



## CLARENCE ENVIRONMENT CENTRE

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Dear Ms Parker

### Assessment of the proposed amendment to the Game and Feral Animal Control Bill.

The Clarence Environment Centre has maintained a shop-front in Grafton for over 22 years, and has a proud record of environmental advocacy. Over the past half decade or more we have written numerous submissions in support of national parks and the preservation of natural areas. As a result, we are keen to comment on this latest madness.

We are fully aware of the intent of the proposed amendment to the Game and Feral Animal Control Bill. It is to allow recreational hunters to pursue their blood sport anywhere they like, and the Amendment document does nothing to dispel or contradict that view. At the outset we are told the intent of the amendment is:

*“(a) to enable the Minister responsible for national park estate land (which includes national parks and certain other land reserved under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974) to make that land available for the hunting of game animals by persons who hold a game hunting licence,”*

**Note:** There is no mention of the promised strict conditions that would apply to hunting in national parks, just that the pastime can be undertaken by the thousands of “*persons who hold a game hunting licence*”. And what are the game species referred to? Note the amendment is to the **Game and Feral Animal Control Bill**, suggesting that native animals may well be added at a later date.

*“(b) to specify certain national park estate land that cannot be made available for the hunting of game animals”*

We are already told in 'a' above that the Minister will be able to nominate land available for hunting. Clearly, World Heritage areas are exempted, however the remainder is available at Minister Parker's whim. So at this point it is worth mentioning some comments recorded in Hansard from August 2 last year, (Page: 3409).

*“Mr RYAN PARK: My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment. Given that Fred Nile successfully went over the head of the Minister for Education to negotiate a reconsideration of ethics classes, what assurances can the Minister give that hunting in national parks will not be reconsidered in return for the support of the Shooters and Fishers Party for her Government's legislative agenda?”*

*Ms ROBYN PARKER: How predictable. The policy of the New South Wales Government is clear: hunting in national parks is not permitted. I say that very slowly for the slow learner on the Opposition backbench. Parks receive over 35 million visits per year and we provide among other things facilities for visitors to our State, and I advise the member opposite that shooting is not compatible with visitations to our national parks. The member has wasted yet another question. For the benefit of those opposite I repeat that the policy of the New South Wales Government is clear: Hunting in national parks is not and will not be permitted.”*

While that sounds like a solid commitment, we wonder what that will lead to when Minister Parker has the power to determine what areas of the National Parks Estate she will close to hunting!

*“(c) to add several species of non-indigenous birds to the list of game animals that may be hunted under the authority of a game hunting licence”.*

We assume this means that people will have to pay the Game Council to hunt a range of introduced Quails, Pheasants, Guinea Fowl and other ferals, which can now have bag limits applied, similar to those limits applying to deer, to ensure they are never eliminated and the environment is stuck with them for as long as the citizens of NSW are prepared to put up with having to fund the Game Council.

*“(d) to enable the list of game animals to be amended by Ministerial order but to specifically exclude native animals from being added by such an order”.*

This is one positive move, but with backflips such as Ms Parker's *“hunting in national parks will not be permitted”*, anything can happen. We certainly know that the previous Shooters Bill, unsuccessfully presented in 2010, included a whole range of native birds and animals, and we know the Shooters will reintroduce that concept the next time Mr O'Farrell asks them for a favour!

*“(e) to make it an offence to interfere with persons lawfully hunting game animals on public hunting land”.*

This clause acknowledges the need to protect the small minority of NSW's citizens who shoot animals for pleasure, from some of the huge majority of citizens opposed to this blood sport, and who might feel moved to protect the unarmed animals that are being killed and maimed.

*“(f) to make a number of other amendments of an administrative, minor or consequential nature”.*

This final objective says it all. Who knows where these obnoxious amendments will end. Presumably not until the O'Farrell Government has a majority in the Upper House or is voted out of office.

Then, almost as an afterthought, we are told that: *“The Bill also amends certain other legislation.”*

The next three objectives are all to favour the Game Council, an organisation that was described in 2010 by its former CEO, David Dixon as "a deeply flawed, quasi-public gift to the Shooters Party, compromised by hunting factions, jobs for hunters, dominant personalities and profound and unsolvable conflicts of interests".

It is worth noting that the Game Council runs at a net loss of about \$2.5 million annually, a direct cost to NSW taxpayers, and that both the current Shooters Party Upper House members, Borsak and Brown, were former senior executives of the Game Council. So the objectives of the new amendments are hardly surprising, and are there:

*“(a) to enable a public or local authority to give permission to shoot on land owned or managed by the authority whether or not it is rural land”.*

Clearly the Shooters Party feels it has the opportunity to cajole Councils, and other land managers, into allowing hunters into every hectare of public land in the State, and is there a suggestion that they might even be allowed to shoot on land that is not 'rural' – urban areas perhaps?

*“(b) to require the Game Council to be consulted before any pest control order is made declaring a game animal to be a pest, and*

*(c) to make a number of consequential and other minor or miscellaneous amendments”.*

The cheek of these demands is breathtaking. We have an independent experts and a Scientific Committee working through the evidence to determine when an introduced species is declared a pest or Key Threatening Process, and yet the Game Council wants to be able to have its two bob's worth in an attempt to prevent the potential loss of a hunting resource, despite having no idea about the environmental damage being caused by these pests.

The danger to human life is another major concern. In New Zealand, where hunting is allowed, three people have lost their lives as a result, including the 2010 incident where a woman brushing her teeth in a popular bush camping ground was mistaken by a hunter for a deer or possum and shot dead.

Between 1 July 2000 and 1st August 2010, 25 people were killed in Australia through recreational hunting incidents, 11 accidentally shot themselves, 5 were shot by their companions, 8 were killed in vehicle accidents, and one stabbed himself. There must have been many more serious injuries.

The description of two of the Victorian incidents are particularly worrying:

- The deceased had been deer hunting with friends when one of the party noticed rustling in the trees. Not knowing where the deceased was, one of the party yelled out multiple times and when there was no response, fired their high powered lever action rifle once then a short time later, a second time. The shooter then went and inspected what had been shot at and found the deceased shot in the back of the head. The deceased was wearing camouflage clothing.
- Deceased and friends were fox shooting in a paddock. It appears that members of the group were walking along a gully trying to scare the foxes out of the bracken when one of the group saw a fox. The shooter took aim at the fox, which was between the shooter and the gully and fired. Part of the spread of shotgun pellets hit the fox, but the rest of the spread went through the bracken and struck the deceased.

If there is anything to be learned from these incidents, it is that the hunters have no idea what they are doing, and in the first case, do not care what they are shooting at; a threatened native animal or a feral pest, it just doesn't matter to them.

Therefore, we urge you to vote against these amendments

John Edwards  
Honorary Secretary