



Game and Feral Animal Control Further Amendment Bill 2012

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Bill introduced, and read a first time and ordered to be printed on motion by the Hon. Robert Brown.

Second Reading

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN [3.52 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Game and Feral Animal Control Further Amendment Bill 2012. The bill is very simple and straightforward, so I will not take up much of the time of the House with my second reading speech. The bill addresses a major problem in New South Wales, particularly for irrigation farmers. Currently, New South Wales farmers must apply to the National Parks and Wildlife Service for a permit under sections 120 and 121 of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 and duck hunters must pass a Waterfowl Identification Test and then apply for a permit under sections 120 and 121 of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 to be issued with a game hunting licence by the Game Council NSW. That is duplication of effort.

The bill simply removes much unnecessary red tape by condensing the administration under one single licensing authority—the Game Council NSW. As is similar with the current system, the bill provides for the granting of a game management licence authorising the owner or occupier of specified land, or a licensed hunter, to hunt on that land for non-commercial purposes ducks and other native game birds that have been listed as game animals. The bill does not authorise the hunting of native game birds on public lands. The same provisions that apply currently to game hunting licences, including provisions disqualifying certain persons from being granted a licence, also will apply to game management licences.

Further, the bill enables the Game Council NSW to impose special restrictions and quotas regarding the hunting of native game birds listed as game animals. Requirements relating to the tagging of those birds captured or killed are similar to current requirements but without the current bureaucratic duplication. Again, as is currently the case, persons will not be authorised to hunt or kill any such bird unless they have passed an official identification test of native waterfowl. The test will be conducted by or on behalf of the Game Council NSW or other bodies recognised by the council. The Game Council will recognise also any test conducted before the commencement of this section by or on behalf of the Department of Environment and Climate Change in connection with the identification of native waterfowl, and the same test administered in other States.

According to the Ricegrowers Association of Australia, early in the season this year 5,000 hectares of rice were lost as a result of damage caused to the crops by ducks. A further 11,500 hectares had to be re-sown—some areas numerous times—and that is the largest area ever to be re-sown. The value of lost production has been calculated at \$10 million and does not include the costs associated with re-sown seed, fuel and other labour costs. Those of us who travel further west than Leichardt and Marrickville know that farming life is not easy. Indeed, it is financially devastating for irrigation farmers who are experiencing a good season to have their crops ruined, particularly by waterfowl. Rice is not the only crop hit each year by waterfowl; of course, many green crops are destroyed by certain duck species. Last year the re-opened Coleambally rice mill processed 800,000 tonnes and it expects to receive 960,000 tonnes this harvest. Farmers deserve every chance to maximise their crops and not to have them eaten by game birds. I commend the bill to the House.