



Ms Lauren Mesiti
Committee Clerk
Standing Committee on Public Administration
Legislative Council
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

24th March 2014

Dear Ms Mesiti,

RE: Inquiry into Recreational Hunting Systems in Western Australia

The Federation of Western Australian Bushwalkers Inc has pleasure in making the following comments to the Standing Committee on Public Administration inquiry into Recreational Hunting Systems in Western Australia.

The Federation of Western Australian Bushwalkers Inc. was formed in 1992 and is the peak body representing the 11 incorporated bushwalking clubs in Western Australia and their 1100 members. It also indirectly represents the 65,000 (ERASS 2012) people in Western Australia who bushwalk.

The Federation is a member of Bushwalking Australia that represents Australia's 25,000 organised bushwalkers. Bushwalking Australia indirectly represents the 846,000 bushwalkers in Australia (ERASS 2010 rev 2012). Its over-riding purpose is to facilitate the healthy recreational pursuit of bushwalking. The Federation has an obvious interest in protecting the recreational values of all public bushland.

Bushwalkers are intensely aware of the impact and devastation caused by feral animal populations. We support feral animal management control programs that are carefully planned, coordinated and monitored to achieve the desired outcome. Significantly, there is no evidence that recreational hunting is effective at reducing the population or impact of feral animals over large areas for the long term.

In association with Bushwalking Australia, the Federation has developed a position statement which it believes ought to apply to shooting in all National Parks and other protected areas*.

* "A protected area is a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values." (*IUCN World Parks*)



Position Statement Shooting in National Parks and Other Protected Areas

1. Shooting in National Parks and other protected areas is inconsistent with the purposes for which they were established.
2. Shooting of feral animals by itself can only be justified when there is clear scientific evidence available as to its effectiveness.
3. Shooting of feral animals should only be done as part of a broader strategy which includes other forms of control such as baiting, trapping and habitat (eg warren) removal. Essentially, shooting should be a final “clean up” operation, designed to eliminate remnant populations.
4. Feral animal shooting must be under the direct control of the responsible authorities, which in the case of WA public land would be the Department of Parks & Wildlife.
5. Any shooting operation must be followed by routine scientifically rigorous monitoring of the area to assess its effectiveness and to ensure it remains free of those animals.
6. Shooting of feral animals under the direct control of the Department of Parks & Wildlife should only be conducted in organised and coordinated operations after the risk to public safety has been assessed by management (and where appropriate other relevant authorities and users) and controls have been put in place to minimise the likelihood of injury to participants and the public.

There is evidence that shooting of feral animals, done as part of a broader pest eradication strategy, which includes other forms of control such as baiting, trapping and habitat removal, is the most effective approach to feral animal management. For the best results, shooting should be a final “clean up” operation, designed to eliminate any remnant feral populations.

The Federation understands that ‘controlling pest animals’ is given as an important reason to allow hunting in protected areas (University of Queensland 2012), so it is significant to note that there is no planning, monitoring or assessment of effectiveness of recreational hunting. It is done on an ad-hoc basis. Interestingly, recreational shooters’ best interests are served by having a well-stocked shooting area, not by eradicating a species. (This conflict of interest has led some maverick shooters in Western Australia to deliberately release feral animals into bushwalking areas close to Perth.)



The Federation hears claims that the as a result of allowing recreational shooting in public lands there will be an increase in expenditure on guns, ammunition, and other related hunting paraphernalia. We bushwalkers do not have the resources to analyse or comment on the veracity any of these claims.

We do know however, that if recreational shooting is allowed in National Parks and protected areas in Western Australia there will be a disproportionately large number of bushwalkers and other outdoor recreators who will be fearful of accessing our traditional bush trails due to the possibility of being inadvertently killed or maimed by recreational hunting. Whether this fear is justified or not, there will be a stepwise reduction in the number of people who access the bush. (A similar scenario is in play at Western Australian beaches currently with the number of ocean goers seriously reduced as a result of the small number of shark attacks in recent times.) There is a deliberate Government policy to 'get people active and out and about'. There are acknowledged health and community benefits in doing so. Surely increased recreation shooting runs counter to this.

Over many years there has been deliberate policy at State and Federal government level to reduce the number of guns in the community, driven by the very small percentage of them that are diverted to unlawful and undesirable uses. If increased recreational shooting leads to increased number of guns then it must be asked if this is a desirable end.

Western Australia has an existing legal framework allowing recreational hunting on private property and recreational hunters currently participate in feral animal management control programs under the administration of the WA Department of Parks and Wildlife and other relevant statutory authorities.

The Federation of Western Australian Bushwalkers Inc supports the existing arrangement and would like to see it remain unchanged.

Yours Faithfully,

Ms Hecate Jay
President