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18 June 2009

The Hon. Carmel Tebbutt
Minister for the Environment and Climate Change
Gov. Macquarie Tower
Level 30, 1 Farrer Place,
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Minister Tebbutt

Re: The Game and Feral Animal Control Amendment Bill 2009

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW (NCC) is extremely concerned at the Shooters Party's Private Member's Bill, which attempts to gain access to National Parks to shoot alleged "game" animals that potentially includes protected animals such as kangaroos.

Unsurprisingly, we are opposed to this frankly dangerous proposition and will continue to protest publicly if any intrusion into National Parks by Game Council or Shooters Party members is allowed - including attempts to justify that practice through offers to remove feral animals.

The concept of any hunting in National Parks or in other designated Game Reserves is repugnant to the NCC, its member groups, other conservationists and, no doubt, the vast majority of the public. Such a move would be seen as hypocritical in a reserve system designed to protect native species and we were comforted to see your reported opinion against this.

The definition of game species is unclear in this instance. It seems kangaroos of different types are listed by the Game Council along with galahs, ducks, teals, and corellas and so on. Generally these animals are protected from destruction but farmers can obtain a special licence to cull kangaroos for instance. Sometimes permission is obtained to destroy wombats, bats, birds and dingoes if they allegedly threaten a farmer's livelihood. Our fear is that once shooting of game animals is allowed to include native animals the distinction will become increasingly blurred.

We are also aware that while this may be an ambit claim there will be political pressure from the Shooters Party on this to gain access to the reserve system to shoot feral species only.

The argument that removal of feral animals by shooters is a much-needed conservation practice is a false one and we would respectfully draw your attention to the published work by Invasive Species Council policy officer Dr Carol Booth, 'Recreational hunting and its place within Australia', in an issue of the Australian Shooters Journal."

Of all conservation NGOs, the Invasive Species Council has the strongest potential reasons to support recreational hunting on public lands, for it campaigns for more effective control of feral animals. But the council opposes recent moves to open up state forests and national parks to recreational hunters because evidence shows that recreational hunting usually does not provide effective feral animal control and creates a serious risk of worsening feral animal problems.....

The Invasive Species Council agrees that feral animal control is very important, but concludes that there is no evidence to support the claims that recreational hunting is an effective or low cost option. "Outsourcing" control of feral animals to ineffective recreational hunters will see populations increase, particularly if governments use it as an excuse to not fund professional

control efforts. There is also the very serious risk that governments are unwittingly creating incentives for maverick hunters to move feral animals into new areas and worsen feral animal problems."

We are also very concerned about with the inclusion in the Bill to take punitive action against anyone approaching hunters in a National Park which has been sectioned as Game Reserve.

We urge your government to see this Bill for the outrageous attack it is on the most basic principles behind nature conservation and its enjoyment by people from all walks of life and all ages. That a National Park could be designated a hunting area to destroy kangaroos, wood ducks, corellas, galahs and any other animal on the Game Council's list is abhorrent and we urge that you not let this happen on your government's watch.

Once these laws are relaxed it will be almost impossible to tighten them again. Support of this Bill will be a dangerous move for the Labor Government, one that signals its intentions to gamble with conservationists' gains fought for the benefit and enjoyment of the wider community, for the short-term support and associated demands of extremist right-wing minority parties.

Finally, we believe to make protest against this illegal would be a disgrace to the Labor movement and this country's spirit of democracy. We urge you and your government to see reason and reject this Bill in its entirety for the extremist and dangerous piece of legislation it is.

We would welcome consultation with your office about our concerns.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cate', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cate Faehrmann
Executive Director

cc
Premier Nathan Rees

Minister for Primary Industries, Ian MacDonald

Opposition Leader Barry O'Farrell

Shadow Minister for Environment, Catherine Cusack

Leader of the NSW Nationals, Andrew Stoner