

Many people dealing with the feral pig problem believe shooting is the best option but the cost factor means it's only done on an irregular basis.

LLS only gets grants intermittently and landholders can't afford the constant helicopter hire, as well as the shooting teams.

One idea would be to form a large conglomerate of landholders across the central west to actually purchase a chopper fit for task.

This sort of project may even attract grant funding as a pilot template project for other pests across Australia where aerial shooting is one of the better options.

Any community CWLLS funding could be used to fuel and maintain the chopper.

Younger commercial pilots looking to get their hours up could probably be enticed to fly the chopper in week long blocks, this time could also be credited to them as 'community volunteer' hours, thus creating two positive outcomes – getting hours for pilots looking to get some experience under their belts and free pilotage for what's normally an unaffordable operation.

Landholders and trustworthy locals could do the shooting with their own equipment and ammunition.

I also believe hunters would pay for the privilege of spending a day or week shooting feral pigs.

This means the costs would be slashed because:

- There'd be no helicopter hire;
- There'd be no pilot wages;
- There'd be no shooter wages;
- If using 'pay for hunter tourists' there'd be no gun or ammunition costs;
- It could promote the region via Youtube videos, what an innovative solution;
- There'd be a chopper on hand in the district for other emergency tasks when necessary, such as search and rescue, flood relief etc;
- Pig shooting operations could be conducted when the time is right, instead of efforts being not as cost-effective because the funding timing means shooting happens at the wrong times just to tick the correct process boxes;

We need a cost-benefit analysis done on this to see what external benefits would be offered by say basing a community helicopter at Warren.

This machine could be managed by an entity such as the shire council and any agency which utilised the asset could pay for it, or agencies which may have a need of it could pitch in to help cover the initial purchase cost.

It would also create an opportunity for any local helicopter pilots with commercial licences who could be hired to do any work required by government agencies.

It's a different and complex approach which would require plenty of thought, but by sharing the cost around on an ongoing basis it would mean landholders suffering feral pig problems weren't reliant on intermittent responses from LLS funded operations which have to wait for money to come through and then rush projects for artificial deadlines, which may be at inappropriate times, and thus not nearly as effective as they could be.

And if you had 10 hunters per week all paying \$1000, that's up to \$500,000 to help cover costs.

These hunters would have to be thoroughly vetted through police checks and belong to legitimate gun clubs, but it would certainly be doable, and half a million dollars would go a long way towards cost-recovery.

If landholders and agencies all chipped in, and there was some contribution from dedicated state and federal grants to get the project up and flying, there's a chance we could see a chopper in the air for much of the year and cost individual landholders and CWLLS far less than they're paying now for a sporadic service.

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