

# MAINTAINING SUSTAINABLE KANGAROO POPULATIONS FOR THE LONG TERM



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## Summary

The future of the kangaroo industry relies on the sustainable management and humane treatment of kangaroos.

There are four species of kangaroo which have been identified by the Australian government as requiring harvesting for ecological and land management reasons. None are threatened species.

Any harvesting of kangaroos must be done in the context of maintaining sustainable long-term kangaroo populations. It is the position of the KIAA and its members that:

- Animal welfare is the top and guiding priority for the industry;
- The sustainable management of kangaroo populations through varying seasonal conditions requires a proactive collaborative approach from harvesters, landowners, governments, animal welfare, exporters and suppliers;
- Survey methods behind estimating kangaroo populations that require a level of harvesting be based on scientific principles and subject to peer review;
- That quota levels for any harvesting be set annually, are conservative, reflect population fluctuations, and are based on accepted population science and that any provision for special permits to be catered for within the quotas;
- That trigger points are incorporated to automatically reduce or increase quotas in unforeseen population events.
- That there is complete transparency with how populations are assessed, quotas are set, and reported.

## Purpose of this document

The KIAA and its members believe that it is vital that customers and consumers of kangaroo products in export and domestic markets have confidence in the sustainable and humane management of kangaroos.

This document details the policy position of KIAA members as it relates to maintaining sustainable kangaroo populations for the long term.

It outlines the minimum expectations KIAA members adhere to when supplying products to export and domestic markets and the advocacy positions the KIAA will take in relation to ensuring sustainable kangaroo populations for the long term.

Overall the KIAA and its members believe kangaroos are important both from a biodiversity viewpoint and as a sustainable resource and need to be respected and humanely treated.

The KIAA also recognises the important role the commercial kangaroo industry plays in helping to control kangaroo populations to ensure both positive animal welfare outcomes as well as landscape sustainability. This sustainable management requires a strong commercial kangaroo industry that is meeting harvest quotas as best as possible and collaboration across all parties including landowners, governments, animal welfare groups, harvesters, exporters and suppliers.

## Overview of issue

Responsibility for managing kangaroo populations rests with Australian states and territories. They determine whether kangaroos can be culled or whether sustainable commercial harvesting is permitted to ensure the welfare of the animals and reduce the impact of populations on agricultural land.

The federal government has responsibility for permitting the export of kangaroo products. Four species of kangaroo are approved for commercial harvest and export—the red, eastern grey, western grey and common wallaroo or euro. None are listed as a threatened species under national environment law, or under state or territory legislation, or on international lists such as CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) and the IUCN Red List of threatened species.

Commercial harvesting of kangaroos is conducted under state management plans, which require harvesting to be sustainable and humane. Management plans include annual harvest quotas based on regular population monitoring.

New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia have management plans for the commercial harvest of kangaroos for export (see table 1 at the end of this document). Smaller scale harvesting occurs in Victoria under a pet food trial (domestic markets only) and two species of wallaby are commercially harvested in Tasmania.

Quotas are set annually and as a proportion of estimated populations. The scientific community and state wildlife management agencies consider that annual harvest levels in the order of 15 per cent of the populations for grey kangaroos and wallaroos, and 20 per cent for red kangaroos, ensure the long-term healthy populations of these species.

Quotas represent the maximum number of kangaroos which can be harvested. The commercial harvest is generally significantly less than the approved quota as the harvest is linked to market demand and the capacity of the industry to harvest the quota level. There is currently no provision for meeting harvest quotas in periods of low market demand in order to reduce the impact on agricultural land.

In addition to the sustainable harvest quotas, New South Wales and South Australia also have a 'special quota'. Special quotas are only used when a management zone's commercial quota has been used and a continuing land damage mitigation need has been demonstrated.

Australia has undergone a severe drought in recent years, and because the primary driver of kangaroo populations is rainfall, overall kangaroo numbers in Australia have naturally declined as a result. The decline comes after record population highs in previous years.

No adverse long-term impacts on kangaroo populations have been identified after more than 30 years of harvesting under commercial management plans. This timeframe has included several periods of severe drought.

Improvements to kangaroo management across the country need to look at proactive and collaborative ways to address natural fluctuations in populations that can impact the welfare of animals and lead to land degradation.

## Standards and improvements sought by KIAA members

Key operational area	KIAA member policy position	Areas KIAA members are seeking improvements
Determining population levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peer reviewed survey methodologies</li> <li>Public disclosure of survey methods and results</li> <li>Minimum of triennial surveys of each management zone</li> <li>Aerial survey supplemented with on the ground surveys where feasible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2020 review of survey methodologies to best practice</li> </ul>
Determining annual quota levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scientifically set quota limits</li> <li>Quotas to be set by region and by species</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular peer reviews of quota limits</li> <li>Disclosure when harvest reaches 50% of quota</li> </ul>
Special permits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Special permits to be catered for within overall annual quota, not additional</li> <li>Prior to special permits being issued, commercial harvesters be given the opportunity to meet the quota need</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Special permits to be catered for <u>within</u> overall annual quota</li> <li>Opportunity for commercial harvesters to meet special quota need</li> </ul>
Other special provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trigger points in population changes for automatic adjustment of quotas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Move to a uniform standard for determining trigger points (standard deviation method)</li> </ul>

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Table 1: Overview of kangaroo management plans for sustainable harvesting

	New South Wales	Queensland	Western Australia	South Australia
Current management plan	2017-2021	2018-2022	2014-2018	2018-2022
Exclusions	Plan relates to commercial harvest on privately held lands, not within protected areas and non-commercial culling for damage mitigation	Plan relates to commercial harvest on privately held lands, not within protected areas and non-commercial culling for damage mitigation	Only relates to the red and western grey kangaroos.  Plan relates to commercial harvest on privately held lands, not within protected areas and non-commercial culling for damage mitigation	Plan does not include protected areas.
Survey methods	Aerial surveys supplemented with mark-recapture distance sampling  Documented in <i>Population Monitoring Methods for the NSW Kangaroo Management</i>  Program and individual survey reports published for management regions.  Surveys conducted every 2-3 years	Aerial surveys  Details of the methodologies used to conduct aerial surveys published.  Surveys conducted every 2 years	Aerial surveys with each Population Monitoring Zone being surveyed on a triennial basis	A combination of fixed-wing aircraft (fixed strip width transect method) and ground surveys (line transect method)  Population surveys conducted annually in regions with an average annual harvest of greater than 50% of the maximum quota for the past five years, and at least once every three years in regions with an average annual harvest of less than 50% of the maximum quota for the past five years.
Quota determination	Varies by region and by species. Typically 17% for red kangaroo and 15% for eastern grey and western grey kangaroos and wallaroos.  Quotas released annually. Incorporates trigger points for quota reset	Varies by region and by species. Typically 15% of populations for eastern grey kangaroos and common wallaroos, and 20% for red kangaroos.  Released annually. Incorporates trigger points for quota reset	Varies by region and by species. Harvest levels typically set for red kangaroos at $\leq 17$ percent and for western grey kangaroos at $\leq 15$ percent of the populations estimate. Released annually Incorporates trigger points for quota reset	Varies by region and by species. Typically 15 per cent of populations for eastern grey kangaroos and common wallaroos, and 20 per cent of the population for red kangaroos. Released annually Incorporates trigger points for quota reset
Special quotas	Yes, available once commercial quota has been fully issued in a management zone	Yes depending on climatic trends and local conditions, exceptional circumstance declarations, macropod population trends.  Limited to a maximum of 2% of population estimate	No, however open season permits are available for where kangaroos are causing damage. Limited to privately held land and not for commercial purposes	Yes, once all of the available quota for a and under a Special Land Management Quota. Limited to 1.5% of standard quota
Non-commercial culling	Yes – by individual application	Yes – includes recreation wildlife harvesting	Yes	Yes

	New South Wales	Queensland	Western Australia	South Australia
Ability to suspend culling on low population numbers	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes