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**THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE A MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART ON MONDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2017.**

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### **WILD FALLOW DEER**

**Mr BEN GOODSIR**, DIRECTOR, NATURAL HERITAGE, **Mr GREG HOCKING**, PRINCIPAL, WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT OFFICE, DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES, PARKS, WILDLIFE AND ENVIRONMENT, WERE CALLED AND EXAMINED, AND **Mr MARK BRYCE**, DIRECTOR OPERATIONS, PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** (Mr Armstrong) - Welcome to the hearing.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Can you give us an outline on the status of the World Heritage Management Plan at the moment and where to from here based on the impact of the feral animals in it. I would like to hear some sort of overview before we get into the questions. I would like to hear a bit more about the World Heritage specifically and what you see now and where you are aiming for, and where the funding comes for that.

**Mr BRYCE** - The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area management plan was approved just before Christmas. That is the final plan and is a statutory management plan. It covers deer management in a couple of places where it imposes in the Central Plateau - which is a hunting zone where deer can be hunted - and an access zone which allows people to move through certain areas to access that zone to hunt. Other than that, there is nothing else specific to deer. There have been concerns, which I guess the committee is aware of, about the potential impact of deer and the deer population on the World Heritage Area.

The first thing to consider from a management perspective is exactly what impact the current deer population or a future deer population might have on the biophysical values or the use of the reserve, the significance of that impact and ultimately whether any control program is feasible or practical and the likelihood of success. To that end the first step is looking at the distribution of the fallow deer.

A research proposal has been submitted to the Australian Research Council, with Parks contributing to that. The aim of that research is to analyse the current distribution of the fallow deer. That will also enable modelling to predict further expansion of the deer in the World Heritage Area, providing an understanding of impacts of the fallow deer on the vegetation and the fauna, and those interactions, particularly in light of climate change and possible fire regimes. Ultimately, with that information we can put together options for management that will be most effective in preventing the establishment of deer in sensitive environments or the spread of the deer through those environments.

Until we get some idea of the impact, we are not at a stage where we can start planning any control program. The research is likely to be submitted by the University of Tasmania, which is leading it, in February-March 2017. We will not know whether that is being funded until the middle of this year.

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**Mr GAFFNEY** - We did get a couple of questions through the ones you have answered directly related to the World Heritage Area - and thank you for the answers. I think 25 and 27 are two related to the World Heritage Area. There are some related to conservations areas. We will start with 25. Is there separate funding already? What role does the Commonwealth have in the eradication of wild and fallow deer in the World Heritage Area? Is there funding specifically for that? It seems that, if there is a World Heritage Area, the Commonwealth might think that is different to a Tasmanian conservation area or some reserves. Would you be better off looking at funding for the World Heritage Area because that has a more significant national status than does a state one? Is there any funding available? If there is, how does that come to Tasmania?

**Mr BRYCE** - There is a Tasmanian-Commonwealth agreement around funding. I believe it is around \$5 million per year but that covers existing programs. It is due to be re-negotiated for the next five years. In the past the Commonwealth has provided funding for biosecurity programs and there is some limited funding there at the moment for biosecurity, certainly not to the extent that it would actually fund this research that is proposed.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - So that \$5 million comes into Tasmania for species?

**Mr BRYCE** - No, it funds existing programs, which is some staff in the natural and cultural heritage branch - previously botanists and zoologists who provide expertise in the management of the World Heritage Area, and also fund a range of management functions within Parks in the World Heritage Area.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - At the moment deer have not been a part of the submission that has gone to access that funding?

**Mr BRYCE** - Not to my knowledge, no.

**Mr HOCKING** - I can only recall one project, which might have been referred to in our submission - the Locke Report. It was done about 10 years ago and was intended to establish a baseline level for the deer population within the World Heritage Area. We have information from that time as to numbers and distribution that could be referred back to. Certainly we would need another project which, hopefully, this ARC one -

**Mr GAFFNEY** - It seems to make sense that we need more updates of information on what is actually happening so you can apply for more funding to do something about it.

**Mr HOCKING** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - It was raised through two different organisations about the goat problem. Has there been any evidence of wild goats in the World Heritage Area?

**Mr BRYCE** - I know there was an eradication program for goats within the World Heritage Area many years ago. It seems that was successful. From time to time I get reports of wild goats.

**Mr HOCKING** - There are ongoing reports, yes - presumably escapees from farms. That project you were referring to tidied up a number of herds around the state following collapse of the goat industry 20 or 30 years ago.

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**Mr BRYCE** - My understanding is the method used was aerial shooting.

**Mr HOCKING** - Yes, that's correct, combined with a method called the 'Judas goat'. We have a radio transmitter on a goat you don't shoot, but it tags along with the other ones so you always know where the other goats are and can hone in on them.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - That was a successful program?

**Mr HOCKING** - It was, yes. It certainly eradicated quite a number of feral goat herds. I can't say all of them.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Are you aware of any numbers building up as far as the department is concerned?

**Mr BRYCE** - There has not been a significant increase in reports.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - It is not on your radar?

**Mr BRYCE** - No, not on our radar. Obviously if there are reports coming in we would look into that situation.

**CHAIR** - We had a couple of witnesses who raised issues of goats. I think it was in the Mersey area and then there was a report in the *Mercury* about them in the Mount Wellington area last year. I was wondering whether there were any reports of them in the World Heritage Area?

**Mr BRYCE** - Not lately that I am aware of.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - You did mention access to zones within the World Heritage Area. How do you increase the zone? Do you anecdotal reports of deer being there? The World Heritage Area zone you are talking about, is that all of the World Heritage Area or only certain parts?

**Mr BRYCE** - It is only certain parts of the World Heritage Area. There is a zoning map within the plan around the Central Plateau - page 219 - and those areas are marked. The hunting areas and the hunting access areas are marked. If you look at it spatially, they are not vast areas by any stretch.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - I do not have access to that. May we ask for a copy? Can you briefly describe how they devised that as an area that needs access for hunting - because of the numbers?

**Mr BRYCE** - It has been a traditional area where they have been able to hunt. That conservation area has been in tenure. When you consider the management objectives for a conservation area, the hunting of game species in conservation areas, game reserves and regional reserves is one of the objectives for management. So long as it does not compromise those other objectives - and the objectives are listed in the National Parks and Reserves Management Act, schedule 1 - we can support hunting. My understanding has been that hunting in those areas have been in place for a reasonable time. It was certainly supported in the previous plan.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Who has statistics about how many deer have been tagged from that area? Where does that come from?

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**Mr HOCKING** - The Wildlife Management branch in the Natural Cultural Heritage Division maintains those statistics. We can provide statistics on the number of hunters who have hunted there each year and the take.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - That would be good. We saw there has only been very few deer out of a World Heritage Area. It would be interesting to know, and if there has been an increase in the numbers? Can you do the last 10, or is that too much?

**Mr HOCKING** - I think we have statistics going back to when this commenced in 2007.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - I think it would be good for us to see if there has been an increase of take, an increase of hunting, which would be handy.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Chair, a question in regard to the other criteria where game management does not impact, can we have a list of those other criteria? Is that easily accessible?

**Mr BRYCE** - Yes, it is in the National Parks and Reserves Management Act, schedule 1. There would be protections around other biophysical values, including flora and fauna. There is geological, provide for public recreation and education. There would often be at least 10 other objectives with each of these reserves. One objective would be the opportunity for hunting game species, which are in those game reserves, conservation areas and regional reserves. Where it does not compromise those other values, we are supportive of that.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Can you explain to me if it could compromise or does not sit nicely with one of those other objectives, does one take precedence over the other?

**Mr BRYCE** - For instance, if an area was heavily used for recreation and the hunting put those visitors at risk, we would not be very keen in supporting hunting.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - With regard to the world heritage areas, is it likely you have a managed hunting program or is it best that you remove all the feral deer within those areas? What is your aim?

**Mr BRYCE** - The current program provides for hunters almost as a recreational opportunity. It is not designed as a control program, although you could claim there as a non-native species they would have some impact. Whether that impact is significant or not needs to be answered through research. If the research indicated the deer population was having a significant impact we would then need to look the feasibility of introducing a control program, and the costs and practicalities around that.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - So it is managed the same as any other farm, so to speak.

**Mr BRYCE** - Well, farmed, yes.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Well, any other operation.

**Mr GOODSIR** - Building on that point and being mindful you have not had this submission for very long, so you might not have had the opportunity to read through it. I will draw your attention to page 5 of our submission.

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Picking up on Mark's point it is not a program in place to control as a controlled deer management program, it is more around recreational hunting. It is worth noting some of the findings from the study done in New South Wales. They identified that for a range of reasons using recreational shooters or allowing recreational shooters into some areas has not proven to be an effective way to manage deer populations. In that context it is worth making Mark's point that it is not about managing the population but it is allowing recreational shooters into the area for that purpose.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Building on from question 11. You have mentioned on the bottom of page 5, 'Professional Control Programs'. Have you run any programs like that? Have you looked into it, or is it too expensive? Can you give me some information on those programs?

**Mr GOODSIR** - In the World Heritage Area in particular, or generally speaking.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - We are talking World Heritage at the moment, the Nature Conservation Act, that sort of thing, yes.

**Mr HOCKING** - To my knowledge, there have not been any control programs undertaken on reserve land in Tasmania. The only examples of control programs we have looked at recently in Acton, we have escaped farm deer on private land we are attempting to deal with.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Within the World Heritage Area, what mechanisms need to happen for that program to take place? Is it a ministerial direction, a decision of the department, what would trigger it?

**Mr HOCKING** - As Mark said before, we would need good evidence deer are being a pest and establish appropriate control methods likely to be effective.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - It is easy enough to trigger it if it was deemed necessary.

**Mr GOODSIR** - That is correct. It would be a decision for the minister or the government of the day, but it would be based on advice they received from the department and any other stakeholders they wanted to take advice from. Essentially, it would be providing them with the relevant information they need to say yes, go ahead with a control program.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - What are the logistics of a professional control program? Do you use professional hunters, is there a group that you bring in, or you make it known that now is the time, hunters can go in. What are the logistics of it?

**Mr GOODSIR** - Is it worth talking through the Acton program that happened recently, what needed to be done and procedures put in place for public safety purposes?

**Mr HOCKING** - Yes, that is right. As you may be aware, the department commenced a program endeavouring to eradicate deer that had escaped from a farm. It was originally on the side of Single Hill near Acton, where we undertook extensive consultation with the surrounding neighbours. There is a fairly high density of people there but they're still suburban lots, 5-10 acres perhaps at most. You tend to find, particularly around the urban areas, there is not a universal desire to get rid of deer. Some people like them, as long as they're not causing too much trouble. The majority felt they were a pest and were destroying quite expensive landscape plantings and that something needed to be done.

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**Mr GOODSIR** - There were a number of complaints received from the department about public safety issues and near-misses with traffic as well. That is the evidence that was gathered as to why the department should be involved in the first place.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - So now we have determined there is a need, how do you go about it?

**Mr HOCKING** - We need to guarantee safety, so advise the immediate land-holders when something is going to happen. We utilise our own staff who are particularly experienced with shooting.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - This is professional hunters - experienced hunters?

**Mr HOCKING** - They are paid by the department as part of our wildlife compliance. We have commenced that program and it still has some way to go to remove even the ones in the immediate spot around Signal Hill. Then we are looking at perhaps extending over to the Meehan Range on the other side of the main road - the Acton Road area.

From personal experience I can say that deer are difficult animals. They are a challenging animal to shoot. I'm used to macropods - kangaroos and wallabies - and they're easy; they just sit there and look at you. Deer have had probably thousands of years of being pursued by humans so are far more alert to things. Once you start shooting they just go and don't stop until they're over the hill.

**Mr GOODSIR** - Leading up to that, even to get to that point, there is a significant amount of resources required. You can do the community consultation, you can discuss it and inform the police, you can get everyone on side, but then you can front up and the deer don't arrive at the location you plan to shoot them in a safe way. So you then have to start the process again, which is fairly resource-intensive and takes some time and planning.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - So you don't have a program extending over months? It is just for that one particular incident?

**Mr GOODSIR** - In that incident, because of the season and time of the year, there was a window of opportunity to go in there and take out some deer, but the timing didn't allow for it to be continued at that point in time.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Moving away from Acton, which is very intensively populated, is there any reason it could not be a program over numerous years until things are brought under control, without having to go through the whole process every time?

**Mr GOODSIR** - No, there is no reason for that. Being able to be done over many years -

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Especially if we are talking World Heritages Area and expanses of farm land, you do not have that process with a heap of neighbours.

**Mr GOODSIR** - That's right. It is still one of those issues depending on the objectives in the conservation area and restricting or excluding access to other recreational users for a period of time and communicating that and making sure it is safe. There are no procedural matters that need to be considered.

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**CHAIR** - On the World Heritage Area, in one of our submissions we have a line on a map which restricts deer back to their natural habitat - the Central Highlands, the east coast et cetera. That was brought in to us by one of our submissions. If we put a recommendation up through this committee that we would like to see that happen, would that help you receive more funding to eliminate deer from the World Heritage Area? Whether the Government accepts it or not is another thing, but if we are saying that deer should not be in the World Heritage Area and other areas, when you went to the Commonwealth, would that actually strengthen your case for funding?

**Mr GOODSIR** - I think the main factors that the Commonwealth would need to consider would be some evidence of harmful impact.

**Mr MULDER** - The intrusion, yes.

**Mr GOODSIR** - As Mark mentioned, we receive funding from the Commonwealth on a five-yearly basis and I think that is due to finish in 2018. The programs have all been allocated through that funding so there is not an opportunity to investigate the impact of deer through that funding.

**CHAIR** - Do you allocate that \$5 million funding when you first receive it? Do you have to allocate that funding? Do you put in a submission for that funding for the next five years?

**Mr GOODSIR** - There is a bit of prioritisation throughout the program. Some programs may not get off the ground because of fires or flooding and things like that, so we have to reprioritise things. Essentially for this funding we currently have in place that expires in June 2018, all the programs have been bedded down and there is really not an opportunity to completely change them, although you can suggest amendments that are consistent with the general priorities and programs that you have in place.

If we were successful to negotiate further funding from the Commonwealth and for whatever reason we had not been able to establish and put in place some of this research that we are planning to do, we could probably put that into the funding request as part of the monitoring research program. I am not sure if a recommendation from a parliamentary committee, if it was not back up by lots of evidence, would necessarily help getting funding from the Commonwealth at this point in time.

**CHAIR** - You said earlier on that you had a monitor on the goats or something, was it?

**Mr HOCKING** - We had an eradication program that was funded by the Commonwealth, probably in the late 1990s, I think, that aimed to eradicate those various goat herds.

**CHAIR** - Didn't you say that you had a monitor or something on a goat?

**Mr HOCKING** - Yes, that is the Judas goat; I mentioned that. That is where you put a radio transmitter on an individual goat which joins the herd and stays with it and you can therefore track that individual goat around and shoot the other goats.

**Mr MULDER** - I'm sorry, but the prospect of a goat running around kissing other goats and being awarded 30 pieces of silver seems a bit odd to me.

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**Mr GAFFNEY** - They do the same thing with donkeys in the Northern Territory. They get a jenny that will come into season and they will follow her in the herd. With deer it is more difficult because of the way they hide and roam a lot further than the goats. The goats are more in a select area. They do not have that roaming capacity. They will just feed and forage around the one area. It is easier to eliminate a goat herd than it is a deer herd because of the way they roam.

**Ms RATTRAY** - So they're not inclusive then. If another deer comes into their patch, they might not include it and then there is no opportunity.

**Mr HOCKING** - Also they're not as gregarious. They don't form these tight herds like goats. With goats they are all sort of partly related and all of that. You do not just send a stranger in, you catch one, put a collar around him and send it away.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Catching a deer is much more difficult.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Yes. The bucks do not naturally stay with the does, whereas with the goats they do. They are a herd animal, but the deer is not.

**Mr MULDER** - Just putting the last two issues together, I don't know whether you gentlemen have seen the map with the great dividing line on it. The proposal was a preferred range through the Midlands. We would continue to manage it but we needed some eradication program in the other areas, which is not their natural habitat and where they are probably being released. That way you would create a buffer zone between the potential of them to go into World Heritage areas. I am not too sure that what we call World Heritage is necessarily their preferred range anyway. I would like to put that with the idea you put in the Acton corridor, once you find out where they are, would we have an open season or targeted eradication program in those other areas? I think that is what the map was proposing.

**Ms RATTRAY** - On the western side?

**Mr MULDER** - The western and southern side. You could send in your Judas Bambi into those areas to access the particular population and eradicate them. I think all sides realise eradication in this state is 'Mission Impossible', but it is a question of controlling the numbers. For the sake of the rest of the state, we should be avoiding the establishment of large herds in those other areas. Would you comment on the feasibility of that operation into containing and controlling within the boundaries with the current regime, but then having an eradication program in the other part?

**Mr HOCKING** - We would say it would be very difficult shooting where deer are likely to occur west of that line. It is quite difficult habitat. That is one of the reasons the success rate of hunters permitted to shoot in those reserve areas on the Central Plateau was so low. They would say it is because it is very hard shooting.

**Mr MULDER** - That is why you would have a targeted different program rather than a recreational hunter program - a commercial hunting eradication operation in those areas, compared to recreational hunting in the others. The recreational hunters are there to get deer but in the other area you are there to get rid of deer.

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**Mr HOCKING** - It would still be a challenge, even for professional shooters. I am not saying it could not be done but it would be a considerable challenge given the terrain, and I am sure Mark could vouch for that.

**Mr BRYCE** - We have to look to it.

**Mr MULDER** - Craig and I were having a semi-light-hearted discussion on the side with the idea of using small drone aircraft, which could be following your Judas Bambi through the bush, tracking the herds that way, remotely controlled and firing lethal darts. That is the type of program. There is a need for huge discussion, it needs some thought on it, but they are some of the ideas we need to be thinking about into the future, particularly with the problems of difficult terrain. I am being a bit facetious with Judas Bambi, but Judas deer.

**Ms RATTRAY** - When you consider the projected numbers, and there is some contention around that, they are significant numbers when you look at the future population. I only have to look at the Midlands, it is becoming quite lush through irrigation as you head up the highway. That is going to attract more feeding into those areas. They will potentially be a problem on the Esk Main Road, and they will be a problem on the Midland Highway. That metal divider will do nothing to stop them getting across from one side to the other.

**CHAIR** - Bruny Island was another place. Apparently there are couple of herds in the Bruny Island area that people have raised issues with me about. They are in my electorate.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - What you are saying is it is difficult, is it a policy issue more so than a departmental comment? Is that what I am hearing you saying?

**Mr GOODSIR** - Coming up with a clear population management objective is a decision for government. There are a host of ramifications and implications. Once they have established a population objective, there are issues around legislation that needs to change in the way you classify these animals, and even the extent to which you introduce an eradication program - how it is managed, how it is monitored and implemented. If you allow deer to roam in some areas and try to eradicate it in other areas, it is one of those ongoing management issues you have to continue to try to clean up the mess on the boundaries, if you can eradicate them from some areas.

From a population management and eradication objective, that is an issue for government to make a decision on. There are then all those other decisions to be made around how it is going to be done, who is going to do it, who is going to pay for it, what changes need to be made legislatively. It is not one the department can comment on. It can be done from policy objective and legislative change points of view and we could work through the issues. It is not something the department can comment on in detail except to explain what the implications might be and how to go about it.

**Ms RATTRAY** - I am interested in the Macquarie Island eradication program. Was that government driven or department driven? I am wondering about the process.

**Mr BRYCE** - It first started as department driven. There is research around the impacts and what this could mean for the island, and ultimately it got traction.

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**Ms RATTRAY** - And that was fed into the government of the day and was subsequently supported by both state and commonwealth governments, so why would it be any different with feral deer?

**Mr GOODSIR** - To make some recommendations to the Government.

**Ms RATTRAY** - You keep on talking about a policy decision of government, but most governments take their information from departments because they are usually so busy doing whatever else they are doing they do not have the wherewithal to dream these ideas and initiatives up. Can you explain to me why it would not be, firstly, department driven if the information was not provided?

**Mr GOODSIR** - That is right, government takes advice from a whole range of stakeholders and the department can provide advice to the minister on this matter. At this point in time the Government has not sought the department's advice on population management issues, or even objectives. To my knowledge the department has not initiated any policy position on this matter to date. It does not mean the department cannot provide the minister and the government of the day with some advice around population management objectives. What we haven't done to this point is a detailed analysis of the various options.

**Ms RATTRAY** - That is the key, isn't it, having the department make a detailed analysis? That is where we need to start.

**Mr GOODSIR** - On the options of eradication and population control? We have not done that.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - On that, and it is not quite World Heritage Area, but the difference with Macquarie Island is that it is an island and eradication is possible. We have the Bruny Island scenario where there is an outbreak - and I imagine there are reserve lands as well - to me, that is a specific target. Feral cats there as well, so is there capacity within the department to create a professional program to get on top of that? How do local councils or governments contact you about managing it before they get out of control?

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Where is the starting point?

**Mr HOCKING** - We have been receiving information via Parks and Wildlife of the range on Bruny Island and what is happening there with the deer. We have records of them there. This was to be something to be looked at after Acton. We have limited resources to apply to these things. Acton was seen as high priority on a numbers front, on the damage being done and particularly the road that has been raised. That was absolutely critical so we wanted to get on top of that and on the basis of how we went there, look at some of the others, including Bruny Island and Eaglehawk Neck. We are looking at commencing a program on King Island that would aim down the line perhaps to eradicate. They are only in the very early stages of establishing there, and again it was a deer farm escapee herd. They are evidently spreading and building up in numbers, and we want to get on top of that too.

**Mr GOODSIR** - With King Island, we have a direction from Minister Rockliff to explore the options for managing deer there. We are going through the process now of working with the local NRM and local farmers to identify exactly what that means. In that context it was not a clear objective to eradicate the deer, it is about consulting with the community, finding out what the

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best options are and the best way of doing it, and then coming up with a plan for dealing with the deer on the island.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - So in that case it could perhaps be a sport attraction to the island if it is management of the herd.

**Mr GOODSIR** - Exactly.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - It could become a shooting area more than just 'Let's get rid of them'.

**Mr GOODSIR** - Yes, that could be an answer.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - It is the management of them. That makes sense.

**Mr GOODSIR** - Or it could be eradication, depending on how the consultation with the community goes.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Is there still a working deer farm on King Island or is that closed?

**Mr HOCKING** - There is no licensed or approved deer farm on King Island. It ceased some years ago.

**CHAIR** - We are getting away from the World Heritage Area a bit. Does anybody have last questions on World Heritage?

**Ms RATTRAY** - I have one on deer farming. Just taking your mind back to the deer farm, and obviously a number of these issues have arisen from failed deer farms, I think it would be fair to say - there are escapees or people have let them go because their enterprise is no longer a viable option, or whatever - is there any bond attached to establishing a deer farm? Obviously this comes back to the Tasmanian community as quite an impost. Has there been any thought given to the establishment of a deer farm bond so that they can successfully relocate their herd if the farm closes down and not just cut the fence and let them go and leave it up to the department? Has there been any thought given to that?

**Mr HOCKING** - I am not aware of any thought being given to it. I was not involved in the original drafting of the legislation that allowed deer farming to go ahead. There is no provision for a bond. However, the current wildlife deer farming regulations provide for the secretary to recoup costs involved in eradicating or -

**Ms RATTRAY** - How would they know whose they were, though?

**Mr HOCKING** - That is a very difficult thing, particularly around the margins of the deer range.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Are they tagged?

**Mr HOCKING** - They may be tagged but there were problems in terms of implementing -

**Mrs HISCUTT** - They'd have one ear off, I suppose.

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**Mr HOCKING** - The background of this is that the recent changes - 2005, I think it was - to the regulations came about under the National Competition Policy. There were some requirements placed on Tasmania via Treasury on us in terms of what we could require. It was considered anticompetitive to require a private operator farming deer - which, from the farmers' perspective are just farmed animals after all, no different to sheep or cattle - to take those animals. The regulations allow for tagging and we certainly promote it as a means for the owner of the deer maintaining a means of establishing ownership of the deer, but we still cannot require them to tag those deer. If they escape and do not have tags they revert to the Crown, but that does not really help in terms of recouping any cost that might be involved in getting those deer back behind wire or controlled in some way.

**Ms RATTRAY** - The old NCP has been very handy - not.

**CHAIR** - When a deer farm ceases to operate and is closing up and they have 100 or 200 deer on that farm, what rules and regulations are on them when they close? Do they have to show how they dispose of those deer or can they just open the gate?

**Mr HOCKING** - They cannot just cut the fence because that would be letting farmed deer go at large and that is an offence. However, beyond that I don't know there are any requirements. Normally they would sell stock, that is what I would expect, or just have the stock processed. That would be the logical thing, but they can't just, as you say, let them out. That is an offence under the regulations.

**CHAIR** - Does a deer farm have to report how many deer it has on that farm?

**Mr HOCKING** - Only at the time of granting them a letter of approval to operate the deer farm. We do that on a five-yearly basis.

**CHAIR** - So there is no control on how many deer. When they are licensed for a farm are they licensed for a maximum of 500 or 1000 deer.

**Mr HOCKING** - It's not actually a licence, it is a notice to operate a deer farm I think it is called. It is based around the secretary of the department, or their delegate, approving the fencing. An approved fence defines a deer farm.

**CHAIR** - So when a deer farm closes up there is no record of dispatch? It is quite obvious that some have escaped or been let go or whatever, but there is no record there to say how they disposed of their last 100 deer or anything like that. They do not have to say we are ceasing to operate, we have 100 deer, and that is how we -

**Mr HOCKING** - They would need to go through a process of ceasing to be a deer farm. They would be required to notify the department that they are going through this process. I know discussions do take place as to how they are going to get rid of the deer. You can't just let them go - let me make that quite clear. We would ensure that arrangements were made for the deer to be disposed of by proper means, either by processing or sale to another deer farm.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - On the back of that, I know with cattle when you buy and sell you have to account for numbers and your accountant asks every year how much you have sold bought and it has to tally up at the end of the financial year. If the figures are not right around the numbers the taxman will ask you what is going on. This does not happen with deer?

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**Mr HOCKING** - That would.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - There is a recorded number of animals.

**Mr HOCKING** - Yes, but only for that purpose. We can't say, 'We'll have those figures, thanks'. That is for another purpose. They are maintaining those figures for tax purposes.

**CHAIR** - As far as animal welfare is concerned, you can have a 20 or 30 hectare fenced area for deer but you are not putting a limit on how many deer you are allowed in that area. There are no limits to how many deer can be contained within that.

**Mr HOCKING** - No, we don't. We get a return when the deer farm is coming up for approval, going for a new notice to operate at the end of five years. We require them to lodge an application that details the number of deer they have at that stage, but we don't apply a limit to the number. That is getting into dictating husbandry. The department does not determine a farmer can have a certain number of sheep or cattle. If there was a case we were aware there were too many deer, consideration could be given for a prosecution under the Animal Welfare Act for not managing stock in an appropriate manner. We do not, upfront, determine how many deer a person can hold on their farm.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - It is a food management issue. It is part of any stock herd, if there is not enough food - it does not matter if there is 5000 or 100, as long as they are well fed and maintained and not being stressed. I don't see any farmer opening up his paddocks and letting all the deer out. They would be ringing Lenah Meats and saying, 'Come and get the rest of my stock because I want some return on it'. What happened on Bruny Island was different. Can you fill us in on the issue there?

**Mr HOCKING** - It is not entirely clear what happened. We have reports of things happening. At one stage people were accusing an operator of Satellite Island, off Bruny Island, of some of their deer swimming to the mainland of Bruny Island, but there was no evidence of that happening. There are rumours in the community a fish farm punt was used to transport deer, but again we have no proof of this. I also have reports of someone seeing a truck containing deer moving south from the ferry terminal on Bruny Island, but we don't know.

There are a number of reports of deer being purchased. They were purchased lawfully by someone from a deer farm on mainland Tasmania and there is some evidence they might have been taken by boat or ferry to Bruny Island and released. However, they were taken there without permission and released. There was no deer farm on Bruny Island. There is an approved deer farm on Satellite Island, west of Bruny Island.

**CHAIR** - Do you have any numbers of what they believe is on Bruny Island?

**Mr HOCKING** - Dozens.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Can deer swim?

**Mr HOCKING** - They can swim short distances.

**CHAIR** - What sort of distance does a deer travel on land?

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**Mr HOCKING** - They can move kilometres. For grazing purposes, 5-10 kilometres.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - If you buy a piece of beef, it is stamped with the abattoir's number on it, but if a wild kill in Victoria or South Australia comes into Tasmania, is it killed in an abattoir under those conditions? I think we are going to write to the Health Department, unless you have a quick answer.

**Mr GOODSIR** - I am thinking in terms of the general authority that is issued. That would be coming from Biosecurity Tasmania, wouldn't it?

**Mr HOCKING** - Yes, that is.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - But Biosecurity Tasmania is worrying about risk material, such as soil, plant and material and/or weed seeds. That might not necessarily worry about the conditions, and I do not mean the conditions as in animal welfare. They are going to kill them, how are they killed? Is it like an abattoir for beef and sheep?

**Mr GOODSIR** - Yes, okay.

**Ms RATTRAY** - In relation to the numbers, you said you think it is significantly higher than 30 000. Is anyone prepared to put a figure on it if it is significantly higher than 30 000?

**Mr HOCKING** - It is a guess, and I stress that. I will give you a quick background of how we came up with these figures. We have for some years been doing surveys for Forester kangaroos in the Midlands, however, Forester kangaroo range is ideal deer range too. Being biologists we count anything, deer included. So we have been doing this for some years and have density estimates in what would be regarded as core deer range. These are some of the properties people pay money to hunt on, to access.

**Ms RATTRAY** - We have heard about it, significant money.

**Mr HOCKING** - They are great properties, good numbers of deer. From that we estimate different types of habitat within those areas we surveyed, certain densities of deer. They vary, say, two per square kilometre up to about 10 or 11 in the most optimum habitat. Based on that we have come up with figures at the lower end of, say, 40 000 - 50 000, up to 80 000. If you apply the highest density estimate it can be over 100 000, currently. They are very rough estimates but they support the statement. We have to concede deer numbers are considerably above what we, the department, have been saying for some years now - about 30 000. That is not reasonable, it is considerably more than that.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - If we are only taking 7 000 or 8 000 out of the population per year -

**Mr HOCKING** - A bit more than that now.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Is it a bit more than that?

**Mr HOCKING** - When we get to the figures -

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**Mr GAFFNEY** - I think you said the crop ones, and whatever. Let us say 10 000, but it is still well below the pool marker of -

**Mr HOCKING** - This year it was nearly 20 000 -

**Ms RATTRAY** - In light of what you said as to numbers, how many do you consider should be taken each year to try to claw back the numbers? Is there an ideal number - 20 000 - or do we need one major sweep for two, three, four or five years and bring the population back to a more manageable number? We are amateurs at this. We are looking for the best information to make some recommendation. We do not want to be wasting our time, or yours, for this exercise.

**Mr HOCKING** - I understand. This is one of the situations where most wildlife biologists would say, 'Adopt an adaptive approach', which is to keep increasing your take until you start getting the population turning around. Clearly from what we have been taking in recent years - and those figures have gone up; we were down around 6000 to 7000 only six, seven, eight years ago - that was not enough, because the population has grown since then. We can account for 19 733 deer.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Sorry, where are you getting that figure from?

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Page 15 in the questions and answers.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Because on page 19, during 2015 some 4792 licenses were issued allowing up to 9584 to be shot and the actual harvest was 4975. Then in the crop ones, over 500 shooting but only half of those. There are 19 000 transactions or reportings but the current harvesting rate in 2015 was only 4975 without the crop ones.

**Mr HOCKING** - Yes, since those figures were derived last year we went through and applied a better method. I stress that we have to estimate because especially in the case with crop protection permits, not all permits are returned. We have to estimate the take.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - I thought all deer shot that had tags had to be reported.

**Mr HOCKING** - That is a requirement, however we do not go out and pursue the farmers who do not return. What we do in practice is when a farmer comes in for a new permit we require the reporting of the take then. We find the accuracy of the take figures improves over time because a farmer may not come back immediately to renew their permit. It might be six months later, so there is a lag. Those figures for 2015 -

**Mr GAFFNEY** - It says that during 2015 the actual harvest was 4975. That is off tagged deer.

**Mr HOCKING** - That is licensed holders of game licenses issued.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Yes, so you are telling me that there is about 14 000 deer shot on crops.

**Mr HOCKING** - No, for 2015 the total number of deer estimated to have been shot by game license holders, combined with crop protection permits, was 14 445. That is the estimate. While we can get a complete return of licensed hunters' takes, it is about 97 per cent I think, people disappear. We can never get 100 per cent, but given that most deer hunters come back to buy a

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license the following year we make sure they return that. With crop protection permits when a farmer seeks to renew their license we ensure at that stage they have return information on their previous permits. There is a bit of a lag there but we still have to estimate the take based on the take by a known number of permit holders and correct from those who have not yet returned their information on take. It is an estimate but a fairly accurate one and it certainly gets more accurate by the second year after.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - I am a little bit confused now because in the first submission that was sent to us, number 56 that was received from DPIPWE, on page 19 it says the actual harvest is 4975, and then there is a paragraph that says that of the 13 000 deer for crop protection permits, only around half the deer authorised to be shot under either game licenses or crop protection permits are taken, suggesting it is simply more deer. If we had 13 000, half of that is 6500, plus 4000, so the figures for 2015 are about 10 000 or 11 000. Now we are being told that the estimated figures are 19 000, so in one year there has been an increase of 8000.

**Mr HOCKING** - It has actually gone up substantially and there are two factors operating there. One is that we issued with game licences an extra tag. We doubled the number of antler deer tags in 2016 which resulted in several thousand more deer being taken.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - When does that figure finish?

**Mr HOCKING** - That is for 2016.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Up to 31 December?

**Mr HOCKING** - Yes, that is the calendar year 2016, the 19 733.

**Mr GOODSIR** - I think there is also a very generic statement here about the point you made that only half of all deer authorised shot under these are taken. That is a trend over time. It is just a generic statement of around half, but it might vary from one year to the next where there might be a high proportion of permits issued that are actually shot or licences as well. As a general statement, it is around half. It does not apply to every year. If you look at attachment 1 of the most recent attachment we sent you, it breaks down. It still shows a little bit of inconsistency between the total take, but it shows you in attachment 1 that the reported take under the permits for 2015 was about 9470.

**Mr HOCKING** - I stress that these are the latest estimates. I think a more rigorous method was applied in deriving these to respond to your question, whereas Ben is correct that what is in there is just a general statement - about half.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - I suggest if we are going to be looking at the university doing a study about the deer numbers, generic guessing or an approximation is not a good way of operating. If we have a regulatory regime where people have to ask for permits and get tags to shoot and then supply information, whether they are a professional or recreational shooter or protecting a crop, definite numbers need to be coming in so that it is not a 5000 or whatever - over a period of time.

**Mr HOCKING** - They do, but it normally takes about a year to get the majority of those returns in. We do not have the resources to pursue a person who is a month or two late in returning their numbers.

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**Mr GAFFNEY** - That figure there, the 2016 one you have estimated, in eight to 12 months' time when you should have those figures in, will that be changed or is that the figure now?

**Mr HOCKING** - It will probably be refined, yes, because inevitably there will be some additional returns. This is certainly a more precise estimate than that statement there, which would just give you an indication.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - I suppose this is showing that the trend for increased herd numbers is obvious because of the take.

**Mr HOCKING** - Yes, absolutely.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - As far as we are concerned regarding this, it just reinforces the fact that it is exponentially rising and could continue unless we have an increase in management of the herd.

**Mr HOCKING** - That is right, although you have to bear in mind that it certainly reflects numbers to some extent, but it can also reflect demand for relief from deer damage, which is often a product of drought conditions and people wanting to do something. We assist with that.

**Ms RATTRAY** - My question has pretty much been answered when I asked about the minister taking advice and being able to have the power to determine. I understand now about the seasons. How much earlier than the season does the minister need advice to change the season? I know last year the season was changed by one week. Obviously people need time to get themselves organised. How do you determine that? Do people ring up and say it is really dry and we need to extend the season?

**Mr HOCKING** - The minister seeks advice from various sources. One of the principal ones is the Game Management Liaison Committee which has both hunter and TFGA representatives on it. They will make a recommendation. Normally that is in about October/November of the preceding year.

In relation to deer hunting, these are passionate people. We get calls in about late March/April about next year's season. When is it going to be? We advise them that a decision will be made later in the year. People do want to plan ahead, and plan their leave. We want to give them a bit of notice. If you are asking how long does it take for the minister to have an amendment order made, in a pinch it can be done in under a month - say three weeks. That is pushing it, though, to get the amendment drafted, signed off and gazette, which is the process it would have to go through.

**Mr GOODSIR** - It has to go through that formal parliamentary OPC process. At the same time, it is not a show-stopper. These dates are produced in a publication *Game Tracks*, which is distributed to all interested parties.

**Ms RATTRAY** - The shooter's bible.

**Mr GOODSIR** - That is right. We have to make sure a decision is made in time for that to be published. So that is another factor we take into account around the timing of those decisions.

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**Ms RATTRAY** - So there could have been times when the season perhaps could have been extended or opened earlier, but because you have not been able to advise people it was a missed opportunity type of thing?

**Mr HOCKING** - The main driver, though, for the timing of the season is the suitability of head and what have you; it is not so much influenced by environmental conditions. Sure, crop protection permits and all that are going to be influenced by environment, and we are utterly responsive to that, but the season is more about a recreational hunting season.

**Ms RATTRAY** - The crop protection process, from the information we received at one of our hearings, is much more streamlined.

**Mr HOCKING** - Oh, yes.

**Ms RATTRAY** - So that is not as much of an issue now, but extending the season, or shortening it - which might be the case - needs at least a month's notice because of the process through OPC and the like?

**Mr HOCKING** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - The Deer Advisory Committee you just touched on, how is that operating now? Wasn't it abolished or was it changed in some way?

**Mr HOCKING** - The Tasmanian Deer Advisory Committee still exists. It has changed. The chairperson has changed but it exists. It is also represented on the Game Management Liaison Committee, which provides broader advice on gaming seasons - duck and quail what have you, as well as deer.

**CHAIR** - Who is on the Deer Advisory Committee?

**Mr HOCKING** - Members of various deer-hunting organisations - Australian Deer Association, the Field and Game Association, and some of the property organisations like Connorville Hunters.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Any landowners?

**Mr HOCKING** - Yes. The TFGA is represented on it, as is Forestry.

**CHAIR** - How often do they meet?

**Mr HOCKING** - Every couple of months, I think.

**Mr GOODSIR** - We can get you a list of the membership if you are interested in seeing who is on it.

**Mr HOCKING** - I think they did make a representation to the committee.

**Ms RATTRAY** - In relation to allowing hunting in national parks - question 11 - you gave us a list of four areas you have said PWS has also 'agreed to the following areas of reserved land

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being opened up for deer hunting subject to an assessment of access and public safety issues'. Is that what Mark was talking about earlier? Is that the same criteria?

**Mr BRYCE** - There are two levels of assessment here. One is that we first checked and saw the degree to which those areas were being used from a recreational perspective. Then wildlife management needed to do an assessment of the public safety issues around determining the ballot - that is, how many shooters can be in there at one time. That is the assessment that I understand needs to be done.

**Mr HOCKING** - How many shooters can safely hunt in that area; how concentrated would the hunting be. Some of these areas are not ideal deer habitat. There might only be a couple of small grassy bottoms where deer can be hunted, so you do not want 50 deer hunters congregating around there.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Of those four additional areas that have been listed, have any of them been opened up? Have any met the assessment criteria and been opened up? It does not say they have; it just says there has been an agreement to have a look at them. Are they going to be available?

**Mr HOCKING** - That is the intention, that at least some of them will be. I know there are access problems. For Castle Cary Regional Reserve, access is only via private land, so you are dealing with a private land-holder who is umming and ahing a bit about that. Tooms Lake Conservation Area is not a very good area for deer hunting anyway because it is very scrubby. Great Lake Conservation Area is very marginal.

**Ms RATTRAY** - What about St Pauls Regional Reserve?

**Mr HOCKING** - I think that might be on the agenda.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Where is St Pauls Regional Reserve?

**Mr HOCKING** - That is in the Fingal Valley, south of the valley. That one could be a goer.

**Ms RATTRAY** - So effectively we still only have four areas?

**Mr HOCKING** - Yes.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Even though they are listed, the other three are not likely to get the nod. Are there any other areas that are being put forward for consideration?

**Mr HOCKING** - There are some other areas, and I understand these are within the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area - Breton Rivulet, Dove Gut Hill and Parson and Clerk, but they haven't even been looked at in any detail yet.

**Ms RATTRAY** - So does the general public - mostly shooters, I expect - put forward an area they believe could be added to the list and then you do your work around whether it is accessible?

**Mr HOCKING** - That is what has happened, I think. It has probably come from the Tasmanian Deer Advisory Council. They put forward these areas and they were duly considered.

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**Mr BRYCE** - The first criterion is 'in accordance with the management objectives'. While the World Heritage Area goes over a range of reserve types, the reserve types or categories have management objectives where hunting is allowable. If it does not compromise any other values, we are likely to support that. It is only on the basis of that recreational value.

**Ms RATTRAY** - That very voluminous document you have in your hand, Mark, is it going to make it more difficult for the general shooting public to access some of these areas?

**Mr BRYCE** - I think most of the people that currently hunt within the World Heritage Area do so. I would not have thought so.

**Ms RATTRAY** - That is okay. Sometimes we put out these plans and the expectation and the ideals end up making it difficult for the general public to ever access or use them for what they are meant for.

**Mr BRYCE** - I think through the sporting clubs and the publications and the clubs that information does get out there in terms of areas available for hunting, because I know that people are keen on that.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Question 16. Landholders whose crops, pasture or infrastructure are damaged by wild deer currently have access to crop protection tags to manage that damage. If, for example, farm A wants to get rid of the herd that is eating their wheat or whatever it may be, I want to tag a total of say 30, is that a problem? What happens if I come back a week later and say there is heap more and I want another 50? Are there any problems or impediments to that landholder's request?

**Mr HOCKING** - They would be considered on their merit.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Each one. How is that considered? Do you have a departmental person go out and look or discuss?

**Mr HOCKING** - It would depend on the circumstances. In the first instance for a year there would probably be some history on that farm. It would not be out of the blue. I have never had that one before. It would be the case that we know that property, we know the number they are asking for is quite reasonable, fine, go for it.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - I know with wallaby permits, and these regulation arrangements can change, where a departmental person had to go to the property, look and take photos and make the assessment over and above what the farmer says. Now the regulations have changed, the farmer is a believable person, so that departmental person does not have to go to the farm anymore. You are saying with deer the departmental person needs to go to the farm.

**Mr HOCKING** - No, not necessarily. Ultimately, it is determined by the delegate of the Secretary, a departmental officer, to make that call based on some knowledge of the area and the deer problems there. There are many properties in the Midlands that would receive an initial quota of tags without inspection.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Without any questions -

**Mr HOCKING** - Yes, that is right.

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**CHAIR** - Is there a limit put on them. We do not issue over 100, or is it case by case?

**Mr HOCKING** - There is no blanket limit, no. There is still a quota on a permit that is enforced by the tags, but no there is no overriding limit.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Generally speaking as a farmer, if I feel all my crops are being eaten I can keep asking and you would generally know it is an inhabited deer area and probably a legitimate request.

**Mr HOCKING** - Yes, that is right. If we have a succession of requests over a short time we might want to have a look at what is going on if it is a huge number. The officers would take into account the seasonal conditions and all the rest. They know if this is like the year before last it was bad and we were receiving an exceptionally high demand for deer tags and we respond to that.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - That sounds easy enough. Thank you.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Question 19. There is definitely a *Yes, Minister* sentence here. Would a model of fallow deer permits similar to a five-year possum or wallaby permit system be a reasonable option? The first two sentences I understand. Again, the appropriateness of deer management options depends on the overarching objectives and the effectiveness of various management options to address the objectives. It is well written, but it is as if the idea is to hide this here. You use it again a bit later on. I suppose the idea of one-year management with ear tags is the way of controlling and managing it. If that is the best option that is fine, because we have had it put to us it could be done over five years. We have to then judge whether we think a five-year option or the one they are using at the moment is the better option. That is why we are asking that question, and yet we get these objectives, and we do on the next question as well, which does not really give us a lot.

**Mr GOODSIR** - In a way it goes back to that earlier question you posed around that map. If we drew a line here and eradicated all the deer on that side and managed this side in terms of recreational hunters, it comes back to that point. Maybe, depending on the population management strategy, maybe a five-year permit would be appropriate if you were trying to eradicate deer on one side of the line. If the overarching management objective is eradication, that works. It could work in a geographic location or-

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Somewhere like Bruny Island, if they wanted to eradicate deer on Bruny Island, every time you had the opportunity to shoot a deer, pop it, because it is being eradicated as a pest, but, 'My god, my licence has run out for one year, I can't shoot this deer because I have got to go and get another licence,' and the opportunity to shoot the deer is gone. If it is managed in a controlled environment, then a yearly one makes sense. In a World Heritage area, you want - if a shooter is there, you want them to be able to shoot the deer and not have to go back every 12 months to get another licence, because you are trying to eradicate that pest from the area?

**Mr GOODSIR** - Yes. In the context of what you were trying to achieve from a population management perspective, would determine the most appropriate kind of regulatory framework around quotas and tags and -

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**Mr GAFFNEY** - That helps us, I think, because if the idea is to manage, that is different than to eradicate.

**Mr GOODSIR** - That is right.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Even though it is a form of management.

**Mr GOODSIR** - Yes. It would have a different regulatory arrangement behind it than deer monitoring.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - That would encourage hunters to go back to an area because, say, they know there are three deer there. They do not have to apply for a licence every 12 months, but they know there is a stag there and four or five does. They will go back there on the off chance they can get it. They can track it over time because they start to know the patterns and habits of the deer. There is a better chance of getting it out of an area where you do not want a deer at all. They do not have to do all the paperwork and that sort of -

**Mr GOODSIR** - I suppose in terms of the wallaby permits and the possum, the difference there is that you need to take into account when you are thinking about a regulatory framework; they kind of apply to private land as well. It is often the farmer sitting on his farm shooting possums and wallabies or engaging someone to do it. It gets a little bit more complicated, I suppose, when it is in a public area as well.

**Mr FARRELL** - With the Bruny Island case, and we have heard different theories behind it, but what do you feel the reason for taking the deer to Bruny Island was? Is it to have some sort of private poaching, hunting place? Is that the main reason?

**Mr HOCKING** - That is what the rumour says. We do not know of course, but yes, it is.

**Mr FARRELL** - If we then had an area we quarantined off from deer and said you are only allowed to have deer in part X of Tasmania, would the department be fearful that would open up other areas of Tasmania that currently have wild deer for more poaching and illegal deer hunting activities? Is that a concern you would have? Do you think that would spike a whole new industry of -

**Mr HOCKING** - Because you do not have deer in one part of the state, it is going to push -

**Mr FARRELL** - Yes. The whole reason for taking deer to Bruny Island, if you quarantine deer to a certain part of mainland Tasmania and all the other areas outside that would still have deer population in them - do you think that would then open that up to more poaching opportunity?

**Mr HOCKING** - It is hard for people to know what the motivation is at times for those who poach. I know for some, we would hear this through the court system, it is a challenge. There are some out there who do it for the -

**Mr GOODSIR** - They like the adrenalin rush.

**Mr HOCKING** - It is. It is extraordinary. They could do it lawfully, but they do not.

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**Mr FARRELL** - Leading on from that, is that an area we should be allocating extra resources, to try to address some of that? It seems the good poachers get away with it. I don't know what control methods you can put in place.

**Mr GOODSIR** - This is the first year ever that a jurisdiction has teamed up with Crime Stoppers to promote the fact that illegal hunting is illegal and there are consequences. We seem to be taking a more proactive approach in communicating the crime and trying to get the community more broadly to keep an eye out for illegal hunting and poaching to assist both the police and wildlife officers catch these people and bring it to a halt. There is recognition this is a problem and there are some processes in place to try to prevent it and raise community awareness around this issue. My understanding is this is the first time Crime Stoppers has become involved in such an illegal activity across Australia, so it will be interesting to see how it goes.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Any prosecutions last year?

**Mr GOODSIR** - They are listed in the back of our submission.

**Ms RATTRAY** - There were 20 all up and 10 for deer.

**Mr HOCKING** - Usually about 50 per cent of prosecutions are for deer, which is disproportionate given the range of game species we have.

**Mr GOODSIR** - I am not sure how many more but there are probably a few more people who have been caught but cannot be prosecuted because the evidence has not been captured in time, but it is certainly a focus.

**CHAIR** - What is the penalty?

**Mr GOODSIR** - Depending on the crime, there could be a whole range of penalties. It could be up to \$10 000 for firearms offences, trespassing and those activities. It could be substantial.

**Mr FARRELL** - With the limited resources you have, a move to do that may create a demand for extra resourcing for departments.

**Mr GOODSIR** - Yes, and trying to use our limited resources and working with the community, police and other agencies trying to identify and eliminate this activity as much as possible through community awareness to start with. Then there will be that Crime Stoppers number which gives people a number to call in if they hear or see something, which may go some way to reducing the poaching, although when these kinds of activities are put in place the reports and records spike for a while, which might not be an indication there is more poaching but just more reporting going on.

**Mr MULDER** - This is about working out whether it is a pest or not. If you are going to try to control populations, which seems to be the big issue here, there are all these requirements for tags and bits and pieces. When it comes to poaching, why would it be poaching, provided you did not trespass on someone else's land, to shoot a species whose numbers you are trying to reduce? I am certainly against people wandering onto someone else's land to shoot something, be it a pest or otherwise, without proper permission and authority, but when you are in these open ranges surely it is in the community interest that we shoot these animals? Why do we have to have the

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regulatory framework, licensing and all those sorts of things? Why do we need to call what is basically a community service 'poaching'?

**Mr GOODSIR** - Once again it comes down to the objectives. Once you have clearly defined an area that is in or out and what your aim is, then you can adjust the regulatory framework to allow for that.

**Mr MULDER** - All you can do is say, 'Yes, minister, a very courageous decision'.

**Mr GOODSIR** - That is correct.

**Mr MULDER** - I think a lot of that comes down to the nub of this inquiry. Do we regulate or not? It seems the proposal is that perhaps we regulate it in one area but make it open slather in the other.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - I am interested in what Tony said. I think if it was in a World Heritage Area it would be professional shooters if it went for a five-year guise of being able to eradicate. If it was for a recreational take then they would still have to stick with the 12-month licensing because you would not want unfettered approach because you still have to manage the takes in those areas just because of the nature of the beast. I think using the term 'unfettered' or 'open slather' is not helpful.

**Mr GOODSIR** - The process that is used in the reserved for public space areas is a ballot system which is about controlling the public safety issue as well.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Yes, and I think that has to be paramount.

**Mr HOCKING** - It is only a certain number of hunters for a certain weekend. That is only when you can do it, not the whole season. The general public needs to be aware of it.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - To be aware of what is around and who is walking and who is using the area for other activities.

**Mr BRYCE** - That's right.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Okay, thank you.

**Mr BRYCE** - We are not really sure of the impact deers are having on other reserves within the state either, so if you focus on World Heritage there are grassland reserves elsewhere that may be affected by higher populations of deer.

**CHAIR** - We have a couple of questions on notice.

**Mr HOCKING** - I need to provide you with statistics on number of hunters and take with reserves since 2007.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - That would be good, thank you.

**CHAIR** - We will confirm that in writing.

## **PUBLIC**

**Mrs HISCUTT** - And the map.

**Ms RATTRAY** - And the book.

**Mr BRYCE** - You can get them online. Do you want me to send it through?

**Mr GAFFNEY** - It would be good to have any of the sections relating to deer because then it saves us going through the whole lot.

**Mr HOCKING** - Will we get a formal request coming through for that?

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much for your time, it is very much appreciated. We have a little more work to do and a couple of site visits.

**Mr GOODSIR** - Do you have any idea about when your report might be completed?

**CHAIR** - It will be as soon as possible - probably in the first half of this year.

**THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.**