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Review of Pest Animal Management

Submission by Stop Arms Fairs in Eurobodalla Inc. (SAFE)

Thank you for the opportunity of providing a submission on this important review. Our organisation, SAFE, has been established in the Far South Coast town of Narooma with the aim of seeking to abolish the annual arms fair (“Huntfest”) held here each year, in order to reduce the availability of firearms, and to stop the promotion of hunting as recreation.

Recommendations not supported

Because we regard hunting of animals for recreation as a form of cruelty, we are opposed to:

- Recommendation 22(i) - *Engage recreational hunters in the preparation of regional pest management plans and include recreational hunting resources in management programs*
- Recommendation 23(i) – *Remove the requirement for hunters to be licensed to target non-indigenous species on private land*
- Recommendation 23(ii) – *Promote the use of approved hunting organisation membership and programs to link hunters with landholders.*

Recreational hunting promotes the use of guns and the proliferation guns in our society. Former Prime Minister John Howard, recently recalling the events around the Port Arthur massacre, said our gun laws were too lax and needed tightening, and warned against complacency on this issue. The active engagement of amateur hunters in developing pest animal management programs, and in their implementation, is an excellent example of complacency around the use and spread of firearms.

Here in Narooma, we are the unwilling hosts of the annual “Huntfest” event, which transformed itself in three short years from a photographic competition to a full-blown arms fair, showing how easily a gun culture can develop.

We regard the increased involvement of amateur hunters in programs of pest animal management as a backward step, and one which moves our society ever more dangerously closer to the gun-obsessed United States, which daily pays a massive price in the loss of life.



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Over and above the issue of gun proliferation is our serious objection to the use of amateur hunters for pest animal management. Their frequent lack of skill leads inevitably to injury rather killing, with night hunting even more likely to have this result. The RSPCA is opposed to the hunting of any animal for sport. A 2013 paper released by the organization said:

The RSPCA believes recreational hunting, or the act of stalking or pursuing an animal and then killing it for sport, cannot be justified. Hunting has the potential to result in significant animal suffering: animals are sometimes chased to the point of exhaustion and then killed with methods that do not cause a quick and painless death. Although some hunters may have the skills, knowledge and motivation to minimise the suffering of their prey, many do not and it is inevitable that some animals will endure pain and distress.

We note the comment in your draft report that:

“Approved hunting organisations are able to train novice hunter and accurately assess the competency of applicants. They are also best placed to monitor the behaviour of hunters and identify and exclude those that present unacceptable risks.”

In regard to this claim, we would remind you of the experience of the Game Council of NSW, set up at the urging of the Shooters and Fishers Party and disbanded some years later after a scathing review by retired public servant, Steve Dunn, which found that:

"more than a decade after it was established the Game Council has no overarching governance framework; lacks a strategic planning framework; lacks some of the skills, tools and resources to ensure effective compliance with its regulatory framework; has no internal regulatory compliance program, has no approved enterprise-wide risk management framework and has an inadequate policy framework".

These are the same hunters on whom you are proposing to rely to police the actions of their colleagues in the expanded regime you have recommended. We would urge you to think carefully before proceeding down a similar path.



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Recommendations Supported

We strongly support the measures proposed in the following recommendations:

- 17 vi. *The NSW Government should:*
- a. the compulsory desexing of all cats by the age of four months if not exempted*
 - b. requiring all owners of entire cats older than four months to be registered as a breeder.*
- vii. *partner with the RSPCA and other relevant organisations to deliver a targeted education campaign raising the awareness of the risks posed by stray and feral cats and promoting responsible pet ownership.*

In respect of recommendation 17 vii, we would add that government support for animal welfare organisations such as the RSPCA should be increased, particularly in light of any additional requirements placed on it, as is the case here.

Other comments

We understand the significant problem posed by feral and pest animals in Australia. We support measures, such as those in recommendation 17, which are likely to reduce the problem in the future. We do not believe, however, that amateur hunting should be part of the solution to this issue, and on that basis we do not support the increased role for recreational hunting as proposed in recommendations 22 and 23. Not only does recreational hunting promote gun use and ownership, but it is an activity unworthy of a 21st century first-world country in terms of the animal cruelty involved.

We hope that you will give due consideration to the points we have made. SAFE would like to be kept up to date with developments regarding the review, and we are happy for our submission to be made public.

Heather Irwin
President

21 May 2016