

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

INQUIRY INTO THE POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONTRIBUTION OF RECREATIONAL HUNTING SYSTEMS

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
WEDNESDAY, 13 AUGUST 2014**

SESSION FOUR

Members

Hon Liz Behjat (Chairman)
Hon Darren West (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Nigel Hallett
Hon Jacqui Boydell
Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson
Hon Rick Mazza (Co-opted member)

Hearing commenced at 10.26 am**Mr ZAINE WILLIAM BEATON****Manager, Beaton Firearms, sworn and examined:**

The CHAIRMAN: Mr Beaton, you have been sitting down the back and you know who we are. Would you like to take an oath or affirmation?

[Witness took the oath.]

The CHAIRMAN: You will have signed a document entitled “Information for Witnesses”. Have you read and understood that document?

Mr Beaton: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: The proceedings are being recorded by Hansard, and a transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. To assist the committee and Hansard, if you could please quote the full title of any document you refer to during the course of this hearing for the record. Please be aware of the microphone in front of you, and ensure that you do not cover it with papers or make noise near it. I remind you that your transcript will become a matter for the public record. If for some reason you wish to make a confidential statement during today’s proceedings, you should request that the evidence be taken in closed session. If the committee grants your request, any public and media in attendance will be excluded from the hearing. Please note that until such time as the transcript of your public evidence is finalised, it should not be made public. I advise you that publication or disclosure of the uncorrected transcript of evidence may constitute a contempt of Parliament and may mean that the material published or disclosed is not subject to parliamentary privilege.

Mr Beaton, you have given a written submission to the committee in relation to your thoughts with regard to an extension of recreational hunting in Western Australia; it is quite a detailed submission, which is really good. You have heard the evidence today from the shooting associations and the various ones represented here, and I would imagine that you would largely have agreed with a number of the things that were put forward by the sporting associations. But perhaps you could speak to us, as somebody directly involved in the industry, as to what perhaps the economic benefits might be if there was to be an extension of the system in Western Australia?

[10.30 am]

Mr Beaton: As to the economic benefits as far as to the industry itself, if you are meaning as far as the companies and whatnot involved, well then of course opening up recreational hunting to be used in public lands will of course open up a lot more avenues for us. As you can understand, shooting in Western Australia, as the gentleman from the deer association said, is very much primarily focused on feral animal control on broadacre farming, so it is all done from a vehicle and it is done with high-powered, large, heavy firearms and that sort of stuff. The recreational hunting that they are proposing to be done on public lands is on foot, so you need to be able to carry your firearm. It is a very different style of shooting, as you can imagine. So for all the existing shooters who want to partake in it—as the survey that I did said, a lot of people wanted to partake in hunting on public lands—it is a very different style of shooting and they would have to purchase very different equipment. All that, obviously, would have an economic benefit to my industry. Also, because it is a very different style of shooting, there would be, of course, economic benefits to the local shires and that sort of stuff such as the purchasing of fuel, accommodation and those sorts of things.

The CHAIRMAN: What about the level of training that people who are involved in hunting should have? What are your thoughts in that regard?

Mr Beaton: The level of training at the moment is very substandard. The level of training should, at the minimum, encompass some sort of practical component, where someone actually has physical contact with a firearm prior to getting a firearms licence; at the moment there is none.

The CHAIRMAN: A bit like for a driver's licence we have to show we can drive a car, we should also have to prove that we can shoot a gun?

Mr Beaton: Well, yes. There should be, at the very least, a familiarisation with a firearm and knowing the components of a firearm, when a firearm is clearly safe, when it is loaded, when it is ready to fire and all those sorts of things; at the moment there are no requirements.

Hon NIGEL HALLETT: Who would you see as having the responsibility for that; the police or the dealer?

Mr Beaton: Are you talking currently or are you talking if something is introduced?

Hon NIGEL HALLETT: Yes, let us take it that you have to have a licence or provide proof of competency of using a firearm; would you, as the dealer, see that become your responsibility, or should people have to go to the police to demonstrate that they are competent with a firearm?

Mr Beaton: I definitely think it should be a legislative requirement to sit some sort of training course. Whether that training course is organised and sat by a government department or whether it is organised commercially through a company like myself that does provide training at the moment for corporate clients, I do not know. But, regardless, there should be some requirement there in legislation to sit a correct test. Now that we mention it, there is a legislative requirement to sit a training course as per the regulations, and then no regulation was ever made.

Hon NIGEL HALLETT: Do not give us more regulation!

Mr Beaton: It is already there; that is what I am saying. The firearms regulations could account for that.

Hon RICK MAZZA: How long have you been in the firearms industry?

Mr Beaton: I have been in the firearms industry for 10 years.

Hon RICK MAZZA: For every firearm that you sell through your dealership, what value of accessory would also be purchased with that firearm?

Mr Beaton: I would put the value at, in total, between 150 and 200 per cent of the value of the firearm. So if the firearm value was \$1 000, the accessories purchased would be between \$1 500 and \$2 000 at an average.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Would you see in your business that if a recreational hunting system was established that there would be value-adding other merchandise that you could sell through that store?

Mr Beaton: Almost certainly. Going back to what I originally said, because it is a very different style of shooting there are very different requirements on that sort of style of shooting. So we are talking about getting into your high-vis clothing, you are talking about backpacks and accessories that help you in that sort of style of shooting. At the moment there is not as much in the current style of shooting because it is all done from a vehicle and that sort of stuff, and there is very much less accessories and stuff sold to current shooters if you like, yes. So there would be a very big value-add to —

Hon RICK MAZZA: To other items you could retail through your store?

Mr Beaton: Correct.

Hon RICK MAZZA: That is all I have, Madam Chair.

The CHAIRMAN: They are all the questions we have for you today. As I said, your submission was quite fulsome as well, but you certainly have given some added benefit to our hearings today. Thank you for taking the time.

Mr Beaton: I appreciate the opportunity.

Hearing concluded at 10.34 am
