

*1. Is the current system effective in encouraging landowners to generate public benefits from their land and rewarding them as environmental stewards? Or are current mechanisms too focused on requiring private landowners to protect ecosystem services and biodiversity at their own cost?*

The current system is totally discouraging. Apart from being block in every direction by the Government from having a conservation status bestowed on our land, Our last application to for a grant for weed control required undertaking a six month course at TAFE at our own expense and required an agreement to report on weed and feral animal status for ten years. The grant money was spent in the first year. Therefore the next nine years of conservation work is at our own expense and the amount of effort expended by us to obtain the grant far outweighed the value of the grant. The current system employed by the government of volunteer shooting of feral animals completely ignores the consequences of the weeds these feral animals kept in control. There appears to be no program for weed control, at least in the area unless it is undertaken by private landholders...One is inclined to ask if the Government doesn't care why should we?

*2. Are there elements of the current system for private land conservation that raise impediments (for example, the binding nature of agreements and potential loss of production) for individuals who want to manage their land for conservation? If so what are they? What incentives might be effective, efficient and equitable in promoting biodiversity conservation on private land?*

We are the owners of lease hold land and all our attempts to have a conservation agreement on the land have been blocked by the Government body who owns the lease. We have been told by NPWS rangers that our land has import conservation values we have been denied conservation status. Since the greater proportion of the land area of this state is held under leasehold title this raises considerable concerns about the ability of the owners of these lands to carry out conservation works.

*Have the threats to biodiversity posed by: (a) people taking animals and plants from the wild, (b) feral animals and weeds, and (c) illegally imported species, been effectively managed?*

In our particular case the threat to biodiversity is offered by Shooting in State Forests which is extremely poorly managed. The fact that the Forests are advertised as open to hunting is an invitation to anyone with a gun to come shooting licensed or not. Although we are assured that the law prohibits unlicensed shooters these laws are not enforced. The response from police on many occasions has been "well what do you want us to do about it" Mostly there is nothing they can do about it unless you can identify the person involved. Who is going to approach a person with a high powered rifle and demand he identify himself? The only way of ensuring some record is maintained is to demand an incident number from the police when reporting a breach of the law.

Next the most obvious consequence of the removal of feral animals from Forests is the proliferation of weeds that were previously kept in check by the feral animals. In our area a number of beautiful and attractive bush picnic and camping areas have been lost through the proliferation of weeds such as broom and blackberry. There has been no attempt by Forests to keep these weeds in check.

The other problem posed by the "Shooting" program is that it is very selective in its target animals. At least in our area the animals shot are diurnal animals ie Goats, and to a much less extent deer, feral cats and dogs, no shooting is allowed at night. That means the pigs, rabbits and foxes are proliferating with no obvious controls and again are left to the landholder to deal with.

*Has the NPW Act and the supporting policy framework led to a positive change in the welfare of native animals (captive and free-living)? What role if any should the government have in ensuring the welfare of individual native animals – particularly where there are already stand-alone welfare laws such as the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979?*

Just the other day I was in the local produce store listening to local farmers boasting how many of the local wildlife they had shot without a license. They were of the opinion the only good wildlife was dead wildlife. When this was raised with a local NPWS ranger I was told that it is more important to keep the good will of the local farmers than to enforce the laws. The government needs to educate its officers that it is just as important to protect the wildlife as it is to support the people. Also it is important for them to realize that there are many remedial measures that solve the problems that shooting does. If people are not educated in these alternatives the Laws protecting the wildlife are meaningless.

*Is the current framework for wildlife licensing, offences and defences, including those applying to threatened species, easily understood? Is the current licensing system too complex? How can it be improved and simplified to focus on conservation outcomes?*

The current framework of wildlife licensing policy is totally impossible to understand. There appears to be a strong if unintended favouritism for one particular wildlife group over all others. This gives it jurisdiction over large swaths of the state. In our case that means that the nearest branch is 150km away. The vast majority of its members are in one main town and there is no support for members in other areas. A recent attempt by a large group of wildlife carers in our area to form their own support network was turned down as the area was already "covered." It has also meant that from our own personal point of view training is very expensive as it usually means an overnight stay somewhere to be able to attend the course.

The other issue we have with the current system is that we specialise in wombats, a highly specialised and unique Australian Marsupial. I recently attended a training course on wombats with the leading NSW Wildlife Group. The course materials were out of date and misleading. The Groups most common remedy for issues with adult animals was to shoot them. The instructors at the course were also obviously very unhappy with the content and handed out factsheets, mostly written by me, for an unlicensed wombat network group. In

spite of this I was not allowed to care for wombats until I had done this course and had my own fact sheets handed out to me. An action that the instructors could get there license with the licensed group cancelled. Letters I have written to the Wildlife group have been ignored. There is no reason to shoot adult wombats, solutions, medications and interventions exist for most problems if carers are willing to keep up to-date with recent developments.

It is also interesting to note that recently the Government themselves have been consulting us on issues of wombat protection, mange treatment and conservation, despite the fact that they refuse to license us as a wildlife group.

