

**Submission
No 163**

**INQUIRY INTO GAME AND FERAL ANIMAL
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (CONSERVATION
HUNTING) BILL 2025**

Name: Ms Sigrid Schenk

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Committee Members,

As a concerned citizen who constantly travels between the ACT / NSW and who values animal welfare, public safety, and meaningful environmental protection, I urge the Committee to recommend against the passage of I add my voice in the strongest terms to oppose to the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025. This Bill prioritises recreational hunting expansion over genuine conservation, public safety, and community welfare.

A legislated "right to hunt" in NSW to be enshrined in law to kill sentient animals is open slather subjecting them to being recreational targets. Animal welfare laws are the hallmark of a civilised society.

Why are you pursuing this law to simultaneously expand recreational killing while currently purporting to strengthen animal protection. It makes little sense.

There is overwhelming contemporary scientific evidence that the proposed approach is ineffective. Bounty programs cost approximately \$264 per animal killed while delivering no measurable environmental benefit. Public money should be directed toward proven conservation methods, not subsidising recreational activities that fail to achieve their stated objectives.

Why ignore Australia's leading animal welfare authority, the RSPCA, that explicitly opposes recreational hunting due to the inherent and inevitable pain and suffering it causes to animals? The Bill provides no animal welfare oversight, no independent monitoring, and no effective enforcement of animal cruelty laws in hunting contexts, creating a regulatory vacuum where animal suffering will go undetected and unpunished.

We are alarmed that this Bill amends the Weapons Prohibition Act to allow recreational hunters access to currently prohibited weapons, including silencers. Why will you place the 97% of NSW residents who don't own firearms at serious risk, as families and bushwalkers would be unable to hear gunfire warnings in over 50,000 hectares of Crown land automatically converted to hunting areas and do this without community consultation.

Recreational hunting always poses significant risks to non-target species, including vulnerable native wildlife. Self-regulation for the Bill also fails to address the welfare of dependent young animals who may be orphaned when adults are killed. It is not appropriate that NSW's public lands function as shooting ranges for recreational hunters. All of us in Australia benefit from enjoying nature without the threat of being impacted by recreational shooters. Too many accidents occur.

Genuine conservation requires science-based approaches that address root causes of environmental degradation, not measures that provide recreational opportunities while failing to achieve conservation outcomes. The Bill diverts attention and resources away from proven conservation strategies such as habitat restoration and professional management programs.

It is horrific that the Bill's automatic conversion of Crown land violates the international principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent, as no Traditional Owner groups or Aboriginal communities were consulted about hunting access to their ancestral Country, potentially breaching Australia's obligations under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

You must not repeat the previous failed governance models. The proposed Conservation Hunting Authority replicates the identical structural problems of the Game Council, which was abolished in 2013 after an independent review found "unacceptable risks to government" due to regulatory capture and conflicts of interest. Such arrangements undermine democratic governance and prioritise narrow political interests over sound public policy and community welfare.

Recommendations

I respectfully urge the Committee to:

1. Recommend that the NSW Parliament reject the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025 in its entirety, recognising that the fundamental structural problems cannot be addressed through minor amendments and that the Bill's core provisions are incompatible with contemporary animal welfare science, public safety requirements, and evidence-based conservation management;
2. Maintain current prohibited weapons restrictions by rejecting all proposed amendments to the Weapons Prohibition Act 1998, protecting the 97% of NSW residents who don't own firearms from the serious public safety risks created by allowing recreational hunters access to silencers and other currently prohibited weapons;
3. Ensure evidence-based decision making over political deal-making by requiring that any future wildlife management decisions be driven by scientific expertise rather than political accommodation with hunting interests, avoiding the repetition of failed governance models like the Game Council that was abolished in 2013 for creating "unacceptable risks to government"; and
4. Mandate comprehensive stakeholder consultation before any future wildlife management legislation, requiring meaningful consultation with animal protection organisations, public safety

experts, Traditional Owner groups, conservation scientists, and affected communities, rather than excluding these voices through political deals with hunting interests.

The Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025 represents poor public policy that fails to achieve its stated conservation objectives while causing unnecessary animal suffering, creating public safety risks, and wasting taxpayer resources. The Bill prioritises the recreational interests of a small minority over sound science, animal welfare, public safety, and genuine conservation.

NSW has an opportunity to lead Australia in developing compassionate, effective, and science-based approaches to wildlife management. This Bill represents the opposite approach—one that takes us backwards toward outdated, ineffective, and cruel practices that have no place in a modern, progressive society.

I respectfully and sincerely urge the Committee to recommend against the passage of this legislation and instead advocate for evidence-based, humane, and effective approaches to conservation that reflect contemporary scientific understanding and community values.

Thank you for considering my submission.