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Put down your gun Chief Minister, there are other ways

President of Wildcare NSW, Professor Steve Garlick, has responded to the call by the ACT Chief Minister to kill kangaroos on Defence force lands and his threat of legal action if Defence do not agree. In the Chief Minister's press release he shows the same dismissive, denigrating and arrogant attitude to the environment, native wildlife in particular, and to voluntary community groups as he has done in other situations in recent years when such groups dared to suggest a more informed and visionary way forward for the ACT.

Professor Garlick said Wildcare had been invited by Defence to submit a non-harm approach to reducing the numbers of kangaroos at the Belconnen Naval Transmitting Station (BNTS). The invitation was provided to Wildcare because it had a strong reputation in working with all wildlife, including birds, reptiles and mammals, as well as a broad network of connections with scientists, including ecologists, wildlife veterinarians, and other relevant practitioners across Australia. A number of Wildcare members do have national and international recognition in their professions, but they are all unpaid and non government-funded volunteers with a passionate commitment to the welfare of all native animals, as well as to their environment.

Wildcare approached Mr Stanhope weeks ago to discuss non-harm options in a reasoned way. The Chief Minister declined this opportunity and has chosen instead to publicly denigrate a voluntary organisation that only sought a positive outcome for all the native animals and plants on contained Defence lands in the ACT, and potentially around Australia

Professor Garlick said; "like the Chief Minister we want to reduce the numbers of kangaroos at Belconnen. This was the core of the detailed three-phase proposal we put to Defence. The difference between us is that the Chief Minister wants to achieve this objective with a repeat of the inhumane shooting spree at Googong in 2003. In contrast, the Wildcare submission to Defence, supported by advice from wildlife veterinarians, ecologists and other scientists, suggests a cautious strategic approach based on an accurate assessment of the ecological circumstances of all the species at BNTS, with the possibility of kangaroo translocation to areas outside the ACT.

Professor Garlick said Defence had been completely responsible in its actions to date by consulting with a wide cross-section of interest groups. He added that Mr Stanhope's scientist advisors have had several months to put forward their peer-reviewed evidence to Defence and other interested organisations, but have not done so. "After waiting all this time, we can only presume that there is no reputable science to be scrutinised publicly that supports the Chief Minister's call to kill the kangaroos at the Belconnen site," concluded Professor Garlick.

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