



WITH EXTREME PREJUDICE - The ACT Government's "Aerial Shooting" of Animals in Namadgi National Park

The Animal Protectors Alliance (APA) is dismayed to learn that the ACT Government has recently announced that aerial shooting of introduced species, in particular wild deer and pigs in the Namadgi National Park will be carried out from 20 September to 1 October 2021.

"They thought they could sweep this under the rug while lockdown is underway, hoping nobody would find out," Robyn Soxsmith, spokesperson from APA said.

Ms Soxsmith adds, "There are many reasons why this decision is a disaster. Firstly, there is absolutely no evidence that killing introduced animals has any long term impact whatsoever on their numbers. In fact, to the contrary, hunting of fast breeding animals can only result in larger numbers of the same species, because younger, more fertile individuals replace older established ones. Even if one introduced species is successfully suppressed for a short while, this decline is likely to result in an increase in numbers of some other introduced species, rather than an increase in any native species populations. Native species populations are not declining because of the presence of introduced species but because of habitat change and fragmentation, air, water and soil pollution, climate change, and the many disastrous legacies of more than two hundred years of open slather hunting.

"Secondly, helicopter shooting is inherently cruel," Ms Soxsmith continues. "It has been proven that you cannot humanely kill a fast-moving animal from a moving platform such as a helicopter. Furthermore how will the shooters know from a helicopter if an animal is actually dead or still alive and suffering? And even if they do manage to see an animal thrashing around in agony, there is nowhere in Namadgi to land a helicopter. How will they put the animal out of its misery?"

"As with any method of wildlife slaughter, families are torn apart and scattered, with foals and fawns - unable to keep up with their terrified mothers being chased by helicopters. These babies will be orphaned and left to die of starvation, dehydration, and attacks by other animals," Ms Soxsmith said.

On this basis, APA argues that the proposed killing will breach the objects of the ACT Animal Welfare Act which recognise animals as sentient beings deserving of protection from cruelty which, in this case, is not only extreme, but also unnecessary and counterproductive.

Another issue the government needs to address is the documented cases of recreational shooters releasing animals into the Park so they can then hunt them down. No wonder the populations of introduced animals have grown to numbers large enough to have attracted the government's notice! Wild dogs numbers also have been attributed to hunting dogs who have run away or been left behind. Instead of punishing innocent and defenceless animals for having been cruelly abandoned, the government needs to prohibit all pleasure killing of animals, and enforce the prohibition. That will remove the incentive for this ongoing seeding of introduced populations.

APA has absolutely no reason to believe the Government's assertion that shooters are responsible and safe gun users. "What safeguards are in place to protect native wildlife so they won't be accidentally shot?" Ms Soxsmith asks. "Given the ACT government's record in relation to kangaroos on suburban



reserves, where shooting routinely occurs within metres of public roads, no one in the ACT should trust this assertion."

Ms Soxsmith also asks what assurances, apart from signage about the closure and "buffer zones", can the ACT Government give to make sure people do not enter while shooting is being carried out. Human safety will be at risk if members of the public inadvertently enter the National Park for hiking and exploring.

"Shooting in a public area is highly irresponsible and dangerous. Has consideration been given to the contingent liability if a serious injury or fatality occurs through the actions of a shooter, and legal action is taken against the Government seeking damages? The ACT government has an absolute duty to ensure the public is safe. Shooting should not be permitted on any public land," Ms Soxsmith concludes.

Contact: Robyn Soxsmith

Mobile: 0424191561