



# NSW Legislative Council Hansard

## Deer Bill

Extract from NSW Legislative Council Hansard and Papers Wednesday 25 October 2006.

### Second Reading

**The Hon. MICHAEL COSTA** (Treasurer, Minister for Infrastructure, and Minister for the Hunter) [2.57 p.m.], on behalf of the Hon. Tony Kelly: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I seek leave to have the second reading speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

#### Leave not granted.

The Deer Bill introduces new legislation to clarify the ownership of deer. It also regulates the keeping and management of captive deer. Further, it prevents the release of deer from captivity and introduces mechanisms to control deer that are not captive. The difficulties in managing deer have led to significant public safety, environmental and agricultural impacts. The bill will help manage deer to mitigate these impacts. As honourable members would know, deer are not native to Australia. However, they have a long history in New South Wales when viewed from the perspective of European settlement. The first deer are believed to have been imported into New South Wales in 1803 and have since established in the Australian bush, particularly in Victoria and New South Wales.

Two hundred years later those deer populations are flourishing and today we understand much better the perils of not managing introduced wild animals. Introduced animals are well known for the environmental damage they cause when present in large numbers. Deer are no different, and excessive deer populations can destroy native vegetation and damage sensitive areas in our fragile Australian landscape.

The New South Wales Threatened Species Scientific Committee has recently recognised the impact of deer on our environment. The committee has listed the degradation of vegetation and environment caused by feral deer as a key threatening process under the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995. I am aware that this decision remains somewhat controversial but there seems to be no doubt that excessive numbers of deer in the wild can damage the environment. Nor is there any doubt about the agricultural harm they cause by competing with grazing livestock and damaging crops. Deer are also becoming an increasing hazard for motorists outside towns and cities. At about 5.30 a.m. when I was on my way to Parliament House I drove down a back road past the Yengo National Park and I saw this animal jump out. I thought it was a horse. It was a deer the size of a horse with huge antlers that almost took up the front of the car. Deer are a hazard.

**The Hon. Robert Brown:** Did he you get a GPS location for them?

**The Hon. MICHAEL COSTA:** Do you want a GPS location for it? Can I have the head? Can I mount the head? Deer wander onto roads and because they are flighty, their behaviour can be unpredictable. It sounds like the Greens! These are all good reasons for better managing captive deer and for stronger control of wild deer. While deer in the wild can cause significant harm, captive deer remain a legitimate industry for farmers. Deer farming is well established in New South Wales. This State has nearly a quarter of Australia's dedicated deer farmers. Deer products from captive deer fill an important niche market both at home and overseas. There is a steadily increasing demand from overseas markets for products such as venison and velvet antler. For example, 90 per cent of Australian venison production is exported.

While the development of the commercial deer industry is worthwhile, it is also important to recognise that the control and management of deer presents unique challenges. The Deer Bill is the culmination of a number of years of consideration of the unique issues concerning deer and consultation with stakeholders. The Government has made every endeavour to take into consideration the needs of the deer industry, as well as the needs of other farmers and public land managers in New South Wales. The Deer Bill addresses the range of different issues and stakeholder needs that arise with respect to deer. First, the bill clarifies the issue of ownership of deer. Second, it regulates the keeping and management of captive deer. As part of this, it puts in place measures to help prevent the release of deer from captivity. And, third, the bill provides for the control of wild deer. There are complex legal issues surrounding the ownership of deer that do not apply to other stock animals, and there is no simple solution to these matters. I commend the bill to the House.