



**Federation of Hunting Clubs**  
Hunters representing hunters

**Submission  
inquiry on Invasive Species  
in Victoria  
2016**



# Federation of Hunting Clubs

## Hunters representing hunters

### Assessment of the biodiversity outcomes, community safety and limitations of the trial conducted by Parks Victoria on control of deer populations in a national park.

The Federation of Hunting Clubs firstly applauds a trial conducted by Parks Victoria utilising volunteers from Australia Deer Association and SSAA Victoria to control deer populations in Wilsons Promontory. This is but one example of successful programs utilising recreational hunters in high use or built up areas. Such programs have been conducted many times both in Victoria and interstate. For ease, our submission will reference and provide comment on the most recent trial in Wilsons Promontory.

#### ***Biodiversity outcomes:***

The trial was initiated after

*“Parks Victoria had become concerned by the perceived increase in park Hog Deer numbers. The rise in the population was thought to be having negative impacts on vegetation and browsing competition with native macropods, mainly Swamp Wallaby (*Wallabia bicolor*), Eastern Grey Kangaroo (*Macropus giganteus*) and Common Wombat (*Vombatus ursinus*).”<sup>1</sup>*

It should be noted that the rise in Hog deer numbers had been attributed to two recent bushfires which created ideal conditions for the migration of Hog deer into areas of fresh regeneration and was not a necessary indication of widespread species population increase.

*“These fires create two situations: the first was forced dispersal where deer moved to unburnt areas; the second was extensive regeneration of vegetation.”<sup>2</sup>*

As such it is the opinion of Federation that such a rise in a specific area would not be justification for any re-classification on a broader scale, to do so would be simplistic and would achieve no effect on their population in Victoria.

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.gma.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/317437/WP-Control-Program-Report-Final.pdf](http://www.gma.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/317437/WP-Control-Program-Report-Final.pdf) pg 4

<sup>2</sup> Ibid



# Federation of Hunting Clubs

## Hunters representing hunters

The trial targeted areas where deer were having a direct impact on floristic composition, and with sightings declining post operation being recorded at 71% at Tidal River site and 36% at Darby River airstrip site respectfully.<sup>3</sup> Such declines after one operation highlight the potential for significant improvement in the biodiversity of these areas. It further highlights that recreational hunters are an underutilised resource in Game and Pest Management.

### ***Community Safety:***

As Wilsons Promontory is an area that receives one of the highest public land visitation rates, the management of public access outside of operation participants was a key concern. This was suitably managed by restriction of public access and specific shooting zones. Therefore community safety was appropriately managed.

### ***Limitations:***

The result of removing 42 deer in a 3 day operation highlights that the mistruths and misinformation regarding the efficiency of ground shooting and effectiveness of recreational hunters by those philosophically opposed to recreational hunting and private firearm ownership are grossly unfounded.

The methodology implemented at Wilsons Promontory was indeed successful, however it is but one methodology in which recreational hunters can be utilised.

Wilsons Promontory is relatively small and receives high traffic so it was appropriate to close it to visitors to complete such an operation. This methodology is indeed suitable for such small parks and reserves.

Large Parks however do not have the same issues in terms of density and frequency of visitors, and the need for direct supervision by Parks personnel is not warranted, nor is it feasible or fiscally responsible with regards to the number of Parks Victoria employees that would be needed to run operations across the state in these larger parks.

The Federation would strongly reject any move to apply this methodology as a one size fits all approach to managing deer. Recreational hunters have hunting on public land without direct supervision and with an exceptional safety record, and it is the firm belief of the Federation that this should continue into the future.

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p9



# Federation of Hunting Clubs

## Hunters representing hunters

### **Consideration of the application of these types of programs for other invasive animal species in partnership with Crown land managers;**

As previously stated, the Federation firmly believes that there is not a one size fits all model for managing Game and Pest animals on any land, public or private.

Any consideration in terms of the application of such programs needs to take many factors into consideration including the type of animal species being targeted, its patterns of behaviour, breeding and homing patterns, and most suitable control method that matches those considerations.

The Federation strongly advocates that the use of recreational hunters always be considered as an option when looking at Game and Pest control programs. Despite misinformation by those opposed to hunting, that all game and pest control should be done by “professionals”, it has been proven through this trial and others that the utilisation of recreational hunters in such programs can be just as successful.

### **Assessment of the relative costs and benefits, financial or otherwise, of other forms of pest control in national parks.**

The Federation first wishes to clarify that the first term of reference refers to the management of Deer, whereas this last refers to Pest, Deer are listed as game species and as such managed through the GMA by managing hunting behaviour. It is our opinion that it should remain so. Recent reports and recommendations in neighbouring states calling for the reclassification of deer to pest should be discounted as these have been riddled with misinformation, they fail to differentiate between the six different species which have diverse habits, and misquoted research. The reports have largely been rejected by major approved hunting organisations and experts in the different species of deer nationwide.

In terms of recognised pests, the federation believes that they should be offered no protection in national parks and recreational hunters should be allowed greater access to assist in the control of such pests. Control methods should be humane as possible and we wish to draw attention that ground shooting is considered one of the most humane control methods available.

In terms of pest control methodologies in national parks, the Federation wishes to highlight that the current system in Victoria delivers significant financial benefits to the Victorian economy both through hunter expenditure and direct and indirect employment.

Postal Address: PO Box 376 Baulkham Hills, NSW 1755

Email: [fedofhuntingclubs@gmail.com](mailto:fedofhuntingclubs@gmail.com)

Ph: 0421710528



# Federation of Hunting Clubs

Hunters representing hunters

*“The total expenditure for hunting game animals was estimated to be \$282 million. When pest hunting by game licence holders is included the estimate is \$417 million... There were an estimated 1,115 jobs (full-time equivalent) generated directly by hunting-related expenditure with a further 1,268 jobs stemming from flow-on employment, giving a total employment impact of 2,382 jobs.”<sup>4</sup>*

It should be noted that access to public land for recreational hunters in Victoria is held in high regard by hunters from around Australia, with many including federation members travelling interstate because of said access. The Federation would advocate for such access to continue, and even expanded where possible due the above benefits to the Victorian economy, particularly regional and rural Victoria.

Public land hunting has the opportunity to provide a niche tourism opportunity and to provide revenue for Victoria to offset the cost of wildlife management. We believe a forward thinking government would recognise this and adopt a strategy to support and promote this.

The above benefits are in stark contrast to the current trial in NSW National Parks, in which the interim evaluation conducted by the Natural Resource Commission states.

*“to date around \$3.6 million has been spent by NPWS on the SPC trial, including:*

- *\$0.64 million (18 per cent) on program design and establishment costs*
- *\$0.32 million (9 per cent) on equipment*
- *\$0.25 million (7 per cent) has been spent on operational costs.*
- *Pre and post operations, NPWS Coordination staff, in-field monitoring and pre and post*

*in-field monitoring costs represent \$1.78 million (around 50 per cent) of total expenditure to date”<sup>5</sup>*

The report further states that current costs make it not sustainable.

*“The reductions in operational and monitoring costs have been significant over the first 18 months of the trial and should be commended. **However, fixed coordination staff costs continue to account for a significant proportion of trial expenditure at a level which would not be sustainable in a non-trial environment”<sup>6</sup>.***

The above further highlights Federations belief that such highly supervised methodologies although necessary and prudent for some areas of crown managed land are not suitable and/or fiscally responsible in others.

The most effective and cost effective option is to open public land to recreational hunting where there is no good reason not to do so and to provide targets and incentives to meet control needs.

---

<sup>4</sup> Estimating the economic impact of hunting in Victoria in 2013, DEPI, 2014, p8

<sup>5</sup> Natural Resource Commission, Supplementary Pest Control Interim Evaluation, February 2016

<sup>6</sup> Ibid



# Federation of Hunting Clubs

## Hunters representing hunters

### Summary:

- Recreational hunting on public land in Victoria has an exceptional safety record.
- The programs involving recreational hunters and Parks Victoria on public land have an exceptional safety record in high use and built up areas.
- These programs are not a one size fits all.
- The most effective and cost effective option is to open public land to recreational hunting where there is no good reason not to do so and to provide targets and incentives to meet control needs.

Postal Address: PO Box 376 Baulkham Hills, NSW 1755

Email: [fedofhuntingclubs@gmail.com](mailto:fedofhuntingclubs@gmail.com)

Ph: 0421710528