



Steve Dimopoulos MP

Minister for Environment
Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events
Minister for Outdoor Recreation

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MIN-241106809

Robert McDonald MP
Clerk of the Legislative Council
Legislative Council
council@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Mr McDonald 

Thank you for your letter of 26 November 2024, notifying me of the petition tabled in the Legislative Council by Jeff Bourman, Member for Eastern Victoria, requesting that the Victorian Government stops the aerial culling of deer in areas that can be hunted by recreational hunters. In accordance with Standing Order 11.04(2), I provide the following response.

I note that the petition includes 2,666 signatures and I appreciate the concerns about the delivery of aerial deer control and how it might impact recreational hunting opportunities on public land.

The Victorian Government supports recreational hunting across 4 million hectares of public land, including national and state parks and state forests. It is also responsible for the protection of biodiversity values across these areas, in part, through the control of pest plants and animals.

In 2020, the *Victorian Deer Control Strategy* was released in response to the widespread and rapid increase in deer across the state. The strategy sets out a long-term, coordinated plan to control wild deer numbers and address the significant impacts that deer have on the economy, public safety, agriculture, biodiversity, water quality, and Aboriginal cultural heritage.

I recognise that licensed recreational hunters play an important role in deer control programs and delivering the overall strategy, however, deer numbers and impacts are still increasing. Game license fees continue to support important compliance activities and the regulation of hunting by the Game Management Authority. Fees are not used to deliver deer control activities.

In 2023-24, aerial deer control funded by the Victorian Government's Deer Control Program was delivered across less than 15% of public land, recreational hunting opportunities including harvesting of venison for personal use continue to be available.

Aerial control of introduced animals has proven to be an efficient and cost-effective method of control for introduced animals and is safely and humanely delivered in Victoria to protect threatened plants and animals. It is an important tool in locations that are remote, difficult to access and cover a large area. Aerial control is used as part of an integrated, holistic approach to managing deer and other introduced species in Victoria and complements ground control of deer in more accessible areas.

Shooters engaged in the aerial shooting program are audited by an independent veterinarian to ensure that animals are being controlled humanely. Aerial shooting is carried out by highly qualified and experienced pilots and shooters under strict conditions, designed to ensure that it is safe, effective, and humane. Animal welfare is paramount and incorporated into all aspects of operations.

Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action staff would be happy to discuss opportunities for involvement in delivery of the Victorian Deer Control Strategy, please call [136 186](tel:136186) to arrange a suitable time to discuss these issues.

Thank you once again for bringing this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely



Steve Dimopoulos MP
Member for Oakleigh
Minister for Environment

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