

# Response by the AWMS Committee to The Game Council NSW- Andrew Moriarty's letter

Dear Andrew

Thank you for your response to the media release and letter I prepared as president of the Australasian Wildlife Management Society in response to the Game and Feral Animal Control Amendment Bill 2009 which is being promoted by the Shooter's Party in New South Wales.

The AWMS committee had a very short time frame in which to respond to the Bill which was at the second reading stage before the committee became aware of its existence. While consultation with members is ideal it is not always practical or possible and this was the case with such an important piece of legislation. The committee is elected to make decisions on behalf of members and felt it had a responsibility to speak on the Bill. Consequently a decision was taken to act swiftly and to strongly lobby on two aspects of the Bill. The letter to "The Land" newspaper was part of the process. You should note that the letters editor developed the heading for the letter without consulting me and that politicians were being asked to reject the Bill in its present form rather than reject it outright.

You pointed out in your response I was long time Director Western for the National Parks and Wildlife Service. This is true if you consider eight years a long time. But I was also involved in 20 years of vertebrate pest management with NSW Agriculture before joining the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The AWMS committee does intend to consult members on this issue so it can present a submission prior to the commencement of the spring session of the NSW parliament.

The two areas of concern are:

## **Introduction of exotic avian species**

The proposed legislation would reintroduce practices that were prevalent, acceptable and understandable 150 years ago but which are now environmentally, agriculturally, economically and socially irresponsible and no longer acceptable to the general community. The Bill proposes the establishment of game reserves on which would be released avian species judged by the Australian Vertebrate Pests Committee to be extreme or serious threats. If the Game Council supports the release of such avian threats it is moving wildlife management thinking back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century when people did not and could not see the consequences of introducing exotic animals as game. The Council would also be ignoring the advice of the Australian Vertebrate Pest Committee. History has shown Australia the harmful and costly consequences of such introductions and the AWMS committee strongly opposes this aspect of the Bill.

## **Recreational shooting being promoted as an effective feral animal control method**

The AWMS committee defines a recreational shooter as "a shooter who exercises their sport other than in a coordinated, strategic and integrated wildlife management or vertebrate pest control program." Shooting is an effective management tool when used in a coordinated, integrated strategic way such as in the South Australian Bounceback Program. Such partnerships between private and public stakeholder groups are commendable and should be encouraged wherever positive social, environmental and economic outcomes result. The AWMS committee acknowledges the Game Council could play a useful role in such programs in New South Wales. This was stated in

my letter to "The Land" newspaper. Recreational shooting is widely accepted as an ineffective control method but recreational shooters can become effective as conservation hunters (your term) when they participate in properly planned wildlife or vertebrate pest management programs. The AWMS does acknowledge there are little or no hard scientific data from Australia on the effectiveness or otherwise of recreational shooting as a management tool. History provides the only evidence at this time.

One other point you make in your response requires comment:

**Contradiction of AWMS Position Statement on Sustainable Commercial Use of wildlife:**

My statement in the letter in "The Land" newspaper was not objecting to the culling of native birds per se. I was making the point that there is a certain contradiction when native bird species which pose no threat are to be listed as a game species for culling while potentially extreme exotic bird threats will be released in game reserves from where they will inevitably escape into the wider environment if the present Bill is passed. The public need to be aware of this. I acknowledge sustainable harvesting of the listed species may be possible if sufficient population data are available to allow sustainable harvest rates to be calculated. However, I doubt if such data are available for most of the species.

Based on the above there is no contradiction of the AWMS Position Statement on Sustainable Commercial Use of Wildlife although another debate could be had about why commercial harvesting of the listed avian species is necessary or acceptable to the general community. I am not aware of recommendation 2 in the Position Statement on Sustainable Commercial Use of Wildlife being addressed by either The Shooter's Party or the NSW Game Council. I may be corrected on this.

This is an interesting area of debate and the AWMS committee is pleased to support your offer to organise a symposium at its 2009 conference which is relevant to the issue.

Terry Korn PSM  
President  
Australasian Wildlife Management Society