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To <land.whitepaper@dse.vic.gov.au>  
 cc  
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 Subject Animals Australia submission to the White Paper call for  
 submissions

**Animals  
 Australia**  
 the voice for animals

**To - Project Director  
 Land and Biodiversity White Paper Project Team  
 Department of Sustainability and Environment  
 Victoria**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Animals Australia is a peak animal protection body representing some 40 member societies – all of which work to improve the lives of animals, and some of which also focus solely on wildlife protection. We appreciate this opportunity to contribute our views on the Land and Biodiversity White Paper.

We welcome statements by Minister Thwaites in the introduction to the 'White paper – Call for Submissions' document such as *'We have the opportunity to manage our plants, animals and indeed our ecosystems in a more proactive way, by tackling our environmental challenges as inter-related issues.'*

However, this important opportunity must be well managed, and in our view at present the Reference Groups indicated do not appear to have essential expertise and specific interest in wildlife (and its management and protection).

We therefore recommend that-

- 1) the Scientific Reference Group must also include a wildlife ecologist (or similar), and
- 2) the Stakeholder Reference Group should also include several of those groups who deal specifically with wildlife, and we would suggest they include the Australian Wildlife Protection Council and Wildlife Victoria (which itself represents a large number of wildlife carers).

At page 5 of the document, it states –

*We need healthy land, water and marine systems for our food and fibre, our drinking water, our agricultural, fishing and tourism industries and for our social enjoyment and sense of connection. Moving toward sustainable land use across Victoria will be a significant challenge – but it is essential for all our futures.*

This statement appear to neglect and/or exclude the interests of others – specifically non-human others. The reference groups must not be directed to consider only the benefits or risks for the human population of Victoria. Such an approach will not give sufficient attention and thus lead to adequate planning for the future and viability of our native fauna with which we share this State. Whilst this may have been the 'motivation' of those currently involved in this planning process, we urge those now involved to be directed to take a less human-centric approach to this process.

On pages 8 and 9 there is an acknowledgement of the importance of native habitat to preserve wildlife, and we trust that this can translate in the eventual White Paper to a plan to enhance habitat. Animals Australia has witnessed an appalling neglect of wildlife and habitat in Victoria and we therefore believe there needs to be a massive shake-up of our wildlife protection system. The devastating fires through last summer and in recent years are eating further into the meager remnants of habitat and the natural range of our native fauna species. Human habitation, and particularly agriculture and forestry, has left so little for these original inhabitants that it is now our duty to proactively care for those that survive.

Animals Australia joins a chorus of concerned citizens urging the Bracks Government, (and the Scientific and Stakeholder reference groups involved with this process) to –

- call a moratorium on the shooting of native wildlife under Department of Sustainability and Environment 'control permits' and shooting on public lands;
- substantially increase the number of Wildlife Officers able to enforce the Wildlife Act;
- ensure areas of high biodiversity and conservation value are given priority by each of the firefighting agencies and land managers;
- plan now to both save existing, and recreate substantial new tracts of native bushland that can serve as wildlife corridors to connect remnant wildlife populations
- to provide funding support for the rescue and rehabilitation of injured (but viable) wildlife (currently taken on my concerned individuals only).

It is regrettable that the White Paper will not include 'Wildlife Exploitation' (page 13) – this is a crucial element of the preservation of our biodiversity. A document that does not consider the impacts (both on individual animals and species) of killing or utilizing wildlife (commercially or otherwise) will not be able to provide a comprehensive plan for the future. We urge the reference groups to reconsider its terms of reference in this regard.

In Australia (and in Victoria) we increasingly stand proud of our beautiful country and the freedoms we enjoy, yet pull back the veneer and it is clear we have a tragic record of species loss and exploitation of the vulnerable.

I urge those closely involved with the development of the further stages of this planning process to consider the health, welfare and future of our wildlife as a crucial part of our shared environment – for their sake and ours.

Sincerely,

*Glenys Oogjes*

Executive Director

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