

Submission
No 272

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

Name: Steve Garthwin

Date Received: 3 August 2025

From:

Steve Garthwin of NSW 2783

To:

Committee Chair, the Hon Emily Suvaal MLC,

Standing Committee on State Development

NSW State Parliament Legislative Council

This is a submission to your Inquiry into the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025

I understand that there is an Upper House inquiry to examine the private member bill introduced by the Hon Robert Borsak MLC of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party. This "Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025" proposes a number of amendments to the Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002, which I am very much opposed to. I therefore wish to be considered as a stakeholder, with my concerns raised at the upcoming hearing and hopefully represented in the House when debate resumes on this bill. I value greatly the effort you are making to hold an inquiry into this bill and in seeking community input.

I call for this bill to be rejected in its entirety.

The big problems I see with this Bill:

- The use of the word 'conservation' in the Bill is misleading and falsely being used to greenwash the legislation through parliament. There's no evidence that recreational hunting effectively reduces feral animal impacts. I'm outraged by the false use of the word and call out this disinformation.
- Taxpayer funds would be used to establish a 'Conservation Hunting Authority' with the power to establish an old-school bounty scheme, instead of us supporting evidence-based conservation programs. Bounty schemes have been proven ineffective at reducing feral animal numbers. Instead, they create pathways for corruption and encourage the spread of animals in the landscape.
- The Bill would remove hunting bans on over 50,000 hectares of public land, including some of the state's most important conservation areas. The Bill would allow hunting in Flora Reserves (which are protected under international

standards) and Travelling Stock Routes (the narrow corridors of remnant vegetation so vital for biodiversity, particularly in heavily cleared regions).

- The Bill would introduce a 'right to hunt' and risks overriding community engagement with the nature they love and protections for sensitive environments.
- The Bill would also weaken firearm laws by making it easier for recreational shooters to access gun silencers and other dangerous restricted weapons.
- Most alarmingly, the proposed Bill would seem to be a revival of a failed system - the old Game Council, abolished in 2013, after a review found it had serious governance issues.

How I feel about Recreational Hunting.

Invasive species are one of the highest impact threats to our native wildlife and ecosystems. Their effective management is essential to the health of the NSW environment. Our sparse conservation resources need to be channelled into the most effective, evidence-based control methods - overseen by professionals, rather than hap-hazard hunting. From The Nature Conservation Council I have learned that the science behind invasive species management tells us that:

- For fast breeding animals, like pigs and rabbits, 60-90% of the population must be removed annually to reduce the population. Yet, historic data shows that bounties typically result in the death of less than 10% of a targeted feral animal population.
- A national review of hunting under past Australian bounty schemes, conducted in 1998 by the former Australian Bureau of Resource Sciences, concluded that 'No bounty scheme in Australia has had a noticeable short or long-term impact on vertebrate pest populations that have a high reproductive rate'
- Similarly, the NSW Natural Resource Commissions (NRC) 2024 Invasive Species Management Review stated that 'recreational hunting by itself does not result in effective pest management'
- While research published by scientists from NSW's own Department of Primary Industries Vertebrate Pest Unit in 2016 suggest 'that there is little direct evidence to support or disprove the argument that recreational hunting provides a useful pest animal control tool on public lands in Australia'.

I believe that the role recreational hunters could play in any Integrated Pest Management programs must be determined by, and fall under the responsibility of, the

NSW Environment Minister and the environment portfolio - **not** a standalone hunting entity. The Bill proposes amendments to the Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002, including to abolish the Game and Pest Management Advisory Board and replace it with the Conservation Hunting Authority. If the intent of the Bill was genuine, the Conservation Hunting Authority would be required to prepare a conservation strategy that outlines environmental goals and outcomes.

A more appropriate investment of time and resources would be to encourage land managers to identify targeted opportunities where recreational hunters could help bolster control efforts as part of integrated control programs in conjunction with other strategies like aerial shooting and baiting, as recommended by the NSW Natural Resource Commission.

The hidden agenda within this Bill is to recognise and make provision for a right to hunt and to abolish restricted game hunting licences, replacing those licences with 'conservation hunting licences'. The bill also seeks to amend laws concerning management of Crown lands to establish that Crown land is available for hunting.

I am completely opposed to these changes.

I have been terrified, in the past, by recreational shooters firing near me in Newnes State Forest whilst I was out walking. I would be in despair if that scenario might be the future for our community, were this Bill to be passed and sensible controls on shooters were to be slackened. Please let your deliberations be guided by the needs and desires of the vast majority of non-shooters and non-hunters. Erosion of protections from exposure to guns and hunting cannot be a positive development.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Garthwin