

Standing Committee on Public Administration



Inquiry into the potential environmental contribution of recreational hunting systems

- a) Acknowledges the use in other State of regulated, licenses recreational hunting systems and the potential environmental contribution made in controlling pest animals on public lands, together with the possible economic, cultural and recreational benefits to the community: and
- b) Directs that-
 - i. The Public Administration Committee inquire into the benefits or otherwise of a similar system being adopted in Western Australia and report back to the House by 4 December 2014.

Safety

Western Australia has the most tightly controlled gun ownership, with a rigorous application process before firearms are issued to individuals. The potential recreational shooters referred to, having been through this process would pose no risk on this issue. The potential recreational shooters belong to Clubs and Associations where safety is paramount.

Economic Benefits

The land in Western Australia is 93% owned by either the State or Federal Government. In a report to the Government 'CALM' now Parks and Wildlife, manages and was responsible for over 109 million hectares or 257 million acres in September 2005. I believe this figure has since increased.

In this report 'CALM' admitted it was impossible to maintain annually the firebreaks.

'CALM' views weed control as a partnership and works wherever possible with the community and especially neighbours to CALM managed land, to share the control burden and optimise the benefits from weed control.

Baiting for foxes for other than conservation reasons can have short term benefits. Western Shield program baits more than 3.7 million hectares of the conservation estate. That is only baiting 3.5% of the land in 'CALM' control.

Cats are currently not specifically targeted for broad scale control.

Rabbits; 'CALM' specifically targets rabbit 'hotspots'.....particular attention is given to those rabbit infestations that threaten significant conservation values. A coordinated approach with landowners is essential.

Pigs: 'CALM' is not currently able to operate a major control effort against feral pigs in all areas....

Goats:where practical, control activities will be conducted in partnership with neighbours.

Camels:... There are mainly some control measures taken, mainly commercial and opportunistic shooting.

Dogs: The funds that have been allocated to CALM for this work are the same as those previously allocated to the Department of Agriculture. These funds are limited, requiring rigorous priority setting within the control program.

The basic outline of the report is that 'CALM' now Parks and Wildlife cannot afford to maintain and upkeep its land assets, it is unable to fully control the vermin and pests that are breeding and doing damage to its lands assets and the native animals on its lands. It acknowledges the fact that it needs community help to control its problems with pests and weeds.

To allow recreational hunting would solve the economic impasse that has been outlined in this report.

It would also assist other land holders whose assets are damaged (economically) by the vermin and 'introduced pests' that are allowed to breed uncontrolled in 'CALM' lands.

Environmental Contribution

'CALM' – Research suggests that baiting to control foxes for conservation areas less than 2000 hectares is considered ineffective because most/all of the susceptible species (mid weight range animals 1 – 5 kilograms) have disappeared and smaller mammals and reptiles are able to persist in the presence of foxes.

Several cases have been reported where fox baits in CALM lands have been picked up by birds and dropped into other lands and thus allow domesticated animals to access the baits and die.

Camels have the greatest impact on UCL and 'CALM' managed areas where they graze ...causing damage to trees and regrowth. They also drain natural waters that would provide water to native animals.

'CALM' remains concerned over the significant impacts from goats on biodiversity values and ecological sustainability

'CALM' now Parks and Wildlife clearly state the damage done by vermin is of environmental concern, therefore removing the vermin with recreational hunting can only be a positive in its Contribution to the Environment on 'CALM's land assets.

The State's budget (economical) and the environmental biodiversity of the 'public' lands, would be clearly benefited - as stated by 'CALM' - in allowing recreational hunting on the public lands.

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