

## PUBLIC

**THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SESSIONAL COMMITTEE GOVERNMENT  
ADMINISTRATION A MET AT THE GRANGE, CAMPBELL TOWN, TASMANIA ON  
TUESDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2016.**

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### **INQUIRY INTO WILD FALLOW DEER POPULATION**

**Mr ANDREW WINWOOD**, PRESIDENT, CHARLTON HUNTERS CLUB, WAS CALLED,  
MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** (Mr Armstrong) - Welcome to the public hearings of the Government Administration A Committee Inquiry into the Wild Fallow Deer Population in Tasmania. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege. I remind you that any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privileges. A copy of the information for witnesses is available. If you have not read it and are not aware of the process, the evidence you give is being recorded and a *Hansard* version will be published on the committee website when it becomes available. By way of introduction, I advise the procedure we intend to follow today is as follows. You will be provided with the opportunity to speak to your submission, if you would like. Following that, the committee will address questions to you. We are seeking information specifically relating to the wild fallow deer population in Tasmania. Would you like to make an opening statement, Andrew?

**Mr WINWOOD** - I have been president of the Charlton Hunters Club for 20 years. I thank the committee for taking the time to read the submission from the Charlton Hunters Club and for giving me the time to speak today. I have read most of the submissions and I agree with most of them. Most of the deer in Tasmania need to be managed in some way or other. The only thing I think we differ on is the way these deer are going to be managed. Some people think helicopter shooters from New Zealand are good; some people think 1080 poison is good; some people think deregulation is good. Deregulation is not a form of management, it is a form of not managing the deer. Part of what we should look to get out of the next couple of days here and in Hobart is that most hunting and farming groups don't agree with deregulation. They don't agree with people throwing deer into a ring and saying it is open slather on deer.

The system we currently have in Tasmania is not broken. We have a good system of deer management through the Game Management Services Unit. Our game management plans are set up to suit properties in how they want their deer to be handled. Through a permitting system and the seasons, deer can be managed for farmers in Tasmania. If he wants to have a lot of deer, he can have a lot of deer. If he wants fewer deer, he can apply for permits and reduce the numbers. The system as to how we manage them is not broken. We ask, who is managing the deer in Tasmania? The deer in Tasmania are always going to be managed by the people who have an interest in them. No matter who comes to the table to give evidence today, they can find supporting evidence to prove their point. Whether it is needing helicopters in national parks to take out the deer because recreational hunters won't do the job, laying 1080 poison or deregulation, everybody will find something to support their argument.

Our argument is that we have been operating on Charlton, which is more than 10 000 hectares of prime farming land in the Midlands. We have a reasonable population of fallow deer. We reduced that from a large population some 20-odd years ago with the help of the

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Game Management Services Unit. We set up a game management plan with the property owners. We discussed with the farmers what they wanted to get out of it and then we brought to the table what the hunters wanted to get out of it. When we first started, the value of fallow deer to the property owner was low because there was a big gap between the returns versus what the property owner got out of the deer. What Charlton Hunters Club did was reorganise ourselves as a self-managed group that would go to the property owner and offer reimbursement for the privilege to hunt. We would pay for that, and in return they would carry an agreed amount of deer.

The way we did that was by encouraging the guys to harvest above what they would normally harvest in all wildlife, whether it be wallaby or possum. Previously Charlton was seen as a bit of a backdoor entry to some of the other properties in the area that had good quality deer populations. Through that Charlton became a property that was mismanaged until we set up our game management hunting plan and started to organise hunters.

The outcome is that we have a low to moderate deer number because the shooters were given the task to bring the deer into an agreed number with the property. We increased the funds so that the compensation back to the farmer was much better. We now pay four times what we were paying 20 years ago to make it a worthwhile proposition as a business for the property so they could run deer as well as their other farming enterprises.

For us as recreational hunters I do not think we are the enemy. I believe we are part of the solution. In some cases when it comes to some areas of the press and the media, we can be seen to have a discoloured neck, but all shooters are not like that. We have a very well-organised group that operate how the property owners want us to operate. We keep the deer numbers to a level that are sustainable and also all the other browsing wildlife on the farm.

We talk about deer moving into the World Heritage Area and what that means for Tasmania. Most hunters agree that if deer are moving into areas where they are not meant to be, we are the solution. We are not a roadblock to stopping that from happening. I do not believe bringing in overseas hunters with helicopters is the answer. We only have to look at history and what happened in New South Wales that should never be repeated. I do not know if anybody is aware of what happened when we brought New Zealand hunters in with helicopters to cull the brumbies in the New South Wales national parks, but what the government allowed to happen in New South Wales national parks was an absolute disgrace and I hope Tasmania would never get that publicity. They were finding that with these so-called professional shooters who came in with helicopters and promised Parks and Wildlife humane culls of the deer in those national parks, 10 days after the cull had finished they were ferrying in wounded mares and horses that had wounds to their bodies and were never going to survive and were going to die a slow death. These were professional shooters who were flown from in New Zealand at government expense.

In the time I have stalked in some of the national parks in Victoria you can get quite close to these brumbies. There are other methods that could have been used to do that, but the government chose what they thought was an acceptable option.

I would hate to see Tasmania go down the same path, as some submissions have suggested, by deregulation. I do not think that is an answer. We already have the answer. We have worked for the last 20 years with the Game Management Services Unit. If we were to empower that unit to be able to govern how deer are harvested and treated in Tasmania, it would be a much better outcome.

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We look at commercialisation and the fact some people would like to see wild deer harvested in the field for the supermarket or restaurant trade in Tasmania. I look at all the work the deer hunters do and all the hunting groups. We sit and talk with the TFGA, local government and with our local farmers, yet we have people wanting to take something that is wild and turn it into a commercial operation when they have started at the wrong end. Our Meat Hygiene Act won't even allow us to harvest deer in the wild or take it to a market somewhere. A lot of work needs to be done. People are calling for deregulation or commercialisation and we have not even done the background work that we have done over the last 20 years for game management.

Credit has to be paid to the people who have fallow deer to where they are now. If we have properties that are overpopulated with deer and we have recreational hunters, our club has offered, via the TFGA, to send registered, licensed hunters onto other farms that need additional hunters for short periods, so farmers cannot say there is no access to good, reliable recreational hunters. They are there.

This year they increased the tags available to licensed hunters. There was an extra 1500 female deer harvested this year by recreational hunters because they made additional tags available. A commercial operation is not going to be as successful as giving the tags to recreational hunters. Recreational hunters will do the job if given the opportunity. They have proven that over the last 12 months where they went to work and harvested the extra 1500 deer on about 4500 licences last year in Tasmania. At least 1500 people took the opportunity to use their additional tags. There are recreational hunters out there who will bring the deer population under control in areas where it is necessary.

We have a very successful balloting system also run by the game services unit that works in some of the highland areas where Forestry has access to recreational hunting. The balloting system allows for management of these areas. It allows hunters in who are responsible, reliable, who will operate within the law and do the right thing. That is a good system.

Deregulation would throw that system away and turn it back to where we were 10 or 15 years ago where everybody was climbing all over themselves. Police were continually called to these Forestry areas because of disputes over where people could camp, hunt and light campfires. We have taken all that away from those areas and made that a pleasurable area to hunt. If you talk to the Forestry guys who manage that with the Game Management Services Unit, they would support that there has been a massive improvement in that area in hunting ethics and the way the hunters operate through a balloting system. That is an option to deregulation because deregulation will turn us way back to where we do not want to be.

I have lived in Tasmania all my life. I have hunted in Canada, Victoria and New South Wales, and Tasmania is unique. We have something no other state can offer. We have very well-managed fallow deer. In some areas some people might say they have traffic trouble getting up the highway because of all the fallow deer that are there. I drove all the way from Devonport today and I did not see a deer. No matter who talks to you, they will find evidence to support what they want to support, whether it be too many deer there so let's poison them, shoot them from helicopters, or commercialise them so we can run them through an abattoir. There is a lot of other work that has to be done before that can ever happen.

The recreational hunters are out there now doing the job and the Government should be supporting them. We have something like 172 properties in Tasmania that currently operate

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under a Game Management Services Unit game management plan. There are not too many people I have seen put submissions in that are anti-deer today. These 172 properties represent 3500 Tasmanian hunters. Whilst we might get a couple of submissions that suggest deregulation, commercialisation or eradication are options, I think the silent majority is sitting back expecting the right thing will be done. We have been doing the right thing now for in excess of 30 years. I do not know that changing anything wholesale is going to fix the problem. Working with the people can fix the problem. Recreational hunters are putting their hand up to fix the problem, and I think that is the option we should be looking at.

**Mr WINWOOD** - Through some of my lobbying and meetings, I am very passionate about ongoing support for recreational hunters and for fallow deer in Tasmania, we have met extensively with TFGA and I have met some of the people on the committee today. You understand where I come from. Recreational owners are never going to be the enemy, and they will always support change. We found that through our clubs and through the TDAC, the TFGA that were out there looking to be part of the solution. We do not want to be left behind by change, deregulation or commercialisation.

We have some agreements with some other groups that will not support deregulation or commercialisation. We have had extensive meetings with TFGA - we have had support from their group - they do not see that as an option either. Our recreational planning group on Charlton turned that property around in less than 10 years. In the past 10 years we have had excellent hunting and good quality deer in low numbers that are sustainable for the property owners. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, Andrew. Do you believe that the deer population is exploding or -

**Mr WINWOOD** - No.

**CHAIR** - You do not?

**Mr WINWOOD** - No, but in saying no, any unmanaged population will increase. In our experience at Charlton over the last 30 years - when we first started with our hunting club, we had to force hunters to shoot does. We had a resident population of female deer of somewhere around 1500 to 2500. When we set up our game management plan, we sat down with property owners and asked, 'What are the numbers that you would like to see on your farm in exchange for us having year-round access to hunt?' They said, 'We want 350.'

Within two years, we had reduced that population from 2500 to the 350 required. We have, not through poisoning, commercialisation, any of that sort of stuff, we did it through recreational hunters given access to permits. The current permitting system now is extending out to a 12-month permit. Any farmer that has an issue with deer can get access to 12-month permits to control their problem.

If we change everything to suit some farmers with overpopulation, I think we have missed the boat on that opportunity. Generations of hunters, generations of families - when I go hunting my whole family goes, it is not something that I do alone. We have accommodation on the farm and a lot of guys in our hunting club bring their families along. Sometimes they do not hunt, they fish or we do working bees, all that sort of stuff. It is more a family hunting environment we are used to. That is what game management plans lean towards, sustainable ongoing hunting for generations to come.

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To answer your question, I do not think our population has exploded as a whole. In some areas where we have escapees from deer farms, illegal releases by people wanting to establish deer in areas, I think you will find deer are coming up in those pockets now. There are pockets around Scottsdale, on some of the islands, and on the north-west coast. These are not exploding from the base population of deer currently in this area, through the midlands of Tasmania. They are not exploding from here. There is no bus they can charter to move to the north-west coast. These deer have been transported there. This is not an explosion of wildlife.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Andrew, thank you for taking the day off to come down here. You said the system is not broken as far as you can see. Do you think there is room for improvement to cull the numbers? If so, do you think the increased season would be better, and bag tags, bag limits? Would you like to comment on that?

**Mr WINWOOD** - Yes. As the president of the Charlton Hunters Club, I also sit on the TEOC[?]. We meet with the minister on a regular basis and we talk about this every year. We talk about increasing the length of season to give our recreational hunters additional access to hunting hours. We are also firm supporters of additional licence tags, but we also support farmers' ability to get crop protection tags in those areas where they need to protect their crops.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - That leads onto my next question. You said that farmers want their population culled to a certain limit. Why would any farmer want any on their property?

**Mr WINWOOD** - Good question. Deer are always going to be in our area. Unless they are totally eradicated, deer are always going to be there.

The options our property owner has taken is that if we are going to support a population of deer, they support it being commercially viable for their farm. What we have done is set up a plan that supports the property owner. Our plan supports the property owner's needs in reducing deer to a number that is acceptable to their farm. They have also increased the rate we pay for access to their property to compensate them for time lost and the effort that goes into those deer.

We sat down as a committee with the property owners and discussed what they thought the deer were costing them and what they needed to recover to compensate property owners for carrying that amount of deer.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Can you give us a rough idea of what you, as a hunter, do to help the farmer? What do you do while you are there?

**Mr WINWOOD** - In our situation, I run the hunting club, everything comes through the club. We have a self-managed group that is run by a committee. That committee is elected to represent the different areas on the farm. Everybody that wants to hunt on Charlton will contact me. Once a week, I fax off a list to the property owners of who is on the property. We have a register at the gate, so everybody signs in and signs out the time that they go in, the things they have harvested - whatever they are harvesting -

**Mrs HISCUTT** - What do you harvest to help the farmer, beside deer?

**Mr WINWOOD** - We harvest possum and wallaby under our licences and under crop protection. So any grazing animals we are asked to do.

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**Mrs HISCUTT** - I have heard things like you need to do a bit of fencing from time to time. Does that happen? Do you do that sort of maintenance?

**Mr WINWOOD** - Not so much on our property but I know other hunting groups that do exchange fencing for hunting access. We do a lot of roadworks on our property. We have had working bees to cut firewood for the shacks and homesteads on the property.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - They are the tasks you do for the farmer to entitle you to hunt there?

**Mr WINWOOD** - Yes. We have also renovated a house that belongs to the farm for our hunters and their families to use. It was a run-down, derelict house and we have a lot of builders, painters and plasterers in our club that come along to working bees. We also built a coolroom facilities and a wash down facility. When the guys harvest their animals we can cool down the temperature so the game meat they harvest doesn't perish.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - You mentioned that the Meat Hygiene Act would need to be amended to compensate for wild harvest deer. Do you think that is a good idea? Would you like to expand further on that? You are saying that because that amendment needs to take place this can't happen, or are you saying you don't want wild harvest to happen?

**Mr WINWOOD** - Some of each for us. We have registered deer farms in Tasmania that have very strict hygiene laws on how they have to operate and how they have to harvest their meat. I don't think field harvest supports that.

If I go to a restaurant with my wife and I want to buy a nice piece of venison, I want to know it hasn't been shot in the field, hung on the back of a ute and carted around for an hour before it made its way to a coolroom. If I buy venison in Tasmania from registered abattoirs, and I know the meat has been looked after properly - as I expect with my beef, my lamb and my pork - I shouldn't expect anything else for the venison I eat with my family.

Some experiences I have had on properties that I hunt on the mainland where they do harvest some of the deer that is imported to Tasmania - not that they are a bad business - but if I knew where that meat was being sold, I wouldn't purchase it.

One night we were hunting on a property in South Australia where some of this meat was being harvested and I stopped the commercial harvester. I pulled over on the side of the road and he had about 12 deer hanging around the side of his four-wheel drive. He was making his way back to his coolroom. I think the Meat Hygiene Act says it has to be cooled to temperature within about 30 minutes. I sat and talked to him on the side of the road for 15 minutes with his ute running. He had already harvested the 12 deer on the back of his ute.

Field-harvested deer, deer and venison for our family to eat has to be all about regulation. The only way to protect our deer and the consumers is to make sure the regulations are not eroded. We need to make sure our Meat Hygiene Act is upheld. There are a lot of things that need to go into training the harvesters and setting up facilities that can take deer from the field and make it fit for human consumption.

**Mr MULDER** - How do you work out what an ideal stocking rate is for an area? These things go across both government and private land. How do you work out an ideal rate? You

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might only want so many per hectare of your land, but if your neighbour has three times that, it is not manageable, is it? Is an approach forward to ask what a reasonable stocking rate is across an area of land?

**Mr WINWOOD** - Yes. What the property owners have done in our area, they tend to talk - we are unique through the Ross Valley in that our property owners talk to each other. Alan Cameron will quite often pull up at the neighbouring property and the first topic of conversation is, 'What deer permits have you got? What are your deer numbers? Are they on our boundary? Are the deer numbers at the right level? Do we need to do some more shooting?'

That information comes back to the club and we will get a message, 'In this area we need to harvest  $x$  amount of deer'. With communication and a managed plan these deer numbers can be controlled. If our neighbour has an overstock of deer and they start floating onto our property, we will increase our tags and our harvest on our side of the fence. We are not only harvesting our deer, we can be harvesting deer that frequent a neighbouring property.

**Mr MULDER** - I am wondering if there is an appropriate stocking rate where things such as environmental damage are maintained and managed rather than getting out of control?

**Mr WINWOOD** - Your management tools are there within the Game Management Services Unit. They have qualified people who can do counting - they can estimate head counts and the damage but, in opposition to that, deregulation can't manage any of that.

**Mr MULDER** - I wasn't going there. I was going for heightened regulation, but on an evidence base.

**Mr WINWOOD** - We support that. Our club is all about records, evidence and what we've been able to achieve over the last 30 years.

**Mr MULDER** - Are we suggesting the Game Management Services Unit should start looking at benchmarks as to what is an appropriate population per region or area? Is that a way to go? Then you can manage within that.

**Mr WINWOOD** - We would be happy to discuss that and support it.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Thank you, Andrew, you are well prepared and know your topic. I am interested in your journey. You said in your submission your club started with 183 members and now you're down to 80, and the return to the landowner is considerably more, from \$6000 to around \$30 000. Was that due to the fact it tripled in cost to participate in deer hunting, or was it that you, as a club, found you had too many people? I am interested in where the other shooters went. Have they gone elsewhere, or are people not as keen?

**Mr WINWOOD** - When we first started we had approximately 186 members. They were guys who wanted one day's hunting a year, as opposed to the hardened guys who want to hunt every single day.

We had 20 or so people when we first formed the club who were evicted in the first year. They were guys who were using Charlton as access to other properties that bounded Charlton. When we first started game management at Charlton we were overpopulated with female deer, which meant the quality of our stags was very poor. Hunters tend to go where the better quality

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deer are and you cannot get that with an overpopulation. That is why recreational hunters on the whole support the reduction of deer, because that gives us better quality deer to hunt. That is what recreational hunters and the Game Management Unit can provide.

The reason we moved the cost is because we wanted to secure the hunting rights to the whole property. We wanted to make sure this was an ongoing long-term venture not only for us but for the property owners. We did not want property owners to be saying the deer was costing them \$10 000 to have every year and they were only getting \$6000 back. We went back to our members and I have some information here from some of the surveys that have been done. Hunters are prepared not only to give up hours but funds to access good quality hunting. What we found on Charlton was that when we had 183 members we had to force guys with penalties to come hunting, and now we are now down to 83 we have to turn them away. We would have a waiting list of hundreds of hunters within Tasmania who would love to get the opportunity to hunt at Charlton.

We carry probably one-quarter of the deer we used to carry but we offer a good-quality family environment to hunt on a very good property that has extremely good property owners who support what we are doing. They get a return out of it and we try to make that as little effort for the property owners as we can. The idea of it was to make it long term for our families so this was an ongoing enterprise.

**Ms RATTRAY** - It is as much as anything a business proposition for the landowner.

**Mr WINWOOD** - Yes.

**Ms RATTRAY** - You mentioned your club had offered its services to other properties that may not have the same set-up you have. Did anyone take it up?

**Mr WINWOOD** - No.

**Ms RATTRAY** - So word went around but nobody said, 'We will have 10 of your guys'?

**Mr WINWOOD** - Property owners, from my experience, get a group of people they trust. You are bringing somebody into your backyard with firearms, dogs and fall guys. Part of our journey in our club was all about gaining the trust of the Cameron family that we were always going to be honest and fair and were going to support their business enterprise. That was farming.

In the first instance, our hunting club will support the farm before we support our deer. If a property owner tells us they need deer harvesting in that area, regardless of what we think as a club, the property owner is always right and it is a business for them to run their farm, not to run deer, so we try to run the deer on that farm as a separate business that does not interfere with their main stream of income.

**Ms RATTRAY** - I was going to ask why you weren't keen to see the deer that is harvested used in a commercial sense, but you answered the member for Montgomery's question very well in regard to that.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Interestingly enough, Victoria is also undertaking an inquiry into it.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Following us?

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**Mr GAFFNEY** - No, ahead of us. Using the numbers from 2009 they said there were 38 000 deer shot and killed but in 2015 there were over 71 000 deer, which indicates a huge increase either in the shooting capacity or the problems of deer populations. Whilst we have areas in Tasmania that are well managed and doing very well, there are other areas in Tasmania that do not have that. How do you solve the conundrum of deer in areas that will continue to breed and populate?

**Mr WINWOOD** - To answer the question on how the harvest is grown, you also have to put that in context with the licence sales that are growing out of control in Victoria. In Victoria your licence sales are going at a flat-out rate. There are more people out there now and similar to Tasmania, there are more people every year opting to hunt and gather their food rather than go to the supermarket. Our rates of licence increases in Tasmania are growing every year and the data the Government has access to will show the numbers of licensed hunters are continuing to increase. A lot of that has to do with the increase in population. People see the increase in population of deer is an opportunity for them to hunt. The increase in harvest comes around by the Game Management Unit and the Government agreeing to additional crop protection tags.

Victoria is very different to Tasmania because most of the hunting is done in state forest or national parks, which is extreme country. For instance, the Snowy River National Park has a very high population of wild deer but there is no hunting allowed there. All the areas around these national parks have a very high harvest rate because of the deer that move out of the national park to feed on farmland.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - I heard what you said about human consumption, but there is a push for pet consumption, using it as a pet food. Do you have an opinion on that?

**Mr WINWOOD** - As a deer hunter, I cannot understand how we would take an animal such as a deer and use it for dog or cat food. From any harvest there is an element of waste. Out of our cattle, beef and pork there is always a certain amount of waste that comes out of our abattoirs. To just target wild deer in Tasmania for the pet food industry would be a dead-set waste of a resource that we have proven can be managed for farmers. They would never get the return from a pet food industry that they can get from recreational hunters for a well-managed herd of deer.

We are returning \$30 000 to a farm for our access. Yes, there is a huge cost for the farm but we return \$30 000. I suggest there would be no pet food company that would pay \$1000 a head for deer for pet food. When we break down our costs as opposed to what we harvest on our licences, the cost is \$600 to \$700 per animal. Is a pet food abattoir going to pay that? No, they are not. When deer have been taken from the wild before, if we go back to the trapping of wild fallow deer, there was a royalty paid to the government and that money was put into support for part of the Game Management Unit and the like now.

Would a pet food industry be able to pay somebody to go out in the field and harvest deer? Would they be able to support abattoirs and then pay either the government or the property owners for access and then make money out of pet food? I do not think that would be case. When operators have proven over the years that they cannot harvest within the law to maintain their number, they will harvest outside the law. Some harvesters in Tasmania have been prosecuted for doing that. If you make something unviable, people will operate outside the law to make it viable for themselves.

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**Mr GAFFNEY** - My dad is a hunter, not of deer, but we have access to [?? 10:54:24]. Over the last 20 to 30 years you may have seen one deer every four or five trips and now you will see herds of deer in that area. Do you regard a deer as a pest or a resource? If you link them with the wallaby, possum or rabbit, they are seen as pests. What do you see deer as?

**Mr WINWOOD** - As an introduced species myself -

*Laughter.*

**Mr WINWOOD** - You might say I am a rabbit but we are all introduced, and I do not think fallow deer are something we should take this opportunity to waste. They are a resource that needs to be managed and used for everybody.

**Mr FARRELL** - In regard to 1080 poisoning, from your point of view how widespread is that? Why is it being used? Why aren't all deer being hunted, from a hunter's point of view?

**Mr WINWOOD** - Through the midlands area - and Alan Cameron would be able to support this - in the last 30 years, even though deer are an exploding population if you listen to the press, the use of 1080 has been non-existent on our property, and we are in the heart of deer country. The Ross Valley houses some of the largest populations and some of the largest properties in the midlands and we don't use 1080 poison. We use recreational hunters to support what the property needs to do when harvesting browsing wildlife - whether it be deer, wallaby or possum.

**Mr FARRELL** - How many other areas are using 1080 over hunting that you are aware of? Is it in certain areas of Tasmania?

**Mr WINWOOD** - Farmers I talk to on the north-west coast and those sorts of areas tend to lean towards 1080 poison because they can't attract recreational hunters. I am sure through the midlands, if you removed fallow deer, the want for hunting in that area would reduce. I travel two-and-a-half hours now to hunt but if we were to take fallow deer away, other than the relationships, I can hunt wallaby 30 minutes from home. Why would I spend all that resource? The only attraction to get us to control browsing wildlife in that area is the relationship with the property owners and our ability once a year to hunt and stalk for trophy fallow.

**Mr FARRELL** - As a group, how would hunters make that extra resource available? What steps would you have to go through to reduce 1080 poisoning and get more hunting in those areas?

**Mr WINWOOD** - Via the TFGA we have offered our hunting group and organised hunts for other properties but we have never been successful in doing that. I have some quite good marksmen in our club, as opposed to helicopter shooters, who I am sure would be much more efficient at going into targeted areas and supporting that without the use of 1080. There are hunters and marksmen within hunting groups in Tasmania who could do what is needed in those areas.

**Mr FARRELL** - What's the main inhibitor of that happening at the moment? Is it just the relationship with landowners or government policy?

**Mr WINWOOD** - With some of the national parks and highland country in Tasmania we have no access. We are working on access for recreational hunters to some of these areas now via

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government groups. It would be great to see come out of this hearing that we could empower our Game Management Unit with a directive and some more support to look for ways rather than going back to pulling our frocks over our heads and saying, 'Let's deregulate and poison and the like'. For a little bit of effort we can make some ground in this area.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, Andrew, it has been a very comprehensive submission. I believe you have some handouts for us.

**Mr WINWOOD** - Because I'm the first one today I thought you would have forgotten most of the things I had to say by the end of the day, so I jotted a few notes down for each of you. There is a bit in there about the brumbies and it's very important you read about what happened with the brumbies in a national park.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**

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**Mr GEORGE GATENBY** WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** - George, welcome to the public hearing of the Government Administration A Committee inquiry into the wild deer population in Tasmania. All evidence taken in this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege. I remind you that any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. A copy of the information for witnesses is available if you have not read it or are not aware of the process. The evidence you present is being recorded, and the *Hansard* version will be published on the committee website when it becomes available.

By way of introduction, I advise that the procedure we intend to follow today is that firstly you will be provided with the opportunity to speak to your submission if you want to and following that, the committee will address questions to you. We are seeking information specifically relating to the wild fallow deer population in Tasmania. Would you like to address the committee?

**Mr GATENBY** - Yes. I am a landowner between Campbell Town and Cressy. We farm 2400 hectares, so it is a little smaller than the property the previous witness discussed. We have 39 registered hunters across the three different properties we have. As a method of liability control and protection for ourselves, we ensure they are all insured through the ADA because liability for landowners is a big issue, certainly with guns. We also provide hunters the ability to cut firewood on our property. They pay a small fee, in our case \$120 per year, and they can take as much firewood as they like. That \$120 goes towards my firewood as a landowner, so I can pay someone else to cut wood for me to save me a job.

I put a submission in and I would like to highlight one or two points on that. We shot 100 deer in the last year on our property. This year it is 250. The reason for that is we have seen the numbers increase exponentially in the last three years, for whatever reason, and as a result we have asked our registered hunters to increase their kills and get more permits to control that. It is not just deer; we have also increased our takes of wallaby, et cetera. What that means to me as a landowner is the equivalent of \$50 000 to \$70 000 per year in lost income for grazing stock. To me, that means a \$1 million to a \$1.5 million interest payment on a loan, so it is a sizeable amount of money.

I see myself as a medium-sized landowner with a big feral fallow deer population problem. I would like to answer some of the questions that were asked of the previous bloke around stocking rate. Deer do not stay on my property. I have driven down the road and was three properties away, and the only reason I knew they were the same mob is that they had a white deer in the mob, and by the time I was in my paddock an hour and a half later, that mob of 20 deer were going across my paddocks into the next farm, so that was traversing probably about 12 kilometres going across four to five properties.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Just in the one day?

**Mr GATENBY** - In a three-hour period. That is another reason you would not see much 1080 poisoning in Tasmania, because we understand that people shoot these animals, and if they have 1080 in them, you don't want to be consuming that meat. That is probably one of the reasons that 1080 is not used very often. It was used back when the Forestry plantations were being established to control deer. At that time, people weren't very aware of what was going on.

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Not all farms charge large amounts for access but, at the same time, I would have 50 people request access to my property per year, close to one a week, either in writing, by phone or face to face.

I think pet food is a great idea, because if you have a 40 kilo carcass at \$2 to \$3 a kilo sold to a pet meat processor, that would be a perfect market for a bloke in South Australia if they are looking for that. It is better than feeding your sheepdogs wheat and other materials made up of sheep.

It is not just the grazing impact that we have on our properties or the crop damage that we see. It is the fence damage. Last year we had a big drought and we saw significant pasture damage, as in it looked like a mob of 200 to 400 sheep running around in circles as they were going through the rut, et cetera. There is significant damage on a dollar basis. The thing is we can't put a dollar value on it, it is all anecdotal, guesstimation and explicit cost and we look at it that way.

We talk about increasing numbers of hunters. The issue with shooting is you have a restricted amount of ground per property. The number of hunters is probably restricted to the number of people who don't tread on each other's toes and get in each other's way and scare off deer. This year, I have decreased the number of hunters on my property to allow for more animals to be shot. That gives me the ability to control my hunting and vermin control. It is easier with less people and allows them greater flexibility to get around the property and not stop on each other's toes.

One big point I want to raise is when I look at myself; I am one vote, one person. I have 39 registered ADA hunters on my property. As an entity, ADA has a larger vote than myself, a larger footprint. If I put my hand up and say that deer are a pest, they are introduced and they cost me money, but if my 39 hunters vote with their union or organisation then I know who is going to win the argument.

The TFGA are representatives of the landowners. They have been great in the last 24 months in liaising with the DPI and increasing our ability to get access to male deer tags through this period - through the essential cropping period - as our crops come to maturity. I couldn't put a value on it. We have been able to scare deer off our crops and have the ability to control those wandering large distances to the irrigated ground during the drought.

The DPI's role, I assume, is to manage sustainability in the environment. The current system that we have in place is a game management plan. As a landowner, liaising with DPI to get permits works really well. It is why they have flexibility and the ability to get us tags to shoot these animals, or at least scare them off or both; it comes together. You are not going to shoot every deer you see. You shoot one; the next one goes off onto the next property and gets off your property.

The last thing in my submission was around Crown land, neighbours and forestry. As we have seen over the last 10 to 20 years, the landscape has changed. There are a lot of forestry plantations, they have changed hands, they have been under liquidation and they are now under managed companies, which is terrific. Unfortunately, these companies don't have management plans for shooting fallow deer so these populations are building up. On Crown land there is very limited ability for hunters to gain access to that ground, and then who is managing it? I don't

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know if there is a system in place to control that. Because we have a large property that borders Crown land and managed plantations, we are continually getting pressure from those points.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Thanks, George. I often travel the Panshanger Road from Campbell Town through to Longford, because it is a nice drive. At 7.30 the other morning, travelling home, I saw four deer out in the paddock down the road. I can understand the problem.

The thing about your submission, which I found a little bit different, you raised the topic about neighbours' responsibility, whether it is Crown or private. Could you expand on that a bit further? Not many submissions went into that area, and yours has. There are issues with that.

How do you work with your neighbours here?

**Mr GATENBY** - To lead off from what the previous witness spoke about, he spoke about neighbours talking to each other. Very anecdotal information we talk, no doubt - we talk about everything. Deer numbers is one of the issues we talk about, how many are you shooting, what are you seeing but, once again, it is anecdotal. It is what your hunters are seeing, it is what time of the day you go out there - we are not out there at night. We are only there during the daylight hours.

I might have a blanket ban on deer. I don't want to see a deer running around at my place, which we still do. The neighbour might not have any shooters on their place and another neighbour may have a limit of 50 tags but they might have a larger intensity of deer. It all comes down to different motivations, different property landowners, their different ideas of sustainability, or their financial or business goals at that time.

Ultimately, private landowners are businesses, be it the forest, the farmers, or the Crown, it is there for a reason. There are all different motivations. We all have to co-exist, just like the hunters. We all work together and we all complement each other. At the same time, we do not have a control or an idea of what the population is. There is no-one taking accurate numbers. All we are getting back is the death, kills or the tag numbers that come in. So many tags might go out when people put registrations in, how many tags get returned, and then we work out how many deer are in the state. What are the monitoring methods and which areas are the populations pushing into?

The other issue is, if you have a forest and then you have cropping ground next door - my ground next to a forest plantation - the deer are going to hide in the forest and come out to the cropping when you are not there. That is when the pressure comes on. You cannot stop deer with fencing. It is too expensive.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - With the damage to boundary fences between properties such as Crown land, who is responsible for the boundary fences? Is it a co-owned responsibility?

**Mr GATENBY** - No, it is like roadsides, it is the landowner. The rule is that you have to restrain your own stock in your own ground. If you have farmers that both have stock, then you pay for it together. If you have Crown land, it is usually always the farmer. Forest management, private companies usually come to the party on 50/50.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Do you think you would have a case against the Crown if you do not want deer on your property and they have a forest they are not managing?

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**Mr GATENBY** - You said it, not me. Yes, of course.

*Laughter.*

**Mr GATENBY** - There is a case for a lot of things. I might say the council pays for half the boundary road for the farm. When you have a highway going through farm, the council should pay 50 per cent of the maintenance cost, but no. The answer is, we are realistic it is not going to happen. We want the ability for that ground on our side to be controlled on that side.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - If it is a park, to protect your land, there should be for the shooters to access that national park, or that park, for the deer?

**Mr GATENBY** - There are issues of control of shooters and hunting. It is a sport and it is a controlled sport, people are carrying guns around. We cannot have my hunters jumping the fence and going shooting over there. If it is controlled over there, yes.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - If it was controlled management of that land?

**Mr GATENBY** - That is a great idea. It is done in Victoria. They can hunt their native reserves.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - What do you see as the inhibitors for the Crown from allowing people in there? Why don't they do it already?

**Mr GATENBY** - Who is going to pay for the management of those hunters?

**Mrs HISCUTT** - The Charlton Hunters Club manage themselves. Why wouldn't that happen? What do you see are the inhibitors for any organised club from saying we will do it?

**Mr GATENBY** - It would only be the image that Tasmania has opened up its Crown land to hunters, and whether the hunters are responsible. The ADA has a great reputation and other hunters clubs do as well, like my own. As long as you can control the right people there is a -

**Mrs HISCUTT** - It is not a native animal?

**Mr GATENBY** - No, I agree. You still have a lot of other things you can shoot. I agree, Crown land should be shot, native reserves should be shot and they should be managed. Who is going to pay for the management of that? That is up to the DPI and the governments to work out. I encourage that.

The issue we see at the moment across, being a neighbour of these Crown lands, is the dark element, the poachers, et cetera. They use that ground. That brings that element we do not want in the area to start doing that. If it is managed, it might push them back and push them out, because something managed is better than being left to do its own thing.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - In your submission, not being a deer hunter myself, you said, under point 2 on permit, 'This was invaluable to us and I support any future allocation of any sex deer during seasonal trigger points.'

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**Mr GATENBY** - Was that point 2 or 3?

**Mrs HISCUTT** - On the first page right at the bottom, the very last sentence.

**Mr GATENBY** - Previously, we have not been able to access -

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Can you explain what you mean by that sentence?

**Mr GATENBY** - Previously we have not been able to access male deer tags out of season; we have had a restriction on our deer season.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - So that is what you mean - the stags?

**Mr GATENBY** - Any sex deer. All we have at the moment is the ability to get male tags and that from the TFGA and DPI working together because of the population increases. There is no ability to get doe tags, which is an animal welfare issue and the fact they are fawning at the moment. What happens if the doe populations get up and start travelling while they are fawning, et cetera?

**Mrs HISCUTT** - What is your answer to that?

**Mr GATENBY** - They only fawn for two months of the year. They will finish in January. They are going to have fawns afoot, they are travelling, going through crops, introducing their offspring to the travel in my paddocks and my fences.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - So what is your answer?

**Mr GATENBY** - My answer is flexibility. We need to give flexibility to the people who allocate permits and the control, but you can't have flexibility unless you know what you have. The issue we have with what is if I ring up the DPI and say I had 94 deer on my property in a one-hour period yesterday, they will give me some tags. Someone else could go in and say they had two next door and another could say they had one, so DPI will ring me back and say, 'George, there aren't many deer around, there are only 30 between each property, so you don't have enough of a problem to give you tags'. If that restriction comes back on us and we lose the control to control these animals, we are going to be stuck in this hard position again where they are travelling.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - How can you prove that?

**Mr GATENBY** - At the moment it's through word of mouth, on trust for us. It is our game management plan, it is our reputation.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - That's fair enough.

**Mr GATENBY** - Yes, it works well.

**Mr MULDER** - It seems to me what we are trying to do is manage a population of deer without actually knowing what it is. Then we are going into the situation of managing it or not managing it on a property-by-property basis when in fact they are occupying regions at times. I note you made some comment about stocking rates and how silly that is because they do not stick

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to a particular property. What I was trying to get through is we need to start managing this on a regional basis, not on a property-by-property basis.

**Mr GATENBY** - Yes. As Mr Gaffney mentioned before, he saw deer where he had not seen them before, so they are moving to different areas as their population grows to look for food and new habitat and that is an issue. They were introduced and have become a pest because there is a large number doing damage, like weeds, to our crops and our farms. It will be a different impact probably for every farmer. If you are a farmer who stocks their property lightly compared to someone who is trying to drive the property as hard as it will go, you will have a different level -

**Mr MULDER** - Across a region, the more deer you have the more damage you have, so you need to manage it on a regional basis rather than a property basis.

**Mr GATENBY** - Yes, but the region is Tasmania.

**Ms RATTRAY** - George, you spoke fairly positively about a pet industry for deer. Is that something you have investigated a bit?

**Mr GATENBY** - A couple of businesses and people have approached me to take meat. They are commercially registered to be able to sell deer and wallaby meat to pet stores. I think it is quite hard to get those licences. It was difficult this year when I tried to increase my hunters to shoot more because they did not need the deer in their freezers as their freezers were full. My feedback was to shoot them and put them in a heap. That is a waste to shooters and hunters. Anyone sitting in here would think that is a waste of meat. To me, they are costing me on the meat production of lamb and cattle and everything else in my enterprise, so it is weighing it up.

I do not think we should restrict ourselves. If you want to make it an industry do so, but let's get a bigger grasp and handle on it so we know which way we are going. At the moment it is about how many deer are out there. Some people put theirs into restaurants, some people can put them into pet food and the rest of us just have to get along like everyone else.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Or dig a big hole in the ground?

**Mr GATENBY** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - George, you said you tried to increase your shooters for the previous year?

**Mr GATENBY** - I decreased my shooters but they increased the number of animals they shot. I asked them to shoot more and got them more tags.

**CHAIR** - So you got more tags but still had the same number of shooters?

**Mr GATENBY** - No, I had fewer shooters. I'm still trying to increase my number of tags and reduce the number of shooters.

**Ms RATTRAY** - That's not easy.

**Mr GATENBY** - No, it's not.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, George. It is very much appreciated.

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**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**

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**Mr BRENDON JORDAN**, PRESIDENT; AND **Mr MICHAEL CASSIDY**, CONNORVILLE DEN GAME MANAGEMENT GROUP INC., WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** - Welcome to the public hearing, gentlemen, of Government Administration Committee A inquiring into the wild fallow deer population in Tasmania. All evidence taken in this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege. I remind you that any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. A copy of the information for witnesses is available. If you have not read it or are not aware of the process, the evidence you present is being recorded and the *Hansard* version will be published on the committee website when it becomes available. I advise the procedure we intend to follow today is that firstly, you will be provided the opportunity to speak to your submission if you so desire. Following on from that, the committee will address questions to you seeking information specifically relating to the wild fallow deer population in Tasmania. Brendon, would you like to give an overview of your submission?

**Mr JORDAN** - I am president of the Connorville Den Game Management Group Inc. as of six months ago, so I am fairly new to the situation.

**Ms RATTRAY** - I bet you didn't know you were going to be doing this when you took on the job?

**Mr JORDAN** - No, I was in America when a lot of this was compiled, so I've walked straight back into it.

The property we shoot on is owned by Mr Roderick O'Connor. It is called the Connorville Den and is situated approximately 40 kilometres south of Cressy and consists of 4500 hectares. Our group has an excellent relationship with the landowner. We are probably the opposite to Charlton in that we pay a minimal property fee to our landowner in return for working bees and road maintenance. He sees that as more encouragement. That is not disrespecting Charlton, but his view is that over time he has weeded out the people he doesn't want on his property. He now has people who are 100 per cent there to manage his deer and virtually work as another unit of his property management.

Fallow deer have been in the Tasmanian landscape for about 120 years in traditional areas such as Ross, Cressy, the central highlands, the north-west coast, Huonville, Scottsdale and Nunamara. I can point out a property at Nunamara that just put in a deer fence which is going to extrapolate the travel of deer into different areas. Our group is not against non-traditional areas being targeted for the control of wild deer populations.

Our property owner gives us a set target - a bit the same as Charlton - where his economical benefit is still viable for us to use his property for wallaby, possum, rabbit, hare, duck, fishing, woodcutting - totally recreational. We are a family-oriented club with 50 members. In the last two years we've had to increase our shooting capacity by 200 tags and a lot of this influence has come through Forestry managing its 5000 acres that adjoins us.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Or not.

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**Mr JORDAN** - It has worked in that it has eliminated our poacher issues. We used to continually have confrontations. We had members shot at, firearms pointed at - threatening their lives. Forestry are, and it is a work in progress and it is really only the last three years, operating this ballot system on the outside of our boundary. The spin-off is it has increased our population by 200. At one stage, on opening morning, there were 180 shooters in on 5000 acres, which became a major issue for Forestry, for safety and our members.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - How many shooters?

**Mr JORDAN** - One hundred and eighty, Forestry said, on opening morning five years ago. We had parties of up to 35. Can you imagine one of our members telling somebody to get off the property, over a poaching issue, when 35 blokes in the bush confront you?

The recent implementation of the irrigation schemes through the midlands has exacerbated the problem down through here. Like George said and Tony has brushed on this, the trouble with this is it is a regional thing because we have, for example, in these non-traditional areas, Joe Bloggs with five hectares of grapes that the deer are decimating, or five hectares of strawberries. The bloke next door, in these Huonville and north-west coast areas, legally cannot go in there and shoot them anyway. We are up against the issue that we cannot physically go in there and shoot them, because we are breaking the law by being on their property. As a group, we are totally supportive of any way of controlling these non-traditional areas.

The crop protection permits on the property we manage - we have an honesty system there where all data that we have collected in the 14 years we have been operating under this game management group, every bit of data that we have on our record, which DPIPW - Kate Gill and Dave Leguis in Launceston have - is true.

We have to provide the tails of the deer when they are shot, so that we know when we say to the government department that we have shot 400 deer, we have definitely shot 400 deer in a year - or 500, 600, whatever the property owner requests - the system at present is very flexible. In the last, say, two years, the department has made access to tags a lot easier. For instance, I rang up on Thursday. I picked up the tags at the mailbox this morning and they were on the property within four days. Going back three years ago, you would be sitting around waiting, twiddling your thumbs for a fortnight. Property owners like Mr Roderick O'Connor, George, and probably every other farmer sitting behind me has had the same issue. It is more flexible, but there is still room for improvement on it, I believe. Whether it is making a five-year program, a two-year program, I do not know.

I believe a five-year program is unworkable, with the amount of bookwork and the tag system, because at 38 cents a tag, I do not think the department want to cough up five years' worth, for every property. On our property alone, we are going to be asking for between 2000 and 3000 tags.

On the crop protection permit, it is all about management, the whole lot of it. It is different for each farm. You are going to have one farmer saying he is happy to have 100 deer. I do not know how we come up with a hectare basis or a regional basis. You are going to have the next bloke who says he does not want any deer. You could have three farmers that say they are not interested.

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We come up against the same thing, that you cannot access to certain areas. When the forestry issue fell in a heap - we now have a 25 000 hectare block behind us that the ADA and TDAC are trying to still get access to. They have access to limited numbers. That incorporates Sorell, Woods Lake, Arthurs Lake, which were inundated at certain periods of time, especially when they start to irrigate the pastures. It is workable. Our system is very workable. Our property owner is pretty happy with our outcomes, but it needs to be a little bit more flexible with some of the issues with the crop protection permits.

At present, the female system is that on 30 October all female tags become null and void. In October, November, December, January, February, and halfway into March, a farmer cannot tackle any problems with his female deer. This year we had to get an exemption for an extra fortnight because we had too many female deer.

The male deer permits have now gone to a 12 month system. We can shoot male deer pretty much up until the regulated deer season for the recreational shooter.

Whilst it is a good system, it still needs to be a little bit more flexible. There are a few issues, to allow a little bit more. The main objective our members see for their access to the property is to shoot a male fallow deer under fair chase in March. To alleviate the property owner's fencing, roads - this year Mr Roderick O'Connor had a major flood, fire and two years of drought back to back - and we have had the increase of numbers. The number one thing for our members is for a fair chase, fair game system to stay in place.

If this system is to change and deregulate in total, our club will fall apart, I can guarantee it. Out of our 50 members we will probably have 20 who will turn up and still shoot, because the majority of our shooters are mainly deer shooters. Last year we shot 5780 vermin on this property, for the privilege to try to shoot a trophy animal over 200 Douglas Score. That is the main objective of our members.

Another major issue for our system is, if it falls apart and is deregulated, the poaching issue is going to go back to what it was in the 1970s and 1980s. If you deregulate it, the only real law anyone is going to have to prosecute is the trespass law. At the moment, as I sit here, it is not worth the paper it is written on. We continually get between six and 12 encroachments a year, even with Forestry working closely by us, and there is no other access in there. We still continue to get between six and 12 encroachments a year, which are all registered and liaised on with forestry to try to curb poaching incidents.

Our club is set alone in its entity, wherein the whole club is insured. It is insured through SSAA but we are insured as our own club entity on that property.

On the back of what the gentleman said from Charlton, the financial benefit of taking wild Tasmanian deer, I believe his figures are 100 per cent correct. Anywhere from \$600 to \$1000 would have to be earned by the commercial operation to outdo what we do as a club, at present. Currently, on average, our members spend \$3000 on vermin control outside the March deer season, which means from our group, stand alone, about \$150 000 goes back into the community. I will pick three subjects; alcohol, petrol and groceries.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - In that order?

*Laughter.*

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**Mr JORDAN** - I put it that because I thought I would get a comment. I will pick on those three. That is \$150 000 back into the community outside the deer season. In the deer season, over average, they spend between \$1500 and \$2000 in March and they go and hunt a deer, which equates to about \$75 000 to \$100 000 into the local community. I believe this will be cut in half, if not more, if it is deregulated. Most of our member will then turn back to what one of the gentlemen said previously, if you want to shoot a rabbit, possum or wallaby, you can do that in your own backyard at pretty much no cost.

The Connorville Den Game Management Group Inc. still wants a regulated Tasmanian deer season.

**CHAIR** - Do you think poaching is not as bad now as it was a few years back?

**Mr JORDAN** - I can only talk about our district but it's definitely not as bad in our district.

**Mr CASSIDY** - We have boom gates we have to go through now and there is also the ballot. To be in that area you have to have a reason to be there and be in the ballot. If you're approached by someone and you don't have your permit we have the names and the photos of the people now - that has been put through in the last couple of years - so we basically know who is supposed to be there and who isn't.

**Mr JORDAN** - The balloting system now is a work in progress with Forestry but it is a lot better than what we had three years ago, to touch on what Mick said. When you put in for the ballot you are only allowed four hunters per group. One person has to be president, or whatever - team leader. If that group gets an infringement, all four get a five-year ban now from Forestry, and have points deducted on their firearm licences, so it is a fair deterrent now for the genuine hunter.

**CHAIR** - Can you tell me what the tags cost?

**Mr JORDAN** - Thirty eight cents.

**CHAIR** - I thought that was what you had said. Per tag?

**Mr JORDAN** - Yes. Roughly 15 000 were issued last year statewide.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - What happens if you find a poacher? Do you take names and contact the police - what is supposed to happen?

**Mr JORDAN** - Most of our guys have a phone on them now and we encourage our guys to try to get a photo. Then they notify the property manager. Where we are is pretty remote, so he has a remote phone. He contacts Forestry and as soon as Forestry can get up there they will come and investigate it. It is not a foolproof system because quite often we cannot get them. If we cannot get them we will often ring the police at Miena and he will come down because he is very much anti-poacher.

It is still a work in progress. I do not mean to harp on about it but we believe now that Forestry have taken it this far and have taken control, they should have a roster and do spot checks

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occasionally. Our guys have to abide by the law and that is the Forestry guys have weeded out their poachers really.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - The second question pertains possibly to the public here. A lot of the management groups are on large tracts of land, large properties, and that is understandable. Often, I suppose, that land is passed down from generation to generation, but there is a change happening where that is not happening so much now because the next generation do not want to look after that much property for lots of different reasons. There are sections of land in between large tracts of land that are being sold to different environmental groups or whatever, so that makes it difficult. I am not suggesting this guy is going to sell but there is a threat later on that you will not have that land available if there is a change of ownership and the new owner has a change of methodology or environmental will. How does Tasmania manage its property in the long term?

**Mr CASSIDY** - I guess that has happened a little bit with the environmental groups who have bought some properties - Jan Cameron - above us. They are not allowed to shoot the kangaroos there. As many wallabies as we shoot down the bottom, they just keep coming in from the top. They're not allowed to control them up there and we can't do much about that.

**Mr JORDAN** - Whatever the government does, I don't believe it is going to fix that issue.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Your thoughts on pet food?

**Mr JORDAN** - In all honesty, I would rather see them used as pet meat than thrown in a pit or burnt. I'm a hunter and I eat deer. My family would consume between 60-80 deer a year. I'm lucky to have a cool room so I can shoot 10-15 deer in one hit and go home and process it through the week at my leisure. Michael lives in Launceston and he can take one or maybe two deer home and process them. He doesn't have access to a cool room. We have that leniency in our club that we know some guys can shoot that number. I would have to say I would rather see them used as pet meat than burnt or put in a pit and buried because I just see that as a total waste.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Most of the hunters don't want to waste food and that's why they hunt, but from a farmer's point of view, if his crops are being overrun there is an issue for him too.

**Mr JORDAN** - I know of commercial harvesters. I manage and run a property of 5000 acres on the east coast and we have game management there. Luckily I have no deer, so I don't have a poaching issue. We have a commercial shooter who comes probably once or twice a year to harvest wallaby and possums for Kelly. He has access to properties right up the Fingal Valley pretty much right to here. He has to shoot them and leave them, and I think that is a waste.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - You are the second person I've heard mention 'family-oriented'. Is that the wife and kids?

**Mr JORDAN** - Wife and two sons.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - So your boys are of the right age, I suppose, for being out there with you?

**Mr JORDAN** - They can be out there at any age while they're not carrying firearms.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - So generally speaking, for the hunters, do the wife and kids go all the time?

## **PUBLIC**

**Mr JORDAN** - No. In the designated deer season the wives and kids will come but most of the time they stay at the shacks. As a club, even though we only have 50 members and we have 11 000 acres or 4500 hectares to shoot on, that is too many for a safety issue. Some of our shooters can't really hunt. They virtually sit in the one spot for the day. Over time somebody shoots one and then you start moving around the property.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Do you have many lady hunters?

**Mr JORDAN** - Yes, we've got a few.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - They'd be pretty good, wouldn't they?

**Mr JORDAN** - Yes.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - You were talking about the small acreages on the north-west coast and you mentioned five hectares of grapes and strawberries, et cetera -

**Mr JORDAN** - With the five-hectare blocks, I see the issue somewhere like Huonville, down the Huon - the urban spread.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - So they are passing through, but you did say you can't hunt on there. Why?

**Mr JORDAN** - Too close to a house most of the time. There is deer from Perth right through to Hadspen. I used to shoot on a block behind Hadspen where there used to be an old game park. The deer constantly jump the fence at Hadspen and get cleaned up at the bridge. They are always travelling through there. We used to shoot right along Eccleston Road. We were in there doing vermin control for the month.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Can you see a safety answer to that?

**Mr JORDAN** - Not really. It's a bit like the question someone asked George about recreational shooters in conservation areas. It's a bit like if somebody picked up a chainsaw and walked into the conversation. That is the mentality out there. They look at us shooters as criminal-type elements. That is the perception I find anyway, my personal view.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - You talk about forestry areas. Are you talking about state-owned forests or private forests?

**Mr JORDAN** - Both. One state-owned forest that borders us is 5000 acres.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Are they easier to work with and manage as compared to private forests? Do you see a difference between the two sectors?

**Mr JORDAN** - We don't really have anything to do too much with our private forest conservation block shooters. That's managed I think by ADA, isn't it?

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Are the biggest issues with the state-owned forests?

**Mr JORDAN** - We had better strike the ADA part of it out on the conservation side.

## PUBLIC

**Mrs HISCUTT** - You do not know if that is managed or not then?

**Mr CASSIDY** - It is managed but I don't know who's got it.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Okay, but it is managed?

**Mr JORDAN** - Only the feral deer population. Everything else is off-limits. As far as our farmers' situation is, like I said, we shoot one kangaroo and come back the next night and shoot two in the same spot. We just get that continually.

**Ms RATTRAY** - And what you don't shoot, I run over.

**Mr JORDAN** - At least you don't brake and cause an accident.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Is that state-owned forest you are talking about?

**Mr JORDAN** - No, that's some of the Jan Cameron conservation land.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - That is private forest you are talking about. Thank you.

**Mr JORDAN** - We really could have tacked on the back of the Charlton thing. At the end of the day, our group would like to see a fair chase system still for the fallow deer. We think we have worked too long and hard as recreational shooters to get this far. Like all systems, it is not perfect but it is better than not having a system.

Something I find a bit funny is that we pay \$68 a year for a game licence, for instance. Last year we were given one male tag and two female tags. I do not believe that on 31 March I take my hat off and become a fallow deer hunter, and I put my hat over there and go out and cull animals on the property. Why couldn't the system be a bit more flexible where a recreational hunter can get three, four, five or six tags? He is paying \$68 a year. When I take my hat off and sit over there, I pay nothing. The government pays 38 cents every time I put a tag on something.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Good question, Brendan.

**Mr JORDAN** - The TBAC have worked hard to get us those extra tags. It is just another little thing that could be adjusted that would help. There are recreational hunters who do not have access to these culling permits. For instance, the 150 Forestry shooters who shoot up beside our place, once they shoot their deer they have to pack up and go home. If they were able to harvest another two or three female deer for the year, it would help our situation and it would help the Forestry situation. Instead of issuing 15 000 culling permits a year, it might be back to 10 - I don't know.

**Mr MULDER** - We heard that commercialising is not a thing because there are all the legal requirements. Are there any impediments, for example, to having private sales, rather than putting it into commercial abattoir-type situations?

**Mr CASSIDY** - It's all really in the hygiene regulations, I should think.

## PUBLIC

**Mr MULDER** - The point I am trying to get to is that we have all these regulations and all this stuff tacked on, yet he is perfectly happy to eat his meat. Why can't he sell it to me so that I can eat it if I trust him? That's what I am getting at.

**Mr JORDAN** - Legislation doesn't allow that.

**Mr MULDER** - I should have warned you that you're not obliged to say anything before I asked you the question, but from a principle point of view, do you see a problem other than the legislation with that sort of an arrangement?

**Mr CASSIDY** - Not really, no.

**Mr JORDAN** - I would have to say no because I have been approached many a time by commercial operators.

**Mr MULDER** - You are allowed to give it away but not sell it. To me that seems a nonsense, especially if that's an alternative to having them rot in the paddock.

**Mr JORDAN** - I have six in my family who don't shoot. They don't have gun licences.

**Ms RATTRAY** - And you feed them. I would like to be in your family.

**Mr JORDAN** - Yes, my mother-in-law loves me.

**Mr MULDER** - I want to pursue that with you because it seems to me that people are horrified by the idea of leaving them to rot in the paddock. Let's put them to use. If you don't like sending them off to the dogs, I will give you my address if you like.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Did you have anything to add, Mike? Brendan did most of the talking.

**Mr CASSIDY** - I'm here as moral support for him. Getting back to the family business, it's not so much what family take each deer season, but the rest of the year there are quite a few families that go up there during the year. Easter time is a big time up there at the den. We probably get a dozen families up there at different times of the year.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Traditional.

**Mr JORDAN** - It is traditional. My grandfather was Noel Jenson, one of the first fly fishermen in Tasmania. I have a rod in one hand, a rifle in the other hand - if you take both of them away, short of work, I don't know what I'd do. I don't like golf.

**Ms RATTRAY** - And you're not ready for bowls.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - For the record, I think it is a great thing for families.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much for your time.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**

## PUBLIC

**Mr SIMON CAMERON** WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** - Simon, welcome to this public hearing of Government Administration Committee A inquiring into the wild fallow deer population in Tasmania. All evidence taken in this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege. I remind you that any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. A copy of the information for witnesses is available. If you have not read it or are not aware of the process, the evidence you present is being recorded and the *Hansard* version will be published on the committee website when it becomes available. I advise the procedure we intend to follow today is that firstly, you will be provided the opportunity to speak to your submission if you so desire. Following on from that, the committee will address questions to you seeking information specifically relating to the wild fallow deer population in Tasmania. Would you like to give an overview of your submission?

**Mr CAMERON** - I am the owner of a farming property called Kingston, which is not far to the north-east of here. First, I would like to thank you for your initiative in establishing this inquiry. It is important for reasons that have been documented in many of the submissions. In particular it is important to farmers and land managers like me who have little say in the overall management of wild deer in Tasmania, even though we are forced to host increasing numbers of the species and absorb the related costs.

I want to start with the broader context. Fallow deer is a species which has been assessed by the Western Australian Department of Agriculture and Food as having an extreme likelihood of establishment in Australia. DPIPWE says the same for Tasmania. This has indisputably happened. More importantly, the assessment by both these organisations went on to conclude that there will be extreme consequences from this establishment.

There is a ranking system within the ranking process where 19 points out of 35 are required for an extreme risk rating. DPIPWE gave fallow deer a score of 28 out of 35 - it was a shoo-in. DPIPWE also compiled a policy and procedures for import movement and keeping of vertebrate wildlife in Tasmania. The introduction commences:

Introduced animals are recognised as one of the most significant threats to biodiversity and are noted for their impact on natural ecosystems, primary industries and public amenity.

It also stated, 'Prevention and early intervention provide the most cost-effective means of managing introduced species.'

In the document, there is detailed consideration of the risk assessment model, the one used for the assessment I referred to, including the comment that it is internationally recognised as world's best practice. One has to wonder why DPIPWE made no mention of this risk assessment in its own submission to your inquiry. In the policy and procedure in discussing extreme-threat species, it is also noted -

Imports of species assessed as an extreme threat will normally be prohibited and the species will be listed as a restricted animal under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife General Regulations 2010.

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The minister will only consider the importation of extreme-threat species under exceptional circumstances.

It goes on to detail what these are and the containment conditions required.

Given that in wild fallow deer we can an extreme pest risk, is there any need to go beyond this when determining how the species should be dealt with? Yes, there is. It is very hard to get this message across in Tasmania. We have a lot of ground to make up. Fallow deer as a species and an extreme threat and given an extreme pest risk rating are not allowed to be imported into Tasmania, yet those here are given partly-protected status and allowed to spread wherever they want to in the state - even to places such as Bruny Island.

Most of what I have to say and was included in my submission has been said by others, but when I speak to you, you are hearing it from someone who has to confront the impact of deer as an invasive species virtually every day he is on his farm, and many days when he is not there. You are hearing it from a farmer who cares about his livestock and the land he is entrusted to look after.

As an individual I place a high priority on biodiversity conservation, biosecurity and maintaining a safe place to live and work. I put my money where my mouth is. I have spent a significant sum on and off my farm attempting to protect and enhance its natural values and make it a viable business. On many occasions, feral deer have directly or indirectly undermined these efforts.

In my submission I have addressed each of the terms of reference and I will cover some of the more salient points. In reference item 1, the Environmental Impacts on Public and Private Land, I refer to numerous studies documenting the environmental impacts of deer, especially fallow deer -

We know from the experience of others that Fallow deer are eco system changers. Nowhere in the world where Fallow deer have been introduced have they not done environmental damage.

We do not need to wait for studies here or the damage to be even more evident before acknowledging the need for management change. In the relevant pest risk assessment categories fallow deer score maximum points.

My first recommendation is that wild fallow deer be removed from the regulations and that the secretary of the department be requested to recommend to the relevant minister to declare fallow deer vermin under the Vermin Control Act.

As an interim and immediate measure, landholders should be able to grant open crop protection permits for all wild fallow deer similar to those now available for wallabies and possums.

Further, to assist in more effective management of the species, I recommend the responsibility for the control of wild fallow deer is transferred from the Wildlife Management Branch to Biosecurity Tasmania. This will bring all invasive species under one management regime.

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I recognise there are a number of stakeholders in the wild deer issue. If there is to be a body such as the Tasmanian Deer Advisory Council - TDAC - all stakeholders should be equitably represented - something that does not happen now.

I will come to my third recommendation later.

For our longer-term response, if we are serious about the containment or eradication, yes, we need a lot more information. This should be sought from within the groups associated, the stakeholders within deer, but also from scientists. We will find those scientists within DPIPWE and elsewhere.

In relation to reference item 2, Any Impact on Commercial Activities on Private Land, I discussed many aspects of costs and risk, such as biosecurity with the species. The biosecurity risk is understated but, as someone with a large investment in animal genetics, I cannot afford to ignore it. I set out the cost to my farming enterprise enterprises in excess of \$35 000 a year, crippling for a small business like mine. I pose the question, why should farmers have to bear any cost at all? I wonder what the committee thinks is a fair thing.

I cautiously extrapolate from the cost to me, as a proportion of land in the deemed 'deer range', if you extrapolate - and I know that is sometimes dangerous - you come up with a number like \$25 million a year. We have already heard comment from George. The costs to landowners is covered in a number of submissions, Connorville, TFGA, Greening Australia, Forico, Ashton & Salmon, the Tasmanian Land Conservancy. You have a range of opinions to draw on.

In this section I have also suggested landholders be allowed to use alternate methods, such as trapping and poisoning, to control deer on their own land. The reason for this recommendation is to improve productivity, as much as anything. A lot of effort has to go into controlling deer. The currently allowed method, which is shooting, for those on their farms is not necessarily a good use of time, and you would be surprised how long it takes.

I have a fifth recommendation and here I have to apologise, it was incorrect in the submission. This recommendation is that landowners with a deer population in excess of 2.5 deer per square kilometre in my submission and as reported in the paper, it read '2.5 deer per hectare'. That would be an interesting sight. The recommendation -

Landholders with a deer population in excess of 2.5 per square kilometre will, if requested by a neighbour, be required to reduce the population or provide a deer proof boundary fence sufficient to prevent deer from entering the requesting neighbour's property.

I also recommend -

That in the event of partially protected species status of wild Fallow deer being retained those landholders who determine their land is not available for recreational hunting and to actively pursue a deer minimisation strategy should be compensated for the continued presence of deer on their land.

There seems to be the belief that if you have land then it should be available for deer hunting. People have other uses for their land. There are particular aspects to Kingston, which I will refer to. I would much rather have scientists on my land, exploring the biodiversity issues and aspects

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of the property than open it up for hunting. That is a personal preference, but I do not see why hunting should be forced on me.

Reference item 3, The Partly Protected Status of Fallow Deer Under the Wildlife General Regulation 2010, this is an extremely complex area. In my submission I suggest -

The partly protected status of wild fallow deer under the Wildlife (General) Regulations 2010 (the Regulations) has provided the mechanism for the species to become widely established in Tasmania.

In my submission I highlight how this has been achieved via the absolute power of the secretary of DPIW and his delegates under the regulations. I comment on deer administration, the inconsistent application of the regulations and the paperwork nightmare that is the crop protection system.

As an aside, I have here a half-sized copy of a crop protection permit. I can give you this at lunchtime to have a flick through and when you come back, I bet there would not be a consistent interpretation of condition 1. It is a paperwork nightmare that, if nothing else, needs to be addressed.

In my submission I also comment on the animal welfare issue, the elephant in the room when it comes to recreational hunting. Used to justify the restricted issue of crop protection permits for antler-less deer, that is doe, for up to five months nearly half the year, this is a restriction, at least for landholders, not found elsewhere in Australia. Is it really legitimate to use the animal welfare rationale when in fact deer are being allowed to breed up for the express purpose of being shot as a hobby or sport? This is a really difficult and unpleasant issue but it will need to be addressed if the deer population is to be effectively controlled and the cost of deer to our environment and to primary industry is to be reduced. The issue will get harder and harder to deal with as the population increases and spreads.

My main recommendation in this section was a review of the regulations. In particular, regulations 21 and 26 have a lot of uncertainty around them and need to be sorted out. There is also, if you were not aware of it, a mandatory ban on the issue of crop protection permits for anybody found guilty of a breach of the regulations or the act. This could be a conviction for something as minor as failing to adhere to the administrative requirements of the regulations.

I have a further recommendation that the details of procedures related to the administration of the regulations be compiled and made publicly available. I have included this because nowhere can you find a comprehensive guide to the types of crop protection permits available and the conditions applicable to each. In fact, I have learnt something this morning that I was not aware of, that for male deer you can now get a 12-month permit. I didn't know that and I don't think you would find it on the website or any other information source. That is not the first time I have come across an important aspect of crop protection permits by accident.

Year after year of being restricted from effectively controlling deer has meant that I do not make the progress I need to make with my farming enterprise and the land I manage. My farm has been in our family since 1905, long before deer were in our area. In fact, it is only in the last 25 or 30 years that they have become abundant at Kingston. Nobody can give me a sound reason as to why I should be burdened with this iniquitous hidden tax in relation to the imposition of which I am really allowed no say.

## PUBLIC

You guys have a pretty difficult task ahead of you sorting through the submissions. It has already been stated that every person who has put in a submission has their own agenda, their own view of the world, but I would like to draw your attention to one particular statement in one of the submissions. Environmental impact on public land has been adequately maintained through crop protection permits for fallow deer. A total of 16 708 tags were issued in 2015, which indicates a reduction in the control of feral populations. That was just looking at one year.

If you consider 10 years of data on crop protection permits rather than just looking at the evidence of one year - and it is around; it is in my submission and others - crop protection permits issued have risen from 5700 to 16 700. Certainly to me this does not suggest a reduction or control of feral populations, rather the opposite. There was a chart in John Kelly's submission showing the population growth in one of the TransAg survey areas. My farm just happens to be part of that TransAg survey area.

In relation to the next sentence in the submission, these permits ensure conservation of forests and open native pastures. I suggest to the committee that you need reminding that crop protection permits for private land are and will continue to be used primarily for the protection of crops and pastures, not for forests and open native pastures, as stated in that submission. The task ahead of you in sorting through the various submissions that have been made is a challenge.

I want to use my farm as an example where deer policy has been used to override the importance of the land. A group of DPIPWE scientists wrote about Kingston that it is highly the natural values retained on Kingston make this property a place of national significance. In 2009, lowland native grasslands of Tasmania - the type found on Kingston - were listed as critically endangered in the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, the Australian Government's centrepiece of environmental legislation. To put Kingston in context, in Tasmania only 3 per cent of the lowland native grassland communities that existed prior to European settlement remain. Of this 3 per cent, almost 10 per cent is found on just one property - Kingston, my place. At Kingston we have conservation covenants covering almost 30 per cent of the land. I agreed to these to form the basis for the protection of the significant natural values that exist there.

I have had visitors to Kingston from all states of Australia, many European countries, North and South America, China and Mongolia. Without exception, they comment on the commitment to natural values management and, without exception, they are amazed at the lack of government support, especially when the control of feral species is discussed. We have at Kingston a situation where maintaining a resource for recreational hunting is given priority over biodiversity conservation that is probably at a nationally significant level.

Chair, I invite you and other members of the committee to visit Kingston to see for yourselves what I am attempting to protect and achieve as a farmer and land manager, to get a better understanding of what I am up to while my ability to control deer is so restricted. Should I put that invitation in writing, sir?

**CHAIR** - You could do, yes.

**Mr CAMERON** - I can come back to reference item 4 if anybody wants to question me on that.

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**Mr GAFFNEY** - On that, what are you suggesting in trapping a deer? I don't understand what that means.

**Mr CAMERON** - My understanding on the small amount of research I have done is that you build an enclosure. There were deer traps built when deer were taken from the wild population to set up the deer farms. I'm not talking about a spring-loaded trap or anything like that. It's an enclosure-type thing.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - You referenced beforehand the welfare of does being bred to be shot. Are you saying that's a cruel method? When you suggest poisoning - and I'm looking at the difference between poisoning any animal or shooting an animal - how do you justify that?

**Mr CAMERON** - On the poisoning issue, I haven't specified 1080, which I believe has been used in the past. I wasn't aware of it still being used currently. I believe there would be a fair bit of research needed to find an appropriate poison and I'm not necessarily saying it should be 1080. As to the animal welfare aspect, that relates to orphaned fawns. I guess farmers and landowners are in a better position than most to minimise this, if not to eliminate it altogether, because they live on the land. If a fawn is left behind there is more chance of them picking it up because they are there more frequently.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Thank you.

**Mr CAMERON** - In terms of reference item 5 - 'any other matters incidental hereto' - I report on property damage caused by deer in the US and the UK, the antisocial behaviour deer attract and the potential for disease transmission to humans. These matters will become commonplace in Tasmania if we do not act to control deer more effectively.

Perhaps in this section I should have included something around the human cost of the current deer policy. You will hear more about this directly from Lyndel Poole this afternoon. Please listen to what she has to say carefully.

In several of the submissions there is comment on the potential impact on rural communities of a reduction in hunting activity. I do not think that any of us who carry the financial burden of deer identified what it would mean if the burden was removed. I have talked about the cost, George talked about the cost, and other people presenting will do the same. A good question to ask would be: if your farm became more productive what would that mean? In my case, it would mean an increase in farm production, adding to the state's primary production, and it would mean additional employment I could offer - at least part-time employment for someone - and this is from one modest farm. It begs the question of what the economic benefit across Tasmania might be. We lose in other ways also. For example, due to the additional cost related to deer, Greening Australia Tasmania was unsuccessful in an application for over \$1 million of funding for a tree planning program.

In my concluding remarks, I wish to bring to your attention the fact that the final report of the New South Wales Natural Resources Commission into pest management in that state has been submitted and the government's response is awaited. The draft report included the recommendation that deer be declared a pest. It is highly likely that this was included in the final report as well. There are political factors at play so we do not know how the New South Wales government will respond. Regardless of this, the fact that a review with similarities to this one has recommended that deer be declared a pest is the most critical aspect for you to consider.

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**CHAIR** - Thank you. You stated that deer has become abundant on your property at Kingston. I take that you don't have a hunting club on your property?

**Mr CAMERON** - We have a property-based game management plan. We have hunters who come during the deer season, others who come when crop protection permits are available and we have a commercial shooter who comes and shoots wallaby and possum. He also shoots deer and we undertake deer shooting ourselves.

**CHAIR** - Connorville and Charlton have their own -

**Mr CAMERON** - We don't, and this is one of the difficulties with smaller properties. It is much harder to get the critical mass for an organisation like that, and it is also the nature of the property. One of the issues we have is that our properties are quite long and thin, and if you have three properties and hunters going across each one, there is quite a safety issue with that too.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Why don't you work with your neighbours for them to have their hunting groups come onto your land? Is there a reason you don't do that?

**Mr CAMERON** - That is a very good question and I'm glad you raised it. If you come to Kingston you will get a better understanding. I have six neighbours. One of them is the Crown; one is a property for sale that is managed by a recreational hunting group; another is a property that is primarily turned over to forestry and is managed by another recreational hunting group; one property with a similar view to my farm on the need for deer control; and another property where they are more liberal in their attitude to deer. I have to throw the question out there - if the deer hunter club works so well, this property is owned by the same people who own Charlton, so why hasn't that system been introduced there?

We have a great number of attitudes in our area and the goals of recreational hunters on the neighbouring property are very different to mine, as it is with my commercial farming neighbour. That makes it that much harder. I agree, and it has come up a couple of times, that this is not a property-by-property issue, it is something that needs to be regionally managed.

**Ms RATTRAY** - So you agree with that sentiment, Simon, that it is more a regionally based issue?

**Mr CAMERON** - I do, but how do we get a meeting of the minds? It is a bit like the question, what is the right population? In the number I have thrown in, I have said 2.5 per square kilometre, which equates to about 75 for Kingston, which is higher than I would like in an ideal situation. I would like to minimise it. I can't do that because of the restrictions around deer control, but 75 is a sustainable population.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Simon, I might be the only member of the committee who has been to your property, although it has been a while since I visited Kingston. I want to talk about your recommendation 3, in regard to the Tasmanian Deer Advisory Committee, TDAC. You have highlighted issues around having, as a landowner, your interests canvassed and looked at in that advisory committee, and we have heard from another presenter the same thing - the sheer weight of numbers for others who might be part of that committee who may have a different view of the world. Can you expand on how you think reconstituting that might be undertaken, to give me some idea of what you were thinking?

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**Mr CAMERON** - It is a good question and one I should have given more thought to. My view right now and my understanding of the committee is that it is dominated by recreational hunting interests from the various bodies. The TFGA is represented and my understanding is that the people who represent the TFGA are pro-recreational hunting landowners. That is an issue for the TFGA, and similarly for those who represent Forestry.

There needs to be a mechanism for landowners or land managers like myself. Also I believe the second largest private landholder in Tasmania is the Tasmanian Land Conservancy. They get no input into deer management and policy at all. I am a small landowner but that is the tip of the iceberg. It is the major players who do not get a say either, so there needs to be some way for representing their interests. The stakeholders should be represented in proportion to the cost to them. There needs to be some mechanism around membership rather than just being there because they are part of a hunting organisation.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Thank you. If you would like to further exercise your mind to that question, I feel sure the committee would be happy to take any additional information, as it was a question without notice.

**Mr CAMERON** - Yes. Thank you for the opportunity. I will certainly do that.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - In recommendation 3, you say -

That the Tasmanian Deer Advisory Committee be reconstituted to genuinely and equitably represent the interests of stakeholders in the control of wild Fallow deer.

Who is your list of stakeholders? Who do you put in there?

**Mr CAMERON** - The stakeholders are the landowners, the Crown, the hunting groups. If you want to split the landholders into smaller groups, you may have forestry and agriculture.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Would landholders be agriculture?

**Mr CAMERON** - Not necessarily. How do you categorise the Tasmanian Land Conservancy? They are landholders, but they manage their land for conservation purposes.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Yes.

**Mr CAMERON** - That stakeholder needs representation.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - You were talking about paperwork, how convoluted it is and difficult to understand. Are you saying there should be terms of reference for each part of that permit you showed us before? When it comes to wallaby and possums, we do that on our farm and I do not have any trouble with that. What do you perceive is the problem with deer management?

**Mr CAMERON** - You can generalise across, yes, it is easier now with the wallaby and possum because it is a multiple-year permit. With deer, you have to record them.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - You have to do that with the others as well, yes.

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**Mr CAMERON** - No, that is fine. Then you are allocating them to a number of hunters. Can I ask Lyndel to comment on this, because she manages it through our farm and we worked through approximately - you can get up to about 50 pieces of paper for one permit.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - I will ask her when she comes forward. Thank you. Yes.

**Mr MULDER** - I look forward to having a look at Kingston. It sounds like you are doing some good work there. What do you do with the land? You are a small business. What are you farming?

**Mr CAMERON** - It is primarily traditional superfine wool. We have diversified a little. We have some fat lambs, and if the opportunity arises, we do a little bit of cropping.

**Mr MULDER** - I suspected that because that is another introduced species, the sheep. I am wondering how you managed the impact of that introduced species on the natural values of your land.

**Mr CAMERON** - Yes. Land with natural values has to be managed. One of the ways of managing it is through grazing. It is an alternative to fire. The biggest difference between sheep and deer and other forms of wildlife, is you can fence them out. You can graze it when you need to graze it and you can close them out when you want to close it out. In terms of how we manage, under the conservation covenants that exist for Kingston, part of the agreement is a stocking level for the conservation lands. It is scientifically recognised that you should be able to graze it, because it is low impact. The grazing limit we are allowed, we never manage to reach. We never get up to that level, because we look at the land and we make an assessment of its condition, and we do not push it.

**Mr MULDER** - Do you have a problem with roo and things like that?

**Mr CAMERON** - Yes, we do.

**Mr MULDER** - How do you manage that?

**Mr CAMERON** - Primarily through a commercial shooter. We were talking before about making use of carcasses and it applies to whatever species. Some of it goes into human consumption. I am not sure, but it may go into pet food. I think for our commercial shooter it is primarily human consumption.

**CHAIR** - Simon, you will not need to send us a written invitation to your property, all the committee is here. We will discuss that later on.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Work out a time, and I know how to get there.

**Mr CAMERON** - Believe Tania, not me. It is a little further than I told her. That would be wonderful, sir. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - We will be in contact with you if we decide to take up your offer. Thank you very much for that.

**PUBLIC**

**Ms RATTRAY** - A very extensive submission. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**THE**

**WITNESS**

**WITHDREW.**

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## PUBLIC

**Mr SCOTT FREEMAN**, PRESIDENT, AUSTRALIAN DEER ASSOCIATION, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** - Welcome, Scott.

All evidence taken in this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege. I remind you any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. A copy of the information for witnesses is available if you have not read it or are not aware of the process. The evidence you present is being recorded and the *Hansard* version will be published on the committee website when it becomes available. By way of introduction, I advise that the procedure we intend to follow today is firstly, you will be provided with the opportunity to speak to your submission if you like to do so. Following that the committee will address questions to you relating to the wild fallow deer population of Tasmania.

**Mr FREEMAN** - I would like to present our submission as presented. We are an Australia-wide association with branches in every state and territory, made up of recreational hunters, interested deer people and conservationists alike. We come from all different walks of life, from one extreme to the other, across our great land.

I am not sure where to go I would rather answer some questions.

**CHAIR** - We can go straight to questions if that is what you prefer.

**Mr FREEMAN** - We can cover it a lot better with that.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - When you say the Australian Deer Association across the different states and territories, do you have similar policies and guidelines or is each state different?

**Mr FREEMAN** - We work under a national code of conduct and ethics. We have a national executive, or board, and everything flows down from that. Each state executive and branch all abide by the same terms, conditions, objectives and such.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Okay, I am not trying to put you on the spot here but I am about to, because I cannot verify a statement made by *The Age*. In *The Age* in Victoria, it said -

The Australian Deer Association, which represents hunters, has called for regulatory changes "to allow the processing of wild shot food for human and pet consumption on commercial premises".

In your submission you are saying that as an association representing recreational deer hunters you are opposed to any proposal to allow commercial harvest of Tasmania's wild deer.

**Mr FREEMAN** - Sorry, I haven't heard that before so you've got me right on the spot there. The regulations and ethics we abide by change from state to state.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - So each state can make its own ruling on whether they think deer can be used for commercial uses?

**Mr FREEMAN** - Yes.

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**Ms RATTRAY** - As a Tasmanian body, would you make representation back to the overarching Australian body and say, 'We think Victoria is on a slippery slope here and we don't support that', and then have a discussion about it?

**Mr FREEMAN** - Yes. It's the same as any democratic process, we have a vote and that mightn't be the same as everyone else's. Each state is different.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - When you represent the group in making that decision, do you survey your members or just discuss it as an executive and say, 'This is the decision we've made'? How do people feed into that policy decision?

**Mr FREEMAN** - This submission was made up from a survey of our members and talking at branch meetings throughout the state. It was all brought back together, so these are not my thoughts or our committee's thoughts, it is our state association's thoughts.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - When you talk about 'commercial harvest', was it put to your members that it would be a commercial harvest for human consumption and/or pet consumption? Personally, I believe there is a difference in mindset to that.

**Mr FREEMAN** - In the past I don't think we have talked about the pet meat, other than to be by-products. If we went down the human consumption side, there would be by-products that would go into pet meat. My thought process was on the human consumption side.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - How often does your association meet?

**Mr FREEMAN** - We have bi-monthly meetings.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - I suppose you will be presenting feedback from the inquiry to your members through that process.

**Mr FREEMAN** - Yes. We have newsletters, magazines and branch meetings. There are three branches in the state and we all meet bi-monthly.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Do you have the current membership?

**Mr FREEMAN** - We're pushing 500 in the state and are made up of family groups - children, wives, husbands, partners. There is one branch in the north-west, we run out of Longford, and there's also a southern branch.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Are you saying most of the hunters in this room are members of the ADA?

**Mr FREEMAN** - No. To be a hunter you don't need to be a member of any association. Some properties ask you to be a member of an association for public liability insurance, so then you can be a member of a handful of associations or clubs that offer that product.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - With your recommendations towards the end of your submission, you have increased the female antler-less licence tag by one, to a total of three tags. Currently it is one adult male deer and two or three antler-less deers. Are you saying it should be both or more - one adult male plus three?

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**Mr FREEMAN** - Yes, but I am not sure of the timing of this. That was increased this year through some of our lobbying.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Are you happy with that or do you think it should be one male plus three instead of 'or three'?

**Mr FREEMAN** - We got it increased this year from previous years. A population has happened over the drought we have just come through so we need to look at that on a property-by-property or region-by-region basis. With the licence and the crop protection on top of that, you can manage your region or property bases. That gives you flexibility with the permit system so we don't have to increase the licence tags so much because we can deal with the population increase or decrease within a region to keep a sustainable level. We could well increase another antler-less deer tag and it wouldn't have a lot of affect on the overall take because we can deal with the ups and down with the crop protection permits.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - At the moment has it gone up to one in three? It is now one and two and that was raised last year. What was it before then - one?

**Mr FREEMAN** - One.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Why can't it go to one and three or one and four?

**Mr FREEMAN** - There is no reason.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Would you like that? Would that be good?

**Mr FREEMAN** - It all depends what 'good' is.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - What is your opinion on two stags and three females?

**Mr FREEMAN** - Stags become more of a regional property issue - I am talking from a deer hunting organisation view, not a farmer organisation. Some properties can deal with an increased take of male deer, which we have had in the last several years with the male deer permits. Some properties that have the numbers of deer might not be able to sustain it if we go onto a smaller property and the farmer might not be happy with and it comes down to whether the farmer is happy for these hunters to take more than the one stag. If we had more than one stag permit that would be achievable.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - We were told before that we should look at this as a Tasmanian problem, not an individual problem. Do you still have the same answer for that take?

**Mr FREEMAN** - It would be wonderful in a perfect world to look at it on a whole-of-state basis and then drop it down to a region and then drop it down to a property. It is hard enough to get property owners in the whole sense to agree on simple things. You are never going to get them to agree. We have property owners that will not let us shoot kangaroos or possums or other native animals on their place but they want all the deer gone, then you have the next bloke down the road who wants everything gone, and then you have the next bloke who wants to keep everything there.

**Ms RATTRAY** - What about the lady owner, what does she want?

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**Mr FREEMAN** - She owns the lot - she wants nothing shot.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Scott, in your objectives it talks about your organisation wanting an improvement in the status of deer in Australia, so you probably would not support it being made a pest. If you were wanting to improve its status, I would say 'pest' would not fit in your objectives.

**Mr FREEMAN** - No. We have fought hard across other states in Australia to try to keep game classified as a game species. In some states we have lost that status and they have dropped down to pests or other things. In Tasmania, we are currently still at the semi-protected/game status and we would like to maintain that.

**Ms RATTRAY** - How do you fund your research into the deer industry?

**Mr CAMERON** - We have another body that sits outside ADA called the Australian Deer Research Foundation.

**Ms RATTRAY** - You have touched on it in your submission. I wondered how you funded that.

**Mr CAMERON** - That was funded in the past through the sale and publications of hunting books and wildlife books, but is not funded very well any more because no-one reads books any more.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Everyone Googles everything now, don't they?

**Mr CAMERON** - Yes, reading is a dying art, so that funding is drying up.

**Ms RATTRAY** - That is a good point. Trying to access dollars for research is always a challenge for any organisation. How do you see the organisation being able to deal with that? We have talked a little bit already today about how we need more information to make these considered judgments.

**Mr FREEMAN** - We have talked about it at the board level and branch level as being able to fund university students to do their masters and such degrees. There are several programs currently, not just by ADA, but SSAA and Field and Game sponsor university students to do theses and their masters degrees and such. That is not 100 per cent funded so you get a lot of work for a smaller amount of money.

**Ms RATTRAY** - University students are often happy to participate in those programs if they get \$2000-\$4000 for a different project. It seems like a pretty good initiative but I know funding is hard to get in any area.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - One of the points in your submission was that you have been successful in reopening some 26 500 hectares in regional reserves and conservation areas for recreational hunting. How do you manage that or who manages that?

**Mr FREEMAN** - That is a good question. That is still up in the air at the moment. The Game Management Services Unit may have to do it for the first year. The TDAC will probably

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do it jointly with the unit and it will be run pretty well in the same line as the big den state forest balloting system.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Right. We can ask them that.

**Mr FREEMAN** - Yes, but there are some other areas that the Game Management Services Unit ballot up in the highlands so it will run along the same lines as those. They don't have the funding or the manpower to run those systems so it looks like some volunteers are going to pick up the slack and do that.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Environmentally in those regional reserves and conservation areas, there is no reason why we couldn't open up more areas if there was some proper management plan.

**Mr FREEMAN** - No.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - It is the funding of it, so the numbers of what some people believe is a pest could be better contained or managed if there was more funding.

**Mr FREEMAN** - Yes. A lot of that stuff is probably not going to be 100 per cent self-funded because recreational hunters are willing to pay a fee to access the land, as we discussed earlier today, so you can get money back for the effort of putting in to ballot those areas. There is never going to be 100 per cent - you never know, but it all depends on the deer population in those areas because people aren't going to pay good money to go somewhere where there is only 2.5 deer per square kilometre or something. It's not worth the hassle of getting out of bed.

**Ms RATTRAY** - From what I have heard today, it's a big commitment to be a hunter and to do this management. In your submission, you talked about lobbying for an extension by one week only. Is that for this season?

**Mr FREEMAN** - We lobbied and were successful in getting a one-week extension to the male deer season.

**Ms RATTRAY** - From four weeks to five weeks, and you are still lobbying for an extension of May to June.

**Mr FREEMAN** - We are still lobbying to continue the antler-less deer season from 1 May to as long as possible. We originally would have liked to have taken it to the end of October, which is when the crop protection permits run out and then we run into the fawning issue, but through the dreaded paperwork, the returns back to the department, we had to bring that to the September date to allow enough time to process the returns to get all the paperwork done.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Do you know where you are with that lobbying process?

**Mr FREEMAN** - It's looking reasonable at the moment.

**Ms RATTRAY** - I don't think the outcome of this inquiry going to help too much.

**Mr FREEMAN** - No, but we are still working on it and it is looking better than it was a while ago.

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**Ms RATTRAY** - That will be something that will need to be in place. What is your experience with the paperwork with the department? We have heard that things are a lot better than they used to be. What is your assessment of the department and how they're moving?

**Mr FREEMAN** - No-one likes paperwork but it's a fact of life. It's probably got worse since we've invented computers, not better. It is manageable as long as you have good systems in place personally. It is more work for the department and if they can improve things it's less work for them. Each club, association and land manager has to have good process in place with any paperwork, so it's just a matter of streamlining those processes and working through it.

**Ms RATTRAY** - We heard this morning that someone contacted the department last week and the tags arrived today.

**Mr FREEMAN** - As a landowner, if you have an issue today, today is too late. You needed to be on top of that last week. It should be the same as any business - you're not looking at today, you should be looking down the track. As a business owner myself, that's what you have to do.

With the five-year permit for the wallaby, et cetera, this will be the first year this has come in so I wouldn't like to throw too much into the five-year basket because I'm pretty sure this is going to be an experiment with the five-year permit. You can see there are going to be some headaches once we get into that a bit, once we get to the four-and-a-half to five-year problem. It might be easier to have a one-year permit.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Maybe start with small steps rather than try to bite off too much.

**Mr FREEMAN** - Each farmer still has to correlate all their records for the five years and keep that on file. If the department asks for it they have to hand it over, so it's easier to do it yearly than five-yearly, I would imagine.

**Ms RATTRAY** - A work in progress. It will be interesting to see how that unfolds.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Your objective number 4 says:

The retention and improvement and habitat for deer and other wildlife, particularly by encouraging governments to pass legislation and make regulations based on sound management principles.

Would you like to expand on that as to what sort of legislation or regulations you would like, other than what you have talked about with bag limits and timing?

**Mr FREEMAN** - That is probably on a regional and statewide basis. As an association we do lots of different work across different walks of life and land across Australia, so it's hard to narrow that down into one specific spot. We probably don't do as much in Tasmania as some of the Victorian and Queensland areas do.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - So you have nothing in mind particularly, other than what you have already talked about?

**Mr FREEMAN** - Not at the moment.

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**Ms RATTRAY** - One of your objectives is the education of hunters in the safe handling of firearms. I have not heard of too many problems. There is the odd time where there might be an incident, but you don't seem to have any real issues.

**Mr FREEMAN** - With recreational hunting in general?

**Ms RATTRAY** - Yes.

**Mr FREEMAN** - No, you don't have many issues but when you do it is fairly catastrophic. We run education programs; we held one last weekend in Cressy.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Is that for new participants or people who want to refresh?

**Mr FREEMAN** - That was open to the general public. We run more specific ones for younger people or new hunters. There are a lot of new hunters coming in at a mature age. They are not just all 16 or 17 year olds.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - You're not saying there is a problem; you're just saying people need to be educated?

**Mr FREEMAN** - No, there's not a problem, but with firearms safety you don't wait until there is a problem. You get on the front foot and be proactive because we don't want problems.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much, Scott. It is very much appreciated.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**

## PUBLIC

**Ms LYNDEL POOLE**, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** - Welcome, Lyndel. As we have done this with every other witness, I will read this to you. All evidence taken in this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege. I remind you that any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. A copy of the information for witnesses is available if you have not read it or are not aware of the process. The evidence you present is being recorded and the *Hansard* version will be published on the committee website when it becomes available.

By way of introduction I advise that the procedure is as follows. First, you will be invited to speak to your submission if you desire to do so. Following that, the committee will ask questions relating to the wild fallow deer population in Tasmania.

**Ms POOLE** - My submission has come about for a couple of reasons. One of the most powerful is from trying to speak out and to gain some sensible control of fallow deer in Tasmania to do with agriculture, environment and all things associated with fallow deer and their occurrence here. I was subjected to a very serious court case that cost me several thousand dollars to defend, which was never going to grow legs anyway, simply because I became collateral damage to a very poorly written regulation and even worse written conditions on permits.

More so, the people charged with enforcing those regulations and writing those permits do not have the skills available that are required to administer them. It is quite obvious through my court case, which is available for all to hear and see, that the man in charge did not have a clue when he came into court and he had even less when he went out. He frustrated the magistrate, and unfortunately that has brought about what I want to bring to light.

At the end of 2011 the case was started against me and that is still ongoing. The court case has finished, I made a complaint to the Integrity Commission, and it has been sent to DPIPW to deal with. At this stage, we still do not have an answer as to how they are going to act against those people who took away my presumption of innocence, treated me appallingly and also cost me, and the farm I manage for Simon Cameron, several thousands of dollars.

**CHAIR** - Excuse me, we really need to stick to the terms of reference.

**Ms POOLE** - Sorry, that was why I came about trying to put in my terms of reference. I think an open cull for fallow deer is to be immediately allowed, with the same conditions applied to those with Bennett's and rufous wallaby and the brush tail possum. That would address a whole lot of issues immediately. It would make shooting available to more people than it does now, because hunter groups are tying up shooting from people that want to shoot. There is a significant difference between hunters and shooters. There are plenty of places for hunters, but the shooters are kept out.

My other recommendation was that deer be deregulated, and that should happen without having to wait for the next review to come up. It has been proven that it can be changed for a season ticket. You can go from having two deer on the ticket to getting three, and it was changed within a few short months. Any conditions to regulations can be changed quite rapidly.

In my recommendations I have stated that I think they should be deregulated. The impacts of them not being deregulated - you face some very high penalties through deer that can be easily

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poached. If things go wrong, they have to be tagged and all the rest of it, and you can be facing up to a \$13 000 fine and a mandatory ban simply by not sending a permit or a tag back. That is manifestly outweighed by any other criminal offence in the system now.

I made a recommendation about commercial arrangements, that landowners must be free to make any commercial arrangements with commercial shooters and hunters. However, commercial shooting must be done by properly licensed commercial shooters. Those that have the means to harvest the animals, the same as they do with the wallaby and possums, have the skills available, and they are checked all the time. That way, there should not be any hygiene problems anyway.

Without deregulation - the property-specific control that commercialisation gives - we will have the same problems that we have now. Mine is quite short and brief because it is brought about by the fact that I think you do need to look at the regulations very hard. You need to look at permits and the poor way in which they are written. They are very much a dangerous tool at the moment that can be used either way, and they do get used either way.

**CHAIR** - You say that an open cull should be immediate. Where do you believe the deer, if you have an open cull - are you saying that those deer can be shot and left, or are you saying you have an alternative for it?

**Ms POOLE** - My idea of an open cull is that it is freed up, and not only into hunter groups for that short period of the year when they can have a licence. You have a permit that you issue to your shooters and they are able to shoot whatever deer they see and take them away, the same as they do with wallaby and possum. I am not saying they don't get used. They do with them what they like. If it were opened up to commercialisation, there would be some use. That comes across other people's interests. There is an easy mechanism, open it up and it would allow a few more people in to shoot. There are plenty of people who want to shoot deer, but they are restricted because hunter groups have all the properties stitched up.

**CHAIR** - When you say they want to shoot deer, they want to shoot them for their own personal use?

**Ms POOLE** - Yes, they want the meat. They have families that want meat. They want to feed dogs. It is very good pet food. My dogs like it.

**CHAIR** - You are saying that hunting clubs are closed, that they will not let -

**Ms POOLE** - I have a group of people that come to Kingston during the deer season to shoot deer so if they want to get a trophy head they can have it. When I first went to Kingston to manage it we had a very stringent hunter group that all these restrictions. There had to be a certain amount of points or you were not allowed to shoot and this and that, so people were sitting on the property not shooting anything saying, 'We'll be back next year with our bottles of wine and sit up all weekend, thank you very much'.

Numbers were building up, so we thought about it and asked what we could do. We were advised by the Game Management Unit that if we did not want to have a restrictive game management plan like that to have an open plan; rewrite the plan and allow people to come in to shoot and they will take away the limit. That is what we did. We culled out the hunters, found shooters and that is what we do. They come in and they shoot through the deer season but they

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are also the first ones back there to shoot through the crop protection permit time. Unfortunately we cannot shoot deer all year around and that is the single biggest issue. The deer are out of control because we cannot have year-round culling.

**CHAIR** - How many shooters do you have on your property during the -

**Ms POOLE** - The property is very difficult to have a lot of shooters on it. Most weekends over the season we will have -

**Ms RATTRAY** - Because of the long, skinny -

**Ms POOLE** - It is a long skinny property and they use high-powered weapons. We live in the valley between them. We have generally two to run. One run can take probably three shooters sensibly as long as they are a family and can work together and know where one another are. Anywhere up to about 12 shooters is the maximum for a deer season on Kingston for safety aspects. Safety has to come into it. These are serious, high-powered weapons. They play for keeps.

**CHAIR** - Shooters are responsible people, though, aren't they?

**Ms POOLE** - Generally, yes. I don't have a problem with shooters. We need shooters.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Lyndel, I would like to talk about applying for the permits and the tags process. In your submission you have not been terribly complimentary about the process. You said your experience has changed a little bit recently.

**Ms POOLE** - Yes, since I made a complaint to the IC and they referred it back to DPIPWE two years ago I am no longer blocked and told it is policy procedure or anything else when applying for permits. I get permits and tags, but it shouldn't take that to get a free and fair system.

**Ms RATTRAY** - What is the normal process? I have never applied for a permit.

**Ms POOLE** - From a manager's point of view I am the landholder. An application has to be made in writing; it cannot be verbal or anything else. The regulations stipulate it has to be made in writing and if you don't it is a breach of the wildlife regulations and a five-year ban if you get caught. Generally I email the head of the GMSU and request a permit. In that request I have to note why I want, how many I want it for, the period of time I want it for, and he will either say yes or no. Recently it has been yes but before that it wasn't. He will then approve that permit which gets sent to Hobart to the Wildlife Management Branch who then fill out the paperwork and send a cover permit to me in my name for the property with the number of animals that can be taken and the range of tag numbers. Then there will be two attached copies which do not have names on them but they are agent copies. They will have a number the same as mine but with an 'A' in front of it. I am able to photocopy that as many times as I like and providing people have gun licences and are permitted to be on the property, I can issue them with one, two or 10 tags. On their permit they have a list of conditions they must abide by, the same as mine when I issue it through them.

Generally they are for three months. At the end of the three-month period if they are not used I then have to notify the department of how many animals were shot and if there are any unused tags. Now they are to be cut up and destroyed but before they had to be returned. That has to

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happen every time. When I get a permit I have to photocopy it for every person I want to give it to, I have to write the tag numbers in and I have to keep a copy of where the tag numbers are going. I have to keep track of who has what tag and that happens for all the deer and Forester kangaroos but you do not have a tagging system for wallaby, possum or any of the others. It is very time-consuming just to get it. To simplify it, it would be nice if we had a permit system the same as the Bennetts possums, where you're issue a piece of paper, and if that person doesn't have that piece of paper they are not permitted to have the deer in their system.

I think it can be simplified and it should reduce costs and everything else. The trouble is, when I get permits I have to read them. I am not sure how many people read their permits carefully, but every time something changes on a permit they are extremely poorly written and worded. I could go home now and issue a permit to someone and technically they could be pulled up and booked because the permits are so badly written. Please, that is what I need you to look at, because everyone is at the mercy of how it is interpreted. We have evidence from three different higher levels in the wildlife management branch who were asked a question and each of them interpreted it differently. That is dangerous. They are the people charged with administering them. Sitting in court, the other guy couldn't answer. He couldn't even read out the permit. He didn't understand it.

I think we have a lot of unfortunate people we issue them to who are exposed to this, and it is not fair. We need shooters to be shooting things, not be worried about whether they're going to be convicted and lose their licence for five years. That is just not on. There needs to be a real tidy-up and we need to free it up so more people can shoot them, which will help everyone because there is supposed to be fewer numbers of deer to get better quality animals ultimately. The population is just blowing out of control. We go at the deer every year as best as we are allowed to and the numbers are still increasing. I still go out every morning and see deer in the same areas. You can put the pressure in one area and they move.

**Ms RATTRAY** - You talk about a more streamlined process. Do you see many people or officers coming around checking the tags and licences? Is that something that happens on an ad hoc basis?

**Ms POOLE** - No. They don't come down our way now because they've got a fair bit of stuff hanging over their head.

**Ms RATTRAY** - It takes a while to find it.

**Ms POOLE** - They found it when they needed to. I think the problem is at the level where the permits are being written, because the permits are being written and changed by whoever is the agent you apply to. They are a legal document but they are not written by anyone with legal qualifications. That is the difference and that is what needs looking at.

If I can be taken to court over a condition on that piece of paper, then it is a legal document. The guy that took me said I had broken the conditions on the permit. He did not understand it himself but he could actually change that permit if he had wanted to anyway. Permits should not be that open to interpretation and being able to be changed. I have several permits where there is a change. It might be very subtle, but there is still a change.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Potentially the intent has changed.

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**Ms POOLE** - The intent is there all the time. You have to read your permits and you have to make sure. I don't need shooters with a five-year ban, I need them on the place shooting. I will highlight it, but it is not up to me. These are grown men who have had more years' experience shooting than me. I shouldn't have to be telling them how to do this. It should be a simple process that anyone can pick up and read. Remember we have young fellows and young girls starting at 18 or younger when they have a junior's permit, so you have to have it simple enough so that everyone can read it and understand it and everyone can abide by it. When the people who administer them can't understand them, we're really in the doo-doo, aren't we?

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Do you have to get a recreational game licence first?

**Ms POOLE** - This is a bit of a misgiving about deer licences sold. Everyone says, they are all hunters and these 4700 all have a right to shoot where they like. I have to buy a recreational deer licence if I want to apply for a cull permit during the deer season, to run concurrent with deer season. I find it offensive that I have to spend \$68 so I can apply for a permit, to hold the permit to give out to my shooters. That is offensive.

**Ms RATTRAY** - The landowner or the property owner has to -

**Ms POOLE** - The landholder, whether I am the manager or not, to get a permit to run concurrently, I had to spend my \$68. That is crazy. I already have enough workload with having to manage these silly animals as it is, without having to go and spend more money to do it. I am not a recreational deer shooter. I am a shooter. I go out and cull animals. There is no pleasure in it and it has to be done.

**Ms RATTRAY** - On point 3 of your recommendations, Lyndel, you said the landowner must be free to make any commercial arrangements with commercial hunters. You have shooters and hunters.

**Ms POOLE** - Because there is a great divide.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Can you explain the difference between hunters and shooters?

**Ms POOLE** - If you look at Mike Bennett's submission, he explains the difference between hunters and shooters. That is why I said at the beginning I was supporting Simon Cameron and Michael Bennett because there is no point in us all going over the same thing. Michael Bennett covers it perfectly. Hunters are the ones that will sit there year in, year out and probably shoot one bullet off and are really reluctant to shoot off crop protection permits for you. They tie the property up and they tie it up for this customary right; my father was there, my grandfather was there, my great-grandfather was there. We want people who shoot and that is difference.

There are plenty of guys who buy a licence. You can buy a deer licence without having a property to shoot on. You have to have a firearms licence to get it but you do not have to prove you have anywhere to use it. It is another way of putting too many licences out there when there are not enough places to shoot. If you do not have anywhere to shoot -

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Do you mean hunters, as in trophy hunters and shooters, as in cullers?

**Ms POOLE** - Yes. Cullers that will shoot -

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**Mrs HISCUTT** - Just a minute, to make it clear for me. Shooters, you are talking about them being cullers?

**Ms POOLE** - Not fully. Some of those like to shoot for a head as well, but ultimately they will shoot at request. We have crop protection permits where you come and cull them and they will go hard to do that for you but, yes, they like a head too. That is fine, it is entirely up to them.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Thank you.

**Ms RATTRAY** - The commercial arrangements you talked about, does that mean you, on your property, have looked at commercial opportunities? Have you found any impediments to doing that or is that not something you have looked at?

**Ms POOLE** - There is an impediment, it is the law. You are not allowed to do anything commercial with deer. You cannot charge someone to come onto your property to shoot a deer, because that is commercialisation. You can charge them a property entrance fee to come onto your property but you cannot charge them to come and shoot a deer, because that is commercialisation.

What I am saying in my recommendations is that I am asking you to look at trying to commercialise it and put it back to the landowner. If we are feeding the deer, give us the right to let someone, if they are commercial and fit the bill and they have an avenue for it, let them take them in preference, put them in a log heap. It is a far better use of it. There are plenty of nursing homes there and I am sure they would love the mince. It is low in cholesterol.

**Ms RATTRAY** - We have heard evidence today about shooters and hunters who belong to a club or an organisation and yet they pay a substantial fee, in some cases, to go onto a property and shoot. You said you couldn't do that.

**Ms POOLE** - If you look in their game plan, it will be called a property entrance fee. They pay a fee to enter a property to shoot, and then they are told they need to shoot others things as well. That is the grey area. It stipulates in the regulations that there is no commercial avenue for deer.

**Ms RATTRAY** - So you don't charge your shooters an entry fee to your property?

**Ms POOLE** - We do to maintain tracks, the same as most people do. If they don't use the track very often they will get their money back. It's an incentive to get in, shoot what you want and get out - especially over the wet season.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Otherwise they make a mess on your property.

**Ms POOLE** - Yes.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - The culling for 12 months, or 12 months a year to be able to shoot, what is the fawning -

**Ms POOLE** - That's the animal welfare issue, the white elephant in the room.

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**Mr GAFFNEY** - I understand what you mean about the 12 months, but from the animal welfare concern that there would be a period of the year you wouldn't want shooters or hunters to kill the doe during the fawning period.

**Ms POOLE** - What's the difference to pouch young in a wallaby? They shoot a wallaby and pull the pouch young out and tap it on the head. You see the fawn and you shoot it.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - I suppose that's the issue. I imagine the fawns will hide when the mother is out foresting. If you shoot the mother you may not always find the fawn, so the issue that was raised earlier about welfare would be a concern.

**Ms POOLE** - Yes, it is, but the other side of that is people are forgetting there is another animal welfare issue. From my perspective as a farm manager, with ewes and lambs, lambs at foot, when does are dropping their young, they are taking the competitive feed from my stock. Yet, they are not given that sort of respect. I have to make sure I find enough food for them or the RSPCA would be onto me, yet everyone is all touchy-feely about Bambi.

I spend a lot of time on a farm, and a farm that has deer on it. When a fawn is quite small you will battle to find the doe or the fawn. She will feed at different hours. When the fawn is more mobile she will come out and have the fawn not far from her. So you shoot the doe, the fawn will run straight to the mother and you shoot the fawn. It's clinical, and there's no more damage to shooting a doe in the head and shooting a fawn in the head; they are both shot dead.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - The social licence in Tasmania regarding animal welfare, to suggest a 12-month-a-year culling season would not be accepted by a large percentage of Tasmanians who would see the fawning as an issue. If it was a more limited period, say nine months, to get over that, it might be a better way of tackling it.

**Ms POOLE** - It probably is, but I would like to draw your attention to Forester kangaroo. They are a big animal, they have a big pouch young, and there is no restriction on that. You can tell the difference between a female Forester and a male Forester, yet there is no restriction on the permit to say, 'Do not shoot the females at this time' - and they have this big pouch young that can be left. I can tell the difference and people who shoot all the time know the difference, too, but no-one is worried about that. Foresters are wholly protected; they have full status. Can you not draw the comparisons? If you shoot the mother Forester, you get the young one and tap it on the head or cut its throat? What is the difference? People have to open their eyes and look at the bigger picture.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - The immediate destruction of an animal so there is no lingering death, as in starvation or whatever, is different.

**Ms POOLE** - Generally, if they are there to be shot the fawn will be with the mother.

**Ms RATTRAY** - You have let the elephant in the room out.

**Ms POOLE** - I thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before you. Good luck, I am glad you've got it ahead of you and not me.

### **THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**

**PUBLIC**

## PUBLIC

**Mr NIGEL DOWNWARD AND Mrs BELINDA DOWNWARD**, MAJESTIC FALLOW, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** - Welcome to the public hearing of Government Administration Committee A inquiring into the wild fallow deer population in Tasmania. All evidence taken in this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege. I remind you that any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. A copy of the information for witnesses is available. If you have not read it or are not aware of the process, the evidence you present is being recorded and the *Hansard* version will be published on the committee website when it becomes available. I advise the procedure we intend to follow today is that firstly, you will be provided the opportunity to speak to your submission if you so desire. Following on from that, the committee will address questions to you seeking information specifically relating to the wild fallow deer population in Tasmania.

**Mrs DOWNWARD** - Nigel and I have been involved in deer farming for the past 16 years so we are very passionate about the issues presented here today. We believe that the Legislative Council should not allow the change in legislation to allow wild shot venison to be sold for human consumption. We have genuine concerns that there will be a decrease in the market value and quality assurance, as well as the meat hygiene standards. We appreciate the investigation into these issues.

**CHAIR** - For clarification, the Legislative Council cannot allow legislation to be changed. We are simply a committee which reports back to the Legislative Council. I am just letting you know the process.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Because you are so heavily involved, could you explain to us the legislation around the hygiene? What act does the consumption of farmed deer fall under? What are some of the hoops you have had to jump through to be able to -

**Mrs DOWNWARD** - We're not involved directly at the moment in the processing of the meat; that is the next stage, I guess, in our plan. We are building up our numbers. With the Australian Standard for Hygiene and Consumption, it is only the wild game animal carcasses fit for human consumption, the meat processing on your premises and things like that. We can't go and sell the livestock that we have at the moment.

**Mr DOWNWARD** - The person bringing wild game meat in at the moment to Tasmania can get the deer shot in South Australia with a rifle in a paddock and then brought here for human consumption, but I'm not allowed to shoot my deer in the paddock and sell it for human consumption. It has to be killed at an abattoir and go through the process that any other meat in Tasmania does.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - How many deer do you run at the moment?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - We have 1500.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - And who do you sell those to?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - I am about to start. We have had a few issues this year like the floods and everything else with my parents and the drought last year. It was hard enough to keep them alive besides starting and this year is not looking much better. I have a market for my deer and I

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am about to start but this matter going on about shooting them in the wild, I personally don't think it's sustainable. I'm a deer hunter myself and I have shot deer and I can't see it being sustained on a large scale.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Because you have been in this business for a while, it is handy for us as a committee to understand exactly what you do with your deer. Will you find a market?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - I also sell their antlers. I sell every product of the deer. I sell some of the products now. I breed trophy stags - that is what I mainly do - and sell their antlers. That is what I have been doing for the last five years. A good mature stag is worth between \$3000 and \$5000 but it has to be a good stag and you have to run it for probably five or six years to get it to that stage.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Then people pay to -

**Mr DOWNWARD** - To shoot it. I have this trophy run.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - On your property?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - I've got more than one property and I do this on one of them. I have to fully fence that property and they are my deer, so I do whatever I wish.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Okay. With the sale of your meat for restaurants, do you sell them the deer or do they go to the abattoir first?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - I have to take it to the abattoir and get it stamped and then I can take it to wherever I want in a chiller trailer. It can get processed wherever I wish.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - At the moment there is an issue in South Australia where they can shoot wild deer -

**Mr DOWNWARD** - In the wild, put it in a chiller, bring it back here and then sell it for human consumption. I have to compete with that and it's not a fair playing field as far as I'm concerned. Another issue is that there are withholding periods on a lot of chemicals. You have to be able to say where your livestock originally comes from - sheep, cattle the whole lot. They have to know where it has come from to where it is slaughtered.

**Ms RATTRAY** - And you have to sign?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - You have to sign. Here a deer can be out in the middle of a mixed paddock and he is sprayed with something with a two-week withholding period and he is going to eat that. Then you shoot that deer and you are going to sell that for human consumption? That blows all that out of the water.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - How long has it been allowed that we can import deer from South Australia while we can't here?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - I can't tell you that information but I believe it has been happening for a while.

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**Mr GAFFNEY** - Have you ever approached the department or the authorities here to ask why or how that is allowed?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - No, I haven't. Here in Tasmania we're trying to have a clean product and if you're bringing all that in, how are we meant to compete with that? He is undercutting the people who are selling the meat.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - For sustainability you are running 1500. When you market, how many beasts would you hope to sell in a year?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - Five hundred.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - What age is the best time to sell?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - I think around 18 months to two years old is the best time for a deer to be slaughtered.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - The does live and are productive until they are how old?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - Twenty.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - With the stags, do you line breed or is it full bore?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - No, I pick the stags out. A lot of people know me in Tasmania. I have gone around to different farms over the years and I try to change the breed. It is the same as anything else. That brings me to another issue. I am not allowed to bring another deer into Tasmania. Even though I am a fallow deer farmer, and everyone else can bring in sheep or cattle, I am not allowed to bring one deer in. The reason is that they are vermin. If you come to my deer farm I can walk past them, just the same as any other cattle, sheep or whatever.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - If we are trying to improve the standard of any stock in Tasmania you should be able to bring in the proper bucks or does from elsewhere to improve the quality of the goods.

**Mr DOWNWARD** - That's right. Another issue is why I brought the antlers in today. As you know, our deer are Dama Dama, as they call them. This stag I bred myself and he would have a fair bit of Mesopotamian in him, which is a totally different subspecies. This species here is on the mainland. To my recollection there has not been another deer brought in to Tasmania since maybe the late 1980s early 1990s. He is a throwback of that particular species.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - What would a stag with those antlers be worth?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - As much as someone is willing to pay.

**Ms RATTRAY** - I don't reckon he's going to sell those.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - No.

**Mr DOWNWARD** - You can buy them if you want to. Everything has a price. He is a very unique stag. He is a hybrid, so to speak.

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**Ms RATTRAY** - My Dad would call him a throwback.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - I suppose one of your concerns that people here would understand and appreciate is that if deregulation came about your market would suffer a lot because you have been breeding a quality product for a number of years to sell.

**Mr DOWNWARD** - That's right. I have trouble with people poaching now. If you deregulate the season, I am going to have a lot more trouble. I agree you should still have the tag system. You should know where that deer has been shot, otherwise you will have Mick jumping over the fence and once he's left the property, that's it.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - You made it fairly clear about human consumption. Do you have any comment to make about pet food, or haven't you given it much consideration?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - No, not about pet food. I am more about the human consumption side of it, with the withholding period on most chemicals. A deer will go to a crop, especially in dry times. He is always after the best food he can possibly find. They are not so much a face grazing animal, they are more of a browser. I know pretty much everything about a deer because I have spent a lot of time with them. As far as shooting does when they're fawning, a doe will plant her fawn and go down the paddock to graze at night. If you shoot her mother, the fawn will die a cruel death. I have seen them sitting here. I have seen them die because their mother has died and there's not much you can do about it. It is a cruel death for a fawn.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - As to the fencing for your property, what height do you suggest, and how much does it cost for fencing for one of your runs?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - Thousands. For 200 metres, the wire alone is approximately \$800 a coil. It is 1 metre 90 cm high and then you have to have a plain wire above it, so it is 2 metres.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Are all your stocks bounded with fences?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - Yes. I would have probably in excess of 10 kilometres of fencing.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Have you had any escapees?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - I've had an odd one but they don't often last long outside. They get shot. Someone will try to get them. They always try to go back to the others. They're a herd animal, and that is their general nature, they want to go back to the others. If you leave a gate open, they will go in. I have a couple of good dogs that will round them up. You're always going to have trouble with trees falling over, you just can't prevent that, but every time it blows a gale I get nervous.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - They say there are about four or five deer farmers in Tasmania.

**Mr DOWNWARD** - There's more than that. There are probably about 120, but there would be four or five main operators who have large numbers.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Do you guys swap and trade bucks and does, stags or whatever?

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**Mr DOWNWARD** - I have done, yes.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Is this your Facebook page?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - Yes.

**Ms RATTRAY** - I want to explore the uneven playing field for your business a bit more, if that's possible. I wasn't aware we allowed South Australian produce to come in willy-nilly and yet we have fairly rigid restrictions on our own in Tasmania. Have you raised that anywhere, Nigel and Belinda, maybe with your local member?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - No, we haven't. To be honest, we both work, we're extremely busy and don't have a lot of free time.

**Mrs DOWNWARD** - I guess this is the next venture. We built up the numbers - it started with an interest and a passion of Nigel's and then he's got bigger and bigger. These issues are at the forefront of our mind at the present minute, so they are things we'll need to investigate further.

**Ms RATTRAY** - You would potentially be asking the committee to investigate how that comes about, how we don't have restrictions on other states? I know we have this free trade agreement between states we have to adhere to, but I'm sure if we were trying to send something to another state and we weren't compliant, they would not want to have our produce in.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Just on the back of that, I know we cannot import potatoes because of diseases. Are you aware of any diseases on the mainland that can potentially come in with meat like that?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - I am not aware of any, no.

**Mrs DOWNWARD** - I guess our point is we think we should be selling product that is produced in Tasmania and looking after the industry here. As a small business that wants to expand, we would like to be supported -

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Is there anything to stop you selling your product on the mainland?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - No.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Except that stretch of water and the cost?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - Yes, and I suppose in our way, we have to take it to abattoirs the same as anywhere else and go through them.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Do you have a home abattoir?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - No.

**Ms RATTRAY** - But you said South Australia do not have to go to an abattoir, they can -

**Mr DOWNWARD** - They shoot it out in the field, so to speak. This is in the deer farm. This is at Watervalley where these deer come from, which is in the south-east, near Kingston.

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They say that they are wild deer - there are no more wild deer. They are behind wire, but it is a massive set-up, you know what I mean? I think it is on half a million acres, something like that. Most deer hunters in Australia will have heard of Watervalley.

**CHAIR** - Do they send them into Tasmania just in carcass form or -

**Mr DOWNWARD** - I presume so, yes.

**Mr FARRELL** - Just with the South Australian - I do not know if you have any knowledge of how they do it, but they are allowed to sell meat shot in the field in South Australia to people. They do not have the same laws dealing with meat hygiene that we do. Is that correct, to your understanding?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - I presume so.

**Mr FARRELL** - That must be handled from South Australia. I am just trying to fathom how you cannot sell your meat if it is shot in the paddock, yet we can bring meat in. I am just wondering where that whole system falls down. Your main market will be Tasmanian restaurants. Is that -

**Mrs DOWNWARD** - It will be.

**Mr FARRELL** - There is no plan at this stage to export?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - I would export it once I got my name out there. I certainly would.

**Ms RATTRAY** - In relation to the business you have, in which people come and shoot on your property, are they guaranteed a set of those? Is that how it works?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - You pay for the size of the stag. Say if you want a 250 Douglas Score head -

**Ms RATTRAY** - That is the Rolls Royce model.

**Mr Nigel DOWNWARD** - A Rolls Royce, yes, you could say. You will pay for -

**Ms RATTRAY** - What is the Commodore model? That will be me.

**Mr DOWNWARD** - You shoot a 200 Douglas Score for about \$800, so to speak, yes. You cater for different people, and you will get some people, as the lady here speaking before - they do not have a property to shoot on. They want to shoot a stag and they have never shot one, then they come and shoot a stag, and I can cater for those sorts of people.

**Ms RATTRAY** - What if they cannot shoot though, Nigel?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - I do not think I have had anyone miss yet, so to speak, but I go with them.

**Ms RATTRAY** - It is an experience, really, more than anything. If they go and they are able to share your knowledge and take home a trophy as well. It is more of an experience.

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**Mr DOWNWARD** - Yes. Some of the stags I have, you would be walking a long time around these hills to find them. They have got age on them and they are fantastic animals, you know what I mean? I have never seen one in the bush as big as some I have, and I have been hunting for a long time. You would have to be hunting on the best properties in Tasmania. There are probably a handful of them that hold these deer.

**Ms RATTRAY** - We have heard today we need fewer numbers to get better quality. How does that work for your business? If you cannot answer that - you do not want to give away your trade secrets, I understand.

**Mr DOWNWARD** - To make a good stag grow to his full potential, it is the same theory - you don't let him rut because you can guarantee the rut will take away 20 to 30 per cent of his antler potential in the one year. If he ruts really hard he loses a lot of weight and then he has to gain that weight back because he doesn't eat much for three or four weeks. He will lose a third of his body weight when he goes through that mating time.

**Ms RATTRAY** - So obviously the rut is the mating?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - Yes, when they call out and go crazy.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - So you've got big, depressed deer.

*Laughter.*

**Mr DOWNWARD** - You pick out the ones you want to breed with and in some cases I dehorn them so they don't do any damage to themselves or the does. A stag will kill a doe in a rut. You try to avoid that at all costs.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Is the dehorning process similar to our cattle?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - Yes. I prefer to do mine in hard velvet. You can bring them all in the shed as soon as their antlers finish growing and usually they're very tender and soft and you cut them straight off without a crush.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - What is your main market, is it locals?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - I sell them all over Australia. They go everywhere.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Belinda, where on earth do you put those in your home?

**Mrs DOWNWARD** - All over the dining room floor - that's the holding bay - and the shed and the veranda.

**Ms RATTRAY** - I have seen them mounted on a nice piece of timber. Is that normal?

**Mrs DOWNWARD** - There is quite a demand for them. People buy them for decorative purposes for weddings and all different things, to make chandeliers and things like that. Our children enjoy collecting them when they are falling off; they race down the paddock to collect them.

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**Mr DOWNWARD** - There is a lot of different uses for antlers.

**Ms RATTRAY** - I have learnt so much today, Chair, about this industry.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Do you put them on eBay?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Nigel, to shoot on your property, a person has to have a gun licence, don't they?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - That's all?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - Yes. I have a special bit of paper I get from Parks and write out the permit and what the deer is whatever else so they can take their deer home - and my phone number and all my contact details.

**CHAIR** - Is the market in Tasmania growing for venison?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - I think so, more so than 10 years ago. With all these cooking shows and everything, a lot more people have taken to eating venison. They like to try something different. Also there are more different ethnic backgrounds in Australia now and deer is probably more to their taste than beef and sheep and other meats.

**CHAIR** - My local butcher told me that whatever they have on the cooking shows, such as beef cheeks, the following week everybody wanted beef cheeks. If you put deer on there everyone will want venison.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Remember when we were kids and nobody wanted the lamb shank? Now they are \$10 a kilo.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - To graze deer, how are they in comparison to sheep and cattle? Do they do well?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - Yes, they do well. They are extremely hardy. They are browsers, they do not just eat grass. At different times, I have a lot of bracken fern in one place and they will dig the bracken fern up and eat the roots. They're a funny animal, they will eat a bit of everything. They are not totally grass eaters but they do like to eat some of the better food.

**Mrs DOWNWARD** - If you haven't got the stock, that's when they'll jump the fence to get out, but ours don't escape because we've got enough feed for them.

**CHAIR** - Do you feed them any hard feed like grain?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - Yes, I've fed them grain before but you've got to be very careful feeding them grain. If you get one that eats too much, like all livestock, it can knock him over just the same as any other animal. You've got to be very careful. You have to make sure they get the right portion. With deer, when they have antlers on and I've been feeding them grain they can

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cannon into you. They're watching the bloke behind him to see that he's not going to sniper him, if you know what I mean. I've had them run into me. They're very unsettled when you feed them grain.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Are there any other recommendations you would like to make other than the fact that you don't want to see wild shot venison sold for human consumption? Is there anything else you would like to add or is that your main concern being deer farmers?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - It is my main concern but I believe that the hunters are doing a very good job controlling the numbers at the moment. Other than issuing a few more tags and maybe lengthening the season and getting a bit better access to some of these other areas that aren't controlled privately for better access for the hunters, they're doing a pretty good job. It's not easy going out there and shooting deer. You have to get up damn early and they will go back early - you have to head them off a bit. It's not just going out and culling, like wallaby or anything else, if they get the pressure on they'll know you're about.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - All abattoirs do the three basics - sheep, cattle and pigs - so to do deer, do the abattoirs have to be specially ticketed?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - No, you can take them to any abattoir.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - It is just livestock.

**Mr DOWNWARD** - I have a trailer and in the trailer I have hooks on the back and a chute with the kill box on. I have a false wall you keep sliding back so one has to come out and go into the kill box, then you lift him and put him in and he falls out and you drop the chute and the next one will come through. That's the way I operate.

**CHAIR** - Is there a market for the skin?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - There's a market for everything. If you can get them tanned the skin is probably worth \$150 to \$200. They make furniture and everything out of that. I've got freezers full of them. The skins are worth a bit of money.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - With your stock, would you be able to tell one of your deer from -

**Mrs DOWNWARD** - Nigel knows every single deer by name.

*Laughter.*

**Mr DOWNWARD** - I know the stags pretty well but maybe not the does so much. I take a bit of notice. I ear tag quite a few does.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - I suppose what I am saying is having looked at your deer compared to wild deer or farmed deer from other places, are they similar in stature, size and look?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - They can vary a bit in size. Some grow bigger than others, like all livestock. I've had a couple of exceptional stags that were probably 10 per cent or 20 per cent bigger than any other deer I have ever had. It must be their genetic make-up.

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**Mrs HISCUTT** - Are the white ones more sought-after for trophy?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - Yes. As you know, and the hunters would probably tell you, there is a lot of black deer in Tasmania. There are not so many black deer in the world. Black deer are probably the most sought after - them and the whites - as far as trophies worldwide because they're not common.

**CHAIR** - How long does an antler grow before they drop them?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - They usually finish growing in mid-February and I have had them drop off in mid-September. He usually grows his antlers in about three or four months.

**CHAIR** - The better the feed, the better the antler, is it?

**Mr DOWNWARD** - Definitely. And the more mature they get the better they get until a certain stage and then they can go backwards.

**Mrs DOWNWARD** -They're all different.

**Mr DOWNWARD** - You very rarely get two alike. You get some similar but very rarely two alike.

**CHAIR** - I am sure members found that very interesting. Thank you for making your time available, it is very much appreciated.

**Mr DOWNWARD** - Thank you.

**Mrs DOWNWARD** -Thank you.

**THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.**