I believe there were over 400 kangaroos in there. You could not have put any more sheep on if you tried, really, and they are trying to run a business. And those kangaroos, because it was irrigated, were coming out of the bush right next door. The numbers are just too great.

John BERGER: So do you have a feel for mob movements, in terms of –

Glenn COLE: They do not seem to move very far. In one particular property that I do, he has got four different blocks, and one block is right next to the forest. It really gets hammered there, and he has told me – I have known him most of my life – the other properties never had kangaroos on them. Then there were one or two. Most farmers do not mind one or two on the property, but when you get your numbers up around 60, 70 or 80 – on this particular property he had a paddock blocked up for shearing in the timber shelter belt, so after shearing you put stock in there. He went to put stock in there and he estimated 120-plus kangaroos were in there. So his feed that he was saving was gone. The number of kangaroos I am hearing of people controlling is just – and we are not getting on top of them. The owners of the Crown, which is the government, have got to take control of the numbers. Just through authority to control wildlife, in 2009 approximately 62,000 kangaroos were able to be controlled under authority to control wildlife, and in 2022 that was 186,000. The need for authority to control wildlife has obviously increased because of the numbers.

I have done some rough figures on kangaroo numbers growing. From information I have received, they believe that 10 per cent of the kangaroos controlled each year will maintain the balance. Well, that is incorrect. We have seen that. It is not happening. I did a rough estimate of a hundred kangaroos, 50 per cent of them females. They breed between two years and 15 years of age, so that comes out to about 43 females being able to have young. I said, righto – with the use of figures – three have not been able to have young for whatever reason. With 40 kangaroos, they can have a young every nine months, so all of a sudden you have got 53. You would

have to have over 20 per cent mortality rate to keep that number about balanced. No way in Victoria have we got that. In outback New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland, where they have got wild dogs, dingoes and drought, that is probably happening, but not here in Victoria. We are supplying them with too much feed and water.

John BERGER: All right, Chair. That is enough for me.

Glenn COLE: The other one, with that feed and water, the Loddon River, Campaspe, Goulburn – those rivers would not have run back at the turn of the century before weirs were put in, and now they are full of water. We are supplying the problem. We have got to take management of it.

John BERGER: Thanks, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Mr Berger. We will go to Mrs Broad.

Gaelle BROAD: Thank you very much for attending today. Just interested, I guess we have heard discussion a bit about the number of tags issued. You know, there has been under that –

Glenn COLE: That is through the kangaroo harvesting program, yes?

Gaelle BROAD: Yes, through the kangaroo harvesting program. Can you comment on that? I have heard that there are potentially people that have just left the tags in their glove box and that a contract shooter has to wait three months to apply for more, I think, once they have utilised their tags. Can you just talk about that?

Glenn COLE: Well, on the kangaroo harvesting program, I have been very active in trying to get information and developing information and that. But anyway, with that, at the moment there is only one main buyer in Victoria. He probably takes 90 per cent of the kangaroos, if not more. He has set a quota on each shooter of how many kangaroos he can handle per week, owing to the fact that he cannot move the product on. Two or three years ago, I believe he had over 700 tonnes of kangaroo meat in freezers, and some of that got dumped because he just could not get rid of it. So then he cut everybody back to a quota. That quota, off the top of my head, is about 1700 kangaroos a week in Victoria – about a thousand are pet food and about 700 are human consumption. Harvesters only have been able to get tags once every three months. That is because of the quota that DEECA have put out for certain zones. People do not – I will just step away from that for a sec. There are six zones in Victoria: Loddon Mallee; Hume, which is to the east; Gippsland; Otways; western district, I think from memory; and central. Those areas have a quota of how many kangaroos can be taken in each area, and in particular in the Otways and Lower Wimmera, their quota has been so small this year that harvesters only get one opportunity to get tags for three months. Tags are issued every quarter, so as soon as the applications go in and the tags are issued, that is it for that quarter. So the reason why they are not getting the tags is they are not available and there is not a market.

I will step back a bit. There were somewhere around 170 registered kangaroo harvest professional shooters in Victoria at one stage. It is now back to 130 or thereabouts, but out of that 130 there is only less than 40 that are actually ones that have got somewhere to sell their animals – their product – to.

Gaelle BROAD: Do you think that industry could be expanded in a sustainable way that meets conservation and economic goals?

Glenn COLE: Yes, if we can get the markets. There is no market for the end product. The dog deaths issue that came out of Gippsland three or four years ago with the contaminated pet food has had a flow-on effect. There are a lot of people who buy pet food who will not buy pet food unless it is coming out of a human consumption facility. They will not take it out of a knackery, and that is fair. That is part of it there. We have got to get the markets. The biggest market, I think, is Poland, and I have heard reports – I have not seen any information, but I have heard reports that in America, when beef prices are very high, they will buy kangaroo meat and put that into their hamburgers to substitute because of the price.

Gaelle BROAD: I am just interested in the authority to control wildlife. I recently spoke with someone; they were mentioning farmers. There is a lot of pressure on farmers to apply, and they are going through drought conditions, many of them. So with the increase, and we have heard of developments and hobby farms, do you think there is a smaller group potentially that are taking on some of the burden of managing?

Glenn COLE: Any farmer who is trying to grow crops – no, I will change that. The majority of farmers who are growing crops and producing livestock as their sole income I believe are controlling kangaroos. There is a big problem with people buying blocks. There is one in particular at Wedderburn that I know of that I think is about 400 to 500 hectares that has been bought by city people. They do nothing with it. It is now overgrown, and that is harbouring a mega number of kangaroos. The farmers around that block – I have been there, and you can see the evidence of the damage the kangaroos are doing both to infrastructure and to their crops.

Gaelle BROAD: Some people have indicated that the system has been set up to fail. What are your thoughts on the way the government –

Glenn COLE: The authority to control wildlife?

Gaelle BROAD: Yes, government managing the wildlife at the moment in Victoria.

Glenn COLE: The people on the ground in the departments understand what is going on, but when it gets up the tree is where they hit the snags. I have heard over the years – one case, which is probably 40 years old now – of a fruitgrower who applied for a permit to control a parrot, which is protected. He got a permit for one bird. Of course he rings the department up and starts giving the bloke an earful. The bloke from the department had nothing else to quieten him down and said, ‘I’m coming to see you,’ and when they were talking about it, he said, ‘If I give you any more than that, people from higher up will stop it completely.’ He said, ‘I know you’ve got a problem. I know you need to control more. Whatever you do, don’t ever have any more than one on the ground at any one time.’ The ones who are at the coalface, so to speak, know what is going on, but they are hamstrung by the people higher up. There are too many – well, not too many, but there are people in higher levels in the departments that do not understand what is going on.

I am a fitter and turner by trade; I have done my time at the ordnance factory here in Bendigo. The engineers we had there, the ones that come straight from university or wherever, were very hard to deal with, to explain how things worked or try and get something altered. But the blokes – there were a number, probably six or eight that I can remember off the top of my head now – who had done their apprenticeship and then had gone and done their training to be an engineer, they understood what went on, how things worked. That is the problem we are getting, I believe, with a lot of these people in departments. They have got to have this university whatever degree, but they have not got their hands dirty. They really do not know what is going on on the ground, and that is a big problem we have got.

With people, I am hearing a lot of, ‘Kangaroos are getting pushed out because of urban development.’ Urban development is all on private ground. It is not happening on Crown land. The kangaroos, yes, are living on private property and getting pushed out. Before the *Wildlife Act* came in, which was in the 70s, people would control those kangaroos, but as soon as the Act came in, you could not do it without going through a lot of paperwork and stuff. A classic case is this one here at Bendigo at the old teachers college, the kangaroos there. They ended up being fenced in, and then when the development started, which was very recently, they have got a problem with them. The gates were open while they were working there, some got out on the road and got killed and everybody starts carrying on. Well, what do they expect? Somebody has got to make a decision and control the numbers.

Gaelle BROAD: Thanks, Chair.

The CHAIR: Great. Thanks, Mrs Broad. I did not think we would agree on much, Glenn.

Glenn COLE: I am just saying how I feel.

The CHAIR: It seems we are on a unity ticket when it comes to authority to control wildlife permits, because I have a very big issue with the way that the department will authorise a number of animals to be killed, but there is no follow-up on the amount of animals that were actually killed as a result of that. And you just mentioned before that you know of a case where someone has shot over the permit by five or six times. Is that something that you would report to the department as a kangaroo shooter? Because it is a clear breach of the *Wildlife Act*.

Glenn COLE: Sometimes you have got to shut up about things, because if I reported that person or a number of people, it is not going to solve the problem of too many kangaroos. The problem we have got is that

sometimes the number that they are issuing for control of kangaroos is not sufficient. It could be changed. In New South Wales if you get an ATCW or whatever they call it up there, you are issued with tags, and the roos that you control have to be tagged or any wildlife have to be tagged. So if anybody goes onto the property, department or whatever, and they say, 'There are 10 kangaroos dead without tags. What's going on here?' they can start smacking people, whereas in Victoria some people say, 'I've got a permit for 10. Which 10 is that? Is that the first 10 or the last 10 or the 10 in between?' It is a very grey area, and it is not an uncommon practice.

The CHAIR: To shoot over permits is not uncommon?

Glenn COLE: Very common.

The CHAIR: Right.

Glenn COLE: And I do know of one farmer who was very high up in an organisation, was sitting with department people and was discussing this problem particularly, and they said to him, 'What happens on your farm?' He said, 'They disappear,' and the people did not know what to say.

The CHAIR: Well, that leads me to touching on the compliance efforts when it comes to kangaroo shooting, because of course it happens usually at night-time when kangaroos are the most mobile. Have you ever had any sort of compliance effort monitoring you or have you seen it on people who have an ATCW?

Glenn COLE: I have not seen anybody have a compliance done on ATCW, but under the kangaroo harvest program there is the Game Management Authority.

The CHAIR: Have they ever attended with you when you have been shooting?

The CHAIR: They have not attended with me.

The CHAIR: Never?

Glenn COLE: No. They have asked twice, but both times I have not been active.

The CHAIR: Right.

Glenn COLE: But there are a number of shooters who I know who have had them out with them, and it has opened their eyes to what goes on.

The CHAIR: Just touching on your comments about kangaroos sort of not being managed and the populations being high, how do you reconcile this with the fact that the kangaroo shooting quota continues to be increased but not met in Victoria? In fact it is nowhere near met.

Glenn COLE: It is not met because we have not got the sales for the meat, for the product.

The CHAIR: So you are saying there is no market?

Glenn COLE: There is no market. If we had a market – let us just say, for a hypothetical, an open market, as much meat as we could supply – I believe we could do 140,000, 150,000 kangaroos a year under that kangaroo harvest program. But the restriction is there is no market, so the buyers are not buying animals.

The CHAIR: Why is there no market? Do you think it is to do with the international concern about our native animal being killed?

Glenn COLE: People put their nose in when they do not know what they are talking about – people overseas and in Australia criticising the program, the control of kangaroos, and they do not understand what goes on.

The CHAIR: Well, touching on what goes on, in 2018 you took a documentary crew out with you with the ABC –

Glenn COLE: Yes, ABC – I have had two lots.

The CHAIR: in which in which you missed shooting a number of kangaroos and a number got away. How is this best practice welfare-wise when kangaroo shooters are openly admitting that it is rather common for kangaroos to be shot, wounded, maimed and then escape back into the wild?

Glenn COLE: None that I took out on that documentary were – they were missed, they were clean misses; they were not hit and let get away.

The CHAIR: What do you mean by ‘clean misses’?

Glenn COLE: You have missed the animal totally. It is not that you have hit the animal and wounded it, and it is got away – you have clear missed. We are trying to hit something about that big or less from about 100 to 150 metres, and many times you line up an animal, and from the time your brain says pull the trigger, that animal moves or flinches, and you miss. Yes, I have hit kangaroos and have injured them, but I do not recall any getting away; I have been able to get a second shot into them and take them down.

The CHAIR: Yes, and there was a follow-up Danish documentary, I believe, that went out with you where there was a missed shot that was followed up with a –

Glenn COLE: It was a low shot, yes.

The CHAIR: Is mis-shooting commonplace?

Glenn COLE: Sorry?

The CHAIR: Is mis-shooting commonplace for kangaroo shooters?

Glenn COLE: In the harvest program I would say no, but in authority-controlled wildlife where they are not done by professionals, there is –

The CHAIR: You agree with that?

Glenn COLE: It is – I am trying to get the right words. I had somebody with me years ago who was not doing what I thought was right, and I told him to put the gun away. They said, ‘Why?’ I said, ‘Well, would you like to be shot in the gut and left to die or shot in the head and killed instantly?’ And that is one of the reasons, probably the main reason, I do what I do; I try to give that animal its best quality of life to the end, not going out with shotguns and inappropriate firearms and going willy-nilly chasing kangaroos and doing all this crap stuff. I have gone out on one property where I found kangaroos that have been shot from the night before, injured and left.

The CHAIR: From ATCWs or from –

Glenn COLE: ATCWs.

The CHAIR: Okay.

Glenn COLE: Whether that farmer did it or somebody else, I do not know, because it was not far off the road.

The CHAIR: That does not surprise me.

Glenn COLE: And that does not go down well with me.

The CHAIR: Yes. Just following on from that, in the same documentary there was a joey in pouch and you smashed its head, as per the code of practice, and shot that at-foot joey. Do these two joeys count towards the quota numbers?

Glenn COLE: No. They are recorded in the system, but they are not part of the quota.

The CHAIR: Yes. And how common is it for joeys to be killed as a result of the mothers being killed?

Glenn COLE: It depends on what you are targeting. Most of the blokes under the kangaroo harvest program are going for bucks, because they are bigger and get better money for them. But to control the numbers when you are doing authority to control wildlife, you have got to control all. To me, we have got to control more does to keep the numbers down. Because if we just control bucks, it is a waste of time. You are not stopping the numbers because they are reproducing. Yes and no, the – sorry, I had a mental blank.

The CHAIR: That is okay, I have another question. I have –

Glenn COLE: The guidelines or rules for the commercial shooters –

The CHAIR: Is blunt force trauma for joeys.

Glenn COLE: Or decapitation if they are small.

The CHAIR: Yes.

Glenn COLE: If anything has got hair on it, I shoot it, because I just find that they are too big to handle, really. But there are a lot of people that do not understand that with authority to control wildlife, they are still supposed to follow the non-commercial code of practice for the control of kangaroos, and it says on the permit that they have to be head-shot. There are very few people – and that is why I believe the government is now, with the drought announcement, giving a rebate back to farmers who employ a professional shooter who is registered under the kangaroo harvest program, because it is going to be a job better done.

The CHAIR: We would agree on the ATCW situation, maybe not so much the commercial shooting, but that leads me into, I guess, all of this disturbance of kangaroos. We have heard overwhelmingly today from wildlife rescuers and carers that they believe kangaroo shooting is actually doing the opposite of what you claim – that it is scattering mobs, it is scaring them out in public places, often they are coming out onto roads or public areas and being hit by cars with existing injuries from missed shots from the kangaroo-shooting industry, from commercial shooting. What would your response be to that? Do you –

Glenn COLE: It is not a commercial industry. I will pull you up right on that. There have been a number of times –

The CHAIR: How do you know? Surely shooting in areas, whether it is commercial or not, does scatter mobs.

Glenn COLE: The problem we have got – and I have been on ABC radio; I rang up to rebuke what people are saying. Every time they find a dead kangaroo in a paddock, or a number of, they target the commercial industry. That is not the commercial industry, it is authority to control wildlife and animals shot without a permit. That is happening a hell of a lot.

The CHAIR: How do you know, when it is not ever possible to trace who shot a kangaroo? Is that just your faith in commercial kangaroo shooters?

Glenn COLE: You cannot prove it. But if your employment was harvesting kangaroos, would you leave money laying in the paddock or would you take that money with you?

The CHAIR: My job would never be harvesting kangaroos, so.

Glenn COLE: Well, I would not leave a \$50 note laying in the paddock. I would take it with me, because that –

The CHAIR: Of course, but with a large animal – anyway, it is sort of beyond my question. My question was: does shooting kangaroos scatter mobs? And would you agree with rescuers that it can leave them ending up in public places? Whether or not it is commercial shooters or ATCW permit holders, we will never know, but does it disperse kangaroos?

Glenn COLE: It can happen and it probably does happen, but if it is done under the right system, I suppose, or process, that is not going to happen. I have shot kangaroos under the kangaroo harvest program in urban areas – houses on two sides in a major suburb in Bendigo. I will shoot one kangaroo, and the others do not go

very far. It is the way you do it. If you go in there with guns blazing, for the use of a better description, of course they are going to go everywhere, but if you do it in a managed and proper process, that is not really going to happen. One of the problems we have got in Victoria too is it is extremely hard to get – well, I will call them a suppressor; everybody else calls them – a silencer to help mitigate that problem of scaring kangaroos. It is very difficult to obtain one now in Victoria. If more professional shooters were allowed to use them, and other shooters, it would make it a lot better. If you go to New Zealand or you go to England, England has now made it that you do not need a permit for them. They are just another tool for you.

The CHAIR: A permit for silencers?

Glenn COLE: For a suppressor. In New Zealand it is mandatory in some areas. I do Bendigo Airport. I do control of wildlife and vermin out there. You have got to do it in a right manner, and as far as I know the police have never had a call from out there at the airport, because I do it the right way. I have made it a thing right from the word go. I contact the police to let them know where I am going, because I know of one case where they actually rang me up to see where I was shooting, because they had a report of somebody shooting. It was not me; it was somebody else in another totally different area.

The CHAIR: Yes, well, it is not a requirement to notify.

Glenn COLE: No, it is not a thing. I was not allowed to put down a kangaroo in an urban area, and it was injured. But then I found out since, under the *Wildlife Act* the gun laws do not exist. I can put down a kangaroo in a public area if it is injured, with a gun, because I have done it twice out at the trotting track when they have been there.

The CHAIR: That is well and truly my time, so I will hand to Mr Welch to finish off.

Richard WELCH: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Glenn. It is actually really great to get your perspective in this, so thank you very much for coming and taking the time to do it.

Glenn COLE: No problem. I only hope I am coming across right.

Richard WELCH: No, it is great. It is really good information. I have only got one question really. There is this contention around the actual number of kangaroos. I have heard both sides of the argument, and one is the actual counting method that is applied by the government is statistically flawed because –

Glenn COLE: I agree with that.

Richard WELCH: they extrapolate from small samples and things like that.

Glenn COLE: Yes, until they physically go out and count them.

Richard WELCH: Yes. And so really a lot of this discussion could be put to rest if we actually had confidence in the numbers.

Glenn COLE: Yes.

Richard WELCH: Do you have any suggestions as to a cost-effective way where that could actually be done?

Glenn COLE: I really do not. I have at times recorded through video large numbers of kangaroos in places. I have got a night vision that I use for finding kangaroos, and it is a fantastic tool, as in, I can pull into a 150-hectare paddock, to the gate. If it is flat, I can scan the whole thing and say, 'There's no kangaroos here; I'll turn around', or I can say, 'There's kangaroos over there.' It is a great tool. If that was linked to video – the only other way I think of would be thermal imaging on aircraft, drones or whatever. My daughter was working for a company here in Bendigo, and they used to do brick counts for the big brick companies.

Richard WELCH: Right.

Glenn COLE: They would fly over with an aircraft and take photos of the yards of bricks, and they did this – all over Australia they were getting it back. And the aircraft could also take ones sideways, so they could

physically count the top of the stacks and they could physically count the sides, and they did a lot of that through using these.

Richard WELCH: And hopefully you do not accidentally count some cows in that.

Glenn COLE: The right people doing the diagnostics on that would get it pretty right. At the moment, as I understand, the aircraft flies along. There is an indicator out at a certain point, and you count the kangaroos next to that.

Richard WELCH: But they move about, don't they, so you might double count, you might miss them.

Glenn COLE: They are only doing strips.

Richard WELCH: Do mobs stay fairly intact or do they break off and join different groups? I mean, could you do a tracking exercise and say, 'Well, we've got two adults from this mob and we know where they are moving?'

Glenn COLE: Kangaroos stay together. I think you will find in late spring or early summer there are a lot of young bucks floating around – they are kicked out of the mob and they go off to find their little tribe. When the numbers get too great for a certain area, as in feed supply, I believe part of that mob will move off and form another mob. But it is not like sheep where they are contained.

Richard WELCH: It would not be viable to put trackers on three or four of them?

Glenn COLE: I do not think so. And how do you put them on? I actually bought a dart gun and looked into it to do control in urban areas and golf courses and suchlike – tranquillise the kangaroos, maybe put them through pet food or even shift them. But from what I have found out, kangaroos do not handle darts very well. There is a large percentage of them that die. I have seen information – I did have it at home; I do not know if I have still got it – I think it was in Western Australia where they tried moving kangaroos, and I think it was like only 20 per cent of them or something survived. Pretty high numbers of them died.

The wildlife carers, with them taking on baby kangaroos and joeys and that – pinkies, as I call them, the ones with no hair and all that stuff. I personally cannot see the point in it when we have got an overpopulation. Throughout the world we control numbers of animals, wildlife. The government has seen fit with corellas, galahs and cockatoos that if they are causing damage, they are exempt from the *Wildlife Act*. The owner of the property or the manager of the property, if they can prove they are doing damage, can control them. They have taken them out of the *Wildlife Act* if they are doing damage. Why cannot we do that with other animals? It is not just the kangaroo numbers. If you look at the number of animals that have got permits, we just see today 3000 or 4000 wombats are being controlled under authority to control wildlife. There were a large number of koalas controlled recently in an area. We have got to control the numbers. If a farmer has too many stock, they starve and farmers get penalised for that

Richard WELCH: So it sort of comes back to for everyone to have a clear conscience about that, what are the actual numbers?

Glenn COLE: Yes. I will agree with that. That is the biggest hassle we have with it all. – how do you get the numbers accurate?

Richard WELCH: And I guess there has to be a calculation made at some point to say: is the cost of getting the number accurate less than the cost of the way we are managing things right now?

Glenn COLE: I believe that if hypothetically they said open slather on kangaroos, we could never wipe them out owing to the number of large areas of state and national parks. If it can only be done on private land, there is too much public land that you could never wipe them out. We might get the numbers down, but we would never wipe them out. And that is the numbers we are trying to deal with today. People up here just north of Bendigo, Huntly and out through there on the edge of the national park, are getting hammered something woeful. They have also got a major problem out there with people out of town illegally shooting on the edge of the national park on private property. They are going out there daily and pulling roos out of their crops, so they have not got a contamination in their crop when they are trying to do it later on.

We have got a problem with people coming out of urban areas trying to assist farmers, and they really do not know what they are doing. There are no rules in place that those people have to do marksmanship or whatever. Anybody who has got a gun licence can go and say, 'Oh, I can shoot em.' Can they hit a target at 100 metres? I have seen blokes who are extremely good at target shooting; you put them on an animal, they are bloody hopeless. I am the opposite. Put me on a target, I am hopeless. Anyway, thank you very much for your time.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Glenn, for coming along. That concludes the public hearing.

Committee adjourned.