

**Submission
No 415**

**INQUIRY INTO MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LAND IN
NEW SOUTH WALES**

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SUBMISSION BY THE CANBERRA BUSHWALKING CLUB

General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 inquiry on the management of public land in New South Wales

The Canberra Bushwalking Club (CBC) is pleased to provide a submission to the General Purpose Standing Committee No.5's inquiry into the management of public land in New South Wales.

About CBC

CBC was founded in 1961 and celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2011. Whilst the CBC is an Australian Capital Territory-based organisation, CBC has a strong interest in New South Wales. Many of our members live in surrounding parts of New South Wales, in Queanbeyan, Goulburn and beyond. Many of the walks organised under CBC's auspices are in some of the most beautiful parks of New South Wales, such as Morton National Park, Tallaganda National Park, Brindabella National Park, Kosciuszko National Park, and further afield.

The work of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service

CBC would like to firstly acknowledge and thank the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) for their work. It is clear the NPWS works hard at preserving the environment and beauty of national parks in New South Wales, whilst making it possible for the general public to visit these treasures.

Decision to allow amateur hunting in New South Wales national parks

We are pleased the Legislative Council of the New South Wales Parliament has established this inquiry. At the same time, we are deeply disappointed that the New South Wales Government's decision to open up national parks to amateur hunters was put to the Parliament rather than enabling further consideration of the issue as part of this inquiry.

The members and committee of the CBC continue to view with deep dismay the decision of the New South Wales Government to allow shooting by amateurs in New South Wales conservation areas and the passage of the amending legislation through the New South Wales Parliament.

It is also disappointing to note that under Schedule 3A of the the *Game and Feral Animal Amendment Bill 2012*, less than 50 of New South Wales' national parks, nature reserves, regional parks and state conversation areas have been explicitly ruled out as public hunting land.¹

1 Parliament of New South Wales (2012), *Game and Feral Animal Control Bill 2012*, [http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/nswbills.nsf/131a07fa4b8a041cca256e610012de17/c8afc0c4709e478bca25788e0005e862/\\$FILE/b2011-163-d18-House.pdf](http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/nswbills.nsf/131a07fa4b8a041cca256e610012de17/c8afc0c4709e478bca25788e0005e862/$FILE/b2011-163-d18-House.pdf).

This is a far cry from the 'limited number of areas' (79) referred to in Premier O'Farrell's announcement of 30 May 2012.² Given the opening up of national parks to amateur hunting was the result of reversing a pre-election commitment³, one could be forgiven for thinking the 'limited number of areas' might not stop at 79.

Pest control on public lands

Conservation areas are just that, wisely set aside by State and Federal Governments to conserve flora and fauna and for the benefit of our and future generations. Whilst we recognise the damage done by feral pests to the areas and adjoining land holdings, there are more efficient control methods available, carried out by professionals.

We echo the concerns expressed by NSW park rangers and conservation groups about safety in these conservation areas and support their work in controlling feral animals in these parks. We are deeply concerned about the impact of allowing amateurs to hunt in these parks, not only on access to these parks for the broader community, but the potential safety risks of 'adequately trained' amateur to all park users.

Some examples: As recently as 27 July 2012, a former President of the Wellington Deerstalkers Association in New Zealand pleaded guilty to the careless use of a firearm causing the death of Mr Alexander McDonald while deer hunting in Aorangi Forest Park.⁴ Another article reports the death of a woman in New Zealand brushing her teeth, shot as the hunter allegedly thought she was an animal.⁵

We note the suggestion that there has not been an accidental shooting in New South Wales on public lands where amateur hunting can take place. We fear that it is only a matter of time and one death, hunter or bushwalker, is one too many.

Lastly, we note with interest one of the terms of reference that refers to "the adherence to management practices on all public land that are mandated for private property holders, including fire, weed and pest management practices."⁶

2 O'Farrell, the Hon Barry (2012), *Game and Feral Animal Control Act*, media release, 30 May, <http://www.premier.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/120530-GFACA.pdf>.

3 'O'Farrell rules our deals with Shooters (2011), *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 April, <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/conservation/ofarrell-rules-out-deals-with-shooters-20110413-1ddf.html>.

4 Donoghue, Tim (2012), 'Deerstalker guilty of causing death', *Dominion Post*, 27 July, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/news/wairarapa/7361532/Deerstalker-guilty-of-causing-death>.

5 Leask, Anna (2010), 'Partner's desperate attempt to keep shot woman alive', in *New Zealand Herald*, 24 October, http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10682703.

6 Parliament of New South Wales (2012), 'Terms of Reference', *Inquiry into the Management of Public Land in New South Wales*, [http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parliament/committee.nsf/0/18b4c6b001e0d367ca2579e9000215c2/\\$FILE/Terms%20of%20reference.pdf](http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parliament/committee.nsf/0/18b4c6b001e0d367ca2579e9000215c2/$FILE/Terms%20of%20reference.pdf).

In respect of pest management practices, we would argue that these practices, especially as they relate to amateur hunting, on public land should be different to private property holders, for one very simple reason. Any member of the public can venture into public land; obviously, this is not the case for private properties. There is an increased chance of a person being accidentally shot on public land as people, rightly, should not trespass on private property.

Conclusion

CBC wrote to Premier O'Farrell after his 30 May 2012 announcement urging the New South Wales Government to reconsider this decision. The members and committee of CBC would ask the inquiry to urge the Government to reverse its decision to allow amateur hunting in national parks. To reiterate, one death would be too many.

CBC thanks the committee for the opportunity to provide a submission on this inquiry.

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