



Brush-tailed Phascogale dead on a road. JORDAN CROOK

SUBMISSION TO

Parliamentary Inquiry into Wildlife Roadstrike

Victorian National Parks Association

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Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry into Wildlife Roadstrike

Submission by the Victorian National Parks Association

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Introduction

Thank you for inviting submissions to this Inquiry into Wildlife Roadstrike in Victoria and the impact on wildlife and ecosystem functions as well as the community and wildlife rescuers and carers.

We acknowledge the field of science known as Road Ecology that refers to the:

ecological investigation building on the mounting evidence that roads are having dramatic effects on ecosystem components, processes and structures, and that the causes of these effects are as much related to engineering as to land use planning and transportation policy. Road ecology is rooted in ecology, geography, engineering and planning¹

We hope that this inquiry will help to support better planning and help to inform the improvement of planning and implementation of wildlife safe infrastructure across Victoria.

Established in 1952, the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) is Victoria's leading community-based nature conservation organisation. We are an independent, non-profit, membership-based group, which exists to support better protection and management of Victoria's biodiversity and natural heritage.

We aim to achieve our vision by facilitating strategic campaigns and education programs, developing policies, undertaking hands-on conservation work, and by running bushwalking and outdoor activity programs which promote the care and enjoyment of Victoria's natural environment.

We acknowledge the Terms of Reference released by the Economy and Infrastructure Committee.

¹ Alisa W. Coffin, From roadkill to road ecology: A review of the ecological effects of roads, Journal of Transport Geography, Volume 15, Issue 5, 2007, Pages 396-406, ISSN 0966-6923, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2006.11.006>.

Recommendations

1. Commission Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) to investigate areas of high wildlife strike and make evidence-based suggestions on ways to minimise these on public land using data sets from iNaturalist, Wildlife Victoria and roads through areas of native vegetation and Protected Areas such as National Parks and Conservation Reserves
2. Commission VEAC to investigate roadside native vegetation, including site condition and the mapping of significant native vegetation be undertaken and recommend extra protections for roadside vegetation through conservation-based land tenure
3. Develop a Road Ecology Centre of Excellence within the Arthur Rylah Institute funded by a fee on luxury vehicles and infringement notices to investigate the impact of roads and associated infrastructure on wildlife and ecosystem function in Victoria and undertake evidence-based mitigation measures and long-term monitoring (If we can work out what DTP is given every year we could ask for 1% of their budget being spent on this)
4. Reinstate the Roadside Conservation Committee. And have it facilitated by an independent body to increase the dialogue with the Conservation and community groups and VicRoads to avoid conflict between their operations and biodiversity values
5. List feral deer as a pest under the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994
6. Community Science and Data-Driven Response: Road ecology and strike prevention must be informed by data. Victoria should support the expansion of community science tools - such as iNaturalist and Wildlife Victoria reports - as inputs into predictive modelling of strike hotspots. These data sets should be analysed by a dedicated Road Ecology Centre and integrated into all transport planning. The public should also be given an avenue to nominate roads for investigation based on lived experience.
7. Acknowledging Traditional Owners: Road planning and mitigation should actively involve Traditional Owners, whose knowledge of Country and species movement is invaluable. Indigenous land management practices offer lessons in landscape connectivity, fire regimes, and ecological resilience. Any future Road Ecology Centre or Roadside Committee must include Traditional Owner representation and collaboration as core practice - not tokenism.
8. The Victorian Planning Authority should be instructed to work with DEECA to develop clear and wide-ranging requirements to minimise fauna-vehicle interactions adjacent to areas of conservation significance. Such requirements may relate to road location and cross-section, traffic calming measures, use of acoustic and visual warnings (for fauna and humans), fencing, crossing structures, location of drainage infrastructure, extent of canopy available for over-

road passage, lighting, adjacent habitat provision and adjacent land use. Requirements should apply to all current PSP in progress and to new development state-wide. Where possible, solutions should be retrofitted. The cost of these requirements needs to be upfront and factored-in to the cost of development. Planning processes need to consider fauna and conservation values very early in the planning process, and continue that attention through all the stages leading to final works.

9. Native grasslands roadsides need to be well-maintained to create good sightlines and reduce vehicle–fauna interactions, as well as to improve their conservation values.
10. Roadside areas of conservation significance need to be defined as Roadside Refuges with strong provisions that protect their conservation values.
11. Roadside areas of conservation significance need to be clearly signed and should be fenced to prevent unintended damage from vehicle entry.
12. The presence of roadside native grasslands needs to be confirmed for this to work. In many cases this data is not available. Hence we recommend a thorough state-wide survey and clear gathering of information around roadside conservation values. This data needs to be held in a centralised, easily accessible format and available from a simply contacted service. The Dial Before You Dig service is a good model. In this case the service would show roadside conservation areas, and no-go zones or zones with special access, permit and activity requirements.
13. Roadsides need to be surveyed for fauna as well as flora. Most areas of known roadside conservation value have only been surveyed for flora. Funding should be allocated to develop and clear state-wide understanding of roadside fauna values.
14. A centralised, easy to use system similar to 000 needs to be developed for injury to wildlife.

Discussion

Impact of road infrastructure on native wildlife and ecosystem function

Roads and associated infrastructure have a detrimental impact on movement, behaviour and welfare of native wildlife and severely impacts the functioning of ecosystems.

Victoria is the most cleared state in Australia with approximately 70% of native vegetation and habitat cleared since colonisation² with most of the remaining areas of natural Vegetation (79%³) being fragmented and not connected to other areas of habitat.

Habitat fragmentation as a threatening process for fauna in Victoria is recognised as a Potentially Threatening Processes List under Victorian State law the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988⁴. As of 5th June 2025 there is no legally required Action Statement to identify potential future actions intended to conserve and manage the threatening process.

The extensive fragmentation (break-up of continuous habitat into patches) of habitat in Victoria disrupts ecological processes (such as wildlife movement and seed dispersal), and increases exposure to other threats such as invasive species and changes in the microclimate (eg drying and exposure to wind).

Without connected habitats wildlife are unable to move safely through the landscape and leads to localised extinctions that feed into greater declines and eventual extinction of plants and animals through loss of genetic diversity leading to inbreeding (other impacts), loss of suitable habitat structures and functions such as large and hollow bearing trees and finally death caused by vehicle strike.

Without intact and functioning areas of native vegetation and habitat (biodiversity) ecosystem functions such as carbon storage, pollination, soil stabilisation and creation, water filtration and creation and oxygen filtration and creation will become degraded and less resilient to changes such as disease, damage and climate change.

Humans are dependent all the aforementioned ecosystem functions.

Wildlife Victoria state that between 2018 and 2023 over 50,000 native animals such as Wombat, Koalas, Dingoes and Kangaroos were killed or injured by road strike in Victoria⁵ but this number is likely highly under reported with many animals hit and killed not reported due to their size, the driver not knowing or the animal dispersed before it could

² Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) Remnant Native Vegetation Investigation Discussion Paper, June 2010

³ Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) Remnant Native Vegetation Investigation Discussion Paper, June 2010

⁴ Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 – Potentially Threatening Processes List, May 2023

⁵ Wildlife Victoria, Wildlife Road Toll Reduction Toolkit Pilot Project, 2024

be treated. This likely leads to the animals dying slow and painful deaths with severe injuries.

Cost-Effective Mitigation Structures

Numerous international studies have shown that wildlife road-crossing structures, particularly when combined with fencing, are among the most effective ways to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions. Overpasses and underpasses integrated into roads can reduce roadkill by up to 90%^{6,7}. Tasmania's Bonorong Wildlife Hospital has recommended a similar approach, after years of recording road fatalities. Implementing these mitigation strategies—especially in known hotspot areas—should be a basic design requirement in all new road projects and retrofitted where feasible.

Urban and Peri-Urban Hotspots

Wildlife-vehicle collisions are not confined to regional Victoria. High rates of roadkill occur in peri-urban fringes—such as the Yarra Ranges, Mornington Peninsula, Macedon Ranges and outer Bendigo—where development pressure, traffic volume and wildlife habitat all converge. These zones often fall between policy gaps—too urban for wildlife strategies, too rural for traffic mitigation funding. A Victorian Wildlife Roadstrike Strategy must explicitly include peri-urban zones and prioritise fencing, speed limits, and real-time signage where animal movement is highest.

Importance roadside native vegetation

Some of Victoria's most valuable remnant native vegetation, most threatened ecological communities and endangered plant species rely on roadsides and road reserves. These areas have avoided clearing and damaging disturbance through colonisation of Victoria and are in many regions of Victoria the last remaining areas of high-quality native vegetation and habitat.

These roadsides are highly fragmented and vulnerable to destruction from road widening works and degradation through ploughing, invasive species invasion, grazing, firewood collection and climate change⁸.

Remnant roadside vegetation provides examples of native plant communities that may be absent from adjoining cleared private land providing a valuable genetic resource and seed bank for seed collection (with appropriate seed collection permits), to help propagate local plants for revegetation projects while also providing habitat and

⁶ Glista, D.J., DeVault, T.L., & DeWoody, J.A. (2009). A review of mitigation measures for reducing wildlife mortality on roadways. *Biological Conservation*, 141(2), 353–361.

⁷ Rytwinski, T. et al. (2016). How effective is road mitigation at reducing road-kill? A meta-analysis. *PLOS ONE* 11(11): e0166941.

⁸ VNPA (2014) Natural Victoria: Conservation Priorities for Victoria's Natural Heritage. Nature Conservation Review. Full Report. Victorian National Parks Association, Melbourne.

ecological connectivity for plants and wildlife in fragmented landscapes⁹ as well as amenity value.

In landscapes where native vegetation is sparse and the only habitat left in an area the roadsides can be of increased use by the last remaining wildlife to move between other areas of habitat such as parks and reserves in a safe and protected manner.

This conflict has been seen consistently over past years as the road network expands and areas of native vegetation are further destroyed. For instance, the Office of the Conservation Regulator (OCR) recently imposed an significant Enforceable Undertaking on Powercor for 32 instances of destruction of roadside vegetation throughout 2023 and 2024. The OCR is currently investigating further damage of 3.5 km of important roadside vegetation by Moyne Shire Council. These are far from isolated examples.

Although Victoria's native roadside vegetation is recognised for its importance to biodiversity preservation, carbon storage, flood mitigation and increased amenity value buy some in the conservation and scientific community this has not necessarily been reflected in policy and legislation by the state.

These roadside areas are still largely under protected if protected at all and are subject to destruction and degradation by legal and illegal activities due to poor decision-making processes and poor planning due to a lack of understanding and strong conservation-based land tenure.

In 1975 a group of concerned conservation and planning groups (Including the VNPA and the Town & Country Planning Association) along with State and Federal road experts and planners initiated the Forum on Roadsides and Conservation¹⁰. Through this forum grew the Roadsides Conservation Committee in Victoria consisting of both NGOs and government departments, this was arguably the first coordinated attempt to improve roadside management in any state¹¹.

Roadsides Conservation Advisory Committee (Vic.) published a Roadside assessment handbook in 1996.

The roadside committee was later merged into VicRoads in the early 2000s and was closed in the late 2010s and no longer exists.(Matt to confirm?)

⁹ John Robinson, Upper Maribyrnong Catchment Group. The value of roadside remnant vegetation, Victorian Landcare Magazine, Issue 79. (2020)

¹⁰ Forum on Roadsides and Conservation, Victorian National Parks Association and Natural Resources Conservation League (November 1974)

¹¹ Parks and Leisure Australia. Forum on Roadsides and Conservations, <https://parksleisure.com.au/parc-library/335-forum-on-roadsides-and-conservations/>

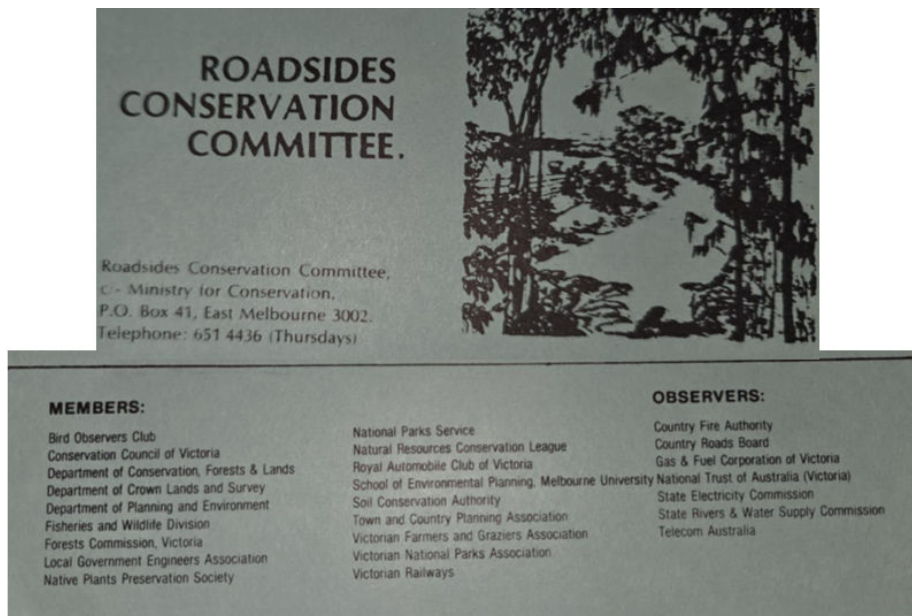


Image. Early Roads Conservation Committee document

Grassland roadsides

It is important to recognise that some of the last, best remnant grasslands remaining are located on roadsides, in particular on 3-chain and 5-chain rural roads in the west of Victoria, but also in the plains to the north of Victoria. The conservation significance of these grasslands cannot be overstated. Only 0.5% of the Natural temperate Grasslands of the Victorian Volcanic Plain remain.

These grasslands may be the last local refugia for threatened fauna as well as flora. Many endangered species call grasslands home: from reptiles like the Striped Legless Lizard to frogs such as the Growling Grass Frog to mammals such as the Fat-tailed Dunnart to birds like the brolga to insects like the Golden Sun Moth.

Such roadsides are incredibly vulnerable to destruction from road works, and from works associated with utilities. Local graziers damage them by using this public land for grazing. Farmers extend their fields to the road bitumin, erasing the roadside. Heavy machinery on roadsides in wet conditions creates rutting that destroys native vegetation and creates opportunities for destructive weed invasion.

Poorly maintained native grassland increases the chances of roadstrike. This is because invasive grasses such as Phalaris stand higher than native grasses and reduce visibility; and also because grassland maintenance tends to keep vegetation low and open, improving visibility.

As a consequence, we recommend implementing a program that keeps native grassland roadsides well-maintained. This has clear ecological benefits as well as reducing vehicle–fauna interactions.

In addition, we recommend that roadside areas of conservation significance n be defined as Roadside Refuges with strong provisions that protect their conservation values.

Roadside native grasslands need to be identified for this to work. Hence we recommend a thorough state-wide survey and clear gathering of information around roadside conservation values. This data needs to be in a centralised, easily accessible format and available from a simply contacted service. The Dial before you dig service is a good model. In this case the service would show roadside conservation areas, and no-go zones or zones with special access and activity requirements.

Areas of roadside conservation significance need to be clearly marked, and ideally they need to be fenced to stop accidental damage from vehicle entry.

Edge Effect as a driver for ecosystem decline

Roads and other linear infrastructure have strong effects on predator activity within intact landscapes¹²this impact is not restricted to bituminised roads only but also includes logging roads, walking and mountain bike tracks and 4WD tracks.

Through the creation of new roads, tracks and disturbance in natural areas or widening of existing roads a phenomenon called "edge effect" is created.

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment (2002) describe the term as having various consequences, on vegetation and wildlife. These edges may be natural, such as forest grading into woodland, streamside vegetation passing through an arid zone, burnt and unburnt areas; or induced, such as pasture abutting forest or a road through a forest¹³.

The edge effect from roads and infrastructure include the following¹⁴:

- Micro-climatic changes: Solar radiation, humidity, air temperature, wind speed and soil temperature may all be altered along edges. This can have a dramatic impact on the vegetation and, ultimately, the wildlife
- An increase in pest animals: Pest animals such as foxes, cats and feral domestic dogs tend to move and harbour along roads, tracks and cleared areas adjacent to

¹² Keren G. Raiter, Richard J. Hobbs, Hugh P. Possingham, Leonie E. Valentine, Suzanne M. Prober, Vehicle tracks are predator highways in intact landscapes, *Biological Conservation*, Volume 228, 2018, Pages 281-290, ISSN 0006-3207, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2018.10.011>.

¹³ Department of Natural Resources and Environment (1993), Land for Wildlife Notes-Edges-their effects on vegetation and wildlife.
https://www.swifft.net.au/resources/23_edges%20and%20their%20effect%20on%20vegetation%20&wildlife.pdf

¹⁴ Department of Natural Resources and Environment (1993), Land for Wildlife Notes-Edges-their effects on vegetation and wildlife.
https://www.swifft.net.au/resources/23_edges%20and%20their%20effect%20on%20vegetation%20&wildlife.pdf

or in bush areas. Edges, by providing improved access, can cause a decline in wildlife populations through predation and competition.

- Weed invasion: Edges can provide opportunities for the invasion of natural vegetation by weeds. Disturbance creates opportunities for weeds to establish as well as dumping of green waste into natural areas
- Impacts from adjacent land-use: Edges are prone to many disturbances such as chemical and fertilizer drift from adjacent farmland, trampling and grazing by stock, fire escaping into habitat areas, recreational disturbance and littering
- Noise, movement and light: Many wildlife species rely on the seclusion of undisturbed habitat in order to breed and live successfully. For example, the Wedge-tailed Eagle has been known to abandon its nest due to disturbance¹⁵, and Powerful Owls will avoid areas with high light levels

Impact of invasive species caused by road infrastructure

Roads and other linear infrastructure have strong effects on predator activity within intact landscapes¹⁶, some scientists refer to roads and infrastructure as “predator highways”¹⁷.

It is well known that tracks into natural areas facilitate predators such as feral cat (*Felis catus*) and the red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) entering further into natural areas, giving more direct access to areas where predators cannot usually hunt. This allows predators to penetrate further into the range of species that may be more sensitive to predation than prey species in the predator’s regular habitat¹⁸.

Roads and linear infrastructure are a primary vector for weed invasions due to their continued disturbance in their management as well as being dumping points for green waste.

As summarised by Patricia Barwick (1999):

Some of their unique characteristics include the ribbon shape of road surfaces which create steep cut and fill batters which are ideal weed beds, and extensive bare ground resulting from drain cleaning and other maintenance activities, which offers the weeds a free range and no other plant competition.

¹⁵ Department of Natural Resources and Environment (1993), Land for Wildlife Notes-Edges-their effects on vegetation and wildlife.

https://www.swifft.net.au/resources/23_edges%20and%20their%20effect%20on%20vegetation%20&wildlife.pdf

¹⁶ Raiter, K.G., Hobbs, R., Possingham Hugh, P., Valentine, L.E., Prober, S.M., 2018. Vehicle tracks are predator highways in intact landscapes. *Biological Conservation*.

¹⁷ Raiter, K.G., Hobbs, R., Possingham Hugh, P., Valentine, L.E., Prober, S.M., 2018. Vehicle tracks are predator highways in intact landscapes. *Biological Conservation*.

¹⁸ James ARC. 1999. Effects of industrial development on the predator-prey relationship between wolves and caribou in Northeastern Alberta. Department of Biological Sciences. University of Alberta, Alberta

Public roads are usually corridors for a number of services, and this makes it difficult to assign overall responsibility for controls including weed control. In addition, travelling vehicles commonly transport a range of weedy materials, in many different ways ranging from mud on tyres to air suction currents, and these frequently end up being dumped in the road corridor. Being very long and thin, roadways are also ideal for introducing weeds into the wider countryside, from where they can spread onto farms and other lands.

(Ben to ask Kate Blood for any further links and references. Issues) - Have asked Kate is putting some stuff together.

Artificial light impact

Light pollution harms wildlife and ecosystems¹⁹.

Light pollution can change the behaviour and physiology of wildlife, reducing survivorship, reproduction and adding extra stress on already vulnerable populations of wildlife.

Indirect effects of light pollution also includes changes to the availability of habitat or food resources, pollination of plants²⁰, attraction of predators and invasive pests, both of which may pose a threat to wildlife and plants.

Examples of species being impacted by artificial light include the Bogong moths (*Agrotis infusa*)²¹ which has a flow on effect to other animals that rely on the moth such as the Mountain Pygmy-possum (*Burramys parvus*) which starves without sufficient numbers of Bogong moths to eat. What can be perceived as a small impact has a flow and cumulative impact in native ecosystems.

The pollination of plants and thus their reproduction is also be impacted by artificial light by, as highlighted by the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) ²² below by:

- Distracting, repelling and killing pollinators
- Reducing flower visits and the amount of pollen transported

¹⁹ Lets witch off light pollution together, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (2025)

²⁰ Knop, E., Zoller, L., Ryser, R. et al. Artificial light at night as a new threat to pollination. *Nature* 548, 206–209 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1038/nature23288>

²¹ Moth Tracker, Zoos Victoria. <https://www.zoo.org.au/moth-tracker/#:~:text=Bogong%20Moths%20are%20facing%20a,introduced%20species%20and%20habitat%20loss>.

²² Artificial light reduces pollination, seed dispersal and nutrient cycling, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (2025) <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/campaign/light-pollution/ecological-communities#:~:text=Artificial%20light%20reduces%20pollination%2C%20seed,marine%20amphipods%20and%20saltmarsh%20crabs>).

- Restricting the movement of seed-dispersing animals across the landscape
- Reducing nutrient cycling by soil-digging nocturnal mammals (such as bandicoots, bettongs and bilbies)
- Reducing the activity of invertebrates that break down dead organic material (such as beetles, marine amphipods and saltmarsh crabs).

Insects around the world are rapidly declining. Concerns over what this loss means for food security and ecological communities have compelled a growing number of researchers to search for the key drivers behind the declines, many academics have raised the concern of Artificial light in these declines²³.

This impact of artificial lights impact on wildlife and how to mitigate the threatening process is being studied across the world. The Commonwealth's DCCEEW has a *National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife (January 2020)* which lays out a Best Practice Lighting Design guide which is below;

Natural darkness has conservation value in the same way as clean water, air and soil and should be protected through good quality lighting design.

Simple management principles can be used to reduce light pollution, including:

- 1. Start with natural darkness and only add light for specific purposes.**
- 2. Use adaptive light controls to manage light timing, intensity and colour.**
- 3. Light only the object or area intended – keep lights close to the ground, directed and shielded to avoid light spill.**
- 4. Use the lowest intensity lighting appropriate for the task.**
- 5. Use non-reflective, dark-coloured surfaces.**
- 6. Use lights with reduced or filtered blue, violet and ultra-violet wavelengths.**

From Best Practice Lightning design, DCCEEW 2020

Department of Transport and Planning and VicRoads poor land stewards

The Department of Transport and Planning and its shopfront VicRoads are known as one of the largest destroyers of native vegetation across Victoria²⁴.

Through poor planning and lack of genuine consultation DTP and VicRoads have been the cause of many conflicts between road creation, duplication and planning leading to

²³ Avalon C.S. Owens, Précillia Cochard, Joanna Durrant, Bridgette Farnworth, Elizabeth K. Perkin, Brett Seymoure, Light pollution is a driver of insect declines, Biological Conservation, Volume 241, 2020, 108259, ISSN 0006-3207, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2019.108259>

²⁴ Per. Comms. Dr. Greg Moore, Melbourne University

significant impact on large old and hollow bearing trees, native vegetation and habitat across Victoria.

This poor planning can be reduced and mitigated through bringing in ecologists, arborists and communities into the planning processes earlier in the planning process and making consultation genuine with real outcomes for wildlife, ecosystems and communities.

Although billions of dollars churn through DTP and VicRoads every year, very little to any of that funding is used to mitigate or monitor the impact of the infrastructure on local wildlife and ecosystems despite the significant impact the building and operation of these developments have.

There is a need for DTP and VicRoads to recognise the large impact they have on native vegetation and habitat as well as increased mortality of native wildlife. So far any attempt by VicRoads and DTP have been tokenistic at best in reducing their impact on wildlife and ecosystems.



Western Highway near Buangor, 2015

Legislative and Policy Gaps

Despite the ecological significance of roadside vegetation and known wildlife hotspots, current planning frameworks lack enforceable biodiversity impact requirements. The Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, the Native Vegetation Clearing Guidelines and the Planning and Environment Act 1987 all offer limited mechanisms for proactive roadstrike prevention. Biodiversity overlays often do not apply to VicRoads-managed land. Legislative reform is needed to embed biodiversity impact thresholds, require wildlife-sensitive design, and mandate ecological assessment in all major road projects - not as an afterthought, but at concept design stage.

Impact of protected feral deer on road users

Feral deer are an immediate and growing threat to Victoria's National Parks and natural areas, agricultural production and increasingly road users.

It is estimated that 1 million deer cover Victoria, impacting private and public land.

Instances of road strike of feral deer across Victoria have increased as deer numbers have, many deer species in Victoria are as large as livestock. For instance, the Sambar Deer (*Rusa unicolor*) stand at 1.6 meters tall, as long as 2.4 meters and weigh over 300 kilograms²⁵.

According to economic analysis by the Invasive Species Council²⁶, feral deer will cost Victoria more than \$2 billion over the next 30 years. The report found the cost of not controlling the feral deer population in Victoria is estimated to be \$1.5 to \$2.2 billion over the next 30 years, based on just four sectors, one being public safety:

- Agriculture: \$351m to \$350m due to lost grazing and resources spent managing feral deer.
- Forestry: \$269m to \$365m from lost forestry production.
- Public safety: \$576m to \$825m from deer-related vehicle accidents.
- Social: \$308m to \$474m in social costs from reduced recreation use values.

This does not include the cost to the environment or public health should disease be spread from feral deer to livestock or water supplies.

The experience of most Victorians and other road users of feral deer is one of fear, anxiety and increased insurance premiums, with instances of peri-urban and regional people having to change their driving schedules to avoid feral deer.

²⁵ Sambar deer in Australia, Feral Scan.

https://www.feralscan.org.au/deerscan/pagecontent.aspx?page=deer_sambardeer

²⁶ An analysis of the economic, Social & environmental cost of feral deer in Victoria (2022) Invasive Species Council. Available at: <https://invasives.org.au/publications/an-analysis-of-the-economic-social-environmental-cost-of-feral-deer-in-victoria/> (Accessed: 26 May 2025).

Victoria is the only mainland Australian state that lists feral deer as a protected species under the States Wildlife Act to appease the shooting and hunting lobby at the expense of natural areas and agricultural production and increasing road users.

With such large animals freely roaming the state in high numbers for a small group of hobbyists is perplexing and completely unacceptable for ecological and human health and safety.

The Financial Cost of Collisions

The economic cost of wildlife and deer collisions extends well beyond biodiversity loss. The average insurance claim for a wildlife collision in Victoria ranges between \$2,500–\$5,000 per incident (RACV, 2023). Collisions with large-bodied species like Sambar Deer can result in write-offs, personal injury, and even death. A growing number of regional and peri-urban drivers are adjusting their travel schedules to avoid known deer zones—this is not sustainable or equitable. This inquiry must consider both the household and societal cost of inaction.²⁷

Wildlife Rescue Capacity

The current wildlife rescue system in Victoria relies on underfunded, decentralised volunteer networks. Many carers are older Victorians who face burnout, financial strain and inconsistent coordination from authorities. A centralised, state-funded wildlife rescue dispatch and triage system is urgently needed. This system should integrate real-time roadstrike reporting, support for regional wildlife hospitals, and public awareness campaigns. Road users must have a simple and widely promoted method to report and respond to injured wildlife.

Climate Change and Roadstrike Risk

Climate change is amplifying roadstrike risks across Victoria. Increased droughts and bushfires push animals to seek new feeding or water sources, often leading them to roadsides. Seasonal movement patterns are shifting, making it harder to predict wildlife behaviour based on historic norms. Without adaptive planning, climate-driven migration will further increase vehicle-animal collisions. Wildlife infrastructure must be planned not just for today's conditions but for a rapidly changing future.

²⁷ RACV (2023). “What to do if you hit an animal.” <https://www.racv.com.au/royalauto/on-the-road/driving/hit-animal-what-to-do.html>



Road killed Sambar Deer, Yarra State Forest. May 2025



Road killed Sambar Deer, Warburton Highway. February 2025