

I write as a landholder and rate payer in the Bombala district. As well, I am a recreational hunter and volunteer shooter who holds a NSW R-licence and a Victorian Game Licence.

Firstly I note that there are no references in the reports to substantiate the "facts" being put forward. That is an unfortunate omission, which should have been addressed. Where is the science and the evidence?

Secondly, I also note that while some introduced species rate a mention in these reports, native species such as kangaroos and wallabies are carefully omitted, as well as other "lesser" species like the European Wasp (which feeds on carrion meat). The Commission has only therefore considered a subset of species susceptible to have negative impacts on our environment. Kangaroos also graze the native vegetation and can have a negative impact on our environment when their numbers exceed the land carrying capacity. This is a serious omission which must be addressed.

The feral horses report advocates caution and respect of (I paraphrase) "community concerns" and the "heritage value" of these animals. Yet astonishingly, the same is not extended to wild deer. Yet, our wild deer populations originated from legal releases in the 19th and 20th century for the purpose of establishing sustainable game resources. They therefore clearly also have a heritage value, and many people consider them with the same respect extended to horses. The report fails to recognise this.

The quoted growth rates of the wild horse and wild deer populations are 6%-17% per annum and 30% in 5 years respectively. Taking the average for horses to be 11.5% yields a 72% increase in 5 years ! When compared to the 30% for wild deer, it is evident that wild horses populations require more containment measures than wild deer. Yet the reports recommend the de-listing of deer as a game species and "caution" for horses. This is contrary to logic and should be rectified.

The reports rightly mention the contributions of hunters and shooters. It is gratifying to see a positive reference to freely given efforts by law abiding firearm owners, What is disappointing is that much more emphasis should have been given in the recommendations to extend those contributions from hunters and shooters (often the one and same person). These extended contributions should include more State Forests and also -- critically -- National Parks. This is a model that has worked very well for many decades in Victoria. The reports and recommendations should have taken good notice of this, yet they do not. That must be corrected.

The economic contribution that hunters and shooters bring to rural and remote communities is also completely disregarded. These have been documented in a number of reports, which should be familiar to members of the Commission. I am happy to provide further references, should that not be the case.

While in some instances being supportive of reducing "bureaucracy and red tape" one of the main recommendations of the reports is to appoint regional pest control officers (again my paraphrasing), which clearly amounts to more bureaucracy and red tape! The recommendations also state that a levy would be extended to landholders like myself. I strongly oppose this recommendation. I already pay sufficient levies for no tangible benefit. I also resent the prospect of being made accountable, and possibly fined by

shifting the onus entirely on me, the land owner, instead of offering positive alternatives, possibly including hunters and shooters.

The most critical recommendations which concern me as a landholder are those which aim to:

1. de-classify wild deer from a game status to a "pest" status;
2. remove the need to hold a G-licence to shoot deer; and
3. remove restrictions on spotlighting at night.

(1) Poaching, illegal hunting and illegal shooting are serious existing problems which affect many landholders such as myself and neighbouring properties, close and far. Law enforcement is sporadic and not widespread. Fines and convictions seem to penalise legitimate licence holders more so than illegal individuals who have nothing to lose except nominal sums of money.

I have drawn parallels between wild horses and deer above. But a fundamental difference is that deer present (to some people) a "trophy value", which greatly attracts poachers and illegal hunters. Classifying deer as a pest will simply increase these illegal activities -- both on public land and on private land. This should not happen.

(2) As a land owner I am appalled that the reports would recommend the removal of formal training and qualification for hunters and shooters. I welcome people who have demonstrated commitment to ethics, laws and the respect of land values. Others are not welcome. I therefore strongly oppose this recommendation.

(3) Spotlighting at night may be an expedient means to quickly reduce animal populations in some problem areas. To broadly legitimise (even legalise) the activity, as explained above, simply encourages more illegal activities, which is truly frightening to any landholder like myself. Especially when these activities occur at night. Again, the best practice example of Victoria should have been endorsed, instead of being ignored.

Regards,
Alain Remont