



## **SPORTING SHOOTERS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA INC.**

November 2005

The Secretariat  
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee  
Department of the Senate  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

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A SUBMISSION ON BEHALF OF THE SPORTING SHOOTERS ASSOCIATION  
OF AUSTRALIA INC. WITH REGARD TO THE NATIONAL ANIMAL  
WELFARE BILL 2005

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The Sporting Shooters Association of Australia Inc. (SSAA) represents firearm owners across eight States and Territories. In this capacity the Association embraces a role as an educational body for sporting shooters, including recreational hunters. As such we provide to our members information and education on the various State Acts and Codes of Practice that are applicable to recreational hunting or the culling of pest species. It is from this position that we would like to provide general comments on the proposed *National Animal Welfare Bill 2005* and to place it in the context of other recent developments in animal welfare in Australia, including the recent *National Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS)*.

The formation of a National Animal Welfare Bill would at first appear to be an obvious step in integrating individual state legislation to form an overarching

national frame work. However, the recent reviews of State-based Animal Welfare Acts around the Nation indicate that a co-ordination of uniform standards is already occurring. Such co-ordination has occurred regardless of each State and Territory being individually responsible for promoting humane, responsible and accountable care and use of domestic animals, livestock, wildlife and animals kept for scientific purposes within their jurisdiction.

In addition to the existing State Animal Welfare Acts there are many industry National codes of practice. These codes have been developed in consultation with animal industries, animal welfare groups and relevant state and federal Government bodies. Hunting organisations such as SSAA and Field and Game Australia abide by these codes, which include *The Code for the Destruction or Capture, Handling and Marketing of Feral Livestock Animals*, *The Code of Practice for the Humane Destruction of Birds by Shooting in South Australia* and *The Code of Practice for the Humane Shooting of Kangaroos*. These codes establish the standard of humane conduct and are the minimum required of persons involved in the destruction of animals by shooting.

The development of these codes of practice indicate the importance of the integration between the various industries, recreational bodies and those entrusted with overseeing animal welfare. Of even greater importance these codes provide evidence that there are situations where a blanket code of practice is detrimental to the management of sustainable agricultural practices as well as to the overall ethics of welfare. For example, in Tasmania the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, a statutory committee established under the *Animal Welfare Act 1993* to advise the Minister for Primary Industries, Water and Environment on all animal welfare matters of importance to the State, developed an Animal Welfare Standard for the hunting of wallabies for commercial, recreational and crop protection purposes in Tasmania. The Standard is designed to accommodate the special circumstances and environment that impact on wallaby hunting in Tasmania and has been adopted by

the State Government in response to a specific environmental issue. This standard for the harvesting of wallabies is strongly supported by the landholders in Tasmania.

Thus, it is clear that the introduction of Federally developed 'one size fits all' codes of practice are to be discouraged in favour of the interaction, on a local level, of relevant industry, recreational bodies and those organisations truly devoted to animal welfare, which will achieve a balanced code of practice acceptable to all parties. More importantly, it should be emphasised that codes of practice should continue to be developed with input and scientific objectivity from all key stakeholders.

Currently, sport shooting organizations and the legislation ensure that hunting is conducted in a manner that respects animal welfare, while conserving wildlife. In 1990, the 18<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the IUCN, the World Conservation Union, formally recognized sustainable wildlife utilization as a legitimate and potentially powerful conservation tool, and stated that ethical hunting in no way contravenes the duty of care and humane treatment of animals. This ethic is integral to hunting, both in the past and in the present and the future. It should also be noted that the United Nations and the IUCN have recognized the importance of maintaining biodiversity through sustainable conservation use, with both these organisation acknowledging the importance of hunting as a legitimate part of sustainable use, and one which does not preclude the principles of animal welfare as part of the code of practice.

The Co-operative Research Centre for Pest Animal Control has estimated that feral pests cost Australia more than \$720 million each year. These figures do not address the indirect or long term effects of land degradation and loss of biodiversity. Licensed firearm owners are already serving the community by assisting private landholders and the various State Governments in the management and control of pest animal populations. In doing so, they also protect unique and diverse Australian eco-systems and Australian agricultural enterprises. The *National Animal Welfare Bill, 2005* would effectively put an end to this important volunteer contribution to conservation.

In summary, the proposed *National Animal Welfare Bill, 2005*, appears not to improve, replace or negate existing State authority. Thus, it would seem that much of the content mirrors or duplicates existing legislation. States and Territories already have animal inspectors in place and the proposal to employ National inspectors would also duplicate existing infrastructure and procedures. Additionally, the Australian Government has committed funding to the AAWS, which has a primary policy objective of improving consistency of legislation across States and Territories for improved and sustainable animal welfare outcomes. Thus the SSAA would humbly suggest that the Federal Government's commitment to the AAWS, in conjunction with the recently reviewed State and Territory Animal Welfare Acts, negates the need for the *National Animal Welfare Bill, 2005*.

The Sporting Shooters Association of Australia Inc. welcomes this opportunity to present a submission on the *National Animal Welfare Bill, 2005*. The Association promotes a broad range of firearm-related activities, including hunting, at the local, state, national and international level and currently, through our National Association, holds official Non-Government Organisation status within the United Nations.

This submission represents the concerns and experiences of SSAA members and the aim is to encourage informed contribution into the debate on Animal Welfare. Should there be any questions of if any further information is required in relation to this submission we would be most pleased to respond.

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