

The Committee Manager  
Standing Committee on Environment and Planning  
Parliament House, Spring Street  
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

25 August 2020



Dear Committee Members

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria. As a wildlife rescuer and advocate for many years I have consistently witnessed the government failing our wildlife. I am extremely concerned about the biodiversity emergency and the rapid decline of our wildlife and wilderness areas that has been further exacerbated by the devastating summer of bushfires.

I fear the government does not recognise the enormously deleterious impact of animal agriculture and the greenhouse gases, waste, excessive energy use and land clearing that upholds this industry. It leaves no space for wildlife and any creatures that cause the slightest inconvenience are summarily slaughtered with little serious attempt at non-lethal mitigation.

There is a clear conflict of interest having the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) regulating commercial environmental destruction and wildlife culling whilst also being responsible for 'protecting' wildlife and the environment. We consistently see that DELWP is more interested in servicing the needs of primary producers and developers than protecting our wildlife and ecosystems. It is a clear case of the fox guarding the hen house and we urgently need change before it is too late.

We desperately need an independent office to protect wildlife and habitat. Requests to cull wildlife should go through an authority that understands the many highly effective non-lethal solutions available and how they can best be utilised for the benefit of all. There is a dearth of resources and support to enable access to these alternatives and instead applicants can rapidly obtain Authority to Control Wildlife permits without ever learning means of living harmoniously with wildlife.

There needs to be a societal attitudinal change challenging the perception of wildlife as pests and it needs to come from the top. The government must demonstrate that all wildlife, even abundant wildlife, has a right to exist, thrive and be treated with respect. We need to be guided to ethically and sustainably share this country with wildlife, rather than forcing it out as we expand. There is no time to lose.

Sincerely

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Alyssa Wormald  
Director, Australian Native Parrot Protection Authority

[Redacted contact information]