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The Secretary,  
Ms Jenny Mannering  
Legislative Council Government Administration Committee A  
Wild Fallow Deer  
Parliament House  
Hobart TASMANIA 7000

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Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to you make a submission to the Wild Fallow Deer Inquiry being conducted by the Legislative Council. My submission endeavours to follow the guidelines as set out under the Inquiries terms of reference.

## Background

As a large landowner (17,200ha) I and my recreational hunting groups have a significant interest in the effect that deer have on my property Connorville. I am also part of a much larger regional group called the Big Den Recreational area. This group consists of five hunting clubs/groups that involve my property and that of three neighbouring landowners and most importantly Forestry Tasmania land.

- Land covered under the all group arrangement is 30,000 plus hectares in total.
- Our area has one the largest boundaries with forested land in Tasmania.
- We have a significant problem with deer however the group is generally managing deer numbers under the current deer regulations.
- Our group involves some 140 of my hunters/shooters directly and 200 of the other members hunters to total approximately 340 hunters.
- The level of time, people administration, poaching patrols and prevention of illegal access in relation to deer is quite simply massive.

- Some 20 people are actively engaged in the administration of hunting activities over all the properties.
- The group in its entirety would apply annually for some 1700+ deer permits.
- On an individual property basis deer control on my property Connorville represents the highest cost and time commitment for a non-farm enterprise.
- We were one of the first properties (if not the first) to adopt property based game management principles.
- I personally have been a past member of the TFGA Wildlife and Firearms Committee and make contributions to assist the TFGA in their policy setting.
- Some commercial kangaroo hunting only is carried out on the property.

My own property's hunting group Presidents and Committees work tirelessly to ensure compliance with the property's objectives in relation to deer numbers. Both myself as landowner and our energetic Hunting Groups President and committee require our hunters to conduct shooting control of all vermin and native browsing animals in order to retain the right to shoot a trophy stag. Whilst the majority of our excellent shooters /hunters do the right thing a minority have been known to record artificially high numbers of deer shot in order to retain their position on the property and to protect their trophy stag resource. The problem with this is that by default you can end up with too many deer. Our Hunting groups work very hard though to ensure that all our shooters comply with our hunting objectives

Keeping high deer numbers (especially stags) has been scientifically proven not to produce better trophy stags. Retaining too many deer is certainly not in the land owners' interest.

### Past and Current Permit Applications

In the past all permits had to be to named hunters only and reply forms had to be completely filled in before we landowners could apply for more. This was fine if you have a small hunting/shooting group but not if you have 140 people. We for a number of reasons could not get all our hunters to fill in their tallies and replies, which stalled us in obtaining further permits to keep the deer numbers down.

Delays in culling large numbers mean it is more difficult to get deer numbers down resulting in further costly damage.

The problem also had been that even with receiving more permits that they were still not enough to really deal with problem. We had been unable to obtain our quota numbers primarily due to the Department not allowing us the quota's that we really wanted, resulting in protracted negotiation with the Department over a lesser amount.

For quite some time permits/quotas had not reflected our annual request for permits/quotas based on the on ground deer numbers.

Fortunately in the last two years permits and quotas (especially for the doe season and crop protection permits) have been a lot easier to obtain.

Currently permits/quotas can be held by our respective Committee Presidents and then apportioned to the hunters. This has meant a vast improvement in culling quickly and efficiently.

However it is still not enough. We need more crop protection quota. In order to keep deer numbers under control my property requires at least another 600 doe and male crop protection permits on a permanent basis to have any real effect in reducing deer levels to an acceptable levels.

#### Impact on our Commercial Activities - Costs

- Pasture loss equivalent to 2000 dry sheep a year Goss Income of \$60,000.
- Yield loss in crops (poppies and cereals): up to \$10,000
- Administration for Game Management unit plus Hunter Club's administration and compliance costs; \$10,000
- Patrolling and poaching control (owner, management and staff and Hunter Club personnel); \$50,000.
- Damage to fencing; \$5,000
- There is a cost in permit delays when shooting large numbers quickly especially for the larger properties.
- Cost recovery is minimal as our property access fee is \$150 or \$75 or Nil depending on the area.

#### Environmental Impact - Costs

- Extensive damage to native vegetation and tree regrowth especially by Stags.
- Deer are the most destructive animal to tree regrowth and or plantations.
- To prevent large scale destruction to new regeneration or restoration projects, it requires 100% deer proof fencing to guarantee success. The cost of this fencing is prohibitive to most landowners. As an example, Greening Australia's 150ha project of plantation and restoration planting at Connorville cost is in excess of \$150,000 over two years 2014-16.
- Single tree plantings require caging but they are also costly in time and money.

#### Response and Recommendations

- Permits, quotas and tags must be required for the stag seasons, doe seasons and for all crop protection in order to control or alleviate poaching, trespass, landowner cost, landowner protection and general nuisance. This is especially the case for the larger landowners.
- The current regulations and system is a major aid in controlling who can enter a property and more importantly does without exception help landowners and enforcement agencies control illegal access and poaching.
- Primarily, my proposed amendments are designed to simplify the process especially for large quota/permit holders and transfer responsibility of crop protection numbers back to the landowner.

- It would be a great shame if deer hunting/shooting is to be deregulated as there would be no one to enforce the right of entry and hunter control on private land. Poaching, illegal access and damage to property as it was in the past would once again rear its ugly head.
- If you think deer are a problem; the less than legal and non-property committed deer hunters are even more problematic and costly.
- There is an absolutely essential need to retain Parks and Wildlife and the Game Management Unit and for these bodies to continue to enforce control over the significant number of shooters that do not follow the rules and regulations that are in place.
- More permits will solve the issue not deregulation.
- Deer deregulation would quite simply endorse more hunters/shooters to illegally shoot on a landowners' property.
- The Game Management unit must have a handle on what is the deer picture state wide, in order to chart the movement of deer, the results of hunters and shooters efforts and therefore the ability to advise Government on future changes to the regulations.

#### Recommendation 1

I proposed amending current regulations for the partial protection status for Fallow deer in Tasmania to include a similar model as modelled in the recent changes five year permit for Wallaby and Possum permits for properties who have a Game Management Plan, with deer permits being issued on a five year basis.

#### Recommendation 2

Amend the current regulations for the partial protection status for Fallow deer in Tasmania to include absolute discretion for land owners to be able to nominate the total quota number of crop protection permits they require, at the start of the Calendar year for either a one to five year period.

#### Commercial Opportunities for the use of Wild Population Stocks.

- In principle I am not against the commercial harvesting of deer however we do not conduct commercial hunting of deer on any of our properties.
- Commercial deer hunting has been tried on my property on a number of occasions and basically it has failed due to the high compliance costs and the subsequent low financial return to the hunter / landowner. Commercial hunting can mean the loss of opportunity or access to private property for a large number of recreational shooters and hunters.
- In a lot of farm situations you cannot just have commercial hunters to control deer, let alone native browsing animals. Commercial hunters alone will not be able to adequately cover the whole property in terms of an effective over all wildlife control.
- Good idea but not practical.

Any Matters Incidental Thereto

- We are firm believers of the current system, (controlled recreational hunting). However, there is scope for improvement in the system especially where there are large populations of deer.
- The problem isn't necessarily the system: it is that there are just too many deer.
- More quotas and tags need to be made available to solve the problem.
- Without doubt well managed and controlled recreational hunters are the best solution to the deer problem. It is absolutely imperative that controlled recreational hunters be the source of shooting/hunting deer.
- Deregulation creates more problems than it solves
- Continue the existing right to use 1080 poison as a last resort option.

Yours Faithfully,

Roderic O'Connor

Director

Connorville Station Pty Ltd