

To the NRC review team,

As someone who has lived out west for many years, I see the best and worst of the system. What's heartbreaking is how many kangaroos we find starving to death in drought. What's frustrating is that landholders who want to do the right thing—who must humanely euthanise suffering animals—are technically breaking the law. This is the legacy of a broken piece of legislation: the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016.

The law does not support the realities of land management. Kangaroo populations swing dramatically, and without intervention, the animals suffer. But the Act only allows action through an unwieldy permit system, and in the meantime, people are forced to watch animals die slowly or by breaking the law and putting them out of their misery.

On top of that, the Act effectively sidelines Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal people should not have to ask permission to manage their totemic species, hunt for ceremony, or gather traditional foods. But the current clauses are confusing, inconsistent, and open to misuse. They don't guarantee Aboriginal rights—they limit them. And this forces Aboriginal people into hunting illegally without a licence to harm. It's not a given right for Aboriginal people to kill kangaroo for their use it's only a defence to a prosecution.

The government needs to take responsibility and update the law. That means:

1. Clear Legal Pathway for Euthanasia:

The Act must provide a lawful, defensible right for landholders or any other person who seeks to euthanise kangaroos suffering from severe distress or injury—especially during droughts or car strikes. If comfortable to do so to alleviate pain.

2. Explicit Cultural Rights for Aboriginal Communities:

Amend the Act to guarantee Aboriginal rights, subject to relevant land access agreements being in place, to:

- Hunt, gather, and perform ceremony;
- Access and manage totemic species;
- Practice cultural burning and knowledge sharing;
- Use bush foods and medicines without unnecessary permits.

3. Respect for Aboriginal Law and Authority:

There must be space in the Act for Aboriginal governance over kangaroo and land management—respecting existing cultural systems rather than overriding them.

4. Long-Term, Landscape-Wide Planning:

Stop treating kangaroo management as a seasonal emergency. We need a forward-looking strategy based on ecosystem health and community input. Through a sustainable approach to avoid the mass die offs in droughts.

5. Responsibility of the Crown:

Crown as the owner of all protected animals until lawfully captured or killed as outlined in the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (Section 2.18.2). The Crown needs to take reasonable measures and be proactive in helping landholders reduce kangaroo populations to avoid mass starvation events like the last drought where millions perished. The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 (POCTAA) binds the crown (Section 35A).

Until these reforms are made, the Act will continue to cause suffering—to animals, to landholders, and to the culture and rights of Aboriginal people. It's time for a compassionate, practical, and just approach to kangaroo management, which starts with amending the law.

Yours Sincerely,

Leon Zanker

Western landholder

22-4-2025