

A photograph of a white plate containing a serving of kangaroo meat. The meat is sliced into several pieces, some showing a dark, cooked exterior and a lighter interior. It is garnished with fresh green arugula leaves and several wedges of bright red tomato. The plate is set on a wooden surface.

**“It smells disgusting”: the  
personal geographies of  
plating-up kangaroo**

Gordon Waitt  
Australian Centre for Cultural Environmental Research  
University of Wollongong  
New South Wales  
Australia

- What I wouldn't eat, for start, a bloody emu or kangaroo. No, I'd pretty well eat anything. You know, a lot of friends I've got just wouldn't eat kangaroo or emu just on principle. The bloody national anthem, national icon... what's her name, emblem. You know, disgusting [curling up nose]... Why would you eat them? I think it's wrong. Americans wouldn't saddle up to a bloody a big golden eagle would they? No, I wouldn't eat it if ... I'd prefer not to eat kangaroo meat. Well yeah, wouldn't eat that. I'm an Aussie and I don't think ... I wouldn't eat my national emblem.

(Australian born Pete is a home-owner, husband, grandparent, retired coal-miner, aged in his sixties and lives in an outer Wollongong suburb classified as a socio-economically advantaged )

# Australian Centre for Cultural Environmental Research

ARC Discovery Project (DP0986041):  
**Making less space for carbon: cultural research for  
climate change mitigation and adaptation**



**Chris Gibson**



**Lesley Head**



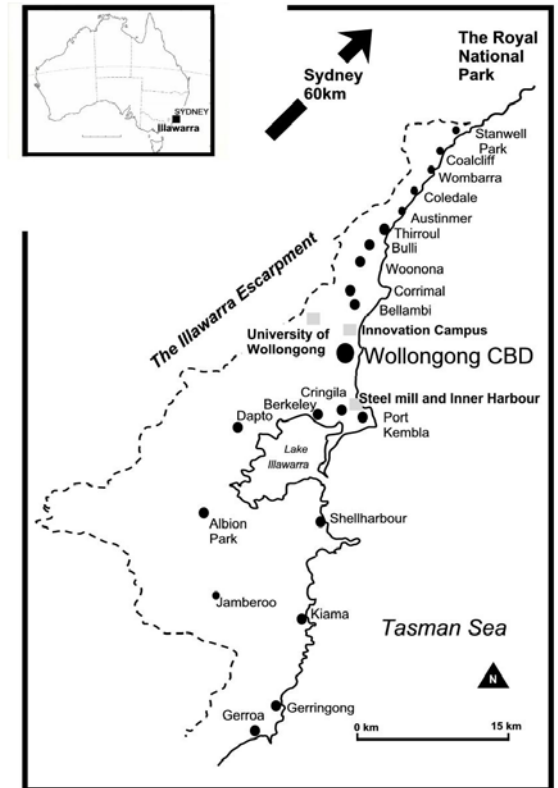
**Nick Gill**



**Carol Farbotko**

# Location

[Wollongong: the third largest city in New South Wales with approximately 202,000 residents]



2009 survey representative  
sample comprising 1465  
households

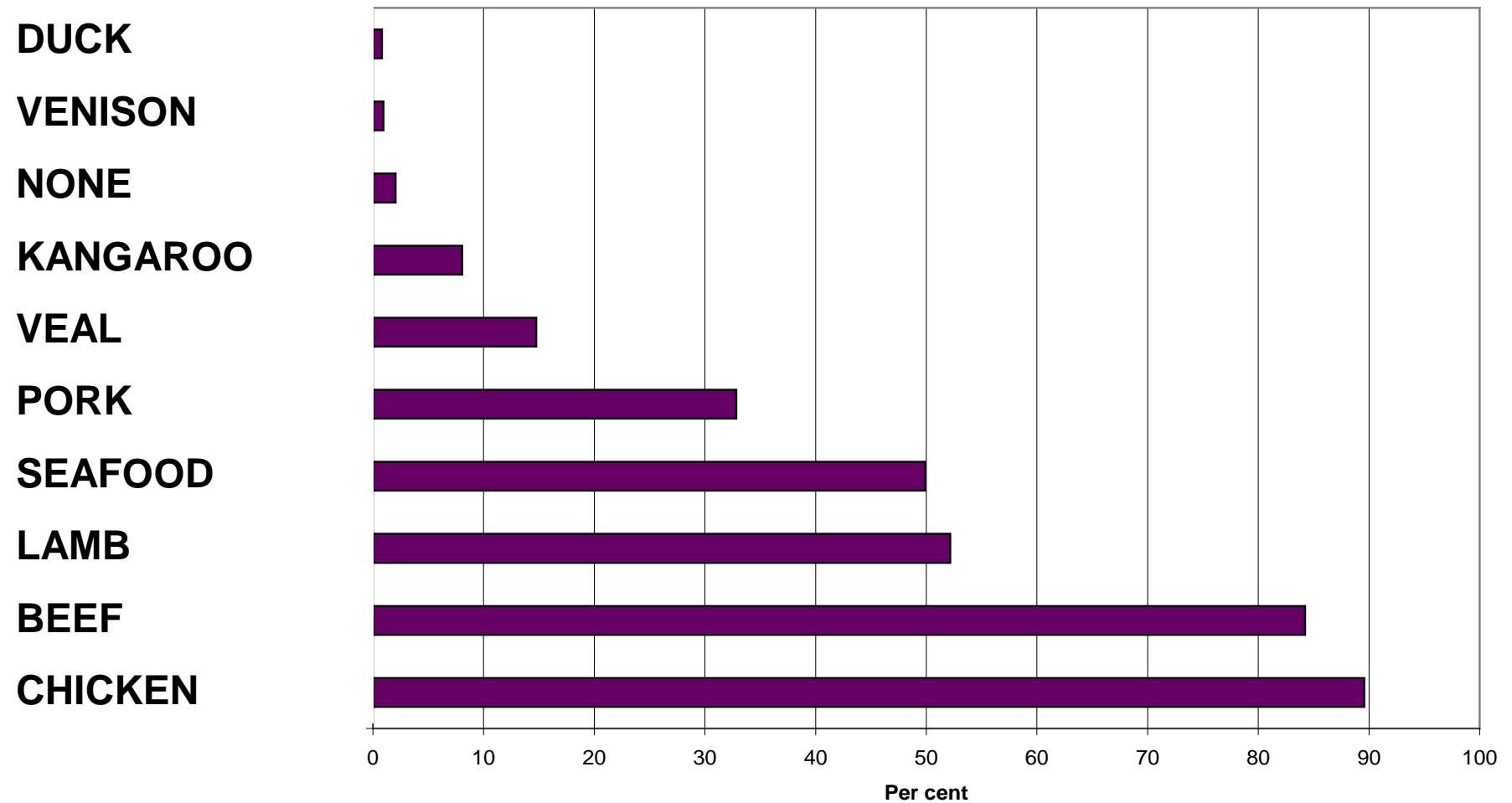
Details of sampling strategy and structure  
in: Waitt, G, Caputi, P, Gibson, C, Farbotko,  
C, Gill, N, Head, L and Stanes, E (2012)  
'Sustainable Household Capability: Which  
households are doing the work of  
environmental sustainability?', *Australian  
Geographer*, 43, 1, 51-74

# TOUGH TIMES? GREEN TIMES?

A survey of the issues important  
to households in the Illawarra



# Types of Meat Consumed in Average Week



# Presentation Question

A close-up photograph of a man's mouth, slightly open, with a forkful of dark, textured food (possibly chocolate or a dense cake) being brought to his lips. The man has a light beard and is wearing a blue shirt. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

- How might eating be helpful to teaching personal geographies – and key concepts like place, sustainability, and change?

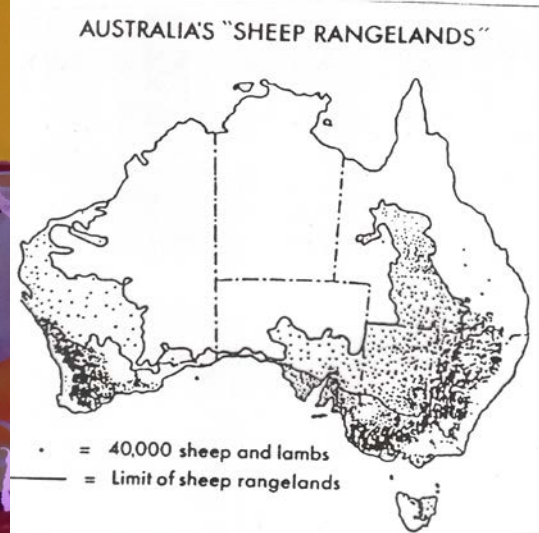
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# Sustainable food politics of kangaroo

SAVE 58¢



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3. Write letters to: The Prime Minister, and The Minister for Environment, (Dept of Fisheries, Canberra, ACT, 2600).
4. Contact your MP and ask for more brochures. Circulate these to your friends.

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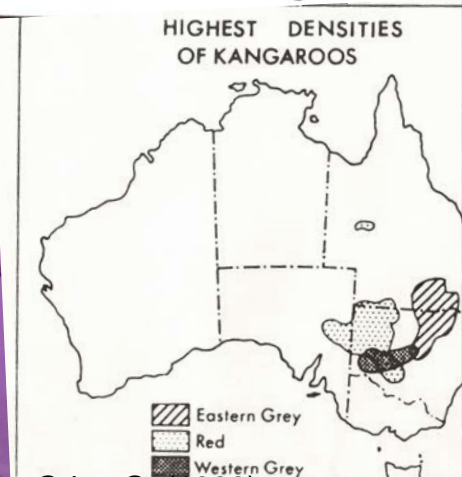
kangaroo products don't buy booklet

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A close-up photograph of a plate of sliced beef brisket. The meat is dark brown and glistening, arranged in a fan shape. It is surrounded by fresh green leafy vegetables and several slices of bright red tomatoes. The background is a plain white surface.

**Methods**

**Bring-a-plate**



# *Appetites for kangaroo as a restaurant food*

- Interviewer: So under what kind of circumstances could you imagine yourself eating kangaroo?
- James: Well the times that I have eaten it [kangaroo] have been at restaurants. ... um, it wouldn't be something that I would just cook for myself...so in that sense, it would be something specialist I guess....

(Australian born James, 36 years of age, a professional, divorced, single father, who grew up in Wollongong and enjoys cooking and lives in a suburb of socio-economic advantage.)



# *Appetites for kangaroo as tasting the 'real' Australia*

Interviewer: About trying new foods, have you ever tried kangaroo?

Alison: Yes. We went to Central Australia, and we thought we would try everything that was going. Crocodile was the other one. ... it [kangaroo] was on the menu at Alice Springs, and at Uluru we were at the sort of hotels that would put those things on for the tourists' interests. Like we were tourists too, and we wanted to experience the taste. We didn't order it the second night did we? [chuckles] Anyway...

Richard: ...No, we had something different the second night.

Alison: I wasn't fussed, kangaroo had more of a gamey flavour, would you say gamey?

Richard: Hmm.

Alison and Richard, a retired married couple aged in their seventies, who for over forty years had lived in a lower-socio economic suburb of Wollongong)



# *Appetites for kangaroo as differentiating 'home' and 'far away' places*

- Adam: It's a great looking piece [of meat] isn't it?
- Interviewer: Yes.
- Adam: I've eaten it [kangaroo] a couple of times and it tastes like a cross between lamb and beef. I was in South Australia travelling around, I'd been up in the Flinders Ranges and I came down, Brachina George in the old Subaru, the old 44, came out in the western sides and there's a little place called Parachilna, great little old country pub there and some cockie's wife was running it and her kitchen was just brilliant and I looked at the menu and thought: "Oh that's just mad". And, I ordered the kangaroo salad ... And, it was just like this is perfect and so exotic. I had it [kangaroo] once or twice back in Sydney when I was up there ... I couldn't imagine not having an adventurous palate, like it would be just so boring ... I am not really a real meat and three veg kind of guy. They [men he meets at the pub] are just really conservative in their taste ... A lot of people are just meat and three veg. I was talking to this guy yesterday at the pub and he was really conservative and he was just meat and three veg and I go: "Have you ever tried Lebanese food?" "Nah", Thai? "Nah."
- (Adam is a mature-aged student who grew-up in Wollongong and lives alone in the house he inherited from his mother)



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- Adam: As I have said I've not cooked it [kangaroo] myself, I have only ever eaten it out, but I certainly have no qualms with the flavour of it. I mean it really is a cross between lamb and beef isn't it? ...And, I must admit I pass by it at Woollies [Woolworths supermarket] all the time, because they sell it now.



# No appetite for kangaroo at home

Angela: I'm not fussed. It's [kangaroo] a very strong, gamey flavour to it. I know it's low in fat, no cholesterol, is really good for you, high in iron, all that jazz, it's farmed quite humanely, blah, blah, blah, but that's just me, I don't like the taste of it [kangaroo].

(Australian-born Angela is aged in her forties, an administrative assistant who grew-up in Wollongong, and lives in an affluent northern suburb of Wollongong with her husband and seven-year-old son. Finding cooking a burden, Angela cooks quick and convenient meals at home including spaghetti bolognaise sauce, pizza, stir fry beef and barbequed chicken.)

A close-up photograph of a white plate containing several pieces of cooked kangaroo meat, which is a dark reddish-brown color. The meat is garnished with fresh green leafy vegetables, possibly rocket or arugula. The background is slightly blurred, showing a green fabric surface.

# No appetite for kangaroo at home

- Interviewer: It's kangaroo meat.
- Donna: Oh you're kidding. Yuck, kangaroo. Aarrghhh! I'd rather eat no meat. I don't like the smell of it [kangaroo]. I don't like the look. I love lamb. I don't like the thought of eating Skippy [the bush kangaroo]. They sell it in the supermarket. But a lot of 'em [kangaroos]...they are getting rid of 'em like that [being shot], they are a pest.
- Bridget: Yes because they are a pest ...I thought with the meat, with the meat like that, with the worms and that, that's why you've gotta cook it slow.
- Donna: It's [kangaroo] yuck [spitting kangaroo meat from mouth]

(Australian born Donna, a 33-year-old mother of two, and Bridget, a 50-year-old grandmother, and live in a socio-economic advantage suburb)

# No appetite for kangaroo at home

Mary: I just can't stand the smell of it [kangaroo meat] [turning up nose, and pulling away from the plate of roasted kangaroo]. No thank you. I cannot stand the taste of it. I do remember we cooked it in spaghetti bolognese once and my son threw it up, and I was teeming [vomiting] over it. No thank-you. It just makes me sick, it just reminds me of changing my son's nappy... shit. We cook baked [roast] dinners yeah and we love that. Kangaroo no way!

(Australian-born Mary is in her late thirties, a single-mother, a public housing tenant, and described her background as working-class. She lives in Berkeley, a suburb of socio-economic disadvantage)



# No appetite for kangaroo at home

- Mary: Kangaroo no way. If the government said: 'Right, it's illegal to touch any animals with four legs, we have to eat the animal with two legs and a long tail.' I'd say: 'Fuck you mate'. I'm growing my own food, have a couple of cows, sheep, whatever ... in the backyard [laughter]. I just ... no! Would you eat it?
- Researcher: Yeah, I've eaten it a couple of times recently, and I quite like it actually.
- Mary: Yuck, yuck ... I just can't eat it.
- Mary's friend: I don't like the thought of eating kangaroo.

# Conclusion

- Place
- Sustainability
- Change



# Facts and Figures

- reducing beef consumption 20 per cent from 1990 levels would cut 15 megatonnes of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere by 2020 (Diesendorf 2007)
- 4.7 per cent [75 Australian households] eat kangaroo monthly or more frequently (Ampt and Owen 2008).
- 66% of kangaroo is eaten in restaurants, with 50% of consumers eating kangaroo only in restaurants (Purtell 1997)

the visceral:

“the realm of internally-felt sensations, moods and states of being, which are born from the sensory engagement with the material world”.

(Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2008: 462)