

MEDIA RELEASE

22 July 2021

Wildlife Victoria calls Fake news on Heritage Media Release

Wildlife Victoria, the State's wildlife emergency rescue service, has slammed today's media announcement from Heritage Golf and Country Club as fake news and a deliberate deflection from the spate of brutal kangaroo killings on the property over the last two months.

According to Wildlife Victoria CEO, Lisa Palma, the announcement entitled Heritage is Listening – Kangaroos Will Not Be Culled included a number of questionable statements:

1. *"Heritage Golf and Country Club has decided not to proceed with a planned Council approved cull of kangaroos on its two championship courses."*

Councils are not responsible for approving kangaroo culls. Kangaroo culls may only proceed with either:

- an Authority to Control Wildlife permit from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning issued only in very specific circumstances
- permission from the Game Management Authority, which allows for kangaroos to be killed as part of a harvesting program for commercial pet food processing.

Heritage Golf and Country Club's original permit came through the Game Management Authority, which authorised the Club to kill kangaroos on the property for the purpose of harvesting as pet food.

2. *"The Kangaroo population has tripled in 12 months due to a breeding surge during the drought and the advantages of easy access to a carpet of grass on golfing fairways."*

Ms Palma stated that a tripling of a kangaroo population in 12 months is simply biologically impossible and absolutely ludicrous.

"Female kangaroos commonly have one young annually, with the mortality rate in the wild for joeys typically at 70% in the first year of life" she said.

3. *"Increasingly, the kangaroo population is dangerous and there have been instances of the bigger male kangaroos becoming aggressive towards people."*

Ms Palma said she absolutely refuted the notion that the kangaroo population is dangerous with Wildlife Victoria receiving no reports of kangaroo aggression towards people at the site.

"Some of the larger male kangaroos are known by the locals to be peaceful creatures, who enjoy the natural habitat of the local landscape. Indeed, the big fellow known as Scar Face is beloved by many in the community," said Ms Palma.

"In direct contrast to Heritage's statement, Wildlife Victoria has received an inordinate number of calls from concerned members of the public, residents, golfers and staff who are terribly worried for the safety and wellbeing of the kangaroo population on site."

4. *"The task to solve this problem and oversee the management and protection of kangaroos lies with the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP). As a result, the kangaroos will be relocated back into the Warrandyte State Forrest and the property will be fenced."*

The Heritage Golf and Country Club abuts bushland including Mount Lofty at Wonga Park and the kangaroo population comprise a meta population of transient animals that are local to the area. The kangaroos do not belong to the Heritage Golf and Country Club.

Ms Palma said it is outrageous, unacceptable and illegal for the Heritage Golf and Country Club to relocate the kangaroos without the required authorisation from the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning.

Victoria Police hosted a meeting on 6 May between Wildlife Victoria's CEO Lisa Palma, Wildlife Victoria Lead Veterinarian Dr. Natasha Bassett, the previous General Manager of the Heritage Golf and Country Club, and the

Club's service provider who had been engaged to shoot the kangaroos on the site.

The parties agreed that the kangaroos at the Heritage Golf and Country Club would not be harmed whilst discussions continued.

Ms Palma said that since the meeting of 6 May, no further discussion had taken place between those parties.

"Instead, we have witnessed the result of stealthy cruel and violent attacks on the kangaroo population, night after night at the site. This has been ongoing for months now!"

To date, Wildlife Victoria has seen a significant number of cases of kangaroos that have been savaged by dogs, shot, dismembered and driven over by vehicles.

"Our volunteers have witnessed a dumping ground of kangaroo carcasses on the property. It's terribly sad and traumatising for our volunteers to have had to humanely euthanise tens of kangaroos after they have been maimed. We've also seen female kangaroos with pouch young that have been driven into dams where both the mother and joey have drowned," said Ms Palma.

"This recent statement from the Heritage Golf and Country Club that purports to recognise that golfers and kangaroos must be able to co-exist, comes as quite a shock to us given their lack of engagement with Wildlife Victoria post the meeting of 6 May.

"Despite this, Wildlife Victoria remains hopeful that Heritage Management will consult with us in order to achieve a positive outcome for the remaining kangaroos on the site."

"Perhaps, given Heritage's concern for the safety for club members, visiting golfers, residents and their families and young children, more work should be done on their part to prevent the vicious dog attacks that have been regularly occurring at the property. We have taken many calls and received letters from members of the public who are too afraid to walk on or near the grounds for fear of the dogs turning on the locals."

Ms Palma concluded that Wildlife Victoria is assisting the authorities with their ongoing investigations into the killings that have taken place at the Heritage Golf and Country Club in recent months.

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For further information and enquiries contact:

Wildlife Victoria media team on 0447 193 121 or by email at media@wildlifevictoria.org.au

About Wildlife Victoria

- Wildlife Victoria is a not for profit wildlife Emergency Response Service that has been operating for more than 30 years as an independent, not-for-profit organisation focussed on the welfare of Australia's unique wildlife.
- Annually, Wildlife Victoria's Emergency Response Service receives more than 88,000 requests for assistance and assists over 50,000 sick, injured or orphaned animals.
- Wildlife Victoria educates the community about wildlife, and helps the community manage wildlife incidents.
- Wildlife Victoria advocates for wildlife whenever their welfare is under threat or compromised.