

# Conservation

# & Hunting

Issue 3

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Simulated Field and Real Conservation in our Schools



Australian  
**Deer**  
Association



**field &  
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Australia Inc.

*Hundreds of young trees planted, guarded and watered in*



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Cover Photo: Hog Deer (*axis porcinus*) stag. A wild hog deer stag in coastal Victoria – Photo by Daniel Burke  
Native to the Indian sub-continent, hog deer have been established in South Eastern Australia since the 1860's. The Victorian herd of hog deer is now the most secure and intensively managed population of hog deer in the world. With a strong population and no notable negative environmental impacts, Australia's hog deer are an excellent example of how game animals can be managed to satisfy a wide range of priorities.

*This page: The established trees have restored biodiversity, provided habitat for wildlife and enabled native grasses to re-establish*

# Landmark Study of Victorian Hunting

A study of the economic impact of hunting in Victoria, commissioned by the Department of Environment and Primary Industries, has revealed that hunting generated \$439 million for the Victorian economy last year.

The study was described by Agriculture Minister Peter Walsh as ‘the most comprehensive survey ever of Victorian hunting’.

When releasing the report Mr Walsh said that ‘the Victorian Coalition Government values the significant social and cultural benefits game hunting provides to our state, and we also see opportunities for the sector to develop high value, niche tourism experiences that could attract interstate and international visitors and, in turn, further boost regional economies’.

Victoria’s 46,000 game licence holders support the equivalent of 3,500 full time jobs.

60 per cent of the money spent by hunters is spent in regional Victoria and makes a significant contribution to regional economies.



Region	Deer	Duck	Quail	Pest animals	Total Expenditure (\$m)
Central Highlands	3	2.2	0.6	7.6	13.4
Central Hume	12.8	2.3	0.7	10.5	26.3
G21	2	9.8	2.5	2.8	17.2
Gippsland	27.9	16.4	3.7	28	76
Goulburn Valley	3	5.6	1.8	7.7	18.1
Great South Coast	2.1	1.2	0.5	2.1	5.8
Loddon Mallee North	1.5	7.5	1.1	16	26.2
Loddon Mallee South	1.6	11.7	1.8	12.8	27.9
Lower Hume	12	0.9	0.2	9.6	22.6
Melbourne	65.7	38.5	30.3	32.1	166.6
Upper Hume	5.9	1.3	0.2	4.3	11.6
Wimmera Southern Mallee	0.8	2.1	0.6	1.7	5.2
Total:	138.3	99.4	44.1	135.1	416.9

The economic importance of hunting was highlighted by a Channel 7 comparison of the value of hunting compared with other sporting events. Hunting came second behind the Spring Racing Carnival.

#	Event	\$million
1	Spring Racing Carnival	\$620
2	Hunting	\$439
3	Australian Open	\$238
4	British & Irish Lions Tour	\$80
5	F1 Grand Prix	\$40
6	Liverpool v Melbourne Victory	\$35



## Taking Initiative at Clydebank

A desire to see a neglected tract of public land reach its full potential has been the impetus for a decade-old, hunter-led conservation project in Eastern Victoria.

The Clydebank Morass State Game reserve is an 1800-hectare parcel of former farmland bordered by the Avon River and Lake Wellington. The reserve was progressively purchased by the Victorian Government in the mid to later part of the twentieth century. Virtually all native vegetation was cleared from the area during the farming era and dense introduced grasses had all but precluded the re-establishment of indigenous flora species of any sort. Consequently, the reserve's capacity to provide habitat for wildlife was significantly diminished.

Hog deer had been present in the area since the late 1860's but their population was largely restricted to private land. In addition, the hunting opportunities for 'ordinary' hunters during the tightly-regulated April open season were severely limited due to the death of wildlife on suitable public land.

The Australian Deer Association (ADA) realised that if things were going to change, hunters would need to take the initiative. In 2004 the ADA allocated a budget to commence work on the reserve and secured complimentary funding from a range of sources including the Blond Bay Hog Deer Advisory Group, Greening Australia and Parks Victoria.

In the midst of the drought in May 2005, volunteers from the ADA commenced the task of restoring the reserve by planting 5,000 seedlings over about 6 hectares adjacent to the Avon River.

In the decade since the project commenced, over 40,000 trees have been planted over hundreds of hectares, effectively restoring the biodiversity of the area whilst simultaneously transforming the reserve into a high value habitat for a wide range of mammals and birds.

***“ 40,000 trees have been planted over hundreds of hectares, effectively restoring the biodiversity of the area whilst simultaneously transforming the reserve into a high value habitat for a wide range of mammals and birds. ”***

# Radicalism Takes its Toll on the RSPCA

The RSPCA, both in Australia and in the United Kingdom, is paying a price for its transformation from an animal welfare to an animal rights organisation.

At this year's annual conference, the NSW Farmers Association called for the RSPCA to be stripped of its policing powers.

The Chair of the Sheep Advisory Committee, James Jackson said that the RSPCA was using its brand to drive an agenda.

'We see the RSPCA driving for a cease to the live export business... this is an organisation that's moving seriously towards the dark side...

'The time has come for the Department of Primary Industries and the State Government to take up the role because it's a divisive issue and the RSPCA has lost credibility.'

Mr Jackson said the privileged position of the RSPCA was a factor driving the commercial value of its brand (e.g. its relationship with Coles).

'Their brand is reinforced by the fact they've got this special constable status.'

The RSPCA's NSW CEO Steve Coleman offered the usual responses to criticism of the RSPCA's morphing into a radical organisation.

He blamed other animal rights organisations, such as PETA, for tarnishing the RSPCA's reputation and argued that the RSPCA was the least worst option among animal liberation organisations.

What these defences do not address is the extent to which the RSPCA has responded to competition from organisations such as PETA, Animal Liberation Victoria, Voiceless and Animals Australia by becoming more radical, using its special powers to do so.

For example, Victorian farmers James Holdsworth and Heather Ellison have sued the RSPCA for damages after an RSPCA inspector entered their property, unannounced, and slaughtered and removed hundreds of perfectly healthy Murray-Grey stud cattle - including four bulls and their best breeding cows.

Ruling in favour of the farmers, Judge Bowman said that the 'the whole operation... seems to have been conducted with what could be described as indecent haste...

*“ Their brand is reinforced by the fact they've got this special constable status. ”*

'There is effectively no reason why that whole operation could not have been put on hold for at least a day so that Holdsworth (and Ellison) could have been consulted in relation to what could be done with the cattle.'

The RSPCA's actions brought back memories of its raid on the Waterways Wildlife Park in New South Wales in February 2010, where they removed several koalas.

The raid was accompanied by a Channel 7 television crew, but the RSPCA did not tell the local vet about the raid and the owner of the park was absent when it took place.

The RSPCA did not show anyone the koalas they removed for weeks and the raid led to a call for the NSW Government to remove the RSPCA's powers.

In Tasmania, a Parliamentary committee has found that RSPCA Tasmania, which has received \$2 million from the Tasmanian State Government since 2011, used its funds for legal action against the State Government, its own employees, individual members and RSPCA Australia.

The Committee said that 'in doing so, the board has spent a significant amount of its budget on legal expenses rather than on its core business of animal welfare'.

The Committee recommended that no further funding be provided until the organisation was restructured.

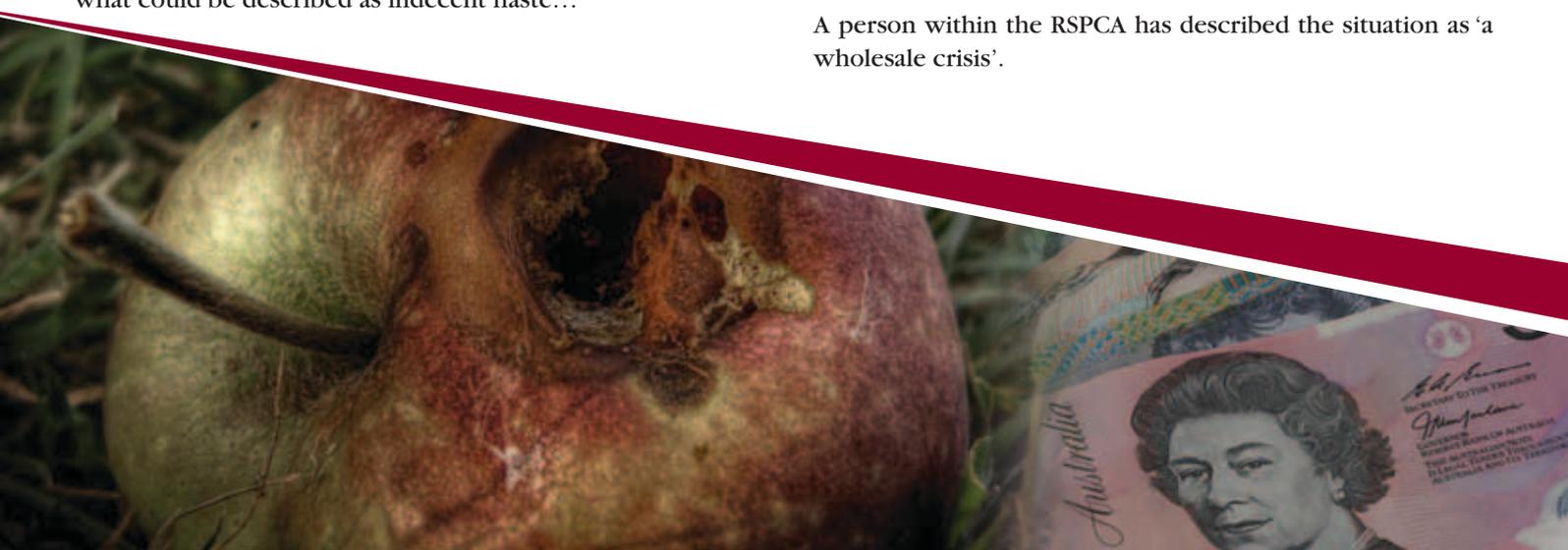
Meanwhile in the United Kingdom, the CEO of the RSPCA resigned earlier this year because of ill health following the furore after the organisation spent £326,000 prosecuting the Prime Minister's hunt.

Within two months, its Director of Marketing and Campaigns and Deputy Chief Executive also had gone.

Now the RSPCA is having to retrench staff in a bid to make savings of £4.5m a year.

Last year it had a net cash outflow of £6 million and it appears that it has not had a net cash positive position since 2007.

A person within the RSPCA has described the situation as 'a wholesale crisis'.



# Another Successful Pollie Shoot

The 12th Annual Victorian Politicians' Clay Target Shoot sponsored by Field and Game Australia (FGA) once again lived up to expectations.

From small beginnings the shoot has become a popular social event for both politicians and members of their staff.

This year more than 100 people from beginners to experienced hands gathered on a sunny, Melbourne August day to shoot clay targets and to feast on a game menu comprised of duck, venison, wild boar and quail dishes. FGA would like to express their gratitude to Chef Shane McRae and his staff who did an outstanding job on the day's catering.

As usual Labor, Liberal and Nationals teams competed for the annual trophy.

The Nationals were successful in their determination to win the trophy, following wins by a Liberal team last year and a Labor team in 2012.

State members including Minister for Small Business and Minister for Energy and Resources Russell Northe, Assistant Treasurer Gordon Rich Phillips and Shadow Treasurer Tim Pallas were joined by federal colleagues Senator Nigel Scullion, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs; Senator Michael Ronaldson, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and the Special Minister of State; Senator Bridget McKenzie and John Cobb, Federal Member for Calare.



*L. to R: John Cobb MP, Senator Nigel Scullion, Senator Michael Ronaldson and Senator Bridget McKenzie.*

*This year's winning Nationals team: Scott Mitchell, John Cobb, Russell Northe, Bridget McKenzie, Bill Sykes and Nigel Scullion, with FGA Chairman Bill Paterson and the coveted trophy.*



*“ From small beginnings the shoot has become a popular social event for both politicians and members of their staff. ”*

# Simulated Field and Real Conservation in our Schools

The tradition of competitive simulated field sports in Victorian schools is a long-standing one. Started back in the 1950s by Charles Whitla from Wangaratta, it began simply from the need to educate students attending the Wangaratta Technical School about firearm safety and the correct technique for firing a shotgun.

However, after Mr Whitla moved to Benalla and commenced instructing the students at the Technical School there, a challenge was issued from Whitla's former students at Wangaratta for a contest. In 1961 the first Victorian inter-school clay target competition took place, between Wangaratta and Benalla. Wangaratta won, prompting Benalla to practise for a return bout.

Within a short time, the concept of competitive simulated field sports for schools had spread across north-eastern Victoria. One of these schools, in Mansfield, included habitat and wildlife conservation in their program. An Outdoor and Fishing Club with student office-bearers was formed to help organise the student program. This club, together with the Victorian Fisheries and Wildlife Department, developed a common project in building an artificial duck-breeding swamp on the banks of the Delatite River. The project involved construction of a levee and the planting of over 500 redgum eucalypts. Students then obtained nesting boxes with help from the Field and Game Association and installed them in the swamp. Within a year or so, this swamp was a wonderful breeding ground and was open for shooting in season. Sadly, changes in climate and environmental water usage mean that adjoining waterways no longer rise to their full level, so this swamp has not been an ideal habitat for many years.

Following on from this, in 1965 a Field and Game club was also started at the Mansfield school and, between the adult and junior members, over 200 nesting boxes were distributed in the Mansfield district. The study of duck nesting habits, water birds and habitat were educational by-products of the club. This link between conservation and hunting has long been established: for the pastime to be sustainable and lifelong, hard work is done to ensure that the game animal populations flourish and have suitable habitats, and that there is public land available for the pursuit of this passion.

There have been over 7,000 students competing in the clay target competitions in the last 29 years, with over 70 schools in regional Victoria attending the school shoots. With these numbers of students attending it would appear that there is still a strong interest in simulated field sports among the younger generation of Australians, also illustrated by young shooting athletes such as Shepparton Field & Game member Emma Cox representing Australia at the Glasgow Commonwealth Games earlier this year. The recent announcement by the Victorian Government of the Shooting Sports Facilities Program, with funding grants for the upgrade of shooting club facilities, means that the tradition started by Chas Whitla over 60 years ago can continue. This is vital for the education of our youth in the enjoyment of safe firearm sports and ethical hunting and, more importantly, the conservation work done on public land to help develop healthier habitats for game animals and other wildlife.



*Chas Whitla giving a demonstration to students at Benalla Gun Club in the late 1960s.*



*Mt Beauty Secondary College students at the 2011 Benalla School Shoot.*

# WA Firearms Licensing System Review: Just a Con?

Last November the Western Australian Government responded to an attempt by the Shooters and Fishers Party Upper House member Rick Mazza to disallow substantial increases in firearms licence fees by announcing a review of the firearms licensing system.

The Nationals took credit for the decision to have a review and used it to justify not supporting the disallowance motion.

At the time concern was expressed about the fact that the review would be undertaken by the Law Reform Commission given that Law Reform Commissions do not have a history of being sympathetic to shooters.

Attention was drawn to the fact that the Attorney-General Michael Mischin, to whom the Law Reform Commission reports, did not appear to be supportive either.

The review was supposed to commence on the 1st of March.

However, the Law Reform Commission did not hold its first, and possibly only 'scoping study meeting' with shooting organisations until the 8th of September — more than six months after the commencement date.

The Law Reform Commission does not propose to report until September next year despite the fact that the Minister for Police Lisa Harvey stated that the review would be dealt with this year.

Nothing has been heard from the Nationals about what appears to be a classic case of obfuscation.

Meanwhile the Attorney-General is a fountain of ignorance.

When questioned, he said that he did not know why the Law Reform Commission did not have to report until September next year or who chose the date.

He did not know why it was taking the Commission so long to get started and appeared to think that this sort of delay was not unusual.

He seemed to suggest that one of the reasons for the length of time being taken was that the Commission tended to engage somebody 'specifically experienced' to draft the draft discussion papers.

However when asked if a person had been found and appointed he did not answer the question.

He also did not know when a discussion paper would be released and public comment sought.

The time being taken to organise this review suggests that the threat to review firearm licensing has achieved its purpose — seen off the criticism of the significant firearms licence fee increases in 2013.

Whether it has solved the Nationals' problem of explaining away its support for those increases is another issue.



*“The time being taken to organise this review suggests that the threat to review firearm licensing has achieved its purpose — seen off the criticism of the significant firearms licence fee increases in 2013”*



an attempt in Victoria to persuade the government to do precisely that.

The effect would have been to reduce dramatically the number of dealers who could afford to sell powder and components.

These sorts of decisions would suit police unions.

They treat firearm ownership as a health and safety issue and are determined to reduce the number of firearms, regardless of whether they are registered or not and regardless of whether they are owned by licensed shooters or not.

Registered firearms and licensed shooters are an easy target.

The Queensland Police Union, for example, has made its views well known. They think that only farmers and people employed in the security industry should be allowed to own firearms.

This mentality exists among public servants responsible for policies concerning firearms and the management and administration of firearms' registries.

Talking up the idea that the majority of firearms used to commit crimes are stolen from licensed shooters helps their cause.

Victoria provides a good example of a campaign to talk up the thefts of registered guns from licensed shooters.

In June the Ballarat Courier published a story headed 'Stolen guns end up with drug dealers in Ballarat'.

The story began:

'Criminals are stealing guns from farms in the Ballarat region to feed a growing methamphetamine trade.

In recent months, farms.....have been targeted and had firearms stolen.

'Victoria Police livestock and farm crime Superintendent Craig Gillard said criminals were hitting rural properties for guns which then found their way into the hands of drug dealers.'

It then continued:

'We know most farms have guns. When it is obvious the property owner has left to, say, go to the footy in Melbourne, they are an easy target...

'Whatever is in the gun cabinet they take. We are seeing a lot of .22 rifles and even air rifles go.

'It's hard to say categorically if it is organised crime, but we know they are being stolen to order.'

What is known is that:

- the level of the use of 'ice' in regional Victoria is reaching plague proportions and that the majority of domestic burglaries are driven by drug addicts looking for cash or anything that be converted to cash to feed their habit; and
- the preferred weapon of choice for criminals is the pistol and that most gun-related violence involves drugs and drug dealers protecting their turf against each other.

***“there is a greater danger to the community in being threatened by people with knives than people with firearms”***

Yet the police argue that 'guns are being stolen to order' by drug addicts.

What criminal gang would rely upon drug addicts to steal guns to order, and, if they are being stolen to order, why the number of .22s and air rifles being stolen?

The Police say that farms are being targeted, especially when 'it is obvious the property owner has left to, say, go to the footy in Melbourne.'

Yet, as any footy follower in Victoria will tell you, these days getting to a game at the MCG on a Saturday afternoon is like winning Tattslotto.

So are the Police saying that the thieves know the clubs that farmers support, are they saying that the thieves keep farms under surveillance without being detected or... what are they saying?

Perhaps there is a clue in Superintendent Gillard's saying that the situation is 'dangerous to police and the community at large' (note the order), but then says that there has not been an increase in the number of armed robberies.

In other words, there is a greater danger to the community in being threatened by people with knives than people with firearms.

For the Police, it is a different story.

The Police cannot say categorically that organised crime is responsible for gun thefts.

What can be said categorically is that with increased drug use, the number of burglaries increase as drug users steal anything, including firearms, to sell to feed their habit.

The problem is not licensed shooters but the drug trade and the solution is to allocate the resources necessary to identify the drug networks and stop the distribution of drugs — not put the blame on licensed shooters.

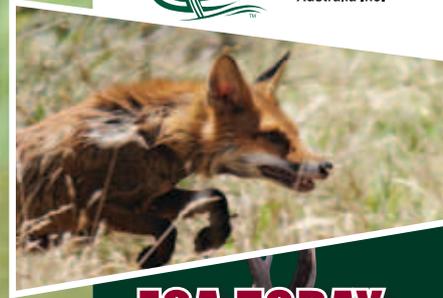
The good news is that the bulk of the more than 300 submissions made to the Senate Committee point out that the problem is unlicensed shooters and unregistered firearms and not licensed shooters.

Nevertheless, hunters, recreational shooters and the organisations representing them must be ever-vigilant.

There are those with anti-gun agenda who are well organised and who take full advantage of inquiries such as this to pursue their objectives.

# FIELD AND GAME AUSTRALIA

*Preserving Cultural Traditions*



**JOIN**

thousands of other like-minded Australians as a member of the nation's most progressive firearm, hunting and conservation organisation.

The respected voice of FGA and its members is heard throughout the country. Strength is found in numbers – do you belong to Australia's strongest and most successful shooting association?

## **OUR MISSION:**

*"To be the most effective organisation in the promotion of hunting, recreational shooting and habitat conservation."*



## **WHO'S PROTECTING THE FUTURE FOR YOUR FIREARMS LICENCE?**

Firearm sports in Australia must have:

- Respected representation
- A knowledgeable and unified voice
- All party support and acceptance
- Consistency in media messages
- New opportunities to shoot
- A code of ethics and high standards of conduct



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- Ethical
- Sustainable
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# The Deer People



Photo by: Jamie Stevens

- Extensive branch network established in every State and Territory
- Promoting hunter education and sustainable and safe hunting
- Active in wild deer management and habitat conservation
- Advocating for fair and equitable access to public land for recreational hunting



**"Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land"**

*Aldo Leopold*

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