

This letter was sent to the editor of the Courier-Mail and published on June 26-27, 2010

YOUR SAY

I have always had a deep respect for animals. To me, they've always been incredibly beautiful and intriguing creatures. From tiny ants and their complex social hierarchies to the unfathomable size of our gargantuan whales, the variety, intelligence, beauty and complexity of the animal kingdom is truly astounding.

Looking back on it, a childhood spent running amok in the scrub of the Dandenongs set me up for a lifetime love of Australia's amazing wildlife.

But in the past few years I've become increasingly concerned for my animal mates and the more I think about it, the more worried I become.

So many of our fauna are teetering on the brink of extinction, and if we don't act as a nation, even our more "common" species will soon be lost.

Take the kangaroo for example, arguably Australia's most iconic animal, yet every night thousands of 'roos are killed for sport and profit in the world's largest land-based wildlife slaughter.

Proponents have for years spread lies and propaganda about kangaroo overpopulation and "necessary population control measures". My response: What a crock!

The kangaroo industry exploits declining populations of kangaroos for nothing more than greed and profit margins. Every year millions of kangaroos are slaughtered for their meat and skin with little governance or population monitoring.

Simply travel to the Outback and it becomes grimly evident that kangaroos and wallabies are treading a thin line. In some of my favourite spots where once kangaroos were found in mobs numbering in the hundreds, you're now lucky to spot even a solitary female.

Some will argue that kangaroos must be controlled to enable farmers to run their stock but reputable organisations such as CSIRO and University of NSW have shown that the effects of kangaroos competing with sheep and cattle are negligible.

The most disturbing aspect of the industry is the abhorrent disregard for animal welfare, and the fact that the Australian Government continues to sanction the nightly massacre makes me sick to my stomach.

According to the kangaroo industry code of practice, joeys found in the pouches of their slaughtered mothers should be clubbed to death or decapitated. It fails to allow for the at-foot joeys that hop off when their mothers are killed, and are left to starve to death.

As a country we have lost our respect for nature.

Perhaps it's because nowadays most people (especially those living in the cities) don't get the chance to head bush and connect with the environment and its incredible inhabitants.

If you have concerns for our wildlife, please voice your opinion and make it count. Write to your local, state and federal politicians and boycott the 'roo industry by refusing to buy their products. Most importantly, get connected with nature.

Bob Irwin, Kingaroy