

Mr Gerard Brereton

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To Mr Robert Armstrong MLC, Inquiry Chair,

I am writing to you, on behalf of the group of recreational hunters I represent and coordinate in the Midlands area of Tasmania. I was disappointed to read that the Legislative Council found it necessary to conduct an inquiry into the Fallow Deer in Tasmania. It seems that the importance of recreational hunters to the Tasmanian landscape and the service they provide to the State's landowners is often taken for granted and easily forgotten.

Fallow deer were first introduced into Tasmania as a recreational resource. As a result, many generations of Tasmanians have since learnt the valuable life lessons that are associated with hunting. The importance of respecting the animal that provides food for their families and ensuring that animal is managed for future generation's forms part of the genetic makeup that is a recreational hunter. Over the years, the number of Fallow Deer in Tasmania has increased, with the number of recreational hunters taking up this cultural tradition also increasing. In early 2016 over 5000 hunters purchased a licence to hunt Fallow deer, the highest number ever recorded. **These figures prove that deer in Tasmania are valued and are seen as a resource and it's not only the hunters that value the deer.**

The majority of landowners use the deer on their properties as a bargaining tool. A well managed herd of Fallow Deer is seen as an asset to landowners as the huge demand for hunting access to these deer is exchanged for various goods and services. Some examples of what the members of my hunting group provide to our property are listed below:

- Controlling the ever increasing numbers of browsing wildlife (kangaroo, wallaby, possum, rabbit) at the hunters cost (fuel, ammunition etc)
- Providing hundreds of hours of free labour
- Pay in excess of \$10,000 per year in access fees to the landowner
- Undertake security patrols of the property
- Conduct maintenance on the property's building assets and dwellings
- Repair damaged fences

These Men, Women and their families would not undertake this vast amount of work at considerable cost to their income if it wasn't for the opportunity to hunt deer, as the opportunities that these hunters are presented with is seen as a reward for their effort and dedication. As an example, many landowners used to see 1080 poison as the only viable solution to controlling the massive explosion of browsing wildlife numbers. Tasmania's recreational hunters are however bucking this trend with **7480 recreational wallaby licences sold in 2015**. The DPIPWE also issued **1632 crop protection permits in 2015 to control wallaby numbers** which resulted in a total of **695,830 animals harvested**. What a fantastic result for the landowners struggling through a very dry year. These figures prove the relationship between a landowner and his recreational hunters is an important one and it is imperative that both work together to achieve their desired outcomes.

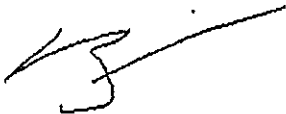
As deer are partly protected, there is a limit on the amount a recreational hunter can legally take per year (3 deer). In some instances due to dry conditions, herd imbalance or cropping programs a landowner may need to harvest more deer from their property than what the hunters can legally take and this is where the importance of Tasmania's Game Management Unit comes to the fore. Landowners can request the Department provide them with permits to harvest a certain amount of animals, be it Male or Female deer. These permits are then issued to the landowner and passed onto the properties recreational hunters in return for the hard work they provide to the property throughout the year. This system works as the recreational hunters are able to selectively harvest the animals that the landowners want removed. It's a win for the landowner and win for the hunters.

By deregulating, removing the partly protected status and allowing deer to be harvested for commercial purposes, would see all the hard work undertaken by many generations of passionate Tasmanians lost. It would see a dramatic increase in illegal hunting and trespass as well as an imbalance to the male/female ratio of the herd as only the best, prime conditioned animals are suitable for commercial use. Illegal hunting and poaching is already rife in this State. Many landowners find the headless carcasses of Fallow bucks strewn throughout their properties after the peak breeding period or 'Rut' is over. During this time of the year (early to mid April) Fallow bucks become more visible and chase the female deer into groups where they can be successfully mated with. This makes the Bucks easy targets for game thieves who illegally access the property, kill the deer and then remove the head as a trophy. In most cases the carcass is left to rot and the meat wasted. As deer are currently partly protected, these game thieves can be charged with various wildlife offences if caught and convicted. If the deer are deregulated to a pest status, these thieves must be caught on the property in order to be charged with an offence (trespass). The penalties for which are extremely lenient and are not adequate enough to act as a deterrent for other prospective criminals.

The Fallow Deer is now a traditional part of the Central Tasmanian landscape and belongs here as much we do, which proves the current desire to simply classify something that's introduced as a 'pest' is not the correct mindset. Deer and Trout (also introduced) have been a part of Tasmania for nearly as long as European settlement itself and have provided a fantastic recreational pastime for many generations of Tasmanians that should be celebrated. I do believe however that Fallow deer occupying non traditional areas as a result of farm escapees need to be controlled. These deer should be culled before they are able to establish a breeding population by issuing landowners with permits and utilising the goodwill of recreational hunters.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss my experiences with you during the public inquiry and can be contacted anytime.

Yours Sincerely,



Gerard Brereton