



Shooting of Wombats Should NOT be Legalised - and here's why!!

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The ACT Government is about to vote on passing legislation to allow the legal shooting of Wombats - we need to stop this bill now, protect our indigenous wildlife and advocate for wombats wrongly accused of being troublemakers from sheer ignorance. The ACT government's proposed plan is based on false claims of "overabundance" ignoring accurate population data and correct knowledge of wombat behaviour.

Authorities and many of the public get it wrong blaming wombats for causing erosion, land and infrastructure (e.g. burrows and wombats under houses), spreading disease (i.e. mange) and prolific breeding. This misinformation and ignorance is putting wombats in unnecessary danger, unacceptable suffering and encouraging painful loss of life.

Alternative management methods and non-lethal solutions are readily available, proven to be successful and should be implemented rather than cruel and unnecessary legalised shooting.

Wombats are a vital part of Australia's unique biodiversity. Decisions must be grounded in science, compassion and respect for our native wildlife - not fear or convenience.

The problem with legalised shooting: Issuing permits to shoot wombats enables blatant cruelty. "Problem" wombat numbers are not monitored by authorities in NSW so when people apply for a permit they will often shoot indiscriminately. Even worse, because these permits exist many people think they can exterminate wombats at will, without consequence. There is seldom any follow-up for these protected animals. No one is made accountable.

When a wombat is shot it rarely kills them instantly. Injured victims run into their burrow with a bullet hole that becomes an agonising slow death. Humane euthanasia requires a bullet shot point blank into the skull. Wildlife rescue centres such as Wombatised Inc. deal with far too many cases of maggot filled bullet wounds of dying wombats as a result of this cruelty. Sadly in NSW getting a permit to harm wombats is also ridiculously easy - a simple, almost over-the-counter transaction. We need to advocate for our wildlife, prevent legalised shooting of wombats and stop issuing permits.

Wombats are the second oldest mammals on earth next to the echidna and the platypus. We must protect them. Stewardship of the planet and co existing with native animals is our responsibility.

Misinformation 1: Overpopulation

This misconception is based on the incorrect assumption that multiple burrows means multiple wombats. This is not true. Multiple burrows together is simply the result of the mouth of one burrow (which would have been structurally sound) being filled in and compacted. The wombats then try to access their burrow from the surface above the tunnel which is often many metres long and can divert in many directions underground with hallways, bedding chambers and nursery rooms. The wombats are trying to reclaim their

burrow by digging from the top. This is an important point because wombats get wrongly accused of digging multiple burrows. They are simply trying to maintain their place of living because the original entrance is no longer accessible due to human behaviour.

If a wombat is buried alive, death is not soft and sleepy. Asphyxiation causes panic and pressure where the eyes pop out causing an excruciating slow death.

Wombat burrows and tunnels that were dug 100 years ago and then filled in by humans are still in existence in the subsoil.

When an adult wombat is shot this causes extreme stress for the younger ones who create “bolt holes” because they are frightened of grazing, so they dig shallow holes for protection.

If a female wombat of breeding age is lucky enough to have a baby, the joey stays with mum for 18-24 months. The female will not have another baby until the offspring leaves. There is no such thing as a wombat population explosion.

A wombat population is determined by the number of scats (wombat droppings). Wombats, like horses, are hind gut fermenters and defecate approximately nine times per day. Each elimination is approximately 10 scats (cubed individual pieces). Wombats also denote their grazing area etc by scat dropping, often a long distance from their sleeping chamber. These factors often contribute to the overcalculation of wombat numbers.

Misconception 2: Wombats cause erosion and land damage

When studying the ancestral wombat burrows in a National Park or undisturbed landscapes you see ONE or TWO burrows per acre, that are structurally sound and constructed beneath the subsoil. With connected canopy, understory and ground cover the water subsides because of natural filtering from intact landscape. This is the ancient ecology of the wombat with NO erosion.

Farmers, developers and landowners have denuded the landscape and trampling cattle have caused the erosion. It is very hypocritical shooting the brumbies from the Snowy Mountains acknowledging their cause of erosion but conveniently denying the cattle doing the same damage throughout the rest of the state!

Many years ago farmers knew how to keep their waterways intact because they depended on the water for drinking. Now they overgraze because of financial pressure. Many people are primary producers for tax cuts so the wombat loses from perpetual human interference and ignorance. Development should be done further than above the flood zone with a significant buffer to protect the land surface.

Misconception 3: Wombats spread disease

Wombatised Inc. and other wildlife agencies have dealt with wombats suffering from many diseases from pink eye, a variety of intestinal worms, scabies (mange) to name a few. Sarcoptic mange, caused by the *Sarcoptes scabiei* mite, is considered an introduced species that arrived with European settlers and their domesticated animals about 200 years ago. Intestinal worms and pink eye are caused by pathogens that exist globally and are not indigenous to Australia. Once again the wombat is incorrectly targeted.

Mange (scabies), spread mostly by foxes, is easily treated with education and diligence. Most wildlife groups can train individuals to treat mange.

Misconception 4: Wombats are aggressive and dangerous

Wombatised Inc. is a well established treatment centre for wildlife. With over 20 years in wildlife rescue and rehabilitation and working with 1000s of wombats, experience has consistently shown that the majority of wombats with fear based aggression is directly due to human interference such as car strike,

habitat removal, becoming orphaned, being pushed into suburbs, dog attacks, sickness and/or fighting over territory which is now remnant, unpredictable, often unsafe and extremely stressful.

The 1952 Brittanica's definition of a wombat is a shy and gentle creature. Wombats (our indigenous ground dwelling bears) have been persecuted from sheer ignorance. There was a bounty on their heads in 1906 because they were incorrectly blamed and we have not even progressed if our authorities think it is the right thing to do to keep persecuting them.

Wombats are extremely intelligent, sensitive animals. Contrary to popular belief, they are also highly social animals. Just because they graze on their own does not reflect their social structure. Wombats eat on their own because more than one wombat can not run into one burrow at a time. It is safety behaviour. An individual wombat orbits around the burrow they have in sight for safety. They are intensely social, sharing burrows, monitoring each other, making sure their wisdom (wombat tribe) is adequately socially structured.

Misconception 5: Wombats cause damage to buildings and infrastructure

Wombats are continually being pushed out of their ancestral pathways which are riparian zones (the ecology that belongs to the waterways and above). Bare nosed wombats are native to the waterways east of the great divide. We have built above the flood zone (mostly) but we failed to allow a buffer zone for the animals.

Before land clearing the rocky out crops and huge ancient fallen trees would have been the wombat's shelter. Development and land clearing drive wombats to seek shelter under human structures. Animal rescuers, like Wombatised Inc., get many callouts for people distressed about wombats under their house. There are demonstrated methods to correct this problem. Houses built on riparian zones should be wombat proofed from the beginning, It is possible to fortify domestic dwellings preventing wombat access under the guidance of experienced wildlife professionals. More information and clear instructions for this are available on our website <https://wombatised.org/>

Damage to fencing is manageable. Wombat gates, which are easy to install, have proven over and over to be an effective solution for avoiding fence damage. The trick is to put the wombat gate along the wombat's pathway.

We have a duty to protect our native wildlife including wombats

Wombats are crucial to maintain Australian biodiversity and ecosystem resilience. Wombat burrows provide native animals access to shelter during fires and the water table during times of drought. Regenerating and preserving intact vegetation is vital for conservation, not just wombats but all native species. Keeping the natural ecosystem intact (and/or restoring them) ensures peaceful coexistence of our native wildlife alongside humans.

Wombats are the second oldest mammal on earth next to the echidna and the platypus.

They are unique to Australia.

We must protect them.

We cannot legalise shooting.

We must not allow this cruelty based on ignorance to proceed.

Stop the ACT Government legalising it.

Wombats are a major attraction for tourists to Australia, affectionately represented throughout mass media. Coexistence is necessary.

Please visit our website <https://wombatised.org/> and Wombat Protection Society <https://www.wombatprotection.org.au/>

How You Can Help:

- Write to the Minister Ms Suzanne Orr MLA; Email - ORR@act.gov.au
- Write to your local MP
- Support Wombat Rescue's campaign to stop legalised shooting: <https://wombatrescue.com.au/no-shooting/>
- Contact us on wombatisedinc@gmail.com