

THE WORLD LEAGUE FOR PROTECTION OF ANIMALS

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COMMENTS ON THE NATIONAL ANIMAL WELFARE BILL

The World League for Protection of Animals (WLPA) strongly endorses the concept of National Animal Welfare Legislation.

Senator Bartlett is to be congratulated on initiating a Bill which is in line with the range of community values and establishes a basis for consistency in animal welfare standards across Australia. Many features of the Bill if implemented will clearly reduce suffering.

The following comments are made within this context and with an awareness of the challenges that have been – and will continue to be - met :

- 1. Section 3: Purposes of Act : While the intention to reduce suffering is recognised in this section, it is of concern that cruelty to wildlife should be allowable in any circumstances. There is also considerable concern that this cruelty often occurs on the basis of insufficient or negligible evidence. There are assumptions for example that certain introduced species represent a threat to wildlife. In many cases there is no evidence that this is the case and in fact killing of introduced animals may increase the threat to native wildlife. Cats, for example are substantial predators, yes, but they predate mainly on other non-native species, such as rabbits, rats and mice which would otherwise proliferate.**

Appropriate research is essential into the inter-relationships of native and non-native species so that non lethal and scientifically sound means of protecting wildlife may be determined and implemented. It is now generally recognised that the major threat is habitat loss.

- 2. Terminology: The term, “feral” carries with it strong negative attitudes. It is proposed that the term, “non-native species” or “introduced species” replace it in this document.**
- 3. The constitution of authorities or committees is of concern, reflecting as it does some of the major concerns with existing bodies. To be effective it is essential that there be stronger representation from animal welfare/non-industry/non government members.**
- 4. Appointment of inspectors: Persons from animal rights/welfare organisations who can show evidence of required skills and knowledge should also be included in those who may be appointed as inspectors.**
- 5. Powers of inspectors: While it is clearly essential that processes be in place to protect animals from cruelty, the powers listed in this section are disturbing in that decisions may be made for a range of reasons, not all of them in the interests of the animals. The role and importance of education**

must be given more emphasis, especially where companion animals are concerned but also more widely. In a number of cases there are reports that loved animals are being put to death without valid reasons. The responsibility of local governments to provide appropriate education must be enforced. And where inspectors are used there must be tight processes ensuring accountability.

- 6. Steel jawed trap: the possession of steel jawed traps must be completely outlawed. Allowing its possession if it is part of a “display or collection” will not prevent its use to cause suffering**
- 7. Baits and harmful substances should not be used. The long term effects on the environment are largely unknown, quite apart from the suffering they cause.**
- 8. Removal of cats’ claws: This operation causes longterm suffering to the cat . To suggest that this cruelty will mean better protection for wildlife is unlikely in the extreme. It may however reduce the cat’s capacity to prey on rats, mice, rabbits, cockroaches, a range of introduced birds and animals, and leave the way wide open for the laying down of poisons.**
- 9. Draize tests should be completely outlawed.**

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