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Stella Kyriakides

EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety
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Valdis Dombrovskis

Executive Vice-President of the European Commission
An Economy that Works for People
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Brussels, 22 October 2021

Dear Commissioner Kyriakides, dear Vice-President Dombrovskis,

We, the undersigned organisations, jointly call on the European Commission to stop the imports of products derived from the commercial killing of kangaroos, and to encourage the Australian Environment Minister Sussan Ley not to approve the New South Wales (NSW) Commercial Kangaroo Harvest Management Plan 2022-2026.

On 15 October, the Parliament of New South Wales (NSW) published the results of an in-depth parliamentary inquiry on the '[Health and Wellbeing of kangaroos and other macropods in NSW](#)'. The state of NSW has the biggest commercial killing of kangaroos in Australia, and the findings of the inquiry are a clear confirmation of the ethical concerns surrounding the commercial kangaroo industry, as well as of the urgent need to end the kangaroo meat and skins trade.

The undersigned organisations have long called for an EU ban on the placing on the market of products derived from kangaroo hunting based on animal welfare concerns. The recent inquiry has provided ample evidence on the cruel treatment of animals stemming from kangaroo hunting. Animals are shot at night, in remote areas without scrutiny or enforcement, leading to non-lethal shots that cause horrific injuries and a slow death. If females are killed, dependent joeys endure a cruel and violent death, or are left in the field to suffer exposure to starvation or predation. The Australian and NSW government admitted in the inquiry that there are no records kept on how many baby joeys are killed every year by the commercial killing of kangaroos. They are the forgotten part of this trade of wildlife.

As an illustration, the following are observations made by the inquiry committee on the animal welfare dimension of kangaroo hunting:

- *“the breeding cycle of kangaroos means many females shot would have dependent young at any time of the year, it is readily apparent that the **killing of otherwise healthy young animals is the reality of the kangaroo industry.**”*
- *“Nevertheless, we are concerned that the **prescribed method of killing** with a single head shot is sometimes **not achievable in a real world scenario**, where kangaroos are shot in the dark at a distance. The committee notes evidence that some kangaroos, even those killed by commercial shooters, are not being killed with a fatal head shot.”*
- *“The committee is **concerned by reports of animal cruelty going unexamined**, leading to lack of confidence in the management of both commercial and non-commercial kangaroo killing.”*
- *“There is a **lack of monitoring and regulation at the point-of-kill during both commercial and non-commercial killing** of kangaroos.” (there is thus no supervision in the field to verify that killing was done humanely).*

Furthermore, the conditions in which kangaroo hunting is carried out lead to significant hygiene issues, and to risks for food safety and thus EU consumers. There are inherent risks of bacterial contamination of the meat, due to the butchering in the field and the long, exposed, unrefrigerated transport of the carcasses. Lactic acid was found to be routinely used to decontaminate the meat, although this isn't an allowed practice for fresh game meat in the EU¹.

From a conservation perspective, the inquiry found that the NSW government's methods of counting kangaroos was not transparent and population estimates used to establish annual commercial kill quota are likely to be overestimated. The correction factors used by the Australian government increase each year and the calculated figures seem unlikely considering the slow reproduction rate of kangaroos and other environmental factors, such as drought, fires and loss of habitat:

- *“The current methodology used by the DPIE to produce estimates of NSW macropod populations lacks transparency.”*

The findings of the NSW parliamentary inquiry also include the following on the impact of this industry on indigenous people:

- *“The draft NSW Commercial Kangaroo Harvest Management Plan 2022-2026 makes reference to taking into account the interest of Aboriginal communities but the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment was **unable to demonstrate how Aboriginal concerns about kangaroo welfare and spiritual importance are being addressed.**”*
- *“The **shooting of kangaroos has a profound impact on the mental health of some Aboriginal people, kangaroo carers and rescuers.**”*

¹ Please read Eurogroup for Animals report Kangaroo: from Australian icon to meat and luxury leather for the EU:
https://www.eurogroupforanimals.org/files/eurogroupforanimals/2020-10/2020_eurogroup_for_animals_kangaroo_report.pdf

These findings leave no room for doubt regarding the proportionality of measures needed to counteract the gruesome kangaroo meat and skin trade. Between 2016 and 2019, EU imports of kangaroo skins almost doubled quantity-wise, and those of kangaroo meat by 11%. The EU remains by far the first destination of such meat. Therefore, the 10 undersigned organisations call on the EU to act in accordance with its values. In the consultation on the Future of Europe, one out of seven EU citizens indicated animal welfare should be a priority for the EU². It is high time for the EU to introduce an import ban on all goods derived from the hunting of kangaroos.

In addition, we call on the European Commission to use the opportunity presented by EU-Australia trade negotiations to discuss this topic with the Australian government and, considering the findings related to conservation and impact on indigenous people, to encourage Australian Environment Minister Sussan Ley not to approve the NSW current plan for the commercial killing of kangaroos, as these quotas do not consider the results of the NSW Parliamentary Kangaroo Inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

Eurogroup for Animals
World Animal Protection Netherlands
LAV
GAIA
Fondation Brigitte Bardot
Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals [Dierenbescherming]
Pro Wildlife
The Center for a Humane Economy - US
Voiceless
Kangaroos Alive Australia

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/online-consultation-report-april-2019_en.pdf