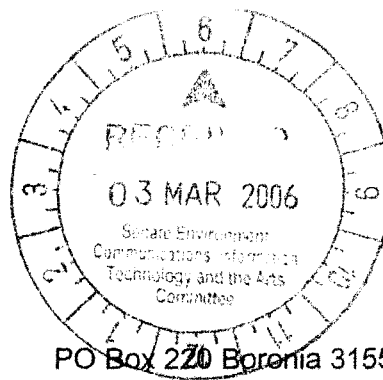


Australian
Deer
Association

APRN 690933077

Incorporated in South Australia

"Conservation is a state of Harmony between Man and Land" —Aldo Leopold



President Max Rheese
Wednesday, 1 March, 2006

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Inquiry into Australia's national parks, conservation reserves and marine protected areas

This submission is presented by the Australian Deer Association which represents deer hunters. (A short attached appendix describes the Association.)

This submission responds to the terms of reference but it also makes comment on references to deer in a submission presented to the committee by Mr Philip Maguire.

The terms of reference before the committee are vast in their application, huge in terms of geographical area and complex in terms of adequacy of funding.

In Victoria, the Victorian Environmental Assessments Council and its predecessors have progressively reviewed parts of the State for the past 30 years and almost invariably recommended an increase in the area of national parks. Its recommendations almost without exception, included an initial recommendation:

"That the authorities responsible for managing and protecting public land and water resources be allocated the resources necessary for the task."

In Victoria there has been a continuing high level of scepticism about whether the funding has been adequate. It is however almost impossible to quantify the level of funding required, the amount allocated and any consequent shortfall.

As far as this Association is concerned there is at best only anecdotal information that funding is inadequate. The inadequacy of funding is reflected in the growth and spread of weeds within Park areas. Parks Victoria's own material has expressed increasing levels of concern about the spread of weeds.

There has been significant concern about the values and objectives of national parks in Victoria particularly in relation to levels of access. More recently though, actions by Parks

Victoria have begun to resolve some of these issues but there is considerable residual angst about lack of access. It is noted however that the committee's terms of reference refer only to the availability of resources and not the objectives themselves.

The Australian Deer Association has some significant concerns about the comments made by Mr Philip Maguire in relation to deer in his submission.

The Australian Deer Association is working with public land management agencies including Parks Victoria on the management of deer.

The main thrust of our work will be to ensure any deer impact is minimal and to ensure deer numbers do not get out of control.

Most estimates of deer in the Alpine National Park are well below the 200,000 figure suggested by Philip Maguire. Andrew Moriarty in his paper *"The liberation, distribution, abundance and management of wild deer in Australia"*, 2004, based on a survey of government field staff around Australia, came up with the estimate of 70,700 sambar for the whole of Australia! Many believe that the figures in Andrews paper, for all deer species, is too high, but none the less it is nowhere near 200,000.

Everything has an impact - tourists, cattle, deer, skiers and climate change. The real issue is how it is dealt with.

The Association is working with Parks Victoria to control numbers and impact. In any event, the impact of deer, although acknowledged is not great and not regarded as one of the major threats to the Alpine National Park environment.

Our partnership with Parks Victoria is clearly a valuable and simple land management tool where the people who know most about the issue, - deer habitat and behaviour, in this case, - assist the agency involved in its management processes and actions.

In relation to the issue of adequacy of funding it is interesting to note here that Parks Victoria is utilising available expert volunteer resources to assist in its management.

Groups that utilise park areas have long wanted to be involved in management and we are delighted that this is beginning to occur.

The Association has signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (see appendix below) with Parks Victoria. The Memorandum establishes a framework to develop and maintain protocols for a positive and constructive working relationship between the Australian Deer Association and Parks Victoria to *"apply science for improved management of wild deer populations in Victoria's Parks and Reserves"*.

We wish the committee well in its endeavours to plumb the depths of the issue about the adequacy of funding for national parks in Australia. Unfortunately the inadequate time available to us and our own limited resources means that we cannot provide further useful information. In any event, it would be expected that information on values and objectives and the availability of funding would need to be obtained from the state agencies as a starting point for this inquiry. The fact that we do not have this information readily available in Victoria has long been a matter of concern and if all the Committee managed to do was to get this material on the table, it will have served a useful purpose.

Appendix 1 - About the Australian Deer Association

The Australian Deer Association Inc. (ADA) was established in 1969. It is the largest deer hunting and deer conservation organisation in Australia.

The ADA is a national organisation and has a total of 19 branches throughout Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, Tasmania, New South Wales and the ACT. The Victorian division of the ADA is well established and has six very active branches: Melbourne, Gippsland, East Gippsland, Murray Valley, Western Port and Central Victoria.

The Association and its members are dedicated to the retention of habitat for deer and other wildlife, the preservation and extension of public access to Australian bushland and the management of deer as a cultural resource.

Appendix - Memorandum of Cooperation Between Australian Deer Association (Vic) and Parks Victoria

1. PREAMBLE

Deer species were introduced into Victoria in the 19th century to provide hunting opportunities in the new colony. Today, Victoria is regarded as having some of the best deer habitat in Australia and Victoria's National and State Parks and Forest Reserves provide a unique opportunity for hunters to stalk deer where deer hunting is permitted. Deer are an introduced species listed as protected Wildlife in the Wildlife Act. Parks Victoria recognises deer hunting as a legitimate activity in those areas of parks and reserves where hunting is allowed.

Protected deer species present a management problem for Parks Victoria in certain circumstances. As an introduced species the National Parks Act requires Parks Victoria to undertake actions to control or manage introduced species. The processes provided for in this Memorandum of Cooperation seek to resolve the needs in meeting the objectives of both parties.

More knowledge is required about deer species that occur in Victoria and the impact of large populations of deer on Victoria's indigenous flora and fauna communities.

In February 2004, there were in excess of 11,100 licensed deer hunters in Victoria, an increase of 60% over the last eight years. Hunting including deer hunting adds significant income to Victoria's economy particularly in rural and regional Victoria.

2. OBJECTIVES

This document establishes a frame-work to develop and maintain protocols for a positive and constructive working relationship between the Australian Deer Association (Victoria) and Parks Victoria that for areas managed by Parks Victoria where deer hunting is allowed, will preserve and enhance recreational deer hunting (stalking) opportunities and apply science for improved management of wild deer populations in Victoria's National and State Parks and Reserves.

3. ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF PARKS VICTORIA

Parks Victoria is a statutory authority charged under the Parks Victoria Act 1998 to provide services to the State of Victoria and its agencies for the management of parks, reserves and other public land;

Parks Victoria manages Victoria's outstanding parks system, comprising over 4 million hectares (approximately 16% of the total land area of Victoria) and receives over 60 million visits per annum;

The stated purposes of Parks Victoria are to:

- Conserve, protect and enhance environmental and cultural assets
- Responsibly meet the needs of its customers for quality information, services, and experiences
- Provide excellence and innovation in park management
- Contribute to the social and economic well being of Victorians

4. ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE AUSTRALIAN DEER ASSOCIATION (VICTORIA)

The Australian Deer Association (Vic) provides a voice for and otherwise represents deer hunters and deer hunting throughout Victoria.

The objectives of the Australian Deer Association Vic are:

1. The improvement of the status of deer in Australia.
 - The promotion of research into the behaviour and ecology of wild deer for improved management.
 - The retention and improvement of habitat for wild deer and other wildlife, particularly by encouraging governments to pass legislation and regulations based on sound management principles.
2. The improvement of the status of deer hunting
 - The preservation and where appropriate, the generation of deer hunting as a legitimate and traditional activity.
 - The preservation and extension of public access to deer habitat for recreational use and the encouragement of such use.
 - The personal adoption by members of the Association's National Code of Conduct and Hunter's Pledge

3. OPERATION FRAMEWORK

(a) Steering Committee:

- Parks Victoria

Director Fire and Emergency Services/Regional Manager East; and
Manager Fire & Compliance

- Australian Deer Association

President

Chairman, Deer Management Committee

(a) Communication

The parties will work towards the sharing of newsletters and information of common interest to promote the objectives of this memorandum and issues of mutual concern.

Each of the parties to this agreement will provide and keep updated a corporate contact list which is attached as an appendix and it is agreed that the recommendations for decision making in relation to the matters contained in this memorandum will be dealt with by the Steering Committee.

There shall be established a wider group of local representatives at Branch and 'Chief Ranger' levels for ongoing consultation, information sharing and discussion of local issues. Each of the parties shall provide a list of regional representatives.

The first chair shall be a representative of Parks Victoria for a period of two years and thereafter the chair shall rotate on a two yearly basis. The Chair agency will be responsible for the organisation of meetings and the secretarial service required to record minutes, organise meetings and liaise as required.

(b) Cooperative ventures

It is acknowledged that the parties may develop a number of cooperative ventures including for example:

- Park signage
- Research programs
- Joint deer population management;
- Liaison and involvement
- Hunter and Community Information, interpretation and education programs

(a) Research

The parties will cooperate in promoting, planning, supporting, reviewing and communicating research to facilitate a better understanding of deer species, sustainable management of deer populations and impacts on biodiversity. This may involve contributing to, and commenting on, management strategies to implement research findings.

(b) Policy

Parks Victoria will consult with the Australian Deer Association (Victoria) (within the spirit of this agreement) in relation to operational policies and programs, which may have an impact on the activities, interests or obligations of the latter.

Existing operational policies will be reviewed and as appropriate adjusted to meet with the objectives of this agreement. Existing policies will be noted and dated and attached to the schedule.

The process for input under this MOC recognises that Parks Victoria's management services are delivered within state legislation, Government policy, contractual agreements and the specific responsibilities and powers of the Secretary to the Department of Sustainability and Environment under the Victorian National Parks Act 1975 and other relevant Acts. Parks Victoria is responsible for the development of operational policies and guidelines relating to the management of parks and reserves under its control. Such operational policies must be consistent with legislation and government policy.

(c) Management Plans

This memorandum supports the establishment of a structured consultation process for park management plans, where The Australian Deer Association Victoria provides early input during the development of the draft management plan. The sharing of information and discussion at this early stage will enable The Australian Deer Association Victoria to provide valuable comment on deer management, hunting management, tourism and recreation proposals in a timely manner, and reduce the potential for dispute and misunderstandings on release of the draft plan.

It is agreed that consultation will continue through to the approval of the final plan. It is also acknowledged that contribution by The Australian Deer Association Victoria will be considered along with submissions made by all interested parties.

(d) Publicity

The Steering Committee may develop appropriate relationships with Media and make approaches to industry to seek commercial support for the objectives of this agreement.

The parties may develop brochures, publications and flyers to promote matters relevant to this agreement.

(e) Education

Parties will work together on projects such as

- Hunter education
- Environment education

- Public education in relation to deer management and hunting in National and State Parks and Reserves managed by Parks Victoria.
- (i) Resourcing
 The parties will facilitate opportunities for funding of joint research, conservation and training programs.
 The parties will progress joint programs that achieve the intent of this agreement consistent with Government and DSE policies regarding hunting and the management of protected wildlife and services provided by Parks Victoria to the Victorian Government.

Resolving issues

The purpose of this agreement is to develop a mutual understanding of each of the parties' interests and objectives.
 Matters will be resolved unanimously and where resolution cannot be achieved the matter will remain open for discussion to enable the parties to find an acceptable outcome.
 It is recognised that not all matters may be agreed and the parties may resolve not to agree and move on to deal with other issues.
 With respect to local issues this agreement recognises that many local issues can and should be resolved with the regional representatives and in the event of a dispute the matter is to be referred to the Steering Committee to facilitate resolution via line management.

4. WORKING TOGETHER

The parties will work together in a timely and professional manner and ensure that their transactions are open and transparent.
 The parties will keep each other informed about initiatives, issues and develop a relationship based on mutual cooperation and respect.
 Agendas, correspondence and publications will be dealt with through the liaison officers noted in the schedule in a timely and responsible manner.

5. CONDITIONS OF THIS MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION

- (a) Participation in Similar Activities
 This memorandum in no way restricts the parties from participating with other public or private agencies, organisations, and individuals on similar agreements. The parties recognise the importance of cooperation and partnership with other organisations and institutions regarding their mutual interests.
- (b) Non-Fund Obligating Document
 This memorandum is neither a fiscal nor a funds obligation document. Nothing in this agreement shall obligate any of the parties to expend funds or to enter into any future contract, supplemental agreement, or obligation with the other. Any endeavor involving reimbursement or contribution of funds between the parties to this memorandum will be outlined in separate agreements that shall be made in writing by representatives of the parties and shall be independently authorised by appropriate statutory authority. This agreement does not provide such authority.
- (c) Force and Effect
 Parks Victoria and the Australian Deer Association Victoria intend to conduct the aforementioned activities in this agreement in accordance with existing State and Commonwealth laws and policies. If any provisions of this memorandum are determined to be inconsistent with existing laws, regulations, policies or directives governing the parties,

then only those provisions of this agreement not affected by a finding of inconsistency shall remain in full force and effect.

6. TERM OF AGREEMENT AND REVIEW

The term of this agreement should be for ten years and it is agreed that the objectives and methods of operation will be reviewed at the end of each two year period. The parties will have the opportunity to agree on management issues, protocols and policies throughout the term of the agreement as it is intended between the parties that the agreement is floating and flexible and depends upon the co-operation of the parties working together.

Yours sincerely



Max Rheese
President