



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

STANDING COMMITTEE ON STATE DEVELOPMENT

Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025



Report 55

September 2025

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Standing Committee on State Development

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September 2025

Chair: Hon Emily Suvaal MLC



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Table of contents

	Terms of reference	iv
	Committee details	v
	Recommendations	vii
	Conduct of inquiry	viii
Chapter 1	Overview	1
	Reference	1
	Current regulation of hunting in New South Wales	1
	Background and purpose of the bill	2
	Overview of the bill's provisions	3
Chapter 2	Key issues	7
	The role of hunting as a conservation method in New South Wales	7
	Animal welfare considerations	13
	Public safety risks	15
	Safety risks for other users of public land	15
	Broader community safety risks	19
	Stakeholder perspectives on the proposed Conservation Hunting Authority	20
	Enshrining a 'right to hunt'	22
	The operation of the right	24
	Changes to prohibited weapons controls and expansion of 'genuine reasons'	25
	Committee comment	27
Appendix 1	Submissions	29
Appendix 2	Witnesses at Hearings	47
Appendix 3	Minutes	49
Appendix 4	Dissenting statements	73

Terms of reference

That:

1. the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025 be referred to the Standing Committee on State Development for inquiry and report.
2. That the committee report by 10 October 2025.

The terms of reference for the inquiry were referred to the committee by the Legislative Council on 24 June 2025.¹

¹ *Minutes*, NSW Legislative Council, 24 June 2025, item 50.

Committee details

Committee members

Hon Emily Suvaal MLC	Australian Labor Party Chair	<i>Chair</i>
Hon Scott Barrett MLC	The Nationals Deputy Chair	<i>Deputy Chair</i>
Hon Robert Borsak MLC*	Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party	
Hon Mark Buttigieg MLC	Australian Labor Party	
Hon Scott Farlow MLC	Liberal Party	
Ms Sue Higginson MLC*	The Greens	
Hon Emma Hurst MLC	Animal Justice Party	
Hon Stephen Lawrence MLC	Australian Labor Party	
Hon Peter Primrose MLC	Australian Labor Party	

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* Ms Sue Higginson substituted for Ms Cate Faehrmann from 25 June 2025 for the duration of the inquiry.

* The Hon Robert Borsak MLC is a participating member from 25 June 2025 for the duration of the inquiry.

Secretariat

Verity Smith, Principal Council Officer
 Gerard Rajakariar, Principal Council Officer
 Emily Whittingstall, Senior Council Officer
 Samie Jeffrey, Administration Officer
 Anthony Hanna, A/Director

Chair's foreword

On 24 June 2025, the Legislative Council referred the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025 to the Standing Committee on State Development for inquiry and report by 10 October 2025.

The bill proposes a range of amendments to the laws that regulate hunting in New South Wales, primarily by allowing certain crown lands to become designated for hunting and prescribing the mechanisms by which Crown land may be made available for hunting. The bill also proposes the creation of the Conservation Hunting Authority in place of the Game and Pest Management Advisory Board, replaces restricted game hunting licences with conservation hunting licences, legislates for a 'right to hunt' and proposes amendments to the weapons legislation to provide for conservation hunting licence holders to be granted a permit to use a silencer.

The committee heard passionate and competing views about these proposed amendments. There was diverging evidence about the role of hunting in effective pest control, particularly of invasive species. Stakeholders were also divided on the possible safety risks of the bill, including the possible detrimental impact on the use of public land by members of the public who perceived a safety risk.

The committee takes very seriously the evidence from stakeholders about the possible watering down of the existing gun laws. The committee endorses the public statements made by the Premier that the New South Wales government does not condone any relaxation of the state's robust gun laws.

The committee has recommended that the Legislative Council consider the issues identified by stakeholders as set out in this report during debate in the House.

While this was a relatively short inquiry, it received an enormous amount of engagement. More than 2,600 submissions and proforma letters were received from organisations and members of the public, and at a public hearing, the inquiry heard from 23 witnesses with a diverse range of perspectives on the bill.

I acknowledge and offer thanks to my committee colleagues and the committee secretariat for their hard work and professionalism in making this inquiry possible. I also acknowledge all of the individuals and organisations who took the time to have their say on the bill, including those who volunteered their time to attend the committee's hearing. Their evidence helped inform committee consideration of the issues and will be valuable as the House proceeds to debate the bill.

I commend the report to the House.

Hon Emily Suvaal MLC

Committee Chair

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

27

That the Legislative Council consider the issues identified by stakeholders as set out in this report during debate in the House.

Conduct of inquiry

The terms of reference for the inquiry were referred to the committee by the Legislative Council on 24 June 2025.

The committee received 2,627 submissions and 3 supplementary submissions.

The committee held one public hearing on Friday 8 August 2025 at Parliament House in Sydney.

Inquiry related documents are available on the committee's website, including submissions, hearing transcripts, tabled documents and answers to questions on notice.

Chapter 1 Overview

Reference

- 1.1 The Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025 is a private member's bill introduced into the Legislative Council on 28 May 2025 by the Hon Robert Borsak MLC.
- 1.2 On 24 June 2025, the Legislative Council recommended that the provisions of the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025 be referred to the Standing Committee on State Development for inquiry and report by 10 October 2025.²

Current regulation of hunting in New South Wales

- 1.1 The current regulations for hunting on public and private land in New South Wales are outlined in the *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002* and the Game and Feral Animal Control Regulation 2012. Hunting of introduced species of game animals in New South Wales is regulated and administered by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.³
- 1.2 To hunt on public land in New South Wales, hunters require a Restricted Game Hunting Licence.⁴ Public land refers to land that is owned or managed by the government, either state or federal, and can include state forests, Crown lands and national parks.⁵ Currently, legal hunting can only occur in specific state forests that have been declared by the New South Wales government. Once the government has declared a piece of land as suitable for hunting, its suitability must also be assessed by the land manager.⁶ After this has occurred, the land then becomes open to general hunting.⁷
- 1.3 To hunt on private land, hunters must have the permission of the landowner or occupier.⁸ Licence requirements for those hunting on private land are dependent on the species of animal they wish to hunt.⁹
- 1.4 The Game and Pest Management Advisory Board is an advisory board appointed under the *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002*. The board is made up of individuals with expertise in pest management, wildlife, veterinary science, hunting, education and community engagement and includes representatives of regional New South Wales.¹⁰ Its functions are to represent the

² *Minutes*, New South Wales Legislative Council, 24 June 2025, p 2494.

³ NSW Game Hunting Guide, NSW Department of Primary Industries, April 2017, p 4.

⁴ NSW Game Hunting Guide, NSW Department of Primary Industries, April 2017, p 87.

⁵ NSW Game Hunting Guide, NSW Department of Primary Industries, April 2017, p 87.

⁶ NSW Game Hunting Guide, NSW Department of Primary Industries, April 2017, p 87.

⁷ NSW Game Hunting Guide, NSW Department of Primary Industries, April 2017, p 87.

⁸ NSW Game Hunting Guide, NSW Department of Primary Industries, April 2017, p 86.

⁹ NSW Game Hunting Guide, NSW Department of Primary Industries, April 2017, p 86.

¹⁰ *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002*, s 8 (2)(a)-(b).

interests of licensed game hunters and to provide advice to the Minister for Agriculture, Regional New South Wales and Western New South Wales.¹¹

- 1.5 Under section 20 of the *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002*, the responsible Minister for the land may declare it open for licensed game hunting. Before doing so, the Minister must give public notice of the proposed declaration. In making the declaration, the Minister must consider safety, the rights of other land users, plans of management or other documents relating to the use or management of the land, and any recommendations from the land manager and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. Once these requirements are satisfied and the land manager has assessed its suitability, the land can then be opened for general hunting.¹²
- 1.6 A declaration may be subject to conditions and does not itself allow hunting. Hunters are required to obtain an R-licence and must obtain written permission from the Department prior to hunting.¹³
- 1.7 The expansion of programs like the National Parks and Wildlife Service's Supplementary Pest Control Program, that involves volunteer shooters in a planned and strategic role alongside other professional methods, could be undertaken under the existing legislation.¹⁴

Background and purpose of the bill

- 1.8 The stated purpose of the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025 (hereafter, the bill) is to amend the *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002* to 'recognise the role of hunting in the preservation of native species, the natural environment and cultural heritage and to recognise the right of citizens to hunt for cultural and recreational reasons'.¹⁵ It also seeks to amend the *Crown Land Management Act 2016* to 'establish the mechanisms by which Crown land may be made available for hunting', as well as the *Forestry Act 2012* and the *Weapons Prohibition Act 1998* for related purposes.¹⁶
- 1.9 The Hon Robert Borsak MLC, in his second reading speech, emphasised the environmental, social and economic impact of conservation hunting in New South Wales.¹⁷ Mr Borsak stated that recreational and conservation hunters play an important role in controlling invasive pest species, which 'can cause environmental degradation and economic impact'.¹⁸

¹¹ *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002*, s 9 (1-3).

¹² Answers to supplementary questions, Mr Richard Varvel, Director, Forestry & Hunting Regulation, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, 2 September 2025, p 1.

¹³ Answers to supplementary questions, Mr Richard Varvel, Director, Forestry & Hunting Regulation, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, 2 September 2025, p 1.

¹⁴ Answers to supplementary questions, Natural Resources Commission, 2 September 2025, p 1.

¹⁵ Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025, First Print.

¹⁶ Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025, First Print, Schs 3 and 4.

¹⁷ The Hon Robert Borsak MLC, Second Reading Speech: Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025, 28 May 2025, p 1.

¹⁸ The Hon Robert Borsak MLC, Second Reading Speech: Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025, 28 May 2025, p 1.

- 1.10** Mr Borsak highlighted the significance of hunting as a cultural activity for Indigenous and non-Indigenous hunters, as they both 'share a deep connection to the land and to the wildlife they hunt'.¹⁹ He also noted in his second reading speech the positive economic impact of hunting, particularly in regional and rural areas, stating that 'recreation and conservation hunters contribute over half a billion dollars to the New South Wales economy'.²⁰
- 1.11** Addressing the first part of the bill, Mr Borsak further described the impact he proposes it would have on the environment, economy and hunters, stating:
- By expanding access to public land for hunting, we can improve environmental outcomes, reduce government expenditure and create positive physical and mental health benefits for participants. By supporting Indigenous hunting and land management practices, we can also create employment opportunities, strengthen cultural traditions and boost regional economies.²¹
- 1.12** The role of hunting for rural communities and its environmental impacts or otherwise were a significant focus throughout the inquiry. Stakeholder views are explored in chapter two.

Overview of the bill's provisions

- 1.13** The objects of the bill, as set out in the explanatory note, are as follows:
- a. to amend the *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002* to—
 - i. abolish the Game and Pest Management Advisory Board and replace it with the Conservation Hunting Authority, and
 - ii. recognise and make provision for a right to hunt, and
 - iii. abolish restricted game hunting licences and replace those licences with conservation hunting licences, and
 - iv. provide that national park estate land must not be declared as land on which hunting is permitted,
 - b. to amend the *Crown Land Management Act 2016* to establish the Crown land that is available for hunting and the mechanisms by which Crown land may be made available for hunting.²²

Proposed amendments to the Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002

- 1.14** The bill proposes a number of amendments to the *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002* including to:
- make a provision for the creation of a Minister for Hunting and Fishing

¹⁹ The Hon Robert Borsak MLC, Second Reading Speech: Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025, 28 May 2025, p 2.

²⁰ The Hon Robert Borsak MLC, Second Reading Speech: Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025, 28 May 2025, p 1.

²¹ The Hon Robert Borsak MLC, Second Reading Speech: Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025, 28 May 2025, p 3.

²² Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025, Explanatory Note, First Print, p 1.

- replace the restricted game hunting licence with the conservation hunting licence
- insert sections 4A-4C, which outline that individuals have a right to hunt
- include an obligation that public sector land managers consider this right to hunt when making decisions regarding land management.²³

1.15 The bill would also see the Game and Pest Management Advisory Board abolished, and instead provide for the establishment of a Conservation Hunting Authority.

1.16 The new Authority is proposed to absorb some of the existing functions of the Game and Pest Management Advisory Board in addition to the following new functions:

- to make recommendations under section 20 to the responsible Minister, but only the Minister may make a declaration
- to liaise with public sector agencies on land management matters
- to give advice to the Minister for Hunting and Fishing on game and feral animal management on the Authority's own initiative
- to liaise with Local Land Services, and other bodies the Authority considers relevant, in relation to pest animal management
- to promote research into game, feral and pest animal management issues, and the benefits of hunting, including for the development of regional economies, the conservation of the natural environment and native animals, and the preservation of cultural practices
- to promote, develop and deliver educational courses regarding game animals and animals that interact with game, feral and pest animals
- to promote the objects of the Act.²⁴

1.17 The bill makes no changes to the section 20 declaration process under the Act. The bill introduces a new pathway for certain Crown lands to be designated as hunting land, where appropriate. Designated land is taken to be declared public hunting land under the *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002*. The designation does not itself allow hunting, and the hunting is still subject to written permission from the Minister before each instance of hunting.²⁵

Proposed amendments to the Crown Land Management Act 2016

1.18 Schedule 3 of the bill seeks to amend the *Crown Land Management Act 2016* to allow for hunting to take place on some Crown land. The bill specifies that Crown land does not include national park estate land.²⁶

²³ Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025, First Print, Sch 1, cl 2, 4 and 8.

²⁴ Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025, Sch 1, cl 10.

²⁵ Answers to supplementary questions, Mr Richard Varvel, Director, Forestry & Hunting Regulation, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, 2 September 2025, pp 1-2.

²⁶ Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025, First Print, Sch 1, cl 6.

1.19 It also outlines the proposed process that a licensed hunter would need to follow in order to hunt on Crown land that is available for hunting. This would represent an expansion to the current extent of public land that is gazetted for hunting.

1.20 Clause 2 of Schedule 3 of the bill identifies a range of reservation numbers as designated land.

Proposed amendments to the Forestry Act 2012

1.21 The bill would make amendments to the *Forestry Act 2012* regarding the objectives of land managers. These amendments include a requirement that land managers consult with the Conservation Hunting Authority when reviewing a management or working plan for a forestry area.

Proposed amendments to the Weapons Prohibition Act 1998

1.22 Under the current *Weapons Prohibition Act 1998*, the Commissioner of Police must not issue a permit for the possession or use of a prohibited weapon unless the applicant has a genuine reason for possessing or using the weapon.²⁷ The bill seeks to amend the *Weapons Prohibition Act 1998* to include conservation hunting as a genuine reason for an applicant to be issued a permit to access a prohibited weapon.

1.23 In the bill's second reading speech, it was noted that the proposed amendment to section 11 of the *Weapons Prohibition Act 1998* would provide for conservation hunting licence holders to be granted a permit to use a silencer, also known as a suppressor.²⁸ A suppressor is a device designed for attachment to a firearm for the purpose of muffling, reducing or stopping the noise created by firing the firearm.²⁹

²⁷ *Weapons Prohibition Act 1998*, Part 2, s 11.

²⁸ The Hon Robert Borsak MLC, Second Reading Speech: Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025, 28 May 2025, p 1.

²⁹ *Weapons Prohibition Act 1998*, Part 1, s 4.

Chapter 2 Key issues

This chapter discusses the key issues identified by stakeholders during this inquiry regarding the main reforms proposed in the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025. Due to the high volume of submissions received by the inquiry, this report is not able to capture the full extent of submissions received. All published evidenced received by the committee, including the written submissions, is available on the inquiry webpage within the NSW Parliament website.³⁰

The role of hunting as a conservation method in New South Wales

- 2.1 In considering the intent and merits of the bill, the effectiveness of hunting as an invasive species control method was the subject of considerable debate in inquiry evidence. Noting that the bill frames hunting as a conservation method with environmental benefits, the committee heard conflicting views from inquiry participants about whether the reforms proposed in the bill would improve pest control outcomes in New South Wales, as detailed below.
- 2.2 Inquiry participants who supported the bill placed significant weight on hunting's purported environmental benefits as an effective way of controlling pests and feral animals.
- 2.3 For example, Mr Ned Makim of the Australian Pig Doggers and Hunters Association, cited data gathered by the Association on the number of pigs killed nationally in 2024 as evidence of hunting's environmental benefits and cost-effectiveness. Referring to this data set, he submitted that, in 2024, there were 5.3 million pigs killed nationally of which more than 1.6 million pigs were killed in New South Wales. In Mr Makim's view, this represented 'a lot of pigs, at a net positive economic result for the New South Wales economy of about \$327 million. It's obviously cost-effective, and we think it is landscape-level pig control'.³¹
- 2.4 In a similar vein, Mr Andrew Mallen, Assistant Vice-President, Australian Hunters International, sought to impress upon the committee the efficacy of hunting as a biosecurity measure, citing a biosecurity threat posed by an incursion of Canada geese in 2007-2008. Mr Mallen credited volunteer hunters with neutralizing this threat promptly in the face of what he described as inaction by government agencies with biosecurity responsibilities. He told the committee 'it was taken care of in one day. It was in difficult surroundings ... We did it with no fuss, no bother. This is volunteer hunting doing something for the ecology of New South Wales'.³²
- 2.5 Adding to these perspectives, Mr Brian Boyle, a key proponent of the bill with personal and professional experience in hunting, wildlife management and land management, who is an employee of the Honourable Robert Borsak, Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party,³³ reflected on the management of deer through a period of shifting policy settings that were experienced in New Zealand. He argued that research undertaken in New Zealand clearly indicated that

³⁰ See: <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/>.

³¹ Evidence, Mr Ned Makim, President, Australian Pig Doggers and Hunters Association, 8 August 2025, pp 22 and 26.

³² Evidence, Mr Andrew Mallen, Assistant Vice-President, Australian Hunters International, 8 August 2025, p 49.

³³ Submission 58, Mr Brian Boyle, p 4.

recreational hunters were much more effective in population control than government programs:

During all of these things, government programs had very little impact whatsoever. When they actually did studies—they used to have hunters; they called them deer cullers in those days, out in the hills—they used to publish these annual reports, and they were very pleased with shooting X thousands of deer. When a scientist actually went out and studied how many the recreational hunters, or private shooters, over there were doing, it was in the folds of 10 times the amount that the Government was doing.³⁴

2.6 In contrast to this evidence, inquiry participants opposed to the bill were not convinced of the effectiveness of hunting as a conservation tool, especially when undertaken in an ad-hoc and uncoordinated way.

2.7 Mr Jack Gough, Chief Executive Officer of the Invasive Species Council, gave evidence that, as a method for controlling numbers of introduced species, ground shooting is largely ineffective. He told the committee:

The Government's own documents say ground shooting is rated as ineffective for controlling foxes, pigs, goats and rabbits, with limited or variable effectiveness for feral deer and cats, and only when these numbers are low.³⁵

2.8 Mr Gough placed on the record the Invasive Species Council's opposition to the bill, suggesting that not only is it an ineffective response to the feral animal/pest management crisis in New South Wales, it will actually make the crisis worse, partly because the bill is 'doubling down' on past failures in pest management across the state.³⁶

2.9 When questioned further on this issue, Mr Gough cited figures on the number of removals from recreational hunters in New South Wales State Forests which, in his view, provided compelling evidence of hunting's ineffectiveness as a pest control measure when compared with other methods used by public land managers:

I heard some questions in the previous section about how many are being removed by recreational hunters. In State forests in New South Wales, with about 250 or so open, 1.8 million hectares of New South Wales land—where aerial shooting and baiting is effectively banned because of the impact on recreational hunting and doesn't take place. In 2023-24, the hunters that were out there—this was from 68,000 hunting days—removed 3,000 deer. They removed 4,982 pigs. These are tiny numbers compared to those populations. They are nowhere near the population growth rate, nowhere near the numbers that, for example, New South Wales national parks and LLS—not on State forest land—were undertaking. In 2022-23, from aerial shooting, they removed 131,000 feral pigs and feral deer.³⁷

2.10 Ms Kathryn Jurd, General Counsel, RSPCA NSW, was not convinced that the bill will address the invasive species management issues it purports to address, telling the committee: 'The

³⁴ Evidence, Mr Brian Boyle, experienced hunter with experience in parks and wildlife management, 8 August 2025, p 52.

³⁵ Evidence, Mr Jack Gough, Chief Executive Officer, Invasive Species Council, 8 August 2025, p 11.

³⁶ Evidence, Mr Jack Gough, 8 August 2025, p 11.

³⁷ Evidence, Mr Jack Gough, 8 August 2025, p 13.

concern I have, and that I reflect here today, is that this bill moves very far ahead towards effecting an outcome that we haven't worked out whether it's going to address any of the issues that it claims to be attending itself to. That's part of the problem, in my view'.³⁸

- 2.11** Dr Suzie Fowler, Chief Science Officer of RSPCA Australia, not only questioned the effectiveness of hunting for pest management, but also suggested that it can distract from 'effective and appropriate control programs, not just from a financial perspective of the money going to the wrong initiatives that will not work ... but also the motivation is wrong'.³⁹
- 2.12** Some stakeholders did see a role for recreational hunting, but as one supplementary tool amongst a suite of other methods within a coordinated, interlinked pest management scheme.⁴⁰ This evidence posited that recreational hunting on its own is not an effective method, and emphasized the need for a coordinated, integrated, nil-tenure approach.⁴¹
- 2.13** For example, Mr Bryce Wilde, Executive Director of the Natural Resources Commission, called for a government-led strategic, risk based, collaborative approach to pest management supported by integrated policy, planning and regulation.⁴²
- 2.14** The Statewide Review of Invasive Species Management, completed by the Natural Resources Commission, found it difficult to discern the success and effectiveness of the Local Land Services Feral Pig Program due to the lack of consistent monitoring, evaluation and reporting. The Review recommended that future pest management programs take a more strategic approach that clearly identify assets to be protected and for mechanisms to be in place to monitor and report outcomes rather than just outputs.⁴³
- 2.15** In commenting on the precise proposals outlined in the bill, the Natural Resources Commission was circumspect about their justification but nevertheless saw a valid place for ground shooting as a supplementary method of pest control. Mr Wilde commented:

We haven't seen evidence that this proposal is warranted. What we have seen evidence of is that Government should be targeting its limited finances in biosecurity to the programs that have demonstrable practice and research supporting them, and that is where there are well-coordinated targeted collaborative cross-tenure programs where ground shooting does have a role to play but it's not the primary means.⁴⁴

- 2.16** Elaborating on this point, Mr Wilde emphasised the need for a structured framework and strategy within which recreational hunters can contribute to pest control efforts. As an example, he described an ideal scenario in which there had already been an aerial baiting or aerial shooting program carried out at the right season and in the right area. Under such conditions, Mr Wilde saw a valid role for professional and recreational shooters to be engaged to carry out 'mop-up'

³⁸ Evidence, Ms Kathryn Jurd, General Counsel, RSPCA NSW, 8 August 2025, p 73.

³⁹ Evidence, Dr Suzie Fowler, Chief Science Officer, RSPCA Australia, 8 August 2025, p 72.

⁴⁰ Evidence, Mr Bryce Wilde, Executive Director, Natural Resources Commission, 8 August 2025, p 28; Evidence, Mr Rob Kelly, Executive Director, Delivery, Local Land Services, Department of Primary Industries, 8 August 2025, p 7.

⁴¹ Evidence, Mr Gough, 8 August 2025, p 15.

⁴² Evidence, Mr Bryce Wilde, 8 August 2025, p 28.

⁴³ Answers to supplementary questions, Natural Resources Commission, 2 September 2025, p 1. .

⁴⁴ Evidence, Mr Wilde, 8 August 2025, p 29.

operations within that coordinated program and following those activities.⁴⁵ According to this witness, 'that will be able to have demonstratable benefits. But it needs to be part of a well-defined program of works supported by planning at the regional scale and then down to that local scale, so you're clear on what is needed and when'.⁴⁶

2.17 The Associate Director of the Natural Resources Commission, Dr Ben Russell, made it clear that feral pigs are here to stay. He stated that eradication across the state is not achievable: 'No, we're not going to get to a point where we're mopping up the last pigs. We're not going to remove pigs from New South Wales.'⁴⁷ Instead, he emphasised that biosecurity efforts must focus on targeted management in specific areas rather than pursuing the unrealistic goal of total elimination.⁴⁸

2.18 Mr Rob Kelly, Executive Director, Delivery, Local Land Services, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, echoed this sentiment. When questioned on whether the conservation aspects of the bill align with NSW Government policy, Mr Kelly told the committee that conservation hunting in and of itself is not the solution for pest control but could have a role to play as part of a broader, coordinated campaign:

If you're referring to the recreational hunting for conservation or pest control activities—recreational hunting or conservation hunting, as it's referred to in the bill—we consider that part of an integrated package of pest control activities. Of and by itself, it would not be considered the panacea of pest control. But recreational hunting does have a role to play in an overall coordinated pest control campaign.⁴⁹

2.19 Lending further weight to this view, Mr Tony Buckmaster, Principal RD&E Manager, Centre for Invasive Species Solutions, gave evidence that recreational hunting is a legitimate pastime but has limited efficacy as a 'primary pest control method'.⁵⁰ Referring to the reproduction rate of feral animals and the need to reduce populations below that rate in order to make a difference, Mr Buckmaster submitted 'recreational hunting alone cannot do that. It can work, however, as part of a strategic sustained management program ... But as the primary control tool, it is completely ineffectual'.⁵¹

2.20 Some witnesses, such as representatives of the Natural Resources Commission and RSPCA Australia, highlighted the general principle that the government should implement biosecurity programs grounded in evidence. They pointed to the need for programs backed by research,⁵² and for 'oversight, monitoring, evaluation, public reporting of a control program if needed'.⁵³ Commenting on the existence of an evidence base for long-term environmental outcomes, Mr

⁴⁵ Evidence, Mr Wilde, 8 August 2025, p 33.

⁴⁶ Evidence, Mr Wilde, 8 August 2025, p 33.

⁴⁷ Evidence, Dr Ben Russell, Associate Director, Natural Resources Commission, 8 August 2025, p 34.

⁴⁸ Evidence, Dr Russell, 8 August 2025, p 33.

⁴⁹ Evidence, Mr Rob Kelly, 8 August 2025, p 3.

⁵⁰ Evidence, Mr Tony Buckmaster, Principal RD&E Manager, Centre for Invasive Species Solutions, 8 August 2025, p 14.

⁵¹ Evidence, Mr Buckmaster, 8 August 2025, p 14.

⁵² Evidence, Mr Wilde, 8 August 2025, p 29; Evidence, Dr Fowler, 8 August 2025, p 72.

⁵³ Evidence, Dr Fowler, 8 August 2025, p 72.

Wilde of the Natural Resources Commission described there being a 'dearth of knowledge' about the long-term ecological outcomes of conservation hunting.⁵⁴

2.21 Further evidence from Mr Buckmaster highlighted five distinct invasive species programs that were successful in managing and reducing the presence of a variety of invasive species across multiple land tenures. None of these successful programs involved the use of recreational shooting and Mr Buckmaster identified a key factor of success in each program as being strategic and integrated pest management plan that governed the management techniques used, when they were used and to what extent they were used.⁵⁵

2.22 When questioned about whether there are successful examples of reducing the impact or numbers of invasive species in New South Wales, and what role recreational hunters played in that success, the Invasive Species Council stated:

The integrated strategy of aerial culling and baiting, combined with ongoing ecosystem health monitoring, is considered a "best practice" approach for managing invasive species at a single site. The data collected from these programs will be used to inform future strategies, such as the timing and intensity of culling and baiting sessions. While ground shooting within the park by contractor shooters for deer, and recreational hunting of deer and foxes has occurred outside the park boundary for over 20 years, it has not prevented the southern spread of deer, or overall fox activity.⁵⁶

2.23 To Mr Buckmaster's knowledge, no successful invasive species management programs in New South Wales have used ad hoc recreational hunting as the primary method of management. A study undertaken by researchers in relation to deer control in Tasmania by the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development between 2022 and 2023, showed that recreational hunting was not able to reduce deer density on the study site as they were unable to harvest enough deer to bring down the population density. Despite harvesting between 21 and 26% of the deer annually, the deer replaced these numbers through natural breeding.⁵⁷

2.24 To give a better sense of what pest management campaigns which use hunting as a supplementary method might look like, several inquiry participants drew the committee's attention to concrete examples that have been undertaken in the past with varying degrees of success and environmental outcomes.

2.25 The Natural Resources Commission and the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (NSW) both gave the example of the supplementary pest control program run by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service in collaboration with the Sporting Shooters' Association. The Natural

⁵⁴ Evidence, Mr Wilde, 8 August 2025, p 31.

⁵⁵ Answers to supplementary questions, Dr Tony Buckmaster, Principal RD&E Manager, Centre for Invasive Species Solutions, received 2 September 2025, pp 1 – 3.

⁵⁶ Answers to supplementary questions, Mr Rob Brewster, Rewilding Program Manager, Invasive Species Council, 2 September 2025, p 2. .

⁵⁷ Answers to supplementary questions, Dr Tony Buckmaster, Principal RD&E Manager, Centre for Invasive Species Solutions, received 2 September 2025, pp 2 – 3. See: ['Impacts of Recreational Hunting on an Introduced Population of Fallow Deer \(Dama dama\) in Tasmania, Australia - Comte - 2025 - Ecological Management & Restoration - Wiley Online Library'](#) .

Resources Commission explained the National Parks controlled the program, and the Association members, 'who were highly skilled and motivated', assisted in the process.⁵⁸

- 2.26** Mr Lance Miller of the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (NSW) stated that the range of programs that the Association has been involved with, including its contribution to National Parks pest control operations, showed that hunters 'are reliable, capable partners in managing invasive species'.⁵⁹ The Association's Chief Executive Officer, Mr Peter Szaak, further explained that from his perspective, they were called upon by National Parks under 'circumstances that I would say openly that they can't manage on their own'.⁶⁰
- 2.27** The Natural Resources Commission gave the example of the National Parks and Wildlife Service Supplementary Pest Control program, where volunteer shooters could contribute to the success of the feral pig program if they were incorporated into a planned strategic approach. This would require coordinated ground shooting in conjunction with other pest management techniques such as cross tenure aerial shooting and baiting.⁶¹
- 2.28** Mr Wilde clarified that while that example shows that such a model can work well, he has 'not seen that under this bill – at the moment – those provisions which would enable some of that to occur at this stage'.⁶²
- 2.29** Inquiry participants also pointed to the 'Bounceback' program in South Australia as an example of the successful role of volunteer shooters in feral animal management programs.⁶³ Notably, Mr Wilde highlighted this as 'probably the best example of long-term ecological monitoring, which has resulted in beneficial outcomes and shown how there are legitimate roles between non-government and government working together to deliver outcomes'.⁶⁴
- 2.30** The hunting and shooting representatives confirmed that they were interested in working with the Government in a more coordinated fashion to manage feral pests.⁶⁵
- 2.31** Several inquiry participants opposed to the bill reflected that the use of the word 'conservation' to describe the type of hunting does not change the type of activity that is being contemplated. For some, this was seen as an attempt to disguise or obfuscate the bill's true intent:
- Ms Vesk of the Cat Protection Society considered the term 'conservation' an adjective, telling the committee '[i]t doesn't change the fact that the action here is hunting. You can

⁵⁸ Evidence, Mr Wilde, 8 August 2025, p 33.

⁵⁹ Evidence, Mr Lance Miller, President, Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (NSW), 8 August 2025, p 50.

⁶⁰ Evidence, Mr Peter Szaak, Chief Executive Officer, Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (NSW), 8 August 2025, p 59.

⁶¹ Answers to supplementary questions, Natural Resources Commission, 2 September 2025, p 1.

⁶² Evidence, Mr Wilde, 8 August 2025, p 33.

⁶³ Evidence, Mr Gough, 8 August 2025, p 14; Evidence, Mr Buckmaster, 8 August 2025, p 14; Evidence, Mr Wilde, 8 August 2025, p 31.

⁶⁴ Evidence, Mr Wilde, 8 August 2025, p 31.

⁶⁵ Evidence, Mr Miller, 8 August 2025, p 59; Evidence, Mr Mallen, 8 August 2025, p 59; Evidence, Mr Szaak, 8 August 2025, p 59; Evidence, Mr Makim, 8 August 2025, p 26.

put any name on it. It makes no difference. It modifies the noun; it doesn't modify the practice. I think it's meaningless'.⁶⁶

- When asked if there is any legal distinction between recreational hunting and 'conservation' hunting, Dr Fowler of RSPCA Australia suggested that it is an attempt to make it more palatable to the public. She commented: 'I think it's putting a different name on something to try and dress it up in a way that perhaps is more palatable to the public. It doesn't actually change the effectiveness of the control method at the end of the day'.⁶⁷
- Mr Gough of the Invasive Species Council saw the primary purpose and intent of the bill as being to promote recreational hunting, not conservation of the environment.⁶⁸
- Similarly, Ms Jurd of the RSPCA NSW was of the view that the bill is primarily concerned with a recreational activity, not science-based environmental conservation. This witness remarked: 'What we're talking about here is a recreational activity, and this bill attempts to insert what is inherently a recreational activity into a scientific question'.⁶⁹

Animal welfare considerations

- 2.32** Another significant thread of evidence related to the potential animal welfare impacts from the bill's proposed use of hunting as a conservation method.
- 2.33** Ms Louise Ward, Programs Lead, Four Paws Australia, was one contributor to this evidence. Speaking on behalf of Four Paws Australia, Ms Ward characterised the bill as representing a 'troubling shift in policy, one that risks institutionalising animal cruelty under the guise of conservation' and one that elevates recreational hunting interests above animal welfare and community safety.⁷⁰
- 2.34** Bolstering this view, Ms Ward referred to independent evidence showing that recreational hunting is associated with high rates of animal wounding, prolonged suffering and harm to non-target species. She highlighted evidence of cruelty and suffering to animals in the context of recreational hunting including 'missed shots, maiming and dependent young being left behind'⁷¹ and attributed widespread animal cruelty within recreational hunting to a lack of oversight, inadequate shooter training and lack of animal welfare standards.⁷²
- 2.35** A range of animal welfare groups strongly opposed the bill, raising concerns about the treatment of animals and preferring more humane alternatives for managing invasive species:
- In opposing the bill, the Animal Defenders Office told the committee the bill fails to address the lack of animal welfare monitoring during recreational or any hunting and that

⁶⁶ Evidence, Ms Kristina Vesk, Chief Executive Officer, Cat Protection Society of New South Wales, 8 August 2025 p 72.

⁶⁷ Evidence, Dr Fowler, 8 August 2025, p 72.

⁶⁸ Evidence, Mr Gough, 8 August 2025, p 15.

⁶⁹ Evidence, Ms Kathryn Jurd, General Counsel, RSPCA NSW, 8 August 2025, p 73.

⁷⁰ Evidence, Ms Louise Ward, Programs Lead, Four Paws Australia, 8 August 2025, p 68.

⁷¹ Evidence, Ms Louise Ward, 8 August 2025, p 71.

⁷² Evidence, Ms Louise Ward, 8 August 2025, p 68.

the bill 'seeks to normalise an inherently violent activity and dress it up as providing some kind of nebulous public service that it cannot even define'.⁷³

- Ms Louise Ward of Four Paws Australia advanced the view that lethal control should be a last resort, that is 'only when all other options have been exhausted'. She further advocated for 'structured decision-making that includes humane, non-lethal alternatives such as fertility control, habitat modification and selective removal only when necessary'.⁷⁴
- RSPCA explained that while there is 'no doubt that invasive species have impacts...any management of those invasive species should be done at the most humane level possible'.⁷⁵
- Similarly, the Cat Protection Society 'would always prefer that any approach to management of animals is humane and respects the inherent dignity of the animal, but we acknowledge that not all animals belong in all places'.⁷⁶

2.36 In response to animal welfare concerns for non-target species, Mr Richard Varvel, Director, Forestry and Hunting Regulation, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, gave evidence that the existing regulatory controls around which species of game animals can be hunted does not change in the bill, and that any unlawful hunting of non-target species would be subject to an enforcement action:

Under the current legislation—and it doesn't change in the proposed bill—you can hunt "game animals" as defined in the bill or in the legislation. If you're shooting or hunting other animals, for example, if you were to shoot kangaroos, it's not legal under a recreational hunting licence, so you would then have enforcement action. If we were to become aware, or someone made us aware, we could then investigate it. With the enforcement side of it, we've got our side, my team. Also, we work very closely with the police and, if it's animal welfare related, we will regularly transfer information and intelligence reports across to Animal Welfare League or RSPCA to look into and investigate anything to do with actual animal cruelty or animal welfare.⁷⁷

2.37 Questions about the enforceability of and compliance with animal welfare laws in the context of hunting, were raised in evidence from Ms Kathryn Jurd of RSPCA NSW. In particular, Ms Jurd was asked to comment on the enforceability issue in the context of reassurances from pro-hunting groups that individuals doing the wrong thing will be prosecuted. In response, Ms Jurd cast doubt on these reassurances, saying that based on 18 years' experience prosecuting, 'it's unlikely that participants report themselves to the regulator'.⁷⁸

⁷³ Evidence, Ms Tara Ward, Managing Solicitor (volunteer), Animal Defenders Office, 8 August 2025, p 69.

⁷⁴ Evidence, Ms Louise Ward, 8 August 2025, p 76.

⁷⁵ Evidence, Dr Fowler, 8 August 2025, p 74.

⁷⁶ Evidence, Ms Vesk, 8 August 2025, p 73.

⁷⁷ Evidence, Mr Richard Varvel, Director, Forestry & Hunting Regulation, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, 8 August 2025, p5.

⁷⁸ Evidence, Ms Jurd, 8 August 2025, p 70.

Public safety risks

Safety risks for other users of public land

- 2.38** As detailed in chapter one, the bill proposes to make additional public land available for hunting, with several allotments or gazetted reserves identified in clause 2 of Schedule 3 as 'designated land'.
- 2.39** Hunting groups noted for the record that hunting on public land has been occurring since 2006.⁷⁹
- 2.40** According to Mr Richard Varvel of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, at the time of the inquiry, there were 351 declared State forests but hunting was only available in 230 of those forests for various operational and environmental reasons.⁸⁰
- 2.41** Mr Mallen of Australian Hunters International advised the committee that four hundred State forests have been continuously hunted since 2006, with more than two million hectares currently available.⁸¹
- 2.42** In that context, hunting groups gave evidence that the proposed expansion of Crown land would only be a very small increase from the area of land currently available, highlighting that a further 50,000 hectares available for hunters is less than 2.5% of the lands currently available.⁸²
- 2.43** When asked about the reasons for the bill's introduction if it proposes such a small increase, Mr Mallen remarked that hunters 'want to help with the spread and expansion of invasive species' and want to 'give some cultural recognition to hunting in this State'.⁸³
- 2.44** Mr Mallen also explained that shooters currently face difficulties making a booking in good State forests due to their popularity. He commented: 'The popular State forests that carry pretty good numbers of animals that would be getting out of the State forest and impacting on surrounding landowners, they're very hard to get a booking in. Good forests that produce regularly, they're generally booked out'.⁸⁴
- 2.45** Ms Tara Black, Acting Deputy Secretary, Fisheries and Forestry, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, shed light on the process by which the bill would allow further land to be made available for hunting, outlining the additional steps and checks and balances that would need to occur before hunting can take place on any additional parcels of Crown land.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Evidence, Mr Mallen, 8 August 2025, p 57.

⁸⁰ Evidence, Mr Varvel, 8 August 2025, p 8.

⁸¹ Evidence, Mr Mallen, 8 August 2025, p 57.

⁸² Evidence, Mr Mallen, 8 August 2025, p 57; Evidence, Mr Boyle, 8 August 2025, p 57.

⁸³ Evidence, Mr Mallen, 8 August 2025, p 57.

⁸⁴ Evidence, Mr Mallen, 8 August 2025, p 52.

⁸⁵ Evidence, Ms Tara Black, A/Deputy Secretary, Fisheries & Forestry, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, 8 August 2025, p 8.

Under the proposed changes to the Crown Land Management Act, if land is either listed in the schedule that we were talking about before, or meets the criteria that are set out in the bill, there are then additional steps. Then it becomes designated public land, but then there are also additional steps spelled out in the bill around the requirement to develop a plan of management, which must consider hunting but can also prohibit hunting. The plan of management, if it is one of those declared pieces of land, must consider whether hunting is suitable on that land. It can also say no, it's not, or it is but with all of these conditions associated with it. Then there are other steps as well around requiring—you obviously need a licence to hunt on public land, you need to make a booking through the hunting team. There's quite a few steps, checks and balances, to ensure that hunting is safe, which is the Government's ultimate priority. It's the department's ultimate priority to keep hunters and the public safe where hunting occurs.⁸⁶

2.46 Ms Black and representatives from shooters and hunters further emphasised that while hunting has been permitted for at least 20 years in State Forests, there has not been a serious safety incident on public land.⁸⁷

2.47 Outlining the NSW Government's position on public safety considerations, Ms Black underscored the State's strong safety record and confirmed that the Government would be looking to apply the same rigour and assessments for any proposed expansion:

I'd just say that we've allowed hunting on public land, in State forests, for quite some time and there hasn't been a serious safety incident in over 20 years. It is a safe program that we currently run, and we would be looking to apply the same rigour and assessments where additional public land is made available for hunting. Rich can go into detail if you're interested in what that process is, but it is something that has been working well for a number of years.⁸⁸

2.48 On the other hand, the proposed expansion of Crown land for recreational hunting drew intense criticism from inquiry participants opposed to the bill, primarily on public safety grounds.

2.49 For example, the Alannah and Madeline Foundation, an organisation that advocates for the safety of children and young people including from gun violence, considered the proposal to be incompatible with the statutory obligation of Crown land managers to promote the public use of land for the enjoyment of all in New South Wales.⁸⁹ The Foundation's Senior Policy Advisor, Mr Stephen Bendle, asserted that hunting cannot safely coexist with other recreational uses of public land such as camping and bushwalking.⁹⁰

2.50 According to Mr Bendle, the proposal carries significant public safety risks and is therefore not in the public interest:

We can't imagine how that can be achieved through cohabiting with shooters when people there camping, et cetera, would have no real understanding of whether hunters

⁸⁶ Evidence, Ms Black, 8 August 2025, p 8.

⁸⁷ Evidence, Ms Black, 8 August 2025, p 4; Evidence, Mr Mallen, 8 August 2025, p 57.

⁸⁸ Evidence, Ms Black, 8 August 2025, p 4.

⁸⁹ Evidence, Mr Stephen Bendle, Senior Advocacy Advisor, Alannah and Madeleine Foundation, 8 August 2025, p 40.

⁹⁰ Evidence, Mr Bendle, 8 August 2025, p 40.

were in the vicinity or whether and when that was to occur. And it's huge. [...] I think coexisting with people that might assume a right to hunt in those areas is not in the public interest. Now, hopefully, if this was ever to go ahead, there is no-one that would ever be injured. But it's not unreasonable to assume, with the amount of people using those public areas and to all of a sudden implement a situation where you have hunters using it as well—that is not what governments should be doing to ensure public safety, remembering that the test to use and possess a firearm is public safety. That test has been ignored with this bill.⁹¹

- 2.51** Ms Sarah Davies AM of the Alannah and Madeleine Foundation was similarly troubled by the public safety implications of the proposal, telling the committee that opening up public lands for hunting 'inherently puts public safety at risk.'⁹² Ms Davies noted that public lands are promoted as places for outdoor recreation and public enjoyment without having to be concerned about hunters. She expressed concern that while the bill designates 'about 20 allotments of Crown land for hunting immediately', the precise locations of these allotments cannot be ascertained.⁹³
- 2.52** Like Ms Davies, Ms Jurd of the RSPCA was also unable to identify the location of the lands proposed to be available for hunting listed at Schedule 3, clause 2, of the bill.⁹⁴
- 2.53** Adding to this evidence, Ms Lori Modde, Chief Executive Officer of Outdoors NSW, expressed serious reservations about public safety and economic impacts should the bill be enacted in law. In her evidence before the committee, she identified 'risks to shared land use and public safety' as a key area for attention in their consideration of the bill.⁹⁵
- 2.54** Noting that Outdoors NSW guides 2.1 million people into these public spaces every year, including people using public lands overnight, Ms Modde was concerned that the \$4.3 billion coming into the economy through recreational activities in these places would decrease if more lands were opened up to hunting.⁹⁶ She feared that schools, who are particularly conscious of risk management, would be the 'first ones to pull out of State forests' unless concerns about being able to clearly identify the location of hunting could be addressed.⁹⁷ She explained:
- As I say, unless we were able to establish some clear guidelines, and telling us where they were shooting, and being able to move around that, it would be very difficult to understand where they are, when they are, and as a last resort I would hate to see all our schools pulling out.⁹⁸
- 2.55** Ms Modde further explained that 'even just the public awareness of this bill has increased the number of times my phone has rung from operators who are concerned about whether it will interrupt access in certain areas. As you can imagine, schools are very conscious about their risk

⁹¹ Evidence, Mr Bendle, 8 August 2025, p 40.

⁹² Evidence, Ms Sarah Davies AM, Chief Executive Officer, Alannah and Madeleine Foundation, 8 August 2025, p 36.

⁹³ Evidence, Ms Davies, 8 August 2025, p 36.

⁹⁴ Evidence, Ms Jurd, 8 August 2025, p 69; Evidence, Ms Davies, 8 August 2025, p 39.

⁹⁵ Evidence, Ms Lori Modde, Chief Executive Officer, Outdoors NSW, 8 August 2025, p 62.

⁹⁶ Evidence, Ms Modde, 8 August 2025, p 65.

⁹⁷ Evidence, Ms Modde, 8 August 2025, p 63.

⁹⁸ Evidence, Ms Modde, 8 August 2025, p 65.

management. I can probably assume that schools will be the first ones to pull out of State forests'.⁹⁹

2.56 When questioned about whether hunting and other public uses of the land can co-exist if managed properly, Ms Modde agreed that '[i]f the framework is there and we come up with a wonderful foolproof method of knowing where they are, when they are, so that we can avoid those particular areas—absolutely. But the challenges even exist today. After 20 years, if we can't get that right, how is this going to improve from this point forward?'¹⁰⁰

2.57 As a proponent of the bill, Mr Brian Boyle was asked whether he could understand other stakeholders' concerns about community safety. In answering, he agreed, while also countering that '[t]he greatest thing we can do, instead of adding to the fear, is actually educate people about WHS and the hierarchy of controls, and also educate them about how the systems actually work'.¹⁰¹

2.58 On the issue of public safety risks, Mr Miller of the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (NSW) pointed out that hunting is not the only activity that carries risk, suggesting there is risk in most things we do.¹⁰² He underlined that there are ways of managing and mitigating risks and for hunting, these include the training and support services which, in his view, are managed extremely well:

It doesn't matter what we do, there is risk. Getting out of bed in the morning, there's risk. Accepting the risk and mitigating risk is the job of anybody who is doing anything, including driving a motor car. From our point of view, the training and the support services—training under instruction of qualified range officers and then, obviously, with an adult, if you're talking about the under-18 children—all of this is managed extremely well. I would submit that the law-abiding firearms owner is probably the most law-abiding person in New South Wales because we have so much compliance with police. We have a fit and proper person ruling in whether or not we can get a licence.¹⁰³

2.59 When questioned about how the Department would ensure that increased activity is managed safely and without environmental harm, Ms Black was confident that the systems are already in place to manage the risks, explaining, '[w]e've allowed hunting on public land, in State forests, for quite some time and there hasn't been a serious safety incident in over 20 years. It is a safe program that we currently run, and we would be looking to apply the same rigour and assessments where additional public land is made available for hunting'.¹⁰⁴

2.60 Ms Black confirmed that the bill does not propose any changes to the Department's existing regulatory functions.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ Evidence, Ms Modde, 8 August 2025, p 63.

¹⁰⁰ Evidence, Ms Modde, 8 August 2025, p 65.

¹⁰¹ Evidence, Mr Boyle, 8 August 2025, p 56.

¹⁰² Evidence, Mr Miller, 8 August 2025, p 58.

¹⁰³ Evidence, Mr Miller, 8 August 2025, p 58.

¹⁰⁴ Evidence, Ms Black, 8 August 2025, p 4.

¹⁰⁵ Evidence, Ms Black, 8 August 2025, p 4.

Broader community safety risks

- 2.61** New South Wales is a signatory to the 2017 National Firearms Agreement which is based on the principle that the use and possession of a firearm is a privilege that is conditional on public safety. The NSW Weapons Act and the NSW Firearms Act both establish this principle as a guiding objective of the Acts.¹⁰⁶
- 2.62** Other witnesses' opposition to the bill centred on broader community safety risks they viewed as inherent to the promotion of hunting more generally.
- 2.63** Underscoring the link between the use of guns and violence against women, Ms Monique Dam, the Chief Executive Officer of Lucy's Project, a charity focussed on addressing family and domestic violence, referred to the work of Professor Sarah Wendt whose research focusses specifically on rural women. According to Lucy's Project, Professor Wendt's work shows a clear link between the use of guns for hunting and an increased risk in the use of guns to intimidate victim-survivors:

Professor Sarah Wendt, who has researched Australian rural women's experiences of domestic violence for over a decade, highlights that the use of guns for hunting increases the tendency of perpetrators to use guns to intimidate victim-survivors. The higher rate of gun ownership in rural, regional and remote areas increases the risks already of women being killed and being subjected to serious injury. The significance of access to weapons as a high-risk factor is demonstrated by its inclusion in risk assessment frameworks across the country. The national risk assessment principles for family and domestic violence state that a perpetrator's access to, or use of, weapons is a high risk factor. Access to guns is also recognised as a risk factor in the New South Wales domestic violence safety assessment tool. When assessing risk, support services must ask victim-survivors whether the person using violence has access to guns and whether the person has ever harmed any animal, including wild animals.¹⁰⁷

- 2.64** The Australasian Injury Prevention Network raised similar concerns that the bill 'increases existing risk for vulnerable members of the community who are at risk of firearm-related suicide and domestic and family violence fatalities and injuries':

When firearms are involved in incidents involving suicide and domestic or family violence, the risk of lethality is significantly increased. Suicide disproportionately impacts men, while domestic and family violence disproportionately impacts women and children. The risks for these fatalities and injuries are also heightened for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people with disability, and LGBTQ+ populations.¹⁰⁸

- 2.65** In contrast to Ms Dam's evidence, Mr Boyle tabled a research paper by Dr Samara McPhedran that conducted a systematic review of evidence about violent and antisocial behaviours, psychological characteristics, and other attributes of recreational hunters and fishers. Mr Boyle

¹⁰⁶ Answers to supplementary questions, Australian Gun Safety Alliance, 1 September 2025, p 5.

¹⁰⁷ Evidence, Ms Monique Dam, Chief Executive Officer and Board Director, Lucy's Project, 8 August 2025, p 37.

¹⁰⁸ Submission 172, Australasian Injury Prevention Network, pp 1-2.

summarised the paper, entitled 'Killing for Thrills?', as showing 'no scientific justification for linking recreational hunting with domestic violence or mass violence'.¹⁰⁹

- 2.66** When questioned about whether they would be supportive of amendments to the bill that restrict the types of firearms hunters are able to use, or the number of firearms they are allowed to possess, similar to reforms passed in Western Australia, evidence from the Australian Gun Safety Alliance included that there is no cap on the number of firearms a person can own in New South Wales, with police data showing more than 100 gun owners in New South Wales owning at least 89 guns, and two gun owners with over 300 firearms stored in suburban Sydney. The evidence included that 80% of registered firearms are stored in cities, suburbs and large regional towns, and that 76% of people in New South Wales agreeing there should be a cap on the number of guns a person can own, and 70% agreeing that it should be harder to get a gun.¹¹⁰

Stakeholder perspectives on the proposed Conservation Hunting Authority

- 2.67** Inquiry participants expressed strong views on the proposed Conservation Hunting Authority (the Authority) which would replace the existing Game and Pest Management Advisory Board if the bill is passed into law – views detailed in the paragraphs below.
- 2.68** The Authority's proposed functions are detailed in chapter one. As a point of clarification to its proposed remit and purpose, Ms Tara Black of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development confirmed that the bill would not vest the Authority with any regulatory functions, and that the licensing, compliance and mandatory training functions would remain the responsibility of the Department.¹¹¹
- 2.69** In the 2025-26 NSW Budget, the NSW Government allocated \$7.9 million over 2 years to 'establish the Conservation Hunting Authority and support the regulation of additional hunting activity'¹¹². When asked if the NSW Government had ever allocated funding for a private members bill that had not yet passed the NSW Parliament, Ms Tara Black of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, said 'not to my knowledge'.¹¹³
- 2.70** Inquiry participants representing hunters generally lent their support to the proposed establishment of the new Authority. For example, Mr Makim of the Australian Pig Doggers and Hunters Association expressed support for the proposed body, telling the committee it would improve representation and practical hunter input and confirming that his organisation would be open to working with the Authority to coordinate conservation hunting efforts.¹¹⁴
- 2.71** When asked whether it was a concern to the Natural Resources Commission that the proposed Authority would have a statutory requirement to only promote the benefits of recreational

¹⁰⁹ Tabled document, Mr Brian Boyle, *Summary of findings and full report – 'Killing for Thrills' by Dr McPhedran*, 8 August 2025, p 1.

¹¹⁰ Answers to supplementary questions, Australian Gun Safety Alliance, 1 September 2025, p 2. .

¹¹¹ Evidence, Ms Black, 8 August 2025, p 2.

¹¹² Budget Paper No. 1, Budget 2025 – 2026, NSW Government, 24 June 2025, p B-13; Evidence, Ms Black, 8 August 2025, p 6.

¹¹³ Evidence, Ms Black, 8 August 2025, p 5.

¹¹⁴ Evidence, Mr Makim, 8 August 2025, pp 22 and 26.

hunting, rather than examining and distributing evidence in a scientific and non-biased way, the Natural Resources Commission highlighted that they value the provision of transparent science and evidence based independent advice to inform decision making, while acknowledging the value of diverse groups to advocate for their own interests. The evidence from the National Resources Commission was that these two functions should be kept distinct and have clarity of purpose from one another.¹¹⁵

2.72 Evidence from Ms Tara Black about the input on the funding allocations for the proposed Authority was that the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, the NSW Police, and Local land services were consulted with. The Natural Resources Commission was not consulted on the bill, nor, it would appear, on the allocation of funding.¹¹⁶

2.73 By contrast, a number of inquiry participants who spoke in opposition to the bill levelled strong criticism at the proposed Authority, in its proposed composition, functions and policy intent:

- Ms Louise Ward of the Animal Defenders Office considered it 'extremely concerning' that there are no animal welfare representatives on its proposed composition given the direct impact on animals¹¹⁷
- Citing the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Animal Welfare Committee as a parallel example, Ms Kathryn Jurd of RSPCA NSW told the committee the Authority's proposed composition is contrary to how advisory bodies work in similar contexts where a diversity of representation is required by the legislation to ensure different views are presented. Ms Jurd saw the proposed Authority as a departure from this model such that '[i]t's set up so that if there's a vote taken, there's an automatic majority in the hunting representatives because the department representative doesn't have a vote'.¹¹⁸
- Mr Gough of the Invasive Species Council repudiated the proposal, characterising it as a propaganda unit for the shooting lobby and likening it to the now defunct NSW Game Council. He formed the view that 'setting up a four-three voting body funded by taxpayers that is going to be out there doing research, doing public education, doing promotion and engagement on the benefits of hunting for feral animal control when we know there aren't any in terms of recreational hunting. Let's be clear: That is a taxpayer-funded propaganda unit for the shooting lobby, which is exactly what the Game Council was'.¹¹⁹
- This accorded with evidence from Ms Tara Ward of the Animal Defenders Office who told the committee '[i]n its current proposal, it's nothing other than a lobby group for the hunting community. To pretend that it's anything other than that—that's fine, but go and form such an entity privately, not via public law'.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Answers to supplementary questions, Natural Resources Commission, 2 September 2025, p 1.

¹¹⁶ Answers to supplementary questions, Ms Tara Black, Acting Deputy Secretary, Fisheries and Forestry, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, 2 September 2025, p 4; Evidence, Mr Wilde, 8 August 2025, p 29.

¹¹⁷ Evidence, Ms Louise Ward, 8 August 2025, p 71.

¹¹⁸ Evidence, Ms Jurd, 8 August 2025, p 71.

¹¹⁹ Evidence, Mr Gough, 8 August 2025, p 14.

¹²⁰ Evidence, Ms Tara Ward, 8 August 2025 p 72.

- 2.74** Adding to this evidence, Ms Sarah Davies AM of the Alannah and Madeleine Foundation noted her strong objection to the proposed Authority labelling it a 'marketing agency to promote hunting', one dominated by hunting interests in contrast to the existing Game and Pest Management Advisory Board:

[T]he bill unilaterally abolishes the Game and Pest Management Advisory Board without any rationale and installs a new government-funded Conservation Hunting Authority, giving it significant powers, which will effectively be a legislated marketing agency to promote hunting in New South Wales, paid for by taxpayers. At the moment, the advisory board provides government with diverse expert advice from fields of pest management, wildlife, veterinary science, hunting, education et cetera. The new hunting authority, on the other hand, will be chaired and controlled by hunting organisations. Only one position on this authority would come from any sector other than hunting. The New South Wales taxpayers will be paying for it all: paying for the hunters to sit on the board to undertake research into the benefits of hunting and paying for a communications and marketing body for the gun lobby.¹²¹

- 2.75** Mr Wilde of the Natural Resources Commission, focussed on the need for clarity and integrity in the design. He reflected that such an authority can legitimately be created to represent the interests of a single stakeholder, however that purpose should be clear.¹²² Under the circumstances in which a conservation hunting authority had no conservation representatives, Mr Wilde considered that 'either the model itself, the purpose, or the membership would need to be revisited'.¹²³
- 2.76** When asked about the Department's view on the current body, namely the Game and Pest Management Advisory Board, Ms Tara Black described it as 'neutral', further elaborating that while the existing body is operating relatively well, the Department had no objections to the proposed Authority or its functions. Ms Black gave evidence that 'they are broadly similar in terms of the kinds of skills and backgrounds of the people that are on the existing board versus the proposed new authority. The functions are broadly similar as well'.¹²⁴
- 2.77** Evidence from Ms Tara Black indicated that none of the \$7.9 million allocated to the Authority would be directed to invasive species control, because \$4 million would be spent on the establishment of the Authority, and \$3.9 million would be spent on compliance and enforcement functions of the Department.¹²⁵

Enshrining a 'right to hunt'

- 2.78** The bill's proposal to enshrine in legislation a 'right to hunt' was an equally divisive issue, with views polarised between the bill's supporters and opponents.

¹²¹ Evidence, Ms Davies, 8 August 2025, p 36.

¹²² Evidence, Mr Wilde, 8 August 2025, p30.

¹²³ Evidence, Mr Wilde, 8 August 2025, p30.

¹²⁴ Evidence, Ms Black, 8 August 2025, p 7.

¹²⁵ Answers to supplementary questions, Ms Tara Black, Acting Deputy Secretary, Fisheries and Forestry, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, 2 September 2025, p 4.

- 2.79** Hunting advocates spoke of the value of such a right for themselves and their community. Mr Makim described the bill as giving 'form and focus to what we think is a legitimate cultural status'.¹²⁶ He gave evidence that the hunting community is often singled out and subject to criticism in a way that tarnishes the entire community based on the actions of a minority, and that legislating a right to hunt would make hunters feel seen:

When you're in the hunting community, it feels like we're a punching bag, and that the worst elements of what one person did one day will be applied to all of us. It's very demeaning and it's very hurtful to people. [...] Hunters—because animals and hunting and the various views excite such strong emotions in people—can become very obvious targets. What I think something like the right to hunt would do is to say to people, "We see that you exist, and we see that hunting is a legitimate thing to be involved in." We accept it's got to be legal, it's got to be this and that.¹²⁷

- 2.80** Mr Makim elaborated on the potential benefits the proposed right would have for the hunting community in terms of compliance and inclusion, and how that resonates with him personally as a hunter:

If hunting is recognised as a culturally legitimate thing, I think you will have a higher level of compliance with laws and things like that. Not that there's a huge issue now, but you'll have people striving to be more involved in the community rather than seeing themselves as separate. I just think that people have the right to hunt. That rings a bell with me.¹²⁸

- 2.81** Mr Moran, a supporter of the bill, spoke of the cultural importance of hunting for Aboriginal people. He explained that Aboriginal people are currently able to access land to hunt, gather, or recreationally camp on land through a process of asking the local land council 'to negotiate that access through land rights'.¹²⁹ He supposed that the reference to a right to hunt for 'cultural reasons' in the bill 'is to try and ensure that our rights are there for hunting and gathering in any proposed areas'.¹³⁰ While he was not able to vouch for whether the right to hunt for 'cultural reasons' would apply to all people, he explained, 'I can only hope they too could enjoy or understand what we see country as providing. It is the essence of our culture.'¹³¹

- 2.82** Some witnesses, irrespective of their support or reservations concerning the bill, agreed that hunting is a legitimate, valid and valuable recreational activity.¹³²

- 2.83** Ms Black described the Department's view on the right to hunt as 'neutral'.¹³³

¹²⁶ Evidence, Mr Makim, 8 August 2025, p 22.

¹²⁷ Evidence, Mr Makim 8 August 2025, p 25.

¹²⁸ Evidence, Mr Makim, 8 August 2025, p 26.

¹²⁹ Evidence, Mr Nathan Moran, Chief Executive Officer, Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, 8 August 2025, p 45.

¹³⁰ Evidence, Mr Moran, 8 August 2025, p 45.

¹³¹ Evidence, Mr Moran, 8 August 2025, p 46.

¹³² E.g. Evidence, Ms Black, 8 August 2025, p7; Evidence, Mr Buckmaster, 8 August 2025, p 14; Evidence, Mr Wilde, 8 August 2025, p 28.

¹³³ Evidence, Ms Black, 8 August 2025, p 7.

- 2.84** The evidence of the Natural Resources Commission was that a right to hunt, without a coordinated approach between hunters and government programs is not consistent with effective pest animal management.¹³⁴
- 2.85** Some witnesses were questioned about whether any other recreational activities had been given a legislated right, however those witnesses were not able to give an example of any other recreational activity that had such a right.¹³⁵

The operation of the right

- 2.86** Witnesses discussed how the proposed right in the bill could be expected to operate. There were diverging views about the likely interaction of this right with existing laws and regulations, including the National Firearms Agreement.
- 2.87** Representing the NSW Government, Ms Black explained that the right, as set out in the bill, is limited, pointing to the 'important caveats... including that it's not an absolute right, it doesn't override other laws in New South Wales or the Commonwealth and it doesn't overtake other decisions that the Government would make'.¹³⁶
- 2.88** Despite this, some opponents of the bill were concerned that the right may have undesirable effects, either by its incompatibility with the National Firearms Agreement, or by creating unprecedented complexity in its operation.
- 2.89** For instance, Mr Bendle of the Alannah and Madeleine Foundation, drew attention to the preamble of the National Firearms Agreement and the objects of the New South Wales Weapons Act and the New South Wales Firearms Act, which state that 'firearms possession and use is a privilege that is conditional on the overriding need to ensure public safety'.¹³⁷ He believed that the proposed bill breaches this principle, and that the overriding consideration should always be public safety.¹³⁸
- 2.90** Gun Control Australia further expressed similar concerns about how a 'right to hunt' would contravene the underlying principles of the National Firearms Agreement:

The National Firearms Agreement, signed in 1996 by the New South Wales (NSW) Government and constantly reaffirmed as the guiding principle on firearms, states that gun ownership is a privilege, not a right, and is conditional on the overriding principle of public safety... Enshrining a 'right to hunt' in law would be directly contrary to these principles, and signal an intent by the NSW Government to depart from the national firearms safety framework that has reduced gun-related deaths and harm for decades. The existence of the right will undermine the long-established 'genuine reason' bar to obtaining firearms, and make it far easier to obtain a gun in NSW. Further, it does nothing to improve environmental management. Instead, it is a backdoor method to

¹³⁴ Answers to supplementary questions, Natural Resources Commission, 2 September 2025, p 1.

¹³⁵ Evidence, Ms Black, 8 August 2025, p 3; Evidence, Ms Modde, 8 August 2025, p 64; Mr Rob Kelly clarified that the Local Land Services Act allows passive recreational activities on travelling stock reserves (TSRs), Evidence, Mr Kelly, 8 August 2025, p 3.

¹³⁶ Evidence, Ms Black, 8 August 2025, p 3.

¹³⁷ Evidence, Mr Bendle, 8 August 2025, p 39.

¹³⁸ Evidence, Mr Bendle, 8 August 2025, p 41.

dislodging the long-established principle that in Australia, gun ownership is a privilege, not a right.¹³⁹

2.91 Other opponents of the bill highlighted concerns about the legal complexity and ambiguity of the right.¹⁴⁰

- Noting that New South Wales is a 'non-human-rights jurisdiction', Ms Tara Ward warned of the uncertainty around what it means and how it would interact with other laws.¹⁴¹
- Ms Jurd, General Counsel, RSPCA NSW, challenged the description of the right as 'qualified', stating that 'the right exists as it's created, as a right to hunt'. She agreed with Ms Tara Ward that it is not known how the courts would interpret this legislation, noting that a statutory right to hunt is 'unknown to NSW law previously'.¹⁴² Ms Jurd explained further: 'The problem for me, when I was trying to work out how this bill might operate, is that there's not enough within it to know with any certainty what a court would make of it. If those 'rights' start opposing each other, courts are in real trouble—because I would have no confidence in how they would go about interpreting that ambiguity.'¹⁴³
- Mr Bendle of the Alannah and Madeleine Foundation was particularly concerned about the right's possible impact on the police to conduct the fit and proper person test to determine whether someone is entitled to, and can acquire a firearm. In that context, he raised questions about the potential legal concerns that could arise if a person is able to call upon or invoke a legislated right to hunt.¹⁴⁴

2.92 Mr Miller, President of the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (NSW), countered that he did not believe that the right as proposed by the bill would impact the current firearms licencing regime. Drawing on his own experience of the firearms licencing regime, he explained:

The police in New South Wales control the firearms laws and that goes back to the National Firearms Agreement. I sit on the firearms consultative council. The police assistant commissioner manages or chairs that and, in that environment, they're going through the firearms regulations at the moment. I think you'd find that everyone is supportive of firearms regulation in New South Wales—us included, absolutely.¹⁴⁵

Changes to prohibited weapons controls and expansion of 'genuine reasons'

2.93 Witnesses discussed the proposed amendment to allow the holding of a conservation hunting licence as a genuine reason for purchasing, possessing and using prohibited weapons.

2.94 Hunters and shooters in support of this amendment noted the benefits of allowing suppressors to be used in conservation hunting. Mr Ned Makim noted the benefits for the hearing health of

¹³⁹ Submission 180, Gun Control Australia, pp 1 – 2.

¹⁴⁰ E.g. Evidence, Ms Tara Ward, 8 August 2025, p 70; Evidence, Ms Jurd, 8 August 2025, p 70.

¹⁴¹ Evidence, Ms Tara Ward, 8 August 2025, p 70.

¹⁴² Evidence, Ms Jurd, 8 August 2025, p 70.

¹⁴³ Evidence, Ms Jurd, 8 August 2025, p 70.

¹⁴⁴ Evidence, Mr Bendle, 8 August 2025, p 37.

¹⁴⁵ Evidence, Mr Miller, 8 August 2025, p 58.

hunters and shooters, describing it as an 'improvement in workplace health and safety outcomes'.¹⁴⁶

- 2.95** He also argued that the use of suppressors would potentially benefit animal welfare outcomes. He asserted that suppressors 'reduce the amount of flinch in an animal' and allow for 'more shots at a mob of animals, so we think there's a benefit there in terms of animal welfare and in population reduction.'¹⁴⁷In the same vein, Mr Boyle praised the suppressors as a means for increasing kill rates, proposing, '[i]f you really want to get good results, we need suppressors as well, because if you had them combined with suppressors at night, you would kill two or three times the animals.'¹⁴⁸ Mr Andrew Mallen agreed.¹⁴⁹
- 2.96** Concerns from opponents to the bill were raised again about any possible relaxation of laws allowing access to weapons, and the possibility for increased risks for community violence.
- 2.97** Ms Monique Dam, Chief Executive Officer of Lucy's Project, advised the committee that any general increase in access to weapons comes with an increased risk of domestic violence. She was emphatic that extensive research has shown 'that access to weapons, including firearms, in itself does increase the risk of more severe harm and fatal violence'.¹⁵⁰ Ms Dam cautioned that the government should take any steps possible to reduce the risk of harm to women and children, including reducing access to weapons in the first place.¹⁵¹
- 2.98** Some witnesses did not focus their evidence on the amendment to weapons prohibition on the understanding that this amendment would not be successful,¹⁵² and the inquiry heard that the Premier has publicly disavowed of any weakening of New South Wales' gun laws.¹⁵³
- 2.99** In particular, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development highlighted that 'the Premier has made it clear that the Government does not support this bill making changes to firearms or prohibited weapons legislation and the Government has tabled amendments to remove the bill's proposed changes to the Weapons Prohibition Act'.¹⁵⁴ For clarity, a Departmental representative confirmed that the bill does not propose any other changes to weapons and firearms laws in New South Wales.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁶ Evidence, Mr Makim, 8 August 2025, p 22.

¹⁴⁷ Evidence, Mr Makim, 8 August 2025, p 22.

¹⁴⁸ Evidence, Mr Boyle, 8 August 2025, p 60.

¹⁴⁹ Evidence, Mr Mallen, 8 August 2025, p 60.

¹⁵⁰ Evidence, Ms Dam, 8 August 2025, p 37.

¹⁵¹ Evidence, Ms Dam, 8 August 2025, p 37.

¹⁵² Evidence, Ms Sarah Davies AM, Chief Executive Officer, Alannah and Madeleine Foundation, 8 August 2025, p 36.

¹⁵³ Evidence, Ms Black, 8 August 2025, p 2; Evidence, Mr Bendle, 8 August 2025, p 41. See for example, <https://www.news.com.au/national/politics/nsw-premier-chris-minns-praises-port-arthur-response-amid-pressure-over-shooters-reform-bill/news-story/79d611ed0ae4c33c1da4af60b8c2b8ac>.

¹⁵⁴ Evidence, Ms Black, 8 August 2025, p 2.

¹⁵⁵ Evidence, Ms Black, 8 August 2025, p 2.

Committee comment

- 2.100** It is clear to the committee that there are diverse and competing views on the proposed legislation. The committee notes that a variety of interest groups oppose the bill, including public and gun safety, recreation, invasive species and animal welfare groups.
- 2.101** The committee heard that while there is a need for better management of pest control across New South Wales, there was a diversity of views about the role of recreational hunting. Some stakeholders, including hunting organisations, believed there was a role for recreational hunting as part of an effective pest control program. Other stakeholders gave evidence that recreational hunting is not an effective or humane method of animal management.
- 2.102** The committee acknowledges the concerns raised by organisations that increasing hunting in shared public spaces risks pushing other groups out of these spaces, including outdoor school programs. Despite assurances from hunting organisations about safety, the committee acknowledges these concerns are valid given any safety concern could cause community groups to avoid areas used for hunting.
- 2.103** The committee is of the view that this underscores the need for effective coordination that ensures community safety.
- 2.104** The committee heard from shooters and hunters who passionately support the bill as a means of recognising the cultural value of shooting and enabling increased conservation hunting as a means of pest control.
- 2.105** The committee acknowledges that a large number of diverse organisations were strongly concerned about potential safety implications of the bill for humans and non-human animals.
- 2.106** The committee notes and strongly endorses the public statements made by the Premier that the NSW Government does not condone any relaxation of the state's robust gun laws, including the use of silencers and enshrining a right to hunt.
- 2.107** The committee notes that evidence received showed that recreational hunting may not be an effective form of invasive species control in the absence of being part of a strategic, coordinated program delivered through a public lands manager and on an as needs basis.
- 2.108** The committee notes that given the reduced timeframe for witnesses to return answers to questions on notice from 21 days to 14 days, this reduced the timeframe for committee members to consider the post-hearing responses.
- 2.109** The committee recommends that the issues identified by stakeholders and set out in this report be considered by members during the second reading debate.

Recommendation 1

That the Legislative Council consider the issues identified by stakeholders as set out in this report during debate in the House.

Appendix 1 Submissions

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177	Alannah and Madeline Foundation
178	Sentient, The Veterinary Institute of Animal Ethics
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180	Gun Control Australia
181	Invasive Species Council
182	Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) NSW
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187	STEP Inc
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189	Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service (WIRES)
190	Animal Defenders Office
191	Wild Horses Kimberley Inc
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193	State Forest Hunting for Queensland
194	Envoy Foundation
195	Federation of Hunting Clubs
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567	Name suppressed
568	Jennifer Horsburgh
569	Name suppressed
570	Name suppressed
571	Mr Luke Atkins
572	Name suppressed
573	Name suppressed
574	Name suppressed
575	Mr Amritpal Singh
576	Ms Lesley Killen
577	Name suppressed
578	Dr Lynette Eggleston
579	Mr Chris Ross
580	Sylvia Cooper
581	Ms Dianne Craig
582	Name suppressed
583	Mrs Yvonne Lollback
584	Ms Sita Parsons
585	Mrs Karen Johnson
586	Mr Kevin Rodwell
587	Name suppressed

No.	Author
588	Mr Bradley Wilksch
589	Confidential
590	Mr Wayde Yaxley
591	Mrs Lorraine Vass
592	Mrs Jennifer Valentine
593	Mr Anthony Leaf-Milham
594	Lorna Crawford
595	Name suppressed
596	Name suppressed
597	Mr Mary Forbes
598	Mr Murray Sharp
599	Name suppressed
600	Name suppressed
601	Ms Amber Forrest-Bisley
602	Ms Elise Catterall
603	Miss Emily McCallum
604	Ms Zahia Chaaban
605	Name suppressed
606	Name suppressed
607	Mr Paul Obern
608	Name suppressed
609	Confidential
610	Name suppressed
611	Miss Valeria Luongo
612	Ms Rebecca Jenner
613	Name suppressed
614	Name suppressed
615	Animals Australia
1-258	Bulk processed short submissions <i>public</i>
259-735	Bulk processed short submissions <i>name suppressed</i>
736-952	Bulk processed short submissions <i>public</i>

Appendix 2 Witnesses at Hearings

Date	Name	Position and Organisation
Friday, 8 August 2025 Macquarie Room, Parliament House, Sydney	Ms Tara Black	A/Deputy Secretary, Fisheries & Forestry, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
	Mr Richard Varvel	Director, Forestry & Hunting Regulation, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
	Mr Rob Kelly	Executive Director, Delivery, Local Land Services, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
	Mr Jack Gough	Chief Executive Officer, Invasive Species Council
	Mr Rob Brewster	Rewilding Program Manager, Invasive Species Council
	Dr Tony Buckmaster	Principal RD&E Manager, Centre for Invasive Species Solutions
	Mr Ned Makim	President, Australian Pig Doggers and Hunters Association
	Mr Bryce Wilde	Executive Director, Natural Resources Commission
	Dr Ben Russell	Associate Director, Natural Resources Commission
	Ms Sarah Davies AM	Chief Executive Officer, Alannah & Madeline Foundation
	Mr Stephen Bendle	Convenor, Australian Gun Safety Alliance and Senior Advocacy Advisor, Alannah & Madeline Foundation
	Ms Monique Dam	CEO and Board Director, Lucy's Project
	Mr Nathan Moran	CEO, Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council
	Mr Lance Miller	Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (NSW)
	Mr Peter Szaak	Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (NSW)
	Mr Brian Gerard Boyle	Hunter with 50 years hunting, and deer biology research, hunting management and parks and wildlife management background
	Mr Andrew Mallen	Assistant Vice President, Australian Hunters International

Date	Name	Position and Organisation
	Ms Lori Modde	Chief Executive Officer, Outdoors NSW
	Ms Kathryn Jurd	General Counsel, RSPCA NSW
	Dr Suzie Fowler	Chief Science Officer, RSPCA Australia
	Ms Louise Ward	Programs Lead, Four Paws Australia
	Ms Tara Ward	Managing Solicitor (volunteer), Animal Defenders Office
	Ms Kristina Vesk	Chief Executive Officer, Cat Protection Society of NSW

Appendix 3 Minutes

Minutes no. 35

Friday 27 June 2025

Standing Committee on State Development

Room 1043, Parliament House, Sydney and via videoconference at 4.20 pm

1. Members

Ms Suvaal, *Chair*

Mr Barrett (*Deputy Chair*) (via videoconference)

Mr Buttigieg

Ms Faehrmann (via videoconference)

Mr Farlow

Ms Hurst

Mr Lawrence

Mr Primrose

2. Apologies

Mr Borsak (participating for the inquiry into the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025)

Ms Higginson (substituting for Ms Faehrmann for the inquiry into the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025)

3. Draft minutes

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Farlow: That draft minutes no. 34 be confirmed.

4. Correspondence

Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

Received:

- 21 February 2025 – Letter from the Hon Ron Hoenig MP, Minister for Local Government, advising that the government will not be in a position to provide a government response to the inquiry into the ability of local governments to fund infrastructure and services by the due date 28 February 2025
- 23 April 2025 – Letter of appreciation from Mr Adrian Butler, General Manager, Federation Council, for the committee's report into the ability of local governments to fund infrastructure and services
- 6 May 2025 – Letter from the Hon Ron Hoenig MP, Minister for Local Government, attaching the Government's response to the report into the ability of local governments to fund infrastructure and services
- 25 June 2025 – Email from Office of Cate Faehrmann, to Secretariat, advising that Ms Higginson will be substituting for Ms Faehrmann for the duration of the inquiry into the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025 (*attached*)
- 25 June 2025 – Email from Hon Robert Borsak MLC, to Secretariat, advising that he will be a participating member of the inquiry into Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025, and will also make a submission.

5. Inquiry into Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill 2025

5.1 Terms of reference

The committee noted the following resolution of the House establishing the committee, which reads as follows:

- (1) That the Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill 2025 be referred to the Standing Committee on State Development for inquiry and report.
- (2) That the committee report by 4 August 2025.

5.2 Proposed timeline

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Farlow: That the committee adopt the following timeline for the administration of the inquiry:

- 8 July 2025 – closing date for submissions
- 15 July 2025 – hearing
- 28 July 2025 – circulation of chair's draft report
- 31 July 2025 – report deliberative
- 4 August 2025 – report tabling.

5.3 Stakeholder list

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Hurst: That the following stakeholders be invited to make a submission:

- Local Government New South Wales (LGNSW)
- NSW Electoral Commission
- Office of Local Government NSW
- Local governments in New South Wales
- Registered political parties for Local Government Elections (available on the NSW Electoral Commission website)
- Country Mayors Association.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Hurst: That:

- members be provided with the opportunity to nominate additional stakeholders to make a submission within 24 hrs from circulation of the stakeholder list and
- the committee agree to additional stakeholders by email, unless a meeting of the committee is required to resolve any disagreement.

5.4 Hearing witness list

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Faehrmann: That the following stakeholders be invited to appear as a witness to give evidence:

- Local Government New South Wales (LGNSW)
- NSW Electoral Commission
- Office of Local Government NSW
- Panel of NSW Labor, NSW Liberal, NSW Greens.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Faehrmann: That:

- members be provided with the opportunity to nominate further hearing witnesses within 24 hrs from circulation of the witness list and that the committee agree to additional witnesses by email, unless a meeting of the committee is required to resolve any disagreement
- additional witnesses nominated by members be kept to a minimum.

5.5 Post hearing responses

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Farlow: That:

- transcript corrections, clarifications to evidence and additional information be provided within 48 hours of the receipt of the transcript by the witness
- questions taken on notice be provided within 48 hours of the receipt of the transcript by the witness
- there be no supplementary questions lodged by members.

5.6 Chairs draft report

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Farlow: That, owing to the timeframes:

- the secretariat prepare a limited report
- the report be distributed less than 7 days prior to the deliberative.

6. Inquiry into the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025

6.1 Terms of reference

The committee noted the following resolution of the House establishing the committee, which reads as follows:

- (1) That the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025 be referred to the Standing Committee on State Development for inquiry and report.
- (2) That the committee report by 10 October 2025.

6.2 Stakeholder list

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Hurst: That:

- the secretariat circulate to the members the Chair's proposed list of stakeholders to be invited to make a submission
- members have two days from when the Chair's proposed list is circulated to make amendments or nominate additional stakeholders
- the committee agree to the stakeholder list by email, unless a meeting of the committee is required to resolve any disagreement.

6.3 Proposed timeline

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Lawrence: That the committee adopt the following timeline for the administration of the inquiry:

- 4 August 2025 – closing date for submissions
- 8 and 11 August 2025 – hearings
- 8 September 2025 – report deliberative.

7. Adjournment

The committee adjourned at 4.51 pm, *sine die*.

Jessie Halligan
Committee Clerk

Minutes no. 36

Tuesday 15 July 2025

Standing Committee on State Development

Macquarie Room, Parliament House, Sydney at 9.04 am

1. Members present

Ms Suvaal, *Chair*

Ms Faehrmann (from 9.27 am until 11.40 am, from 4.52 pm)

Mr Lawrence (until 10.23 am, from 12.49 pm until 1.00 pm, from 2.36 pm until 2.50 pm)

Mr Nanva (via videoconference, substituting for Mr Buttigieg)

Mr Primrose

Mrs Overall (substituting for Mr Barrett for the duration of the inquiry into Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill 2025) (from 9.12 am)

Mr Tudehope (substituting for Mr Farlow) (until 3.34 pm)

2. Apologies

Ms Hurst

3. Previous minutes

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Lawrence: That draft minutes no. 35 be confirmed.

4. Correspondence

The committee noted the following items of correspondence:

Received:

- 1 July 2025 – Email from Cooper Gannon, Opposition Whip's Advisor, advising that the Hon Nichole Overall MLC will substitute for the Hon Scott Barrett MLC the duration of the inquiry into Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill 2025
- 10 July 2025 - Email from Mr Stephen Bendle, Advocacy Advisor, Alannah & Madeline Foundation, advising the committee that the Foundation would like to appear at a public hearing, and are available to appear at Game and Feral Animal Legislation (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025 public hearing scheduled for Friday 8 August 2025
- 12 July 2025 – Email from Councillor Danielle Maltman, Port Macquarie Hastings Council, to the secretariat, declining an invitation to appear at a public hearing on Tuesday 15 July 2025 for the inquiry into Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill 2025
- 14 July 2025 – Email from Mr Scott Gray, Chief Operating Officer, Wagga Wagga City Council, to the secretariat declining an invitation to appear at a public hearing on Tuesday 15 July 2025 for the inquiry into Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill 2025
- 14 July 2025 – Email from Jade Setter, Executive Assistant to General Manager, Cumberland City Council, to the secretariat declining an invitation to appear at a public hearing on Tuesday 15 July 2025 for the inquiry into Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill 2025.

5. Inquiry into Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill 2025**5.1 Election of Deputy Chair**

The Chair called for nominations for Deputy Chair for the duration of the hearing.

Mr Tudehope moved: That Mrs Overall be elected Deputy Chair of the committee for the duration of the hearing.

There being no further nominations, the Chair declared Mrs Overall elected Deputy Chair.

5.2 Public submissions

The committee noted the following submissions were published by the committee clerk under the authorisation of the resolution appointing the committee: submission nos. 1-23 and 26-48.

5.3 Public hearing

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Tudehope: That the allocation of questions to be asked at the hearing be left in the hands of the Chair.

Witnesses, the public and the media were admitted.

The Chair made an opening statement regarding the broadcasting of proceedings and other matters.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Cr Phyllis Miller OAM, President, Local Government NSW
- Mr David Reynolds, Chief Executive, Local Government NSW

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Mr George Simon, Assistant General Secretary, NSW Labor
- Mr Chris Stone, State Director, The Liberal Party of Australia, NSW Division
- Mr Seamus Lee, Registered Officer, NSW Greens

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witness was sworn and examined:

- Mr Ben Raue, Independent election analyst, The Tally Room

The evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Mr Lachlan Gunn, Acting General Manager, Fairfield City Council (via videoconference)
- Mrs Sonja Drca, Executive Manager, Fairfield City Council (via videoconference)

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Dr Julia Cornwell McKean, Mayor, Berrigan Shire Council (via videoconference)
- Ms Karina Ewer, Chief Executive Officer, Berrigan Shire Council (via videoconference)

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Cr Rodney Pryor, Councillor, Mid-Western Regional Council (via videoconference)
- Cr Ally Dench, Councillor, Wollondilly Shire Council

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Ms Rachel McCallum, Electoral Commissioner NSW, NSW Electoral Commission
- Ms Andrea Summerell, Executive Director Elections, NSW Electoral Commission

The following witness was sworn and examined:

- Mr Brett Whitworth, Deputy Secretary, Office of Local Government, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

The evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

The public hearing concluded at 4.17 pm.

The public and the media withdrew

6. Next meeting

10.00 am Thursday 31 July Room 1136, Parliament House (inquiry into the Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill 2025 report deliberative).

7. Adjournment

The committee adjourned at 4.17 pm, *sine die*.

Madeleine Dowd
Committee Clerk

Minutes no. 38

Friday 8 August 2025

Standing Committee on State Development

Macquarie room, Parliament House, Sydney at 9.16 am

1. Members present

Ms Suvaal *Chair*

Mr Barrett *Deputy Chair*

Mr Borsak (participating)

Mr Buttigieg (via videoconference)

Ms Higginson

Ms Hurst

Mr Lawrence

Mrs MacDonald (substituting for Mr Farlow until 1.00 pm)

Mr Primrose

2. Correspondence

The committee noted the following items of correspondence:

Received

- 15 July 2025 – Email from Ms Leanne O'Reilly, Submissions Coordinator, NSW Young Lawyers Animal Law Sub-Committee, to secretariat, requesting a submission extension
- 28 July 2025 – Email from Ms Stephanie Elliott, Chair, Gun Control Australia, to secretariat, requesting to appear on Monday 11 August 2025
- 2 August 2025 – Email from Ms Amanda M. Passeri, to secretariat, asking for feedback on Central Station Railway Square matter
- 5 August 2025 – Email from Kim Schwindke, Landcare NSW, declining an invitation to appear at the hearing on Friday 8 August 2025
- 6 August 2025 – Email from Dr Rosemary Elliott, Sentient, declining an invitation to appear at the hearing on Friday 8 August 2025
- 6 August 2025 – Email from Rhiannon Heath, Environmental Policy Advisor, NSW Farmers, declining the invitation to appear at the hearing on Friday 8 August 2025
- 6 August 2025 – Email from Lis Ashby, Policy and Innovation Lead, Biodiversity Council, declining invitation to appear at the hearing on Friday 8 August 2025
- 6 August 2025 – Email from Deyi Wu, Whip's Adviser, Office of the Hon Chris Rath MLC, advising that the Hon Aileen MacDonald MLC will substitute for the Hon Scott Farlow MLC at the hearing on Friday 8 August from the start of the hearing until 1.00 pm

- 6 August 2025 – Email from Sarah Boyle, Policy and Advocacy Manager, Domestic Violence NSW, advising that Domestic Violence is unable to attend the hearing on Friday 8 August 2025 and suggesting that Monique Dam, Lucy's Project, attend in their place
- 6 August 2025 – Email from Sharon Close, Acting Manager, Strategy and Policy, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, advising that the NSWALC will not likely be able to appear at the hearing on Friday 8 August 2025
- 7 August 2025 – Email from Mr Daniel Spears, Vice Chairman, Federation of Hunting Clubs, informing the secretariat that he will no longer be attending the hearing on Friday 8 August 2025
- 7 August 2025 – Email from Mr Tony Buckmaster, Principal RD&E Manager, Centre for Invasive Species Solutions, informing the secretariat that Mr Greg Mifsud will no longer be appearing at the hearing on Friday 8 August 2025.

Sent

- 21 July 2025 – Email from the secretariat to Ms Leanne O'Reilly, Submissions Coordinator, NSW Young Lawyers Animal Law Sub-Committee, informing the Chair has approved an extension until 11 August 2025.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Primrose, that the committee keep confidential the correspondence from Ms Amanda M. Passeri to secretariat, asking for feedback on Central Station Railway Square matter, dated 2 August 2025.

3. Inquiry into the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025

3.1 Public submissions

The committee noted that the following submissions were published by the committee clerk under the authorisation of the resolution appointing the committee: submission nos. 1, 3, 4, 7 - 10, 12, 14 - 16, 19 -23, 27, 29 - 32, 24, 36, 37, 39, 43, 45, 46, 48 - 54, 56 -58, 60, 62, 63, 69, 73 - 78, 80.

3.2 Public submissions

The committee considered the following submissions for publication: submission nos. 160, 166, 169, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 190, 192, 195 and 213.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Hurst: That the committee authorise the publication of submission nos. 160, 166, 169, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 190, 192, 195 and 213.

3.3 Partially confidential submissions

The committee noted that the following submissions were partially published by the committee clerk under the authorisation of the resolution appointing the committee: submission nos. 2, 5, 6, 9, 11, 13, 17 - 18, 24, 26, 28, 33, 35, 38, 40 - 42, 44, 47, 55, 59, 61, 64, 65, 67, 68, 70 - 72 and 79.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Barrett: That the committee keep the following information confidential, as per the request of the author: names and/or identifying and sensitive information in submissions nos. 2, 5, 6, 9, 11, 13, 17 - 18, 24, 26, 28, 33, 35, 38, 40 - 42, 44, 47, 55, 59, 61, 64, 65, 67, 68, 70 - 72 and 79.

3.4 Partially confidential submissions

The committee considered the following submission for partial confidentiality: submission no. 175.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Primrose: That the committee authorise the publication of submission no. 175 with the exception of identifying and/or sensitive information which are to remain confidential, as per the recommendation of the secretariat.

3.5 Short submissions

The committee noted that it agreed by email that all submissions from individuals 250 words or less in length will:

- have an individual submission number, and be published with the author's name or as name suppressed, or kept confidential, according to the author's request
- be reviewed by the secretariat for adverse mention and sensitive/identifying information, in accordance with practice
- be channelled into one single document to be published on the inquiry website.

The following short submissions were published by the committee clerk under the authorisation of the resolution appointing the committee: 1 – 258.

The following submissions were partially published by the committee clerk under the authorisation of the resolution appointing the committee: 259 – 507.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Lawrence: That the committee keep the following information confidential, as per the request of the author: names and/or identifying and sensitive information in short submissions nos. 259 – 507.

3.6 Pro formas

The committee noted that the secretariat has received more than 1000 submissions that are pro formas.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Lawrence: That the secretariat publish one copy of each pro forma only, noting how many of each type of pro forma was submitted.

Sequence of questions

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Primrose: That the sequence of questions to be asked at the hearing is to alternate between opposition, crossbench and government members, in that order, with equal time allocated to each.

Questions on notice and supplementary questions

Mr Primrose moved: That witnesses be requested to return answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions within 14 calendar days of the date on which questions are forwarded to the witness.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Ms Suvaal, Mr Buttigieg, Mr Lawrence, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Barrett, Ms Higginson, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald.

Question resolved in the affirmative on the casting vote of the Chair.

3.7 Public hearing

Witnesses, the public and the media were admitted.

The Chair made an opening statement regarding the broadcasting of proceedings and other matters.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Ms Tara Black, A/Deputy Secretary, Fisheries & Forestry, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
- Mr Richard Varvel, Director, Forestry & Hunting Regulation, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
- Mr Rob Kelly, Executive Director, Delivery, Local Land Services, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Mr Jack Gough, Chief Executive Officer, Invasive Species Council
- Mr Rob Brewster, Rewilding Program Manager, Invasive Species Council
- Dr Tony Buckmaster, Principal RD&E Manager, Centre for Invasive Species Solutions (via videoconference).

Mr Rob Brewster tendered the following document: Notes of evidence from senior staff member of NSW Forestry.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witness was sworn and examined:

- Mr Ned Makim, President, Australian Pig Doggers and Hunters Association.

The evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Mr Bryce Wilde, Executive Director, Natural Resources Commission
- Dr Ben Russell, Associate Director, Natural Resources Commission.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Ms Sarah Davies AM, Chief Executive Officer, Alannah & Madeline Foundation
- Mr Stephen Bendle, Convenor, Australian Gun Safety Alliance and Senior Advocacy Advisor, Alannah & Madeline Foundation
- Ms Monique Dam, CEO and Board Director, Lucy's Project (via videoconference).

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witness was sworn and examined:

- Mr Nathan Moran, CEO, Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council.

Mr Moran tendered the following document: Letter outlining evidence to the committee.

The evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Mr Lance Miller, Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (NSW)
- Mr Peter Szaak, Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (NSW)
- Mr Brian Gerard Boyle, Hunter with 50 years hunting, and deer biology research, hunting management and parks and wildlife management background

- Mr Andrew Mallen, Assistant Vice President, Australian Hunters International.

Mr Mallen tendered the following documents:

- Research paper entitled 'Canada geese - a new incursion into Australia'
- Previous Game Council submission to the former Minister for Primary Industries

Mr Boyle tendered the following documents:

- UTS research paper entitled 'A systematic review and meta analysis of the ecological effects of Australian deer'
- Summary of findings from 'Killing for thrills', by Samara McPhedran

Mr Miller tendered the following document: Research paper entitled 'An investigation into the use of sound moderators on firearms for game and feral management in NSW'.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witness was sworn and examined:

- Ms Lori Modde, Chief Executive Officer, Outdoors NSW.

Ms Modde tendered the following document: Excerpt from Annual Report, Outdoors NSW, undated.

The evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Ms Kathryn Jurd, General Counsel, RSPCA NSW
- Dr Suzie Fowler, Chief Science Officer, RSPCA Australia (via videoconference)
- Ms Louise Ward, Programs Lead, Four Paws Australia
- Ms Tara Ward, Managing Solicitor (volunteer), Animal Defenders Office
- Ms Kristina Vesk, Chief Executive Officer, Cat Protection Society of NSW.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The public hearing concluded at 5.30 pm.

The public and the media withdrew.

Tabled documents

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Barrett: That the committee accept and publish the following documents tendered during the public hearing, subject to the secretariat checking the documents for adverse mention and sensitive/identifying information:

- Evidence from senior staff member of NSW Forestry Corporation, tendered by Mr Rob Brewster, Rewilding Program Manager, Invasive Species Council
- Letter outlining evidence to the committee, tendered by Mr Nathan Moran, Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council
- Research paper entitled 'Canada geese - a new incursion into Australia', tendered by Mr Andrew Mallen, Assistant Vice President, Australian Hunters International
- Previous Game Council submission to the former Minister for Primary Industries, tendered by Mr Andrew Mallen, Assistant Vice President, Australian Hunters International
- UTS research paper entitled 'A systematic review and meta analysis of the ecological effects of Australian deer', tendered by Mr Brian Boyle, Hunter with 50 years hunting, and deer biology research, hunting management and parks and wildlife management background

- Summary of findings from 'Killing for thrills', by Samara McPhedran, tendered by Mr Brian Boyle, Hunter with 50 years hunting, and deer biology research, hunting management and parks and wildlife management background
- Research paper entitled 'An investigation into the use of sound moderators on firearms for game and feral management in NSW', tendered by Mr Lance Miller, Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (NSW)
- Excerpt from Annual Report, Outdoors NSW, undated, tendered by Ms Lori Modde, CEO, Outdoors NSW.

4. **Adjournment**

The committee adjourned at 5.35 pm until 10.00 am on Monday 8 September 2025, Room 1043, Parliament House (report deliberative for the inquiry into the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025).

Verity Smith

Committee Clerk

Draft minutes no. 39

Monday 8 September 2025

Standing Committee on State Development

Room 1043, Parliament House, Sydney at 10.05 am

1. **Members present**

Ms Suvaal, *Chair*

Mr Barrett *Deputy Chair*

Mr Borsak (participating)

Mr Buttigieg (via teleconference until 12.26 pm)

Mr Farlow (until 12.26 pm)

Ms Higginson

Ms Hurst

Mr Lawrence (via videoconference)

Mr Primrose (via videoconference)

2. **Previous minutes**

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Barrett: That draft minutes no 38 be confirmed.

3. **Correspondence**

The committee noted the following items of correspondence:

Received

- 9 August 2025 –Email from Witness A to the secretariat drawing attention to correspondence Witness A received following their appearance before the committee for the inquiry into the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025
- 1 September 2025 – Letter from Mr Anshul Chaudhary, Chief Executive Officer, Forestry Corporation of NSW, to the secretariat responding to evidence from the 8 August 2025 hearing
- 2 September 2025 – Letter from Mr Bryce Wilde, Executive Director, Natural Resources Commission, to the Chair providing clarification to his evidence at the hearing for the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025 hearing on 8 August 2025

- 5 September 2025 – Email from Ms Louise Ward, Programs Lead, FOUR PAWS Australia, to the Chair making a formal complaint regarding misuse of inquiry footage
- 5 September 2025 - Email from Ms Tara Ward, Managing Solicitor, Animal Defenders Office, to the secretariat making a complaint regarding misuse of inquiry footage.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Farlow: That:

- The committee keep the correspondence from Witness A regarding an email received following their appearance before the committee, dated 9 August 2025, confidential, as per the request of the author.
- The committee publish the correspondence from Mr Anshul Chaudhary, Chief Executive Officer, Forestry Corporation of NSW, responding to evidence from the 8 August 2025 hearing, dated 1 September 2025.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Hurst: That, in relation to the social media post of 15 August 2025 on the Hon Mark Banasiak's various social media platforms featuring still images of Ms Kathryn Jurd, Ms Tara Ward, Ms Louise Ward and Ms Kristina Vesk from their appearance on 8 August 2025:

- the committee authorises the Chair to write to the Hon Mark Banasiak MLC:
 - drawing his attention to clause 5 of the Broadcast of Proceedings resolution adopted by the House on 18 October 2007 and amended on 19 October 2022, regarding the use of hearing photography and/or footage
 - drawing his attention to paragraph 19 of the Procedural Fairness resolution requiring witnesses to be treated with courtesy at all times
 - requesting that the post be removed from all social media platforms and inviting the Hon Mark Banasiak MLC to apologise to the individuals.
- in response to their complaints, the Chair writes to Ms Tara Ward, Ms Louise Ward, Ms Kathryn Jurd and Ms Kristina Vesk advising them that the committee has considered the matter and has asked the Hon Mark Banasiak MLC to remove the post from all social media platforms, and reminded committee members of their obligations under the Broadcasting and Procedural Fairness resolutions.

4. Inquiry into the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025

4.1 Public submissions

The committee noted that the following submissions were published by the committee clerk under the authorisation of the resolution appointing the committee: submission nos. 10a, 82, 83, 89, 90, 92 - 105, 107 - 109, 111, 112, 114 - 118, 120, 123, 130, 135 - 139, 145, 147, 152, 158, 159, 161 - 163, 167, 168, 170, 171 - 174, 176, 184 - 189, 191, 193, 194, 196, 197-202, 203, 205, 207 - 211, 215, 217, 219, 223, 227, 228, 230, 235, 239, 242, 244, 245, 247 - 252, 254 - 260, 262, 265, 267 - 272, 274, 275, 277, 278, 281, 285, 287, 289, 291, 292, 294, 295, 297, 298 - 300, 304 - 307, 309 - 315, 318, 320, 323 - 327, 330, 331, 334, 335, 337 - 339, 341 - 346, 348, 350, 352, 354, 359 - 361, 367 - 369, 371 - 375, 378 - 382, 384, 386 - 390, 393 - 399, 401 - 407, 409, 411 - 413, 415, 417, 423 - 427, 430, 432, 434, 436, 438 - 442, 445, 447 - 449, 452, 453, 457, 458, 460, 461, 464, 465, 466, 472, 473, 476, 477, 481, 482, 483, 484, 486, 487, 489, 490, 491, 495, 497, 497A, 503, 504, 507, 508, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 519, 520, 524, 525, 529, 532, 535, 536, 537, 543, 544, 545, 547, 549, 550, 552, 554, 556, 557, 560, 562, 566, 568, 571, 575, 576, 578, 579, 580, 581, 583, 584, 585, 586, 588, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 597, 598, 601, 602, 603, 604, 607, 611, 612 and 615.

4.2 Name suppressed submissions

The committee noted the following submissions were partially published by the committee clerk under the authorisation of the resolution appointing the committee: submission nos. 81, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 91, 106, 110, 113, 119, 121, 122, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 131, 132, 133, 134, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 146, 148, 149, 150, 151, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 164, 165, 206, 214, 216, 218, 220, 221, 222, 224, 225, 226, 229, 231, 232, 233, 234, 238, 241, 243, 246, 253, 261, 263, 264, 266, 273, 276, 279, 280, 282 - 284, 286, 290, 293, 296, 301 - 303, 308, 316, 317, 319, 321, 322, 328, 329, 336, 340, 347, 349, 353, 355, 356, 358, 362 - 366, 370, 376, 377, 383, 385, 391, 392, 400, 408, 410, 414, 418, 419, 421, 422, 428, 429, 431, 433, 435, 437, 443, 444, 450, 451, 454, 455, 459, 462, 463, 467, 468, 469, 471, 474, 478, 479, 480, 485, 488, 492, 493, 494, 496, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 505, 506, 509, 511, 512, 518, 521, 522, 523, 526, 528, 530, 531, 533, 534, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 546, 548, 551, 553, 555, 559, 561, 563, 564, 565, 567, 569, 570, 572, 573, 574, 577, 582, 587, 595, 596, 599, 600, 605, 606, 608, 610, 613 and 614.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Farlow: That the committee keep the following information confidential, as per the request of the author: names and/or identifying and sensitive information in submissions nos. 81, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 91, 106, 110, 113, 119, 121, 122, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 131, 132, 133, 134, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 146, 148, 149, 150, 151, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 164, 165, 206, 214, 216, 218, 220, 221, 222, 224, 225, 226, 229, 231, 232, 233, 234, 238, 241, 243, 246, 253, 261, 263, 264, 266, 273, 276, 279, 280, 282 - 284, 286, 290, 293, 296, 301 - 303, 308, 316, 317, 319, 321, 322, 328, 329, 336, 340, 347, 349, 353, 355, 356, 358, 362 - 366, 370, 376, 377, 383, 385, 391, 392, 400, 408, 410, 414, 418, 419, 421, 422, 428, 429, 431, 433, 435, 437, 443, 444, 450, 451, 454, 455, 459, 462, 463, 467, 468, 469, 471, 474, 478, 479, 480, 485, 488, 492, 493, 494, 496, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 505, 506, 509, 511, 512, 518, 521, 522, 523, 526, 528, 530, 531, 533, 534, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 546, 548, 551, 553, 555, 559, 561, 563, 564, 565, 567, 569, 570, 572, 573, 574, 577, 582, 587, 595, 596, 599, 600, 605, 606, 608, 610, 613 and 614.

4.3 Partially confidential submissions

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Hurst: That the committee authorise the publication of submissions nos. 416, 475 and 527 with the exception of identifying and/or sensitive information which are to remain confidential, as per the recommendation of the secretariat.

4.4 Confidential submissions

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Barrett: That the committee keep submission nos. 204, 212, 237, 240, 288, 332, 333, 351, 357, 420, 446, 456, 470, 510, 558, 589 and 609 confidential, as per the request of the authors.

4.5 Answers to questions on notice, supplementary questions and additional information

The committee noted that the following answers to questions on notice, supplementary questions and additional information were published by the committee clerk under the authorisation of the resolution appointing the committee:

- Mr Brian Gerard Boyle, Hunter with 50 years hunting, and deer biology research, hunting management and parks and wildlife management background, received 21 August 2025
- Mr Stephen Bendle, Convenor, Australian Gun Safety Alliance and Senior Advocacy Advisor, Alannah & Madeline Foundation, received 1 September 2025
- Ms Tara Black, A/Deputy Secretary, Fisheries & Forestry, Mr Richard Varvel, Director, Forestry & Hunting Regulation, and Mr Rob Kelly, Executive Director, Delivery, Local Land Services, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, received 2 September 2025

- Dr Tony Buckmaster, Principal RD&E Manager, Centre for Invasive Species Solutions, received 2 September 2025
- Mr Bryce Wilde, Executive Director, and Dr Ben Russell Associate Director, Natural Resources Commission, received 2 September 2025
- Ms Monique Dam, CEO and Board Director, Lucy's Project, received 2 September 2025
- Mr Jack Gough, CEO, and Mr Rob Brewster, Rewilding Program Manager, Invasive Species Council, received 2 September 2025
- Mr Ned Makim, President, Australian Pig Doggers and Hunters Association, received 2 September 2025.

4.6 Transcript clarifications – 8 August 2025 – Mr Bryce Wilde

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Farlow: That the committee authorise:

- the publication of Mr Wilde's letter clarifying his evidence
- the insertion to page 28 of the transcript of evidence from 8 August 2025 providing a hyperlink to Mr Wilde's correspondence.

4.7 Short submissions

The committee noted that it agreed by email that all submissions from individuals 250 words or less in length will:

- have an individual submission number, and be published with the author's name or as name suppressed, or kept confidential, according to the author's request
- be reviewed by the secretariat for adverse mention and sensitive/identifying information, in accordance with practice
- be channelled into one single document to be published on the inquiry website.

The committee noted that the following short submissions were published by the committee clerk under the authorisation of the resolution appointing the committee: 736 – 952.

The committee noted that the following submissions were partially published by the committee clerk under the authorisation of the resolution appointing the committee: 508 – 735.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Barrett: That the committee keep the following information confidential, as per the request of the author: names and/or identifying and sensitive information in short submissions nos. 508 - 735.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Barrett: That the committee keep short submissions nos. 953 – 979 confidential, as per the request of the authors.

4.8 Pro forma

The committee noted that the following pro forma was published by the committee clerk under the authorisation of the resolution appointing the committee, noting that 1,060 copies of the pro forma were received by the inquiry: pro forma A.

4.9 Conduct of inquiry

The committee noted that it agreed via email on 7 August 2025 to the following changes to the agreed witness list for the hearing on 8 August 2025:

- that, in lieu of a representative of Domestic Violence NSW, Ms Monique Dam, Chief Executive Officer and Board Director, Lucy's Project, be invited to appear
- that the Chief Science Officer, RSPCA Australia be invited to appear alongside the General Counsel of RSPCA NSW.

5. Consideration of the Chair's draft report

The Chair submitted her draft report entitled 'Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025', which, having been previously circulated, was taken as being read.

Chapter 1

Ms Higginson moved: That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 1.4:

'Under section 20 of the *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002*, the responsible Minister for the land may declare it open for licensed game hunting. Before doing so, the Minister must give public notice of the proposed declaration. In making the declaration, the Minister must consider safety, the rights of other land users, plans of management or other documents relating to the use or management of the land, and any recommendations from the land manager and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.' [FOOTNOTE: Answers to supplementary questions, Mr Richard Varvel, Director, Forestry & Hunting Regulation, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, 2 September 2025, p 1]

Mr Barrett moved: That the motion of Ms Higginson be amended by inserting at the end: 'Once these requirements are satisfied and the land manager has assessed its suitability, the land can then be opened for general hunting.'

Amendment of Mr Barrett put and passed.

Original question of Ms Higginson, as amended, put and passed.

Ms Higginson moved: That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 1.4:

'A declaration may be subject to conditions and does not itself allow hunting. Hunters are required to obtain an R-licence and must obtain written permission from the Department prior to hunting.' [FOOTNOTE: Answers to supplementary questions, Mr Richard Varvel, Director, Forestry & Hunting Regulation, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, 2 September 2025, p 1]

Question put and passed.

Ms Higginson moved: That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 1.5:

'The expansion of programs like the National Parks and Wildlife Service's Supplementary Pest Control Program, that involves volunteer shooters in a planned and strategic role alongside other professional methods, could be undertaken under the existing legislation.' [FOOTNOTE: Answers to supplementary questions, Natural Resources Commission, 2 September 2025, p 1]

Question put and passed.

Ms Hurst moved: That paragraph 1.7 be omitted: 'Mr Borsak highlighted the significance of hunting as a cultural activity for Indigenous and non-Indigenous hunters, as they both 'share a deep connection to the land and to the wildlife they hunt'. He also noted the positive economic impact of hunting, particularly in regional and rural areas, stating that 'recreation and conservation hunters contribute over half a billion dollars to the New South Wales economy'.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Ms Higginson, Ms Hurst.

Noes: Mr Barrett, Mr Buttigieg, Mr Farlow, Mr Lawrence, Mr Primrose, Ms Suvaal.

Question resolved in the negative.

Ms Higginson moved: 'That paragraph 1.7 be amended by inserting 'in his second reading speech' after 'He also noted'.

Question put and passed.

Ms Hurst moved: 'That paragraph 1.8 be amended by omitting 'positive impact that it would have' and inserting instead 'the impact he proposes it would have'.

Question put and passed.

Ms Hurst moved: 'That paragraph 1.9 be amended by inserting 'or otherwise' after 'The role of hunting for rural communities and its environmental impacts'.

Question put and passed.

Ms Higginson moved: 'That paragraph 1.13 be amended by inserting 'but only the Minister may make a declaration' after 'to make recommendations under section 20 to the responsible Minister'.

Question put and passed.

Ms Higginson moved: 'That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 1.13:

'The bill makes no changes to the section 20 declaration process under the Act. The bill introduces a new pathway for certain Crown lands to be designated as hunting land where appropriate. Designated land is taken to be declared public hunting land under the *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002*. The designation does not itself allow hunting, and the hunting is still subject to written permission from the Minister before each instance of hunting.' [FOOTNOTE: Answers to supplementary questions, Mr Richard Varvel, Director, Forestry & Hunting Regulation, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, 2 September 2025, pp 1-2]

Question put and passed.**Chapter 2**

Ms Hurst moved: 'That paragraph 2.2 be amended by omitting 'Inquiry participants who supported the bill' and inserting instead 'Hunting groups and hunters'.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Ms Higginson, Ms Hurst.

Noes: Mr Barrett, Mr Buttigieg, Mr Farlow, Mr Lawrence, Mr Primrose, Ms Suvaal.

Question resolved in the negative.

Ms Higginson moved: 'That paragraph 2.5 be amended by inserting 'who is an employee of the Honourable Robert Borsak, Shooters Fishers and Farmers Party' after 'and land management'.

Question put and passed.

Ms Hurst moved: 'That paragraph 2.12 be amended by:

- a. omitting 'Other inquiry participants gave a more measured and qualified assessment of hunting's potential role in environmental conservation.'
- b. omitting 'These stakeholders' and inserting instead 'Some stakeholders'.

Question put and passed.

Hs Higginson moved: That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 2.13:

'The Statewide Review of Invasive Species Management, completed by the Natural Resources Commission, found it difficult to discern the success and effectiveness of the Local Land Services Feral Pig Program due to the lack of consistent monitoring, evaluation and reporting. The Review recommended that future pest management programs take a more strategic approach that clearly identify assets to be protected and for mechanisms to be in place to monitor and report outcomes rather than just outputs.' [FOOTNOTE: Answers to supplementary questions, Natural Resources Commission, 2 September 2025, p 1]

Question put and passed.

Ms Higginson moved: That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 2.19:

'Further evidence from Mr Buckmaster highlighted 5 distinct invasives species programs that were successful in managing and reducing the presence of a variety of invasive species across multiple land tenures. None of these successful programs involved the use of recreational shooting and Mr Buckmaster identified a key factor of success in each program as being strategic and integrated pest management plan that governed the management techniques used, when they were used and to what extent they were used.' [FOOTNOTE: Answers to supplementary questions, Dr Tony Buckmaster, Principal RD&E Manager, Centre for Invasive Species Solutions, received 2 September 2025, pp 1 – 3]

Question put and passed.

Ms Higginson moved: That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 2.19:

'When questioned about whether there are successful examples of reducing the impact or numbers of invasive species in New South Wales, and what role recreational hunters played in that success, the Invasive Species Council stated: "The integrated strategy of aerial culling and baiting, combined with ongoing ecosystem health monitoring, is considered a "best practice" approach for managing invasive species at a single site. The data collected from these programs will be used to inform future strategies, such as the timing and intensity of culling and baiting sessions. While ground shooting within the park by contractor shooters for deer, and recreational hunting of deer and foxes has occurred outside the park boundary for over 20 years, it has not prevented the southern spread of deer, or overall fox activity.' [FOOTNOTE: Answers to supplementary questions, Mr Rob Brewster, Rewilding Program Manager, Invasive Species Council, 2 September 2025, p 2]

Question put and passed.

Ms Higginson moved: That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 2.19:

'To Mr Buckmaster's knowledge, no successful invasive species management programs in NSW have used ad hoc recreational hunting as the primary method of management. A study undertaken by researchers in relation to deer control in Tasmania by the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development between 2022 and 2023 showed that recreational hunting was not able to reduce deer density on the study site as they were unable to harvest enough deer to bring down the population density. Despite harvesting between 21 and 26% of the deer annually, the deer replaced these numbers through natural breeding.' [FOOTNOTE: Answers to supplementary questions, Dr Tony Buckmaster, Principal RD&E Manager, Centre for Invasive Species Solutions, received 2 September 2025, pp 2 – 3]

Question put and passed.

Ms Higginson moved: That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 2.22:

'The Natural Resources Commission gave the example of the National Parks and Wildlife Service Supplementary Pest Control program, where volunteer shooters could contribute to the success of the feral pig program if they were incorporated into a planned strategic approach. This would require coordinated ground shooting in conjunction with other pest management techniques such as cross tenure aerial shooting and baiting.' [FOOTNOTE: Answers to supplementary questions, Natural Resources Commission, 2 September 2025, p 1]

Question put and passed.

Ms Hurst moved: 'That paragraph 2.40 be amended by omitting 'This evidence was offered with a view to reassuring the committee that public safety is the NSW Government's ultimate priority'.

Question put and passed.

Ms Hurst moved: 'That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 2.49:

'Ms Modde further explained that 'even just the public awareness of this bill has increased the number of times my phone has rung from operators who are concerned about whether it will interrupt access in certain areas. As you can imagine, schools are very conscious about their risk management. I can probably assume that schools will be the first ones to pull out of State forests'. [FOOTNOTE: Evidence, Ms Modde, 8 August 2025, p 63.]

Question put and passed.

Ms Hurst moved: 'That paragraph 2.50 be amended by inserting at the end: 'After 20 years, if we can't get that right, how is this going to improve from this point forward?'.

Question put and passed.

Ms Higginson moved: 'That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 2.54:

'New South Wales is a signatory to the 2017 National Firearms Agreement which is based on the principle that the use and possession of a firearm is a privilege that is conditional on public safety. The NSW Weapons Act and the NSW Firearms Act both establish this principle as a guiding objective of the Acts.' [FOOTNOTE: Answers to supplementary questions, Australian Gun Safety Alliance, 1 September 2025, p 5.]

Question put and passed.

Ms Hurst moved: 'That paragraph 2.56 be amended by omitting 'According to this inquiry participant' and inserting instead 'According to Lucy's Project'.

Question put and passed.

Ms Hurst moved: 'That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 2.56:

'The Australasian Injury Prevention Network raised similar concerns that the bill 'increases existing risk for vulnerable members of the community who are at risk of firearm-related suicide and domestic and family violence fatalities and injuries':

When firearms are involved in incidents involving suicide and domestic or family violence, the risk of lethality is significantly increased. Suicide disproportionately impacts men, while domestic and family violence disproportionately impacts women and children. The risks for these fatalities and injuries are also heightened for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people with disability, and LGBTQ+ populations.' [FOOTNOTE: Submission 172, Australasian Injury Prevention Network, pp 1 – 2.]

Question put and passed.

Ms Higginson moved: That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 2.57:

'When questioned about whether they would be supportive of amendments to the Bill that restrict the types of firearms hunters are able to use, or the number of firearms they are allowed to possess, similar to reforms passed in Western Australia, evidence from the Australian Gun Safety Alliance included that there is no cap on the number of firearms a person can own in NSW, with police data showing more than 100 gun owners in NSW owning at least 89 guns, and two gun owners with over 300 firearms stored in suburban Sydney. The evidence included that 80% of registered firearms are stored in cities, suburbs and large regional towns, and that 76% of people in NSW agreeing there should be a cap on the number of guns a person can own, and 70% agreeing that it should be harder to get a gun.' [FOOTNOTE: Answers to supplementary questions, Australian Gun Safety Alliance, 1 September 2025, p 2.]

Question put and passed.

Ms Hurst moved: That the following new paragraph be inserted in the section titled 'Stakeholder perspectives on the proposed Conservation Hunting Authority', at the secretariat's discretion:

'In the 2025-26 NSW Budget, the NSW Government allocated \$7.9 million over 2 years to 'establish the Conservation Hunting Authority and support the regulation of additional hunting activity'. [FOOTNOTE: Budget Paper 1, p B-13; Evidence, Ms Black, 8 August 2025, p 6] When asked if the NSW Government had ever allocated funding for a private members bill that had not yet passed the NSW Parliament, Ms Tara Black, Acting Deputy Secretary, Fisheries and Forestry, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, said 'not to my knowledge'. [FOOTNOTE: Evidence, Ms Black, 8 August 2025, p 5]

Question put and passed.

Ms Higginson moved: That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 2.57:

'The document tabled in the hearing by Mr Boyle, A systematic review and meta-analysis of the ecological effects of Australian deer, was funded by the Blond Bay Hog and Deer Advisory Group, the Australian Deer Association, and the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Ms Higginson, Ms Hurst.

Noes: Mr Barrett, Mr Buttigieg, Mr Farlow, Mr Lawrence, Mr Primrose, Ms Suvaal.

Question resolved in the negative.

Ms Higginson moved: That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 2.60:

'When asked whether it was a concern to the Natural Resources Commission that the Authority would have a statutory requirement to only promote the benefits of recreational hunting, rather than examining and distributing evidence in a scientific and non-biased way, the Natural Resources Commission highlighted that they value the provision of transparent science and evidence based independent advice to inform decision making, while acknowledging the value of diverse groups to advocate for their own interests. The evidence from the NRC was that these two functions should be kept distinct and have clarity of purpose from one another.' [FOOTNOTE: Answers to supplementary questions, Natural Resources Commission, 2 September 2025, p 1]

Question put and passed.

Ms Higginson moved: That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 2.60:

'Evidence from Ms Tara Black about the input on the funding allocations for the proposed Authority was that the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, the NSW Police, and Local land services were consulted with. The Natural Resources Commission was not consulted with on the bill, or it would appear on the allocation of funding.' [FOOTNOTE: Answers to supplementary questions, Ms Tara Black, Acting Deputy Secretary, Fisheries and Forestry, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, 2 September 2025, p 4; Evidence, Mr Wilde, 8 August 2025, p 29].

Question put and passed.

Ms Hurst moved: That paragraph 2.63 be amended by omitting 'gave a more restrained assessment of the proposed Authority, focusing' and inserting instead 'focussed'.

Question put and passed.

Ms Higginson moved: That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 2.64:

'Evidence from Ms Tara Black indicated that none of the \$7.9 million allocated to the Authority would be directed to invasive species control because \$4 million would be spent on the establishment of the Authority, and \$3.9 million would be spent on compliance and enforcement functions of the Department.' [FOOTNOTE: Answers to supplementary questions, Ms Tara Black, Acting Deputy Secretary, Fisheries and Forestry, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, 2 September 2025, p 4.]

Question put and passed.

Ms Hurst moved: That paragraph 2.69 be amended by omitting 'Several witnesses' and inserting instead 'Some witnesses'.

Question put and passed.

Ms Higginson moved: That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 2.70:

'The evidence of the Natural Resources Commission was that a right to hunt, without a coordinated approach between hunters and government programs is not consistent with effective pest animal management.' [FOOTNOTE: Answers to supplementary questions, Natural Resources Commission, 2 September 2025, p 1]

Question put and passed.

Ms Hurst moved: That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 2.75:

'Gun Control Australia further expressed similar concerns about how a 'right to hunt' would contravene the underlying principles of the National Firearms Agreement:

'The National Firearms Agreement, signed in 1996 by the New South Wales (NSW) Government and constantly reaffirmed as the guiding principle on firearms, states that gun ownership is a privilege, not a right, and is conditional on the overriding principle of public safety... Enshrining a 'right to hunt' in law would be directly contrary to these principles, and signal an intent by the NSW Government to depart from the national firearms safety framework that has reduced gun-related deaths and harm for decades. The existence of the right will undermine the long-established 'genuine reason' bar to obtaining firearms and make it far easier to obtain a gun in NSW. Further, it does nothing to improve environmental management. Instead, it is a backdoor method to dislodging the long-established principle that in Australia, gun ownership is a privilege, not a right.' [FOOTNOTE: Submission 180, Gun Control Australia, pp 1 – 2].

Question put and passed.

Ms Hurst moved: That paragraph 2.76 be amended by:

- c. inserting 'General Counsel' after 'Ms Jurd'
- d. inserting at the end of the second bullet point 'noting that a statutory right to hunt is 'unknown to NSW law previously'. Ms Jurd explained further "The problem for me, when I was trying to work out how this bill might operate, is that there's not enough within it to know with any certainty what a court would make of it. If those "rights" start opposing each other, courts are in real trouble—because I would have no confidence in how they would go about interpreting that ambiguity.' [FOOTNOTE: Evidence, Ms Jurd, 8 August 2025, p 70].

Question put and passed.

Ms Hurst moved: That paragraph 2.77 be amended by omitting 'Drawing on his own experience of the firearms licensing regime'.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Ms Higginson, Ms Hurst.

Noes: Mr Barrett, Mr Buttigieg, Mr Farlow, Mr Lawrence, Mr Primrose, Ms Suvaal.

Question resolved in the negative.

Ms Hurst moved: That paragraph 2.85 be amended by:

- e. omitting 'on the possible benefits and detriments' after 'It is clear to the committee that there are diverse and competing views'.
- f. inserting at the end 'The committee notes that a variety of interest groups oppose the bill, including public and gun safety, recreation, invasive species and animal welfare groups'.

Question put and passed.

Ms Hurst moved: That paragraph 2.86 be amended by:

- g. inserting 'while' after 'The committee heard that'
- h. omitting 'and that several witnesses agreed that there is a role for hunting as part of an effective pest control program' and inserting instead 'there was a diversity of views about the role of recreational hunting. Some stakeholders, including hunting organisations, believed there was a role for recreational hunting as part of an effective pest control program. Other stakeholders gave evidence that recreational hunting is not an effective or humane method of animal management'.

Question put and passed.

Mr Farlow and Mr Buttigieg left the meeting at 12.26 pm.

Ms Hurst moved: That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 2.86:

"The committee acknowledges the concerns raised by organisations that increasing hunting in shared public spaces risks pushing other groups out of these spaces, including outdoor school programs. Despite assurances from hunting organisations about safety, the committee acknowledges these concerns are valid given any safety concern could cause community groups to avoid areas used for hunting."

Question put and passed.

Mr Barrett moved: 'That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 2.86:

'The committee is of the view that this underscores the need for effective coordination that ensures community safety.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Barrett, Mr Lawrence, Mr Primrose, Ms Suvaal.

Noes: Ms Higginson, Ms Hurst.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Ms Hurst moved: 'That paragraph 2.88 be amended by omitting 'many witnesses' and inserting instead 'a large number of diverse organisations'.

Question put and passed.

Ms Hurst moved: 'That paragraph 2.89 be amended by inserting at the end 'and recognises these statements pertain to the Premier's position that the Government will support amendments to remove access to prohibited weapons under the bill. However, the committee also recognises the position of many groups that aspects of the bill still being considered are seen as a relaxation of gun laws, in particular, the right to hunt and the establishment of a body that will promote further use of guns.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Barrett, Ms Higginson, Ms Hurst.

Noes: Mr Lawrence, Mr Primrose, Ms Suvaal.

There being an equality of votes, question resolved in the negative on the casting vote of the Chair.

Mr Primrose moved: 'That paragraph 2.89 be amended by omitting 'he does not condone any relaxation of the state's robust gun laws' and inserting instead 'the New South Wales government does not condone any relaxation of the state's robust gun laws, including the use of silencers and enshrining a right to hunt'.

Question put and passed.

Mr Barrett moved: 'That the following new committee comment be inserted after paragraph 2.90:

'The government determined to truncate the time allocated for the inquiry, which compromised the opportunity to consider all evidence from all witnesses and stakeholders, and in a timely manner.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Barrett, Ms Higginson, Ms Hurst.

Noes: Mr Lawrence, Mr Primrose, Ms Suvaal.

There being an equality of votes, question resolved in the negative on the casting vote of the Chair.

Mr Primrose moved: 'That the following new committee comment be inserted after paragraph 2.90:

'The committee notes that, given the reduced timeframe for witnesses to provide answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions, from 21 days to 14 days, this reduced the committee's timeframe to consider post-hearing responses.'

Question put and passed.

Ms Higginson moved: That the following new committee comment be inserted after paragraph 2.89:

'The committee notes that evidence received shows that recreational hunting may not be an effective form of invasive species control in the absence of being part of a strategic, coordinated program delivered through a public lands manager and on an as needs basis.'

Question put and passed.

Mr Barrett moved: That the following new committee comment be inserted after paragraph 2.89:

'The committee has concerns about the process of the development of this bill, brought about by the \$7.9 million budget allocation for the Conservation Hunting Authority, prior to the passing of the bill.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Barrett, Ms Higginson, Ms Hurst.

Noes: Mr Lawrence, Mr Primrose, Ms Suvaal.

There being an equality of votes, question resolved in the negative on the casting vote of the Chair.

Ms Hurst moved: That:

a) paragraph 2.90 be amended by omitting 'On this basis, the committee supports the bill proceeding to debate in the Legislative Council and' and inserting instead 'The committee' before 'recommends that the issues identified by stakeholders and set out in this report be considered by members during the second reading debate.'

b) Recommendation 1 being amended accordingly.

Question put and passed.

Ms Higginson moved: That paragraph 2.90 be omitted: 'The committee recommends that the issues identified by stakeholders and set out in this report be considered by members during the second reading debate', and the following new committee comment be inserted instead:

'The committee does not support the bill proceeding to debate in the Legislative Council.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Barrett, Ms Higginson, Ms Hurst.

Noes: Mr Lawrence, Mr Primrose, Ms Suvaal.

There being an equality of votes, question resolved in the negative on the casting vote of the Chair.

Mr Primrose moved: That:

a. The draft report as amended be the report of the committee and that the committee

- present the report to the House.
- b. The transcripts of evidence, tabled documents, submissions, correspondence, proformas and answers to questions taken on notice and supplementary questions relating to the inquiry be tabled in the House with the report.
 - c. Upon tabling, all unpublished attachments to submissions be kept confidential by the committee.
 - d. Upon tabling, all unpublished transcripts of evidence, tabled documents, submissions, correspondence, proformas, answers to questions taken on notice and supplementary questions related to the inquiry be published by the committee, except for those documents kept confidential by resolution of the committee.
 - e. The committee secretariat correct any typographical, grammatical and formatting errors prior to tabling.
 - f. The committee secretariat be authorised to update any committee comments where necessary to reflect changes to recommendations or new recommendations resolved by the committee.
 - g. Dissenting statements be provided to the secretariat within 24 hours after receipt of the draft minutes of the meeting.
 - h. The secretariat is tabling the report at 2pm, Friday 12 September 2025.
 - i. The Chair to advise the secretariat and members if they intend to hold a press conference, and if so, the date and time.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Barrett, Mr Lawrence, Mr Primrose, Ms Suvaal.

Noes: Ms Higginson, Ms Hurst.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The committee adjourned at 1.10 pm, *sine die*.

Verity Smith
Committee Clerk

Appendix 4 Dissenting statements

Hon Emma Hurst MLC, Animal Justice Party

This is a dangerous Bill that will have a devastating impact on public safety, gun control, and human and animal welfare - and it should not proceed to debate.

The Premier has stated publicly he will not be supporting the aspects of the Bill that would allow hunters access to prohibited weapons or establish a 'right to hunt'. This is a positive development. However, the concerns regarding the Bill go well beyond this, and I am disappointed that the Labor members of the committee used their casting vote to vote down my amendment (despite all other members on the committee supporting my amendment) which recognised that there are many other elements of the Bill that are still seen as a relaxation of gun laws, including establishing a body (the so-called Conservation Hunting Authority) that will promote the use of guns and expanding hunting in public spaces on crown land.

The establishment of a quasi-gun lobby, that's purpose is to promote and encourage further gun use, is a risk to public safety and works against the important changes made in this country by former Prime Minister John Howard. We do not need any taxpayer money being used to encourage more gun ownership in NSW. Further, more hunting in shared public spaces increases the chances of someone being seriously injured or killed by recreational hunters. These aspects of the Bill must also be rejected.

The fact that the NSW Government was willing to allocate \$7.9 million to establish the Conservation Hunting Authority in the 2025-26 Budget, before this Private Members Bill was ever even voted on, is very telling. It raises serious concerns about the use of taxpayer resources, especially amidst a cost-of-living crisis, where the NSW Government is citing budget restrictions and failing to fund essential services and other election commitments that would have a positive impact on society.

I am also concerned by the addition of a committee comment in the Report that suggests 'effective coordination' of hunting in shared public spaces could somehow ensure 'community safety'. This is simply untrue. We heard evidence from peak bodies such as Outdoors NSW that, after 20 years of hunting in state forests, it has not been possible to safely coordinate the use of public space between hunters and other user groups such as bushwalkers, school groups, education programs and tourism operators. This committee comment takes the evidence out of context and implies that this can be strategically coordinated. It cannot – and has not for many years. Giving priority to hunters to shoot and kill animals 24/7 in public spaces over other recreational groups – as this Bill does - is not appropriate and pushes others out of these spaces. The reality is that if hunters could be in the area, then other users of this land, including school groups, will need to cancel their activities for safety reasons. The human and public safety risk here is simply too great for this Bill to proceed.

Lastly, I am concerned by the way this Inquiry into the Bill has been rushed by the NSW Government.

Despite receiving over 2,500 submissions, we had just one day of hearing - held only days after submissions closed, with limited opportunity to review submissions or consider community feedback - and then we were pushed to finalise this Inquiry Report well before the reporting date. This is a controversial Bill that has received significant public and media attention, and it has serious implications for public safety, gun control and animal welfare. There was no justification to rush the Inquiry.

During this short Inquiry, we received overwhelming opposition to the Bill from a broad range of stakeholders, including domestic violence organisations, gun safety groups, outdoor recreation associations, animal welfare advocates, bushwalkers, and invasive species groups. By contrast, the only stakeholders who supported this bill were hunting organisations and hunters themselves - and of course, the Shooters Party. The Bill must be rejected.

Ms Sue Higginson MLC, The Greens

I would like to thank the hundreds of people who took time to make submissions to this inquiry, the organisations that gave evidence, and the significant investment of all people that support effective and coordinated invasive species management and maintaining sensible gun control in NSW.

The Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025 was never about controlling the distribution and population density of invasive species. This bill was about the delivery of a publicly funded Authority controlled by representatives of the gun lobby, who would be required to promote recreational hunting regardless of science and evidence. Through the Bills intended purpose and operation it would also undermine and weaken the National Firearms Agreement by creating a statutory right to hunt in NSW. As it stands, gun ownership and use is stated as a privilege, not a right.

These two components represent an insidious attempt by the gun lobby through the Shooters Political Party to infiltrate the NSW political system and statutory framework. By establishing a public gun lobby, called the Conservation Hunting Authority, and enshrining a right to hunt, this would be a significant step by the Shooters to bring American-style gun politics into our communities and way of life.

The evidence heard in the inquiry from professional land managers, scientists, and Government agencies, was that the control of invasive species across land tenures is critically important and must be undertaken in a planned, coordinated and strategic way. The combination of baiting, ground and aerial shooting, as well as trapping, have been used effectively to reduce the populations of, and reduce the spread of, damaging invasive species such as deer, foxes, and pigs. The Centre for Invasive Species Control was not aware of any successful program to manage invasive species that relied on ad hoc recreational shooting as part of the control measures.

By contrast, recreational hunters who gave evidence could not clearly identify an evidence based quantitative value of their recreational shooting on invasive species populations. This was even though they claimed a high number of invasive species animals had been shot by recreational shooters. The witnesses were unclear if they would support the complete removal of invasive species from the landscape if that meant they no longer had anything to hunt. They also did not provide evidence that their recreational shooting had either a positive or negative impact on controlling invasive species.

The Natural Resources Commission, a Commission that sits within the Premier's portfolio, gave evidence that this bill was unwarranted and that the \$7.9 million in public funds that has already been allocated to the non-existent Conservation Hunting Authority would be better spent on invasive species programs with demonstrable benefit. Despite being part of the Premier's agencies, the NRC was not consulted with by the Premier's office before he announced his support for recreational shooting, and was not consulted at all on the proposed \$7.9 million in funding without any direct spending on invasive species.

The Committee received concerning evidence about the significant burden that would be put on Councils and other public land managers as a result of them being required to conduct reviews of all their lands and remake plans of management to allow recreational hunting. The land use conflicts arising from a large expansion of recreational hunting on public lands are significant and would limit the peaceful enjoyment of these places by all other stakeholders. This was particularly apparent in the evidence of witnesses who use public lands for therapeutic purposes and other uses, particularly outdoor recreation and education that involves children and young people. It is completely inappropriate that more recreational shooting is allowed to happen in these shared spaces on an ad hoc basis.

The final content of this report is influenced in part by the Government's initial support for this bill. That support has moved significantly since more understanding of the Bill's intended effect has come to light. This is reflected clearly in the report where it acknowledges the Premier's changed position on the right to hunt. The final recommendation that this bill should proceed to debate should have been amended, as put by members of the committee, to recommend that the bill not proceed. This is because

it is clear from the inquiry that the bill is not about invasive species control, and it is more about the Shooters Party's demands to weaken gun laws in NSW and to be able to treat public lands as game reserves.

The Shooters Party in NSW has creatively invented the term Conservation Hunting in an attempt to justify the activities of their members and supporters as anything other than a recreational pastime. The evidence from this inquiry has put into stark contrast the reality of this invention, and suggests that this term should be disregarded as a political fantasy.

If the House is to continue to consider this bill, and proceed with debate, I urge all Members to read the genuine evidence of professional scientists and other experts contained in this report. It is clear that the approach proposed in this bill is inappropriate, dangerous, and will result in worse outcomes for invasive species management in this state, as well as worse outcomes for gun safety and the community.

Hon Scott Barrett MLC, The Nationals

I want to state from the outset that I continue to support much of the intent of this Bill. I will always support attempts to effectively control invasive species, increase access to our crown lands and promote outdoor recreation activities including hunting.

However, this must be done correctly.

Australia's history when it comes to the management of invasive species is littered with terrible mistakes and ill-thought-out Government decisions. Errors that could have been easily avoided if decision makers, such as legislators, gave greater consideration and additional rigor to these important decisions and their direct and indirect consequences.

The litany of blunders includes the introduction, inaction and subsequent mismanagement of rabbits, foxes, prickly pear and deer to name just a few.

To avoid further lapses, I moved that this Bill be sent to the State Development Committee for inquiry and reporting by October 10th, 2025. I did so to properly examine any issues that may have been included in the Bill given our state's horrible record of mismanagement as mentioned above. It also presented an opportunity to give Parliament the information it needed to pass a Bill that could deliver genuine impacts on invasive species.

Throughout this process however, it became clear there were far more problems with the Bill than first thought.

One issue that became evident was the allocation of \$7.9 million in the 2025-26 NSW Budget. This pot includes \$4 million for the creation and operation of the Conservation Hunting Authority and an additional \$3.9 million to increase resourcing for DPIRD's hunting compliance and enforcement functions.

It was evident that none of this money would go to any invasive species control, and more than half went to the establishment of a new body with no explanation as to why this body was needed.

The NSW DPIRD when pushed on the value of such a new body, described its position as "neutral", without a preference for the existing Game and Pest Management Advisory Board or the proposed Conservation Hunting Authority which will cost at least \$4 million to establish.

The Government's decision to allocate funding in the Budget reflects, at best, a complete disregard for proper parliamentary processes. Some participants in the inquiry also suggested it indicated a deal had been struck between the Government and the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party.

I was also concerned that the timeframe set for the inquiry was unnecessarily tight. The original motion required the committee to report back to Parliament by 10th October 2025, but the schedule for tabling was set much earlier.

A clear shortcoming of this rushed timeframe was the receipt of answers to supplementary questions on notice after the draft report had already been circulated to the committee. This is extremely unusual to me, made more so by the complete lack of explanation as to why this needed to occur.

As I have previously stated, I completely support more access to Crown Lands for our hunting community. However, as Mr Richard Varvel stated in his answer to supplementary questions on Notice, there is already a mechanism for the responsible Minister for the land to allow this in the *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002*.

Any new land declared open for hunting by this bill, would still require a declaration and assessment by the Minister, making the legislation redundant in this regard.

For this reason and others, I believed there was no hurry to send this Bill to Parliament for consideration.

