

From: <admin@bushwalking.org.au>  
To: <Undisclosed-Recipient:;>  
Subject: Confed Mins 15 August 2006 2  
Date: Fri, 8 Sep 2006 12:20:52 +1000

## **Greetings**

### **AGM – adjourned until 19th September 2006**

to allow tabling of the audited annual financial accounts and election of an Auditor. Margaret Covi re-elected President.

### **BWRS – next First Aid Course: 4th – 5th November**

Places still available on the above course. Bushwalkers to register online at:

<http://www.bwrs.org.au/> plus answers to FAQs and payment details.

Full payment in advance of the course is required to confirm any booking.

### **EPIRBs**

See the August edition of „The Bushwalker% for the first of two articles on EPIRBs written by Keith Maxwell, President BWRS.

### **Blue Mountains National Park – Princes Rock Track now open**

The Princes Rock track at Wentworth Falls has reopened.

For further information contact the NP&WS Heritage Centre, Blackheath:

Phone: (02) 4787 8877

Open seven days 9.00 am to 4.30

pm

Administration Officer

The Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs NSW Inc.

**8th September, 2006**

Telephone:

9290 2060 (MessageBank) – M, W, F

10am-4pm

Email:

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## Shooting in NSW State Forests

### Notes from The Greens Public Forum held 14th August 2006

At Confederation's 15th August General Meeting, Bob Minnaert, a member of our Insurance/Legal Committee, reported on a meeting with the Greens senators on 14 August connection with the issue of shooters in State Forests, & on information he had gained on these issues. Our committee is still considering these difficult issues, & thank Bob for his report as below.

There were people there with very different agendas: there were bushwalkers, but also animal welfare groups, the greens themselves, and some others with a general interest in the subject ^ as well as a man from the gun lobby. Unfortunately, a lot of time was spent debating the merits of the animal welfare people's case that there should be no interference at all with either native or feral animals, in other words no trapping, hunting, poisoning or other methods of controlling feral animals. This debate should not have been allowed to go on as long as it did ^

the result was that suddenly a bell rang, the room hire was finished, and there was no time to properly debate what to do about the shooters legislation. The greens took our email contacts, and said they would contact us about further action.

The Greens senators felt that there may well be a case for shooting feral animals, but this should be done by professional shooters ^ not amateurs from the hunting clubs. This would remove the incentive for shooters to „seed% the forests with deer, pigs etc, and would also be much safer. Many cases were quoted where the current arrangements resulted in some dangerous situations.

As part of their licence, shooters are provided with a 10m \$

Public Liability cover. As to possible problems identifying the culprit when an accident happens, the man from the shooters groups said that the records were kept at the Game Council of which shooters were in the area at the time.

I have also looked at the website of the Game Council of NSW, which is the controlling body under the legislation, and which is controlled by the various hunting bodies (The Greens stated that the hunting bodies have 8 out of 15 positions on the Council, but there is in fact another position which is vacant at present and is reserved for the aboriginal population). There is no position on the Council for recreational users other than hunters ^ they obviously do not rate very high priority.

Currently, the situation is that you can go hunting if you have a Restricted Licence issued by the Game Council. You must make a booking for hunting in a State Forest, but this can be made right up to the morning of the day you want to go. There is no website where bushwalkers can check what bookings have been made, but you can phone the Game Council in Orange during business hours to find out (and hope no one makes a booking after you have phoned!)

There is a Code of Practice, but it seems to be little more than a series of Motherhood statements.

At present 82,000 licences have been issued, and a minimum age of 12 years applies (not old enough to drive a car, to vote or to have sex, but old enough to carry a gun!!). Enforcement is going to be problematical: it was said at the meeting that at present there is one inspector to cover the area of NSW west of the Blue Mountains.

Thinking about the whole situation, it seems to me that what the whole thing means is that not only bushwalkers, but also horse riders, mountain bikers and other users of the forests are for all practical purposes being excluded. No one is going to go into a State Forest when there are hunters present, or when there is a risk of hunters suddenly turning up. I understand that signs are being erected on popular walking tracks ^ can you see any walker going in against those signs??

Obviously, Confederation,s preferred option should be for the entire legislation to be rescinded, and we should pursue this in any way we can. However, if this is not achievable in the short term, it is essential that there is wide-spread knowledge of the specifics of the scheme. It seems to me that if only for reasons of fairness, adequate access should be granted to users other than shooters. We could probable live with the State Forests being open to shooters say the first week of every month; if you think that is not realistically achievable, perhaps we should offer them 2 weeks each month?? Such a deal would give everyone clarity and certainty, and could help prevent accidents and incidents which otherwise are bound to happen.

As a very minimum, their systems should be tightened up and be made more user-friendly. Bookings for hunting in a particular state forest should close at least two days before the day applied for; they should be clearly marked on their website where this information should be easily accessible to other interested parties.

By the way, I wonder what the attitude of the State Opposition would be on this issue? After all, the state election is just 18 months away.