

To the Secretary,
Standing Committee on Climate Change,
Environment and Water,
Legislative Assembly for the ACT.

**Submission To The Inquiry Into Current and
Potential Ecotourism In The ACT and Region by
the Standing Committee on Climate Change,
Environment and Water**

**Submitted by:
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Terms of reference applicable:

a) The extent to which organisations currently deliver ecotourism activities in the Region.

f) Any other relevant matter.

Focus of the Submission:

**We should be embracing the amazing link
between Canberra, Australia's iconic capital
city, and the Kangaroo - Australia's iconic
animal.**

Canberra is a city state, since its inception promoted as the 'bush capital'. Now, population growth and the consequent urban

‘sprawl’ are building the ‘capital’, while putting pressure on the ‘bush’.

The bush capital vision has, to date, answered many of the questions that those with the responsibility for development should be asking themselves: What sorts of living environments do Canberrans want? What do they want their landscape to look like? What is the lifestyle they wish to embrace? How do they want to present Canberra to the rest of the world?

However there are many other, equally important, questions that the bush capital vision doesn’t answer: What are the biodiversity impacts of human activity? Which are the most important sectors of the ACT economy? How might we ensure that sectors like Tourism become more commercially viable while improving the quality of our grasslands and their biodiversity? Can we have our cake and eat it too?

Canberra has never been a city where visitors come to shop. It has always been a city that people come to because it is an elegant gateway to the larger environment in which it sits. A city that excels in its ease of access to many beautiful landscapes and outdoor pursuits, as well as some culturally significant national institutions.

Unfortunately, in recent times, the perception of Canberra as a city comfortable in its wonderful landscape has been seriously eroded by poor government policy. Canberra’s image has been seriously tarnished internationally by death images of kangaroos leaping backwards in the air above screened fences designed to keep out the eyes of the world media.

Since then, government policy has instituted an ongoing, highly visible, annual, onslaught of kangaroo “culls” because the kangaroos are seen to interfere with the continual sprawled urban development of the bush.

There has also been a continual onslaught of highly sensationalized media clips of “rogue roos” and “documentaries” doing their best to show what a nuisance the animals are to Canberra golfers and drivers.

The very strange thing about Canberrans and attitude of the ACT government, is that they have never appreciated or embraced the

amazing icon that lives among them, and is unique in this city landscape, the Eastern Grey Kangaroo.

Canberrans think the kangaroo is so populous, it is everywhere throughout Australia. This is not the case.

The most accessible place in Australia to see wild kangaroos is Canberra.

What better icons to twin than our National Capital and our Australian iconic animal. They are natural kin.

The Eastern Grey Kangaroo and its role in the Tourist Sector of the ACT Economy

In the Nature Based Tourism Strategy for the ACT, commissioned by Environment ACT in Dec 2000, there is mention of “pine plantations” as a natural attraction, but **not one mention of kangaroos**. Indeed, and quite perversely, the statement includes as a ‘weakness’ the observation that the ACT is: “a good product but suffers from a lack of nature based destination icons”¹

On a recent visit to the Cairns International Hotel, frequented by Japanese tourists, it was noted that in a coffee table book placed in each room by the hotel chain to give overseas visitors an insight into Australia, each state and territory was given a complete chapter detailing highlights of the capital city, and then highlights of the regions. All states and territories that is, except the ACT. The ACT was allocated just one paragraph, which stated that Canberra was the home of Parliament House which was worth visiting, but that the main reason to visit Canberra was that this was “the” place to see kangaroos.

Wildcare Queanbeyan, the local NSW native animal rescue and rehabilitation organization, gets at least one film crew through each year to film our kangaroos. Not wombats, not koalas, kangaroos. There have been two in the last twelve months. Our kangaroos are of interest to the rest of the world.

1

http://www.tams.act.gov.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0019/14905/nbtstrategyword.doc
[c](#)

Wildcare has also been requested by one of the large ACT conference facilities, to set up a guided tour of wild kangaroos. This was outside Wildcare's ability as a volunteer organization.

There are many instances where the most important thing visiting officials want to see when they come to Canberra, is our kangaroos.

For a recent example, a visit by a delegation from Vietnam's National Institute for Food Control, to Food Standards Australia, when asked what they wished to see in Canberra, had only one answer. They all wanted to see our Kangaroos

In the year ending December 2006:

- International visitors to the ACT spent a total of \$227 million.
- The ACT welcomed 153,975 international visitors who stayed a total of 2.28million nights.
- 54% of international visitors to the ACT were first time visitors to Australia and 46% were return visitors to Australia.²
- Domestic overnight visitors to the ACT spent a total of \$854 million and stayed for an average of 2.9 nights.
- The ACT welcomed 1.9 million domestic overnight visitors who stayed a total of 5.6 million nights. The ACT also received 1.4 million domestic day visitors in the year ending December 2006³

How many of the tourists to the ACT came to see kangaroos? We don't know because the question is never asked.

In the year ending September 2009:

The ACT welcomed 152,000 international visitors. 52% of international visitors who came to Canberra, came for the purposes of a holiday, compared to 47% in the rest of Australia.

2

www.tams.act.gov.au_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/53711/FS_International_Visitor_Behaviour_Dec_06_pdf

3

www.tams.act.gov.au_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/53708/FS_Domestic_Visitor_Profile_Dec_06_pdf

Why? What drew a greater percentage of people to Canberra for a holiday than the rest of the country? Canberra is not known as, or advertised as, an iconic Australian tourist destination like Uluru or the Great Barrier Reef.

How many of the tourists came to see kangaroos? We don't know because the question wasn't asked.

In the year ending September 2009:

The ACT welcomed 1.78 million domestic overnight visitors. The ACT also received 1.36 million day visitors in the year ending September 2009.

Of the overnight domestic visitors 31% came for the purpose of a holiday.⁴

How many of the 23 % of the VFR market that stated as "general sightseeing" as an activity were checking out the mobs of kangaroos as they drove?⁵

How many of the people surveyed in the short breaks survey who said "leverage the environment" actually had kangaroos in their head when they suggested it? ⁶

The major tourism indicators for the ACT for 2002-2003 show that the ACT tourism industry directly and indirectly accounted for \$757 million (or 5 per cent) of Gross Territory Product (GTP), and contributed approximately 11,400 jobs to the ACT economy (6.5 per cent of ACT employment).⁷ By comparison, agriculture (including grapes, livestock, and poultry), which is one of the main

⁴ Source: Australian Capital Tourism , Key National Visitor Survey Results September Quarter 2009 and Australian Government, Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism, Tourism Research Australia, International Visitors in Australia September 2009.

⁵ **Destination Visitor Survey**
Strategic Regional Research – Australian Capital Territory:
Community Perceptions of Tourism and the 'Visiting Friends and
Relatives' Market for the ACT. Pg 2

⁶ **Strategic Regional Research – Australian Capital Territory:**
Community Perceptions of Tourism and the 'Visiting Friends and
Destination Visitor Survey
Strategic Regional Research – Australian Capital Territory
Australian consumer perceptions of Canberra as a short break
holiday destination Pg 2

competitors with kangaroos for control of habitat, contributes less than **five one-hundredths of one per cent** of ACT GTP.

It could be said that allowing kangaroos the potential to use currently leased out agricultural land, would have a far better return to the ACT than does agriculture.

It would certainly have several benefits:

- Restoring old agricultural land to natural temperate grassland habitat expands an endangered habitat for other endangered native creatures such as the golden sun moth and the striped legless lizard.
- It turns the area to new carbon sinks, grazed on by Eastern Grey Kangaroos that unlike the cattle preferred by the ACT government, produce no methane. This is utilizing a natural advantage the ACT has over anywhere else in the world.

Tourism has a much better potential for growth, than does ACT agriculture.

Public Education and Community Consultation

The Anglesea community in Victoria has undergone a community consultation and education process to turn their kangaroos into a tourist icon, and to teach the members of the community how to live with, look after, and appreciate their kangaroos.

This plan was instigated because much of the community believes that it is easier to change human behaviour than that of the Kangaroo's.

This is a selection of sites quickly searched using the search terms "Anglesea" and "kangaroo" on the internet, which show the way this community have embraced their kangaroos.

Kangaroos - Anglesea GC **Kangaroos** are the largest marsupials mammals. They belong to the Macropodidae family. The **kangaroos** at **Anglesea** are the Eastern Grey **Kangaroo**, *Macropus giganteus*, meaning
... www.angleseagolfclub.com.au/layouts/mp_standard/Template.aspx?page=Kangaroos

⁷ www.tams.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf-file/0020/53813/FS_Economic_Contribution_of_Tourism.pdf

[Home - Anglesea GC](#) ... to join **Anglesea** Golf Club: 1. World renowned golf course. 2. Vern Morcom designed golf course. 3. Great family holiday destination. 4. Play amid our resident Eastern Grey **kangaroo**

... www.angleseagolfclub.com.au

[Kangaroos on Anglesea golf course: Tee off on the Great Ocean Road ...](#)

It's a club with a touch of animal magic... But could Tiger Woods or Ernie Els be happy with the extra hazards on the fairways and putting greens in Victoria? davidwhitley.suite101.com/kangaroos-on-anglesea-golf-course-a13830

[Kangaroos on the Anglesea Golf Course, Anglesea, Great Ocean Rd ...](#)

Kangaroos on the **Anglesea** Golf Course, **Anglesea**, Great Ocean Road Region - Image Tourism Victoria www.planbooktravel.com.au/.../great-ocean-road-400x272/anglesea-golf-course.jpg/view

[ANGLESEA - BIG4 Anglesea Holiday Park - Family accommodation on ...](#)

we have **kangaroo**'s grazing in the park permanently. BIG4 **Anglesea** is the only park in **Anglesea** or on Great Ocean Road with Indoor Heated Pool, Indoor Toddler Playroom and ... www.big4anglesea.com.au/index.html

[BIG4 Anglesea Holiday Park, Anglesea, VIC - Holiday Accommodation ...](#)

Summer at BIG4 **Anglesea** on the Great Ocean Road? Everyone wants to be where we are! Come and fossick around in rock pools or mooch around the park amongst the grazing **kangaroos** ... anglesea-holiday-park.vic.big4.com.au

[Anglesea and Aireys Inlet, Great Ocean Road, Victoria, Australia](#)

Swim, surf or just relax in **Anglesea** or nearby Aireys Inlet, favourite Great Ocean Road holiday destinations for families and lovers of outdoors. www.visitvictoria.com/Regions/Great-Ocean-Road/Destinations/Anglesea-and-Aireys-Inlet.aspx

[Anglesea, Victoria - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

... locally for its annual riverbank markets, which take place by the river on **Anglesea**'s main street, the Great Ocean Road. The town's golf-course is known for its resident **kangaroo** ... en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglesea,_Victoria

[Kangaroos Anglesea Golf Course Victoria Australia - YouTube](#)

1,754 views · Added 8/07/2009

8/07/2009 · Clear all videos from this list www.youtube.com/watch?v=RuEel3vZ_9s
[Or and some Kangaroos in Anglesea Golf Club - YouTube](#)

108 views · Added 28/01/2009

28/01/2009 · It so cool this Golf Club... you visit or either play Golf with wild Kengeroos. www.youtube.com/watch?v=WE-_3cZ8Sgg

An education programme of this kind in Canberra would be extremely valuable. We need to teach people how to embrace the concept of living with these gentle creatures, not to be afraid of them and consider them pests.

Normally, they are very gentle and very loving.

There are only a few occasions when people should be wary of kangaroos.

- The human encounters kangaroos with an uncontrolled dog that is off leash.
(Solution: Control your dog around kangaroos. Don't let a dog chase a kangaroo. It may be fun for the dog but can lead to a slow death for the kangaroo from myopathy, and can lead to aggression when the animal is cornered. Kangaroos often lead chasing dogs to water and drown them.)
- When the human gets between a buck and his doe in mating season, (this usually occurs for a limited time around August, September).
(Solution: Bend slightly forward into a submissive stance and move out of the way)
- When a human gets between a mother and her joey.
(Solution: Bend slightly forward into a submissive stance and move out of the way)
- When a kangaroo is injured and vulnerable.
(Solution: Back away and call the rangers)
- When tall male humans in an upright stance approach bucks. Male upright stance can be seen as male aggressive posture by the kangaroo buck.
(Solution: Bend slightly forward into a submissive stance and move out of the way)

Public education can easily demonstrate that reactions by kangaroos to these situations are typical mammal defensive

behaviours and can be explained as such, together with what to do if you get caught in one of these dilemmas.

Conclusion

- Investigate the tourist drawcard of the kangaroos.
- Provide a community based kangaroo management/education plan encouraging nature-based tourism similar to that at Anglesea Victoria
- Embrace the concept of the kangaroo as Canberra's special animal and modify government policy to be positive policy towards kangaroos rather than negative policy. For example. Government policy should take note of wildlife corridors when considering urban infill. Urban infill should not be built across wildlife corridors and effectively blocking them. The Belconnen Soccer Ground in it's present location was a major contributory factor in the causation of the Belconnen Naval Transmission Station fiasco which drew the eyes of the world media to Canberra for all the wrong reasons.
- Agricultural activity in the ACT must fit within the larger framework of sustainability. Activity should switch from grazing, to smaller high yield shrub crops such as grapes, nuts and trees to strike a better balance with the native animals that are mainly grazers rather than browsers, and to allow some land to be returned to native grassland. New and linked areas of grassland habitat would be a long term objective that would allow more room for natural occurrence of endangered species.
- Utilize new grassland habitat as carbon sinks, grazed on by Eastern Grey Kangaroos which produce no methane. This is utilizing a natural advantage the ACT has over the rest of the world.