

Tuesday, 25 March 2014

Submission to the Legislative Council "Inquiry into Recreational Hunting Systems

The GNRBA recognises that there is demand for recreational hunters (mainly shooters) in the Goldfields Mularbor Region mostly adjacent to towns and populated areas. We see the benefits from and problems caused by this activity first hand on a regular basis.

The GNRBA region covers an area equivalent to the whole of the state of South Australia a significantly large area. To further understand our role we refer the committee to our draft business plan a copy of which is attached. Suffice to say that it is a large area which many still consider to be "the wild west".

In regard to inquiry we could provide a very large submission as feral and pest animals are a major threat to the ecosystems and productive potential of the rangelands. Unfortunately we are a relatively new independent association which has limited resources for such a submission. These resources are currently well under the required level for this activity although we are working to address this short fall so we may be much more in control of the rangelands.

Shooting to control feral animals and vermin is an important part of our pest animal control program. We engage "doggers", land managers and other feral animal control specialists to manage dog, camel feral horse, donkey, rabbit and goat populations in the range lands from time to time.

Associated with this control programs there are a number of very significant issues which we address. Our main concern with recreational hunters is that it is mostly uncontrolled shooting where the issues include

1. Lack of recognition and respect for the land managers and not seeking permission from managers or owners of the lands
2. Taking of non-target native species such as Kangaroos
3. Unintentional or intentional shooting of cattle and sheep
4. Danger to native fauna which may be rare or endangered
5. Soil erosion caused by off road and on road vehicle traffic
6. Damage to vegetation due to vehicles or camp sites
7. Physical damage to expensive infrastructure such as windmills, signs, sheds, water troughs, access roads and fences
8. Danger to human life

If we or a recognised authority (who worked with us) were able to control or direct a recreational shooting program then we should be able to address the above issues and turn what many see as a threat into an opportunity that could have benefits. An indication of may be required is;

- Access by recreational shooters to pastoral leases and other rangelands should be on a controlled basis e.g. a licence or permit system

- Fees paid for permits would be used to manage the program and improve the rangelands ecology.
- Shooters must be able to identify target and non target protected species
- The GNRSA, DPW and DAFWA could run training events to qualify recreational shooters
- Shooters need to be aware of lease holders contact details and respect property rights
- Fully aware of dangers to stock and humans
- Shooters could participate in feral vermin management programs for problem and priority species like camels
- Shooters should be able to report kill types and numbers and locations
- Pay an access / licence fee to the lease holder to access property

The benefits of such a system could be very significant to the rangelands ecology, residents of WA, shooters and pastoralists. These may include

- + Safer rangelands
- + Control of targeted pest species where shooting will make a difference to camels
- + Hunter satisfaction from participating and removing pests in a managed program
- + Reduced malicious damage to infrastructure
- + Protection of native species rare and endangered
- + Protection of stock
- + Responsible people in the rangelands that can report on other matters and management needs

We would be pleased to expand on this submission as the opportunity arises and wish to appear before the Committee if possible

Yours sincerely

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