

Shooters let loose in Aussie parks

Title

BirdLife Australia condemns the New South Wales (NSW) government's decision to allow recreational hunting in the state's national parks and reserves. Our national parks and reserves are set aside for the conservation of biodiversity and to foster 'public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of nature and cultural heritage and their conservation' (NSW *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 - the Act*). Recreational shooting in our parks and reserves contravenes the objects of the Act and will put the safety of other park users at risk. Amendments to the NSW *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002* will mean that recreational shooters will be able to shoot pigs, dogs, cats and goats in 79 of the state's National Parks, Nature Reserves and State Conservation Areas. While the NSW Premier, Barry O'Farrell, claims that the decision was made on the basis that recreational shooting will improve feral animal control in conservation reserves, there can be no doubt that it is actually based on politics not science. The Premier's own [media release](#) states that '... the Government had decided to expand the culling program to allow smooth passage of legislation to sell the State's power generators.' - a frank admission that this is a 'political deal' between the O'Farrell Government and the Shooters and Fishers Party rather than a decision based on sound conservation management principles. BirdLife Australia supports well designed, sustained, targeted and humane eradication strategies. However research shows that ad hoc recreational hunting is ineffective in feral animal control because:

- It can scare feral animals into new areas, make them increasingly wary to the efforts of professional shooters and can even increase localised feral animal breeding rates;
- the numbers of feral animals killed by recreational hunters are insufficient to assist genuine feral animal control. For example, Victoria had a fox bounty in 2002-03 that resulted in 170,000 dead foxes. The scheme was abandoned because it didn't work. DPI biologists found that it reduced fox abundance in less than 4% of the state and that numbers would quickly bounce back or climb even higher as a consequence of hunting; and
- there is a serious risk that maverick hunters will introduce feral animals into reserves to create better hunting opportunities.

Permits will be issued by the Game Council NSW, a body dominated by recreational shooters that represents recreational interests that has no capacity to deliver effective, science-based feral animal control programs. BirdLife Australia encourages its members, particularly those who live in NSW, to write to [Premier O'Farrell](#) and [state MPs](#) to let them know that you are oppose this decision and that you want the NSW Government to rescind on its commitment to

introduce recreational shooting in our conservation reserves.