

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Appointment of the Committee and its Terms of Reference

1.1 The Senate appointed the Select Committee on Animal Welfare on 16 and 17 November 1983 and reappointed it on 22 February 1985 and again on 22 September 1987 in each new Parliament to inquire into and report upon:

the question of animal welfare in Australia,
with particular reference to:

- (a) interstate and overseas commerce in animals;
- (b) wildlife protection and harvesting;
- (c) animal experimentation;
- (d) codes of practice of animal husbandry for all species; and
- (e) the use of animals in sport.

1.2 As a result of the broad nature of the terms of reference, the Committee decided to divide the inquiry into a number of discrete areas and, as far as possible, to examine two or more simultaneously. After preliminary public hearings in mid-1984, the Committee decided to examine kangaroos and the export of live sheep from Australia. It later added dolphins and whales in captivity to this priority list. The Committee reported on live sheep exports on 13 August 1985 and on dolphins and whales in captivity on 29 November 1985.

The Kangaroo Issue

1.3 The Committee decided to examine the question of kangaroos early in the inquiry rather than deal with it in the context of wildlife protection and harvesting, because of concern expressed both in Australia and overseas about the killing of kangaroos. Animal welfare organisations have been trying to persuade Australian authorities to stop the commercial and indiscriminate killing of kangaroos while, at the same time, campaigning overseas for the imposition of a ban on kangaroo products into Europe and the United States of America, the two main destinations of such products.

Scope of the Kangaroo Inquiry

1.4 In its inquiry, the Committee is concerned with the welfare of kangaroos in present day Australia. This involves an examination of the kangaroo in its environment. That environment includes not only the pastures, farm lands and forests, but also other animals and people. All of these factors must be taken into account and proper weight given to the interests of each. The question of what weight should be given to each interest is the subject of debate. The Committee has taken a considerable amount of evidence on this issue and it has reached its conclusions on the basis of that evidence.

Conduct of the Inquiry

1.5 The Committee took oral evidence from 98 people representing 40 organisations or appearing on their own behalf. The representatives of some organisations gave evidence on several occasions. The hearings were held in all States and in the Australian Capital Territory. A list of people who appeared

before the Committee to give evidence on kangaroos is contained in Appendix 1.

1.6 As with other parts of its inquiry into animal welfare, the Committee went into the field to get first-hand experience of the problems raised in relation to kangaroos. The Committee spent three days in mid-western Queensland in February 1985 talking to graziers, kangaroo shooters and dealers. It also visited a chiller at Longreach, a meat-processing works in Brisbane and went on part of a kangaroo shoot near Longreach.

1.7 In November 1985, it accompanied members of the European Delegation in and around Roma in southern Queensland where properties were visited and discussions were held with graziers, farmers and officers of the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service.

1.8 In January 1986, the Committee travelled to Broken Hill and Menindee in western New South Wales for visits to the Kinchega National Park and adjacent properties. Members of the Committee went on kangaroo shoots and a simulated aerial survey and visited chillers and a kangaroo meat processing works. The Committee also held talks with officers of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service (NSW NPWS), kangaroo shooters and pastoralists.

Kangaroo Species

1.9 There are 48 species of the family Macropodoidea, comprising nine species of Potoroidae (rat-kangaroos, potoroos and bettongs) and 39 species of Macropodidae (kangaroos and wallabies).

1.10 In 1975, the Working Group on Kangaroo Biology listed six of the 48 species of Macropodoidea as extinct, but it did not

discount the possibility of pockets of one or more of these six species being discovered in the future. Another seven species were listed as being endangered by the Working Group on Endangered Fauna of the Standing Committee of the Council of Nature Conservation Ministers (CONCOM), in a report published in 1984.

1.11 Of the remaining 35 species of Macropodoidea, 25 are fully protected in all States and ten are killed in one or more States. Although the 25 fully protected species are not currently classified as endangered, encroachment on their habitats for the purposes of urban or rural development poses a long-term threat to their survival, unless adequate management programmes are undertaken to conserve their habitats.

1.12 Kangaroo species commercially killed in Australia are listed below:

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	STATE KILLED
Red kangaroo	Megalea rufa] Macropus rufus] (Note: same species)	Queensland New South Wales South Australia Western Australia
Eastern grey kangaroo	Macropus giganteus	Queensland New South Wales Tasmania
Wallaroo, Euro or hill kangaroo	Macropus robustus	Queensland New South Wales South Australia Western Australia
Whiptail wallaby	Macropus parryi	Queensland
Western grey kangaroo	Macropus fuliginosus	New South Wales South Australia Western Australia
Rufous wallaby	Thylogale billardierii	Tasmania
Sandy wallaby	Macropus agilis	Queensland

Black-striped wallaby	Macropus dorsalis	Queensland
Swamp wallaby	Macropus bicolor	Queensland
Red necked wallaby or Bennetts wallaby	Macropus rufogriseus	Queensland Tasmania

Definitions

1.13 The term 'kangaroo' is sometimes used to refer to all 48 species of Macropodoidea but, at other times, it is used to refer to the six species in the macropod genus Macropus or to the three largest species of this genus (M. fuliginosus, M. giganteus and M. rufus). Where it is not clear from the context to which group the Committee refers when the term is used in the report, the group is specifically identified.

1.14 In its Supplementary Submission, dated April 1985, the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service (ANPWS) referred to a semantic argument over the use of the terms 'cull' or 'harvest'. Rather than become embroiled in the argument, the Committee simply uses the word 'kill'.

1.15 In some State legislation there is provision to kill kangaroos for use in scientific experiments. The use of wildlife in experiments, whether for the benefit of the animal or for advances in human knowledge, has not been addressed in this report. That subject is being examined in the Committee's inquiry into the use of animals in research and teaching. Where the Committee comments on the retention of such provisions in State legislation, it is simply maintaining the status quo until it has had an opportunity to consider and report on the broader issue of experiments on wildlife.