

HUNTING & SUSTAINABILITY

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EXPOSING THE COST
OF AERIAL CULLING

NZ INVESTS IN THE
FUTURE HUNTERS



NO ROOM FOR COMPLACENCY

BY RICK BROWN

HISTORICALLY, PEOPLE WHO SAID THAT PARLIAMENT DOES NOT RUN THE COUNTRY, BUT THAT BANKS OR SOME OTHER INSTITUTIONS DO, HAVE BEEN DISMISSED AS CONSPIRACY THEORISTS.

In July, *The Australian* columnist and long-time political insider Paul Kelly turned this on its head.

He wrote that parliament does not run the country. The banks and superannuation funds do (*The Australian*, July 21, 2021).

His article said:

“The pressure on the Morrison government to pledge net-zero carbon emissions at 2050 cannot be delayed or averted ...

“ ... the choices are not between good and evil, not between moral and immoral. Many of the policies demanded by climate believers are dubious and unjustified.

“ ... The reason Morrison must move is not primarily public opinion, or demands from energy sector investors, or moral appeals to save the planet ... The reason Australia must move is because of the global financial power now mobilised in the climate cause ...

“This power is beyond the control of any government or any public. It has no democratic legitimacy. It can make and break companies and redirect the trajectory of nations ...

“When saving the planet is your justification, every norm is at risk.”

Paul Kelly’s analysis should ring alarm bells for people whose interests and passions do not enjoy widespread support (which is more than tolerance or acceptance) in our capital cities.

That is where, in the majority of states, at least 75 per cent of a state’s population lives.

More precisely it is necessary to be conscious of the threat posed to values or activities by the opposition of inner-suburban elites.

Hunters and shooters need to be very conscious of the world in which we live today and not to take the legitimacy of what they do for granted.

ADA is very aware of this reality.

It is why it insists on basing its promotion and defence of hunting and shooting on facts and data, avoids relying on emotional arguments (such as ‘we have a right to go hunting’) and seeks to minimise acceptance of emotional arguments by people who comment on or make decisions that affect hunting and shooting.

Minorities such as hunters and shooters cannot win emotional arguments.

It also is why ADA points out that hunters and shooters cannot rely solely on the law to ensure the future and is very conscious of what is described as ‘social licence’ or community acceptance.

If there were any doubts about ADA’s approach, analyses such as Mr Kelly’s dispels them.

In fact, Mr Kelly’s article demonstrates that the challenge is even greater than what has been stated. Even social licence may not be enough.

In the case of carbon emissions, environmentalists have not focused solely on winning public opinion, but on especially winning the inner-suburban elites who exert power or influence over organisations which can act, regardless of public opinion.

To quote Mr Kelly again, “Green power and financial power have come together in an extraordinary alliance”.

We need to ask if this exercise of power and influence will be limited to carbon emissions or whether it is creating a precedent.

Indeed, it could be asked whether this is the first time that such influence and power have been exercised or whether it is simply the first time we have seen it.

For example, to what extent was the shutting down of the timber industry due to public opinion and to what extent was it the consequence of environmentalists persuading Japanese mills not to buy what it decided was politically correct timber and to banks not lending to parts of the timber industry?

Addressing these questions matter.

There are investment funds called ethical funds which do not invest in certain activities. For example, the Pengana Axiom International Ethical Fund excludes investments in fossil fuel-powered companies, gambling, alcohol, tobacco, uranium/nuclear, weapons, coal mining, gold mining and adult entertainment.

Recently Woolworths and Wesfarmers have restructured their organisations. A consequence was either to get out of poker machines and alcohol or hived them off.

Was this a consequence or was this an intention?

To return to the banks and superannuation funds, might we see, in the future, banks and superannuation funds following the lead of some investment funds and banning other ‘unethical’ industries?

How would the ‘weapons’ industry rate on an ‘unethical’ list?

Mr Kelly’s analysis is a reminder there is not any room for complacency.

Relying on the ideas because our fathers hunted and went shooting that we have a right to do it, or that the law allows us to do it and that is all that matters, is not enough.



HUNTING PART OF RAMSAR FROM THE OUTSET

2021 MARKS THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RAMSAR CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (SO NAMED AFTER THE TOWN IN IRAN WHERE THE CONVENTION WAS HELD).

Too often the term 'Ramsar wetland' is bandied around by people who want to use it to exclude access and use.

To do so would be to ignore one of the core principles of the convention itself—wise use.

The convention commits its member countries to promote the conservation of their Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar wetlands) and to plan for the wise use of all of the wetlands in their territories.

Convention guidelines emphasise "human use on a sustainable basis is entirely compatible with Ramsar principles and wetland conservation in general".

Although the 1971 convention did not attempt a definition of 'wise use', it is clear that the term was being employed in the same sense as in an earlier discussion, which called for the "wise use of migratory stocks of waterfowl".

Here it meant, in modern terms, sustainable exploitation. In making this provision with regard to a habitat, the convention was in advance of its time.

Until the 1950s, the negative protectionist view had prevailed—to safeguard a natural area it was only necessary to exclude any human activity.

Increasingly thereafter it became recognised that many 'natural' areas were, in fact, already man-modified, and man's influence was becoming so pervasive even the remotest area was not free of it.

Instead of preservation, conservation—the maintenance of an area (or a species) in its current status by positive, well-informed intervention—became the order of the day.

A definition of 'wise use' was adopted by the parties in 1987, and was updated in 2005. This definition states: "Wise use of wetlands is the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development".

The three key elements of the definition of wise use are:

- Ecological character, which is the combination of the ecosystem components, processes and benefits/services that characterise the wetland at a given point in time.
- Ecosystem approaches, which consider the complex relationships between every element of an ecosystem, and promote the integrated management of land, water and living resources (including humans).
- Sustainable development, which is a pattern of resource use that aims to meet human needs while preserving the environment so these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for generations to come.

Hunting was in the thinking from the earliest genesis of the term 'wise use', far from being contradictory to the Ramsar principles, recreational hunting is in fact a formative and integral consideration.

STUDY FINDS HUNTING ACCESS HELPS REDUCE DEER NUMBERS

WE REGULARLY FACE CLAIMS RECREATIONAL HUNTING IS NOT AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR MANAGING WILD DEER IN AUSTRALIA.

What we know is, while population control is typically not the major motivation of recreational game hunters, hunting still has an impact on populations—in some areas a significant impact—but that is not well understood or researched.

A paper presented to the Conservation Through The Sustainable Use Of Wildlife Conference in 2016 (Bengsen et al) reflected on this and presented hypotheses for the evaluation of the effectiveness of recreational hunting, and for when and where better targeting of recreational hunting could be useful.

A new paper (Sotorra et al), published in *Australian Zoologist*, while not specifically setting out to answer questions about the role of recreational hunting, nonetheless makes some interesting and valuable observations about the correlation between hunting access and deer density.

The study set out to answer the question: *What factors influence detections of Sambar deer (based on scats) within the mountain ash forests of the Victorian Central Highlands?*

Among a range of interesting and useful findings about the use of forests of different age classes and structures, the study also made observations about land tenure—which indicate a clear correlation between access for recreational hunting and deer numbers.

"There was a marked land tenure effect with the occurrence of Sambar deer being higher in the Yarra Ranges National Park and closed water catchments than in state forests. Greater human access including hunting in state forests may account for this result," the study said.

We continue to advocate for further research and to promote public land access for deer hunters and the role of recreational deer hunters in wild deer management.

Further reading:

Modelling the factors influencing Sambar Deer (Rusa unicolor) occurrence in the wet eucalypt forests of south-eastern Australia.

By S. Sotorra, D. Blair, W. Blanchard and D. Lindenmayer.

DOI: doi.org/10.7882/AZ.2020.040



THE 50-YEAR CREEP OF A RADICAL AGENDA

BY RICK BROWN

BOTH THE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES AND BIG BUSINESS THINK THE GREENS ARE JUST ANOTHER PARTY AND ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS JUST ANOTHER LOBBY GROUP.

As you read this, the Greens are being overshadowed in the cultural extremist spectrum by the animal rights movement.

It is modelling itself on the Greens movement. It has the Animal Justice Party, underpinned by activist groups such as Animals Australia, the RSPCA, Voiceless and PETA and a swag of supporters in universities and schools, the public service and the media.

The latest battleground in Victoria is the re-writing of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act to transform its foundation from animal welfare to animal rights.

Animal rights activists disguise the difference between these two concepts by justifying their agenda in the name of recognising animal sentience.

They imply the fact that animals are sentient (that is, they see, hear, feel, have emotions) either has not been recognised or has been ignored.

The legal protection of animals dates back to the recommendations of the Technical Committee to Enquire into the Welfare of Animals kept under Intensive Livestock Husbandry Systems, which the British Government established in 1964.

The committee concluded: "There are sound anatomical and physiological grounds for accepting that domestic mammals and birds experience the same kinds of sensations as we do ... It is justifiable to assume that the sufferings of animals are not identical with those of human beings; it is equally justifiable to assume that they suffer in similar ways; the valid point where the line should be drawn is very difficult to determine ... It is extremely important to realise this."

The committee's report said "an animal should at least have sufficient freedom of movement to be able without

difficulty, to turn round, groom itself, get up, lie down and stretch its limbs".

Professor John Webster developed these principles and named them the Five Freedoms.

He said: "They should not be interpreted as an absolute standard for compliance with acceptable principles of good welfare but as a practical, comprehensive checklist of paradigms by which to assess the strengths and weaknesses of any husbandry systems".

Since then Professor Webster has said "the Five Freedoms are aspirations". There is not "an article of law that all of these perfect freedoms (should be experienced) all of the time."

However, the RSPCA claims: "the Five Freedoms was the first widely accepted evidence-based framework to capture the key aspects of animal welfare in one model."

The principles are evidence-influenced. They are not evidence-based.

Aspirations hardly constitute evidence. Nor do checklists.

The Farm Animal Welfare Council's press statement announcing Professor Webster's formulation of the Five Freedoms in 1979 accepted "that animal welfare raises certain points of ethics which are themselves beyond scientific investigation".

What is new is that an ideological belief, speciesism, is being justified on the basis that animals are sentient. Speciesism is an example of points of ethics which are beyond scientific investigation.

Animals rights ideology rejects the idea that humans are unique, a consequence of which is, to quote Professor Webster, that human beings have "dominion over the animals

whether we like it or not".

The creator of animal rights ideology, Professor Peter Singer, the author of *Animal Liberation*, coined the term 'speciesism' to describe the belief accepted in most cultures that humans are unique.

The Greens' manifesto, *The Greens*, which Professor Singer co-authored with Bob Brown, encapsulates his ideology: "We hold that the dominant ethic is indefensible because it focuses only on human beings and on human beings who are living now, leaving out the interests of others who are not of our species, or not of our generation".

Professor Singer follows the logic of his belief. Thus: "A week-old baby is not a rational and self-conscious being, and there are many non-human animals whose rationality, self-consciousness, awareness, capacity to feel, and so on, exceed that of a human baby a week or a month old. ... the life of a newborn baby is of less value to it than the life of a pig, a dog, or a chimpanzee is to the nonhuman animal."

Professor Ron Gill from Texas A&M University has observed: "Although the activist groups have done a great job of limiting the use of the term 'animal rights' and use a more palatable term 'animal welfare' in their messages put out to the general public ... most of the leaders of these 'animal welfare' groups ... had a long history of animal rights advocacy prior to becoming leaders of the more middle-of-the-road animal welfare advocacy groups".

It is important that the radical agenda behind the push to re-invent laws dealing with animal welfare is exposed and those who support it understand they are supporting speciesism and accept responsibility for the consequences.

'ABSURD AND ALARMIST' REPORT ON TASMANIAN WILD DEER

THE BOB BROWN FOUNDATION (BBF) HAS RELEASED A REPORT IT PREPARED WITH ITS PARTNERS AT THE INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL (ISC), PURPORTING TO BE A 'FERAL [SIC] DEER STRATEGY FOR TASMANIA'. IT IS A VIABLE STRATEGY FOR TASMANIA IN THE SAME WAY STAR WARS IS AN ACCURATE DOCUMENTARY ABOUT THE 1969 MOON LANDING.

The ISC and Bob Brown's Greens have a close alliance, sharing a premises in Melbourne and collaborating on a number of campaigns that push Greens ideology over evidence-based management.

Speaking in Hobart at the launch of the document, former Greens Senator Christine Milne said: "Fallow deer were introduced to Tasmania in the 1830s and by the 1970s numbered 7000 to 8000. But that figure is now close to 100,000 and set to number a million covering 54 per cent of the state by 2050 unless radical action is taken."

In response, the Australian Deer Association's Tasmanian co-ordinator Scott Freeman described Ms Milne's statement as "absurd and alarmist".

"A report released just last year put the Tasmanian fallow deer population at 53,660 with a net growth rate of just 5.4 per cent per year," Mr Freeman said.

"You can't simply double the scientifically determined figures because it suits your narrative."

In response to the ADA's criticisms, Ms Milne and the BBF doubled down on the anti-hunter rhetoric.

"Just because the Tasmanian Government wants to pretend we remain a far-flung outpost of the Empire and copy the recreational trophy hunting habits of the 19th century British

aristocracy, doesn't mean we should sacrifice our environment and farming community," Ms Milne said.

Going even further, BBF media manager Adam Burling described hunters as "dressing up on weekends, hiding in the bush and trying to see who can kill deer with the biggest antlers" and as "the weird people who have some sort of self-interested deer fetish".

Along with the hunting community, Tasmania's peak farming body was not consulted in the development of the ISC/Greens report.

While acknowledging the impacts of deer on agriculture was an issue, Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association chief executive officer John McKew put it into some context.

"A recent survey of 240 TFGA members revealed that deer are the number six wildlife pest problem for Tasmanian pastoralists," Mr McKew said.

"This puts deer behind the different species of wallabies, possums, cockatoos and feral cats."

Mr McKew reiterated the TFGA's commitment to working proactively and collaboratively with other sensible stakeholders.

The ISC/Greens report is a substantial (in length at least) document that lays out some useful points and proposals for wild deer management in Tasmania,



particularly with regards to proactively preventing the spread of wild deer populations.

Unfortunately, it is let down by the ideological leanings which have underpinned it and the flawed assumptions that appear to have flowed from them.

For example, the introductory paragraph of the *Executive Summary* of this report quotes an annual growth rate of 11.5 per cent, which is more than double the actual net growth rate of 5.4 per cent (as reported by Lethbridge et al just last year).

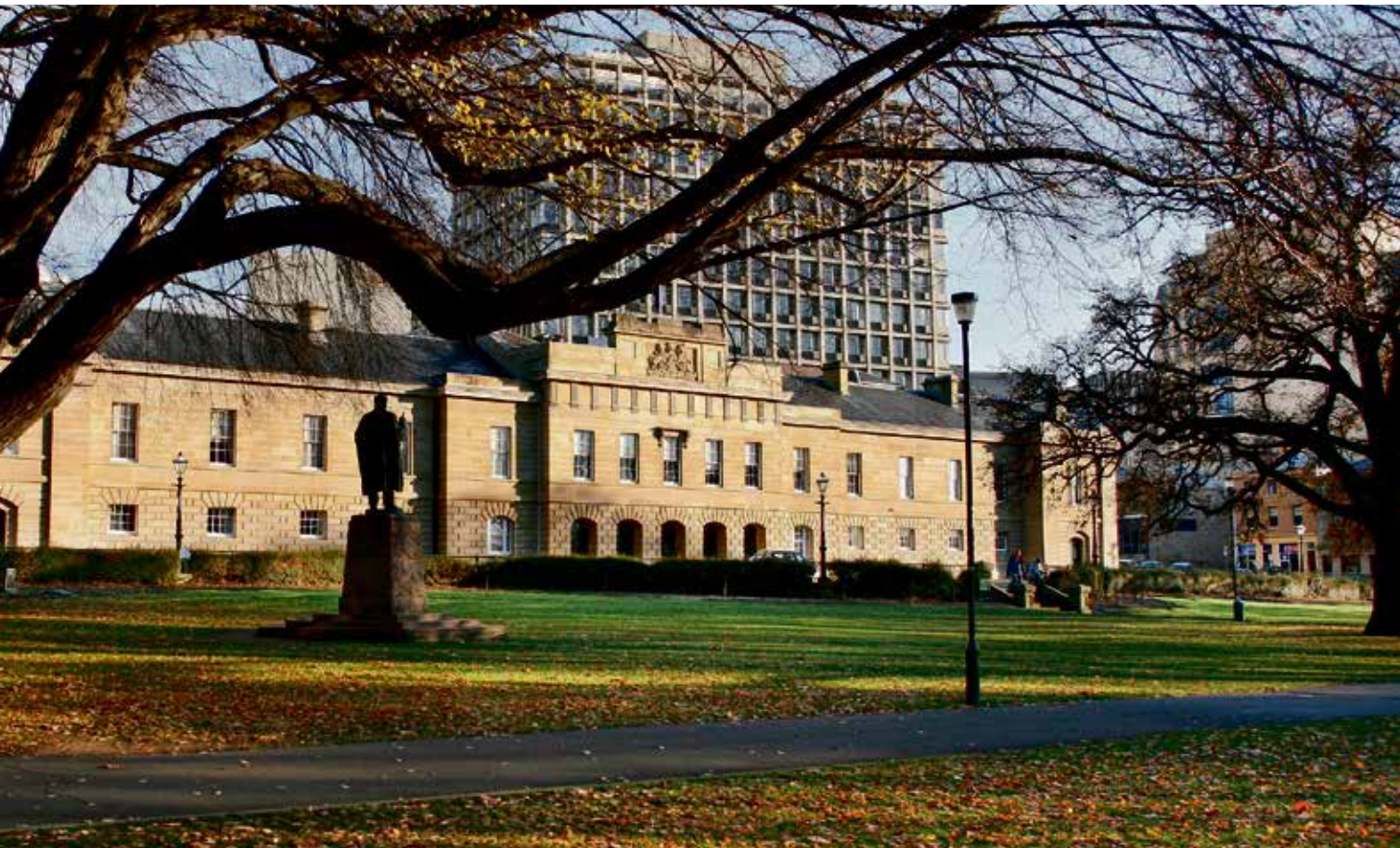
It also exaggerates (albeit this time only by around 5 per cent) the extent of the distribution of wild fallow deer beyond that reported by Lethbridge, with no obvious rationale for doing so.

The document erroneously uses the term 'feral' as a descriptor for wild deer a staggering 433 times.

The document, being predicated on critically flawed assertions about wild deer, unsurprisingly draws flawed conclusions and arrives at unrealistic recommendations.

It also misrepresents and mischaracterises game hunters and game licensing and seemingly seeks to downplay our role and interests in wild deer management.

By misdiagnosing game licensing as the dominant factor in wild deer expansion,



the ISC/Greens report would set the Tasmanian Government on a path that would ignore root causes (such as changed agricultural practices and the expansion of irrigation schemes) and disenfranchise and divide a large group of stakeholders for no conceivable ecological or political gain.

The settings in the Wildlife Regulations would have only a peripheral (if any) impact on any government-led deer control on public land outside of the 'traditional' range.

The document itself makes only passing reference to 'constraints' of the Wildlife Regulations, but in both the *Executive Summary* and subsequent commentary these settings are, incredibly, cast as the key management priority.

"We must seriously reduce deer numbers in Tasmania and eradicate them from the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage area and national parks, removing the partial [sic] protected status of feral deer is step one." Ms Milne said.

The current Tasmanian Government won a major election victory just over three months ago.

They took to that election a clear, comprehensive, costed suite of policies including one specifically about a wild deer management plan: "Invest \$250,000 over two years to implement a new Wild Fallow Deer Management Plan for Tasmania, reinvigorate property-based Game Management Plans, and expand

deer and wildlife population monitoring."

By contrast, The Greens received just 12 per cent of the vote at that election."

Dr Brown launched an extraordinary attack on the Tasmanian Government as a whole and Premier Peter Gutwein in particular.

"They don't have a clue on the environment," Dr Brown said. "All they're interested in is working out how to make money off it."

In response, Mr Gutwein highlighted the more collaborative approach the Tasmanian Government takes to the issue of wild deer management.

"Our clear focus is on maintaining a sensible balance between managing the impact of wild fallow deer on our important primary industries and natural environment and maintaining a deer herd as a traditional hunting resource."

The tone and release of this report follows a modus operandi employed by ISC/Greens in other jurisdictions where they have sought to push their ideological position to the exclusion of all other stakeholders and, in doing so, have attempted to effectively bully elected governments into following along.

In Victoria, for example, they had some success in doing just that by pressuring the government to abandon the practical and workable Deer Management

Strategy in favour of a largely ideologically and rhetorically-based Deer Control Strategy.

Ironically, the zone-based approach that the ISC/Greens are proposing for Tasmania today is substantially the same approach that they campaigned against in Victoria less than a year ago.

The validity of a zone-based management response is demonstrably sound, the credibility of the ISC/Greens in discussions about evidence-based wild deer management is demonstrably not.

This is not simply a disagreement about rhetoric or semantics, it is about the effective management of wild deer in the Australian environment.

By engaging in dismissive and exclusionary tactics and, more importantly, by peddling a predominately false narrative that game status is a salient factor in the expansion of wild deer populations, the BBF and the ISC run the very real risk of distracting our decision makers and acting as hindrance to efforts to manage wild deer in a practical sense.

The Australian Deer Association remains committed to working with the Tasmanian Government, landholders, conservationists and industry on a deer management plan based on accurate figures and setting a realistic and workable path for wild deer management in Tasmania.



For many or most of us, the COVID-19 outbreak has ground business to a halt; we are stuck on a rock midstream, if you will. The question is, how do we get out?

LEARN LIFE LESSONS FROM THE RIVER

BY RON JUNGAWALLA

IN A PREVIOUS LIFE, I WAS AN OUTDOOR EDUCATOR AND COMMERCIAL RIVER GUIDE.

The role involved teaching potential rafting guides the basics of the craft. They were wonderful days in wonderful environments and, mostly, with wonderful people.

After basic river craft theory, we would start the practical learning on class 2 moving water; a low-grade classification, where class 1 is barely more than moving bath water and class 6 is where you do not want to be, even as a professional!

Students would soon learn that ‘technical’ water meant rapids requiring forethought and manoeuvrability, even on low-grade rapids.

Without fail (and essential to the learning process), the newcomers to the art of rafting would get caught up on a rock or two in the middle of their first rapids.

Also without fail, their first and often frantic reaction would be to try to free the raft by whatever means possible as quickly as possible, perhaps to avoid witnesses and embarrassment.

As an instructor, I would ask them to stop and consider two questions:

“Are we, or the raft, in immediate (or indeed, any) danger?” The answer being a resounding “no”.

“Have you looked downstream to plan your next moves and route once free of the current rocks?” Again, the now sheepish answer, was a “no”.

So what’s the point here?

For many or most of us, the COVID-19 outbreak has ground business to a halt; we are stuck on a rock midstream, if you will.

It is very tempting for us to leap into a reactive state as we are all new to this pandemic ‘game’.

I believe that if we had an experienced ‘instructor’, they would counsel us to stop, breathe, look downstream and plan the next part of our journey before trying to free the raft.

As leaders, I believe we are all capable of being our own ‘instructors’.

It is certain there will be a recovery.

Let’s take advantage of this pause to breathe, look downstream and plan.

Once we are freed from the current ‘rocks’, those who will navigate the recovery successfully will have spent the time and energy during the current crisis in planning and preparing for that day.

As the ancients used to say, “this too shall pass”.

Happy rafting.

Ron is an expert in the area of leadership and the founder of Quest Group Global.

EXPOSING THE COST OF AERIAL CULLING

A PRESENTATION TO THE 18TH AUSTRALASIAN VERTEBRATE PEST CONFERENCE HAS PROVIDED AN IMPORTANT PIECE TO THE PUZZLE OF UNDERSTANDING THE COSTS OF AERIAL DEER CULLING OPERATIONS, AS WELL AS THE ANIMAL WELFARE IMPLICATIONS.

Governments throughout Australia are notoriously secretive about just about everything to do with aerial culling—we tend to get media releases touting ‘success’ using spurious measures, but very little of substance is ever forthcoming about the animal welfare implications, the pre- and post-cull monitoring of impacts and the cost to the public purse.

David Forsyth from the NSW Department of Primary Industries presented data on aerial shooting on agricultural properties in NSW, the ACT and Queensland—from a control point of view, the proverbial ‘low hanging fruit’.

Among the tables presented was the *Maximum and Minimum Hourly Costs* of culling operations using the two most common helicopter types.

The costs vary somewhat dependent on how many deer per hour are killed.

Helicopter	Max cost (71 deer/hour)	Min cost (0 deer/hour)
Jet Ranger	\$2348.00	\$1900.00
Squirrel	\$3289.00	\$2841.00

If we overlay those costs to the most recent report from Victoria’s aerial culling program in the Alps, there were 210 hours of flight time for a take of 1473 deer, or just over seven deer per hour—using the lowest minimum cost estimate this comes out at \$399,000 in flight time alone (not taking into account administration costs, accommodation, etc.) or a whopping \$270.88 per deer. All with no clear reportable environmental benefit and no credible understanding of the impact of that harvest on population numbers or density.

By contrast, the most recent data on Victoria’s recreational hunting harvest estimates the annual take to be as high as 213,500 deer—all with no clear reportable environmental benefit and no credible understanding of the impact of that harvest on population numbers or density.

Is the recreational harvest in fact worth more than \$57 million to Victoria alone?

Estimates are that recreational and meat hunters harvest around 135,000 deer, 132,000 other game animals and 230,000 pest goats each year in New Zealand.



NZ INVESTS IN THE HUNTERS OF THE FUTURE

THE NEW ZEALAND DEERSTALKERS ASSOCIATION (NZDA) AND THE GAME ANIMAL COUNCIL (GAC) ARE WELCOMING A \$700,000 BOOST FOR HUNTER TRAINING AND EDUCATION DELIVERED THROUGH THE JOBS FOR NATURE COMMUNITY CONSERVATION FUND.

“Hunting is increasing in popularity and with a lot of new people seeking to learn the skills required to feed their families, we all have an interest in assisting them to be as safe, ethical and successful as possible,” NZDA chief executive Gwyn Thurlow said.

“Both the NZDA and Game Animal Council are committed to improving the provision of hunter education and training and we acknowledge the support of the Department of Conservation in supporting this funding application.”

The Jobs for Nature funding will allow for the creation of five positions to develop and implement the National Hunter Education and Training Scheme over a three-year period.

“In keeping with its statutory mandate, the GAC is in the process of designing an online hunter education course that will act as a bridge between gaining a firearms licence and the hands-on instruction provided by NZDA’s hunter training course, known as HUNTS,” general manager Tim Gale said.

“This funding will allow us to employ someone full-time to get on with the complex development and delivery of the online course.”

“The HUNTS course has been incredibly successful since being launched in 1987 and has seen thousands of hunters gain the skills to safely hunt big game in New Zealand,” Mr Thurlow said.

“Currently it is run by qualified volunteers, which has limited our ability to meet the high demand of aspiring hunters applying for training.

“The extra resource through Jobs for Nature will allow us to professionalise the coordination and instructor assessment roles and mean more people than ever can access this practical training.”

“The reality is there are so many facets to being a good hunter,” Mr Gale said.

“A lot of people get fixated on firearms training and while that is important, most hunting accidents don’t involve firearms at all and are instead the usual outdoor incidents—rolled ankles, falls and being caught out in bad weather.

“Teaching new hunters the necessary safety skills also needs to be combined with teaching them how to be successful.

“This can comprise of what to hunt, where and when, practical field shooting techniques, good game animal management practices, hunting ethics and animal butchery.”

“The importance of hunting to New Zealand cannot be undervalued,” Mr Thurlow said.

“Estimates are that recreational and meat hunters harvest around 135,000 deer, 132,000 other game animals and 230,000 pest goats each year in New Zealand.

“This is a significant contribution, not only to conservation, but in the provision of mahinga kai for many communities.”

“The bottom line is the more new and inexperienced hunters we can reach through this scheme the better the outcomes will be for hunter safety and enjoyment and the greater the hunting sector’s contribution will be to game animal management and the wellbeing of our communities,” Mr Gale said.



POLITICS BY POSTCODE

BY RICK BROWN

MUCH HAS CHANGED AROUND US OVER THE PAST 30 YEARS AND REGIONAL AUSTRALIANS HAVE ENDURED MOST OF THE CONSEQUENCES.

So how do we respond to these changes?

Do we pretend they are not happening and ignore them? Do we say we did not ask for these changes and were not consulted about them, so they should not happen?

Do we say the forces behind these changes are too powerful for us, there is not anything we can do about it and we should accept defeat and find something else to do?

Or do we say we shall try to negate these changes and adapt to them while retaining our culture and our lifestyle?

To answer these questions, it is necessary to ask why we find ourselves in this situation and where it all began.

Some people would say it began with the Vietnam War and the age of protest.

However, the political challenge for regional Australia began well before that with the post-World War II decision to develop a manufacturing industry with a limited population.

There were not enough people to take the jobs to, so the people had to be taken to the jobs.

Thus began not only Australia's well-publicised migration program, but also the attracting of people from the country to the cities in Australia's south-

east corner.

Despite the growth in Australia's population, this mindset has not changed.

Today we see the results—75 per cent or more of the populations of NSW, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia live in the capital cities of those states.

Meanwhile, the consequences of the cultural revolution of the 1960s have been reinforced by the collapse of communism at the end of the 1980s.

Between the 1930s and 1980s, politics in Anglo-Saxon countries and Western Europe were driven by the Great Depression and by communism.

Either political parties broadly opposed communism and central planning and were termed as 'the Right', or they were tolerant of central planning and communism and were termed as 'the Left'.

The true shape of modern politics was evidenced by the free-market economic policies championed by the Labor Party in Australia in the 1980s.

If the major parties in the West had been intellectually honest, they would have wound up as Berlin's wall tumbled down in 1989, because the rationale for the existence of all of them had ceased to exist.

However, that was not possible because, even by then, politics was becoming a career and to have acted on principle would have put jobs on the line.

The only way for a political party to survive in the modern era was to become, what John Howard described in the 1990s, as a "broad church".

And a broad church believes in nothing.

Consequently, since the 1990s, the terms 'Left' and 'Right' have become meaningless.

The only value they have is to provide a way to maintain the myth that the major parties believe in something.

The problem is we have seen through the myth.

'Left' and 'Right' are not terms that give you a sense of somebody's values or beliefs. Nor for that matter is one's identification with the Liberal Party, the Labor Party or even the National Party.

The most accurate indicator of people's values and beliefs is their postcodes—where they live.

In 1998, former Labor leader Mark Latham summed up this development when he spoke of Australians as either "tourists" or "residents".

Latham said the insiders live like



'tourists' in their own country. There is a sense in which they do not live in Australia at all.

"They travel extensively, eat out and buy in domestic help. They see the challenges of globalisation as an opportunity, a chance to further develop their identity and information skills. This abstract lifestyle has produced an abstract style of politics. Symbolic and ideological campaigns are given top priority," he said.

The outsiders, on the other hand—the people who live in the outer suburbs and the regions—are the 'residents' of Australia.

Their values are pragmatic. They cannot distance themselves from the problems of the neighbourhood, and so good behaviour and good services are all important.

There is no symbolism, and no dogma, in the suburbs, Latham says.

The evidence to support Latham's thesis was in already.

It took the form of the results of the referendum on an Australian republic in 1999.

In Victoria, the federal electorates with the four highest 'yes' votes were Melbourne, Melbourne Ports, Higgins and Kooyong—two Liberal, two Labor and all inner suburban.

The 'no' vote in outer suburban Labor seats was like that in outer suburban Liberal seats.

The same held in other states.

In Queensland, just two seats voted 'yes'.

The (then) safe Labor seat of Brisbane and the safe Liberal seat of Ryan, both inner suburban.

As you travelled 'y' along the 'no' votes were comparable, regardless of whether the seats were held by Labor or Liberal/National.

Political loyalties do not provide a basis for analysing the results of that referendum. Postcodes do.

Neither of the major parties wanted to learn the lessons from this referendum because their key decision makers and the operatives with critical influence live in the inner suburbs.

The values and beliefs promoted by both parties are the values of the social sets in which their influential members mingle.

Latham's 'residents' are treated with contempt.

The political elites think the way to overcome the incompatibility of the values and priorities of the inner suburbs and the rest of Australia is to work out how much is needed to bribe the outer suburbs and the regions.

Twenty years after the republic referendum, Australians were shocked by Brexit and the rise of Donald Trump. Why?

The destruction of community on the one hand—and the gutting of the middle class because of the ascendancy of economic Darwinism brought about through the adoption of unbridled free market theory on the other—made the divisions, distrust and cynicism we see today inevitable.

It is against this backdrop that hunters, miners, farmers and people who live in regional and rural areas need to respond to the questions with which I began.

It is important to understand who controls the cultural levers, and what those levers are.

It is also necessary to remember—in an era where principles are expendable and values are negotiable—that 75 per cent beats 25 per cent and the views of the people with whom the political class socialises have greater weight than the views of the people who they claim to represent.

The cultural revolution in which we are caught up will not reverse itself by wishful thinking.

Nor will it be reversed overnight.

Developing ways to hold the line requires skill, judgment and wisdom.

THE DEER PEOPLE

AUSTRALIAN DEER ASSOCIATION

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of harmony between
man and land”

Aldo Leopold

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*Active in wild deer
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*Promoting hunter education
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