



**FRIENDS OF DURRAS INC.**  
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# **MEDIA RELEASE**

## **Review of plans for hunting in National Parks a matter of urgency.**

Members of the Friends of Durras welcome the NSW Government's decision last week to disband the NSW Game Council, the organisation charged with implementing legislation to open up National Parks to hunting. They also welcome the announcement that the introduction of hunting in National Parks will be deferred until October this year - but only because this provides more time to work against the legislation taking effect .

After allegations that two senior Game Council employees had hunted illegally on private property Premier Barry O'Farrell ordered a review into the Council's operation. It found the NSW Game Council was 'embedded in politics', had an 'inherent conflict of interest' in its dual role of representing hunters' interests and regulating hunters' behaviour, and had not given enough attention to matters of public safety.

Mr John Perkins, Convenor of Friends of Durras said "The Game Council was established in 2002 largely due to the influence of the Shooters and Fishers party - and one of the two current Shooters and Fishers MPs, Robert Brown, is a former Chairman.

"Last year the Shooters and Fishers MPs voted with the government in support of electricity privatisation. In return they got legislation to allow recreational hunting in National Parks. Both parties claimed hunting could be safely managed by the NSW Game Council.

"The governance of the Game Council was so compromised that it had to be abolished. Now it's time to abolish the equally dodgy hunting legislation as well."

Although announcing some changes to original plans (bow hunting will not be permitted now, and shooters must now be at least 18 rather than just 12 years old), the Government is adamant that the introduction of hunting in National Parks will still go ahead. The Environment Minister, Robyn Parker, says hunting will begin on a trial basis in 12 parks in three months time, with the view to expanding access to around 75 National Parks once trials are complete.

Mr Perkins has doubts about this approach. "The trials sound like window-dressing to justify a decision that's already been made" he said. "What criteria will be used to judge performance on these trials? Who will decide these criteria? And who will be assessing whether these criteria are met?

"Will it just be members of the Shooters and Fishers Party and hunting groups? Will National Parks and Wildlife Officers - now to be responsible for monitoring hunters - be represented? What about conservationists? Tourism operators? The general public?

"The Government and the Shooters and Fishers Party argue that hunting in National Parks is necessary to reduce feral animal counts - although they haven't provided any evidence that amateur hunting achieves this. Will trials involve scientists and professional feral animal control people who actually know a thing or two about feral animal control?

"For these trials to be meaningful, nobody must be excluded."

Ms Claudia Tilley, at 15 one of the youngest Friends of Durras members, feels very strongly about this issue and is keen for her voice to be heard. "Politics is a bit of a mystery to me. How is it that the Shooters and Fisher Party can bring about such a massive change in National Park operation without those of us who use the Parks being consulted? My generation is going to have to live with the consequences of allowing hunting to take place, and we've had no say at all."

“The Shooters and Fisher party may have a loud voice, but they only represent a tiny proportion of NSW citizens. It’s time for them to step back, and for the NSW Government to listen to what the rest of us have to say. And we don’t want amateur hunters with guns in our Parks. Ever.”

Mr Perkins has a challenge for the NSW Government. “If the Government is genuine in wanting to assess the safety, effectiveness and public acceptability of allowing shooting in the National Parks in the trials it’s planning in October, then include a wide range of interests in this process. Friends of Durras members are willing to offer our expertise.”

**Contact: John Perkins, Friends of Durras, 0427 009 044.**

Images attached:

(1) Worth preserving as gun-free - a view of Emily Miller Beach through trees, Murramarang National Park.

(2) Ms Claudia Tilley (15), Friends of Durras member, urges an end to plans to allow hunting in National Parks.