

Ms Lauren Mesiti  
Committee Clerk, Public Administration Committee  
Legislative Council. Parliament House  
GPO Box A11,  
PERTH WA 6837



## Standing Committee on Public Administration – Inquiry into Recreational Hunting Systems

---

### **Submission being made by Zaine Beaton representing the Western Australian small business Beaton Firearms.**

Beaton Firearms surveyed approximately 3400 of its clients for their opinions on recreational hunting on public lands. Data garnered from this survey has been used in this submission.

#### **Overview of submission**

The introduction of hunting on public lands is a positive step forward for Western Australia. Areas of improvement will include;

1. Controlling of pest animals
2. Economic benefits to those negatively affected by feral animal populations
3. Recreational benefits for Western Australians

These points being covered under the Terms of Reference set down for the inquiry into the potential environmental contribution of recreational hunting systems.

In addition to these points, there are other positive effects from introducing hunting on public lands;

1. Positive economic benefits to those indirectly associated with primary production, general outdoor activities and hunting.
2. Reduction of illegal hunting on public and privately owned land.
3. Biodiversity – Non-hunted native animal population increase.
4. Increase in ethical destruction methods.

The introduction of hunting on public lands has a lot of positives for almost no negative aspects.

Those who stand to gain from the adoption of this program and would, assumingly, support the program, would be the following:

- Primary Producers – The profitability of their businesses will increase as a result of reduced populations of feral and pest animals.
- Shooters – By allowing the extension of their recreational activity to a larger geographical area.

- DPAW and Water Corporation of Western Australia funds are spent on the control of animals in particular areas, such as hunting in water catchment dams and aerial culling.
- Disease transmission –Pathogens and foot and mouth disease in pigs and tuberculosis in feral cattle in Western Australia can be spread to livestock, jeopardising viable stock of farmers.<sup>1</sup>

Feral and pest animals cost Western Australian farmers millions of dollars every year. An effective mitigation of this cost is allowing hunters to reduce the number of feral and pest animals plaguing farmers. If havens for these animals, where they are free to breed without being hunted, were opened up to hunters, the positive effects would include:

- More viable farm land would be able to be cropped by farmers, returning a profit for very little added expense.
- Less farm land bordering public lands would be destroyed or eaten by pest animals, meaning farmers would not lose the money they invested in cropping those areas.
- Less livestock would be killed or injured. This livestock will return more profits for Western Australia farmers
- Less livestock injured will also result in fewer hours spent by farmers being forced to kill injured livestock, dispose of animal carcasses and raising orphaned livestock.
- Lessened costs for replacing fencing on primary production land.
- Less funds spent by public departments managing the control of feral and pest animals in restricted hunting areas.

There would be large economic benefits to farmers and government departments such as the Department for Parks and Wildlife by the introduction of recreational hunting on public lands<sup>2</sup>.

### 3. Recreational Benefits for Western Australians

There are two ways to answer the question of recreational benefits – Benefits *to* recreation and benefits *of* recreation. This response related to the benefits of recreation, predominately being the health benefits.

Encouraging Western Australians to engage in recreational activities is important to fighting off the national obesity epidemic – more than two thirds of Australians are overweight or obese.

Many people do *not* want to engage in a given sport for many reasons;

- They are indifferent to competition, especially when they lack the skills of other competitors.
- They lack the fitness of other competitors.
- The sport is difficult or expensive to get into or they get little results for their efforts and investment.
- They are too old or too young to engage in more demanding, high impact sports.
- They have a physical ailment restricting their involvement in some sports
- They are time poor and cannot commit to the sport at times they may be required to.

However, shooting and hunting is a sport without such restrictions – there is a very large proportion of the population that shooting would appeal to as a sport;

- Shooting is a sport that both men and women can engage in.
- Shooting is a low impact sport
- The sport of shooting does not have time restrictions.
- It can be done solitarily, in groups, with family or with children at your own convenience.
- Hiking or trekking can be done at your own pace or fitness level
- Skills can be learnt in a non-competitive environment.
- The expense of engaging in shooting is minimal.
- The shooter will still get immediate results from a hunt.
- Rewards for investment and training is in the form of more successful hunts

By encouraging the sport of shooting more Western Australian will engage in this recreational activity. Obesity rates will decrease and the medial costs will diminish significantly. Medical benefits include:

- Reduced rates of diabetes
- Reduced rates of depression
- Reduced rates of high cholesterol
- Reduced rates of high blood pressure
- Increased respiratory function
- Higher life expectancy

Getting more people involved in shooting will result in the medial benefits listed above. An easy way to encourage people to take up the recreational activity of shooting is by removing restrictions and barriers preventing them – opening up public lands to hunting will result in many more people engaging in hunting as a recreational past time.

This concludes my comments on the points mentioned in the terms of reference; however, I believe there are many other advantages to the removal of restrictions on recreational shooters hunting on public land.

## **1. Positive economic benefits to those indirectly associated.**

Groups indirectly associated with the destruction of feral and pest animals and would benefit economically from the reduction of restrictions of shooting on public land are:

- Firearm Dealerships, through increased sales
- 'Outdoor' and camping companies, through increased sales
- Local rural communities, through increased revenue for rural companies who products and services that hunters use, such as:
  - Accommodation
  - Food and beverages
  - Fuel



- Decimation of feral animal populations<sup>4</sup>
- The control of native pest animal populations
- A very discriminate control method, as opposed to baiting that can unintentionally kill native wild animals, non-native wild animals and pets.<sup>5</sup>

#### 4. The use of ethical destruction methods

The shooting of feral and pest animals is a far more humane and effective control method to using poisons. The use of strychnine poison is no longer use in baits in Western Australia to its potency, indiscriminate application and environmental persistence. Though 1080 is a more discriminate poison, it is a very inhumane method of killing non-native animals; the animals suffering greatly before dying sometime after initial ingestion. Shooting is instant, results in relatively few non-targeted animal deaths and no deaths further down the food chain.

### Application

The application of hunting systems in Western Australia is quite simple. There exist several models, currently in use in other states of Australia, which could be adopted and utilised effectively. They have had any bugs identified removed already.

Suggested requirements for the application of this program would include:

- Applicants would be required to provide a Police background check.
- Applicants would need to sit a safety and training course. Areas this course will need to cover would include<sup>7</sup>:
  - Adhering to the Firearms Act and Regulations
  - Safety requirements under legislation for use of firearms
  - Safe storage and transport of firearms
  - Internal, external and terminal ballistics of ammunition
  - Bullet trajectory and templating (danger zones and fallout areas)
  - Animal Welfare Act – animal specific humane destruction guidelines
  - Procedures for hunting on public land
  - Navigation and basic bushcraft skills
  - First aid
- Applicants would need to pay a fee for a hunting permit, allowing them to book areas of public land for hunting.
- Successful applicants would need to book areas of public land for certain periods, during which they were permitted to hunt certain animals.
- Successful applicants would be required to carry a GPS that tracks their location during the period of the hunt.<sup>6</sup>

- Allowing hunters an avenue to hunt legally, or extend their current capacity to enjoy their chosen sport, will reduce the occurrence of illegal hunting. With an increased legitimate presence on public land, illegal hunters found on public land will be apprehended by the relevant authorities at a much higher rate than currently possible.<sup>11</sup>
- The introduction of this scheme will increase the number of firearms in the public's hands, increasing the possibility of firearms being stolen and used in crimes.
  - This argument is irrelevant – criminals, not guns, are responsible for stolen firearms.
- Hunters will spread the disease Die-back.
  - As vehicles should not be allowed to be used for hunting on public lands, hunters need only worry about their clothing spreading Die-back. Easily preventable by the use of wash-down bays and correct training.

The implementation of a program allowing the hunting of feral and pest animals on public land has many environmental, economic and recreational (health) benefits and, given the correct checks and training, will be able to be implemented cheaply, easily and managed on a user-pays system.

To re-iterate the original point made, Beaton Firearms supports the introduction of hunting on public lands.<sup>12</sup>

For any additional information in regards to any of the information provided in this submission, please contact Zaine Beaton at Beaton Firearms on the below contact details.

Kind Regards

Zaine Beaton

Manager



U 3/8 Sampson street

Phone : (08) 9452 1411

Maddington WA 6109

Fax: (08) 9452 1433

Email: [info@beatonfirearms.com](mailto:info@beatonfirearms.com)

[www.beatonfirearms.com.au](http://www.beatonfirearms.com.au)

## References

1. <http://europepmc.org/abstract/MED/18818030>