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# **MEDIA RELEASE**

## **Walkers advised to enjoy the last gun-free summer in South Coast National Parks**



*Kangaroo shot by a bow hunter in Murrumbidgee National Park in October 2012, three months before legislation comes into force. [NOTE: Kangaroos are not 'feral animals' and are not lawful targets for hunting.]*

Going for a walk in the bush? From Australia Day 2013 onwards, make sure you slip into a fluorescent vest first.

From 26 January 2013 the Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2012 becomes law, allowing hunters to use guns, rifles and bows and arrows to kill their prey in over 90 per cent of National Parks in NSW - all the hunter has to do is apply online with the Games Council for permission to hunt in the National Park of their choice. There will be no obligation on a hunter to advise Park users that they plan to be shooting on a particular day or in a particular place. Indeed, there doesn't seem to be any provision for hunters to do this, even if they wished to.

Friends of Durras convenor, Mr John Perkins, advises bushwalkers to make the most of the last foreseeable gun-free summer in South Coast National Parks.

'It's difficult to understand how the Australian bush got traded away like this', Mr Perkins said, 'but it appears that the two Upper House members of the Shooters and Fishers Party successfully held the NSW Government to ransom. The O'Farrell Government wanted to privatise electricity, the Shooters and Fishers representatives had the votes to get this over the line, and the safety of the hundreds of thousands of ordinary, peaceful people who value a quiet walk in the bush was the price paid for these.

'On Australia Day, and from then on, those of us who like to go for a bit of a wander in our National Parks - whether this be a 10 day hike or a half hour stroll - are going to have to be very careful that we're not inadvertently putting our bodies on the line.'

Mr Perkins referred to an interview on Radio ABC South East, on 20 September 2012, with Mr Garry Mallard, the Club Secretary of the Bega Valley Traditional Archers - an organisation representing bow hunters. 'Mr Mallard said that hunters are required to wear an item of blaze orange clothing and suggested that other park users should consider doing the same.

'Mr Mallard also said that "it doesn't hurt for everybody to see everybody else",' said Mr Perkins 'but I'm not sure many walkers think of a National Park in the same way we think of a building site or a factory - a place where we need to be constantly on our toes because of the potentially dangerous activities of other workers. Most of us go into the bush because we love the natural environment'.

Mr Perkins said that some hunting organisations suggested that their members should be seen as environmentalists because they targeted feral animals. 'Yet study after study has shown the only way to eradicate feral animals is through scientifically managed programs. This isn't only university modeling, but also on-the-ground research carried out by the National Parks and Wildlife Service among others. Yet the NPWS officers, the ones with the expertise and experience, don't seem to have been listened to at all about the legislation. I suppose it demonstrates we shouldn't let facts get in the way of political expediency'.

Even before the legislation allowing hunting in National Parks comes into effect there have been serious breaches, which Mr Perkins describes as boding ill for the future welfare of Park users. He referred to evidence of the aftermath of hunting in the Murrumbidgee National Park in October 2012, when a kangaroo was shot by a bow hunter but escaped with the arrow embedded in its upper back.

'Mr Mallard claimed in his ABC interview - and I quote - "bow hunters are a very responsible group of people, and I think there is a very high degree of ethics and good conduct within the archery community"' said Mr Perkins. 'Obviously this is not a universally applicable description.

'Or perhaps promoters of hunting would like to argue that the kangaroo should have been wearing its fluorescent vest?'

Link for interview with Garry Mallard: <http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2012/09/20/3594567.htm>