



The Coastwatchers Association Inc.
PO Box 521 Batemans Bay NSW 2536
ABN: 66 003 550 939

Submission re HuntFest application for 2015 event ref
number - E12.6277

The General Manager
PO Box 99
Moruya NSW 2537

Dear General Manager

Firstly thank you for the opportunity to contribute to a formal public exhibition of a proposal on this issue. It is a long overdue chance for formal input which we have been seeking for over 2 years. During this time certain Councillors have sought to impose their views on HuntFest whilst denying there existed substantial opposition. Now at least we can comment on some aspects of the event if not the event as a whole.

We trust that you will acknowledge the number of submissions from non-ratepayers living outside the shire. The differentiation between the residents & non-resident ratepayers on the one hand, and the non-resident, non-ratepayers on the other hand is critical. The pro-hunting networks have been activated nationally and will seek to influence local policy. This potential swamping of local sentiment needs to be exposed from the very outset of any findings you release.



The Coastwatchers Association has embedded in its constitution the following aims:

- c) To investigate threats to the survival of any species or plant and animal communities with a view to the maintenance and enhancement of environmental quality, and where necessary or desirable, oppose such threats.
- d) To develop and where necessary or desirable utilise an understanding of the political and social processes which directly or indirectly affect the natural environment.
- e) To promote those ideas and actions which will enhance humankind's understanding, enjoyment and protection of the natural environment.

Coastwatchers believe the proposal to sell weapons and ammunition at HuntFest runs counter to our aims for the following reasons:

1 Credibility of the Applicant

Coastwatchers Association is concerned with the way HuntFest organisers have been less than truthful about their intentions from the outset in 2012. The generous 5 year licence was granted by Council on the proviso that there would be no guns either displayed or sold. Yet, after HuntFest 2013 came the request (duly granted) to display guns and ammunition despite eloquent and passionate opposition. And now the request has come to sell weapons and ammunition. Had this intention been made clear 2 years ago the initial granting of the licence may not have even occurred.

In an effort to clarify the situation just before the 2014 HuntFest Council wrote to the organisers expressly forbidding the sale of weapons and ammunition. **This clarification was duly ignored and ammunition was sold.** The following receipt for the sale has the purchaser's name blanked out to protect his/her identity. He/she is concerned about retribution. However, if the General Manager requests, the purchaser has agreed to meet privately with the General Manager to produce the original receipt and establish the bona fides of the breach, before going to the media.

public events damages our reputation as a destination for tourists looking for that natural experience.

Furthermore, people in the community who need guns such as police, farmers and professional hunters don't need a fair to be able to purchase firearms. Existing outlets cater well for these legitimate occupations.

4 Weapons sales promote recreational hunting which has resulted in an increase in the targeting of innocent animals. This trend is encouraged when more people in the community find it easier to buy weapons. Furthermore the legitimisation of guns by allowing their sale at a public fair sends a message to kids which is easily misinterpreted. Witness local instances of what has happened with bows and arrows and imagine if these perpetrators (kids or adults) had easier access to guns.



5 Weapon sales are also part of the general push to expand recreational hunting into State Forests and National Parks. There are also multiple reasons why this is not a good idea.

HuntFest proponents would argue that all their weapons customers would be law abiding folks. Whilst this may be true in the majority of cases, there is already a rise in the incidence of illegal hunting activity by people who presumably acquired weapons legally. Compliance is already enough of a headache for authorities that they have to mount joint operations locally to combat all the illegal things people do with legally acquired weapons. Witness the stash seized this year on the south coast.

“THE Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Game Licensing Unit seized a number of hunting related items as part of a compliance crackdown over the June long weekend.

Game Licensing Unit compliance team leader Troy Hogarth said compliance activities uncovered illegal activity in a number of state forests in southern regions of NSW.”



Source: <http://www.batemansbaypost.com.au/story/2345008/weapons-ammo-seized-in-south-coast-hunting-compliance-crackdown/>

Then there are the examples of targeting of wrong animals. For example:

“Six wild brumbies have been found shot dead in a state forest near Lithgow, within a week of the NSW government reopening forests to hunting. Police are investigating the illegal killings at Newnes State Forest near Lithgow and said the fatal shots appeared to have been the work of an experienced marksman. The bodies of four stallions and two mares were found on Sunday afternoon. Hunting in about 200 state forests - including Newnes - was allowed to resume on February 3 after a six-month hiatus.”

Source: <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/brumbies-shot-dead-in-newnes-state-forest-20140212-32ic4.html>

So once it is acknowledged how widespread hunting transgressions are in our forests it raises the issue of public safety of other recreational users of that same forest estate. Since the opening of many State Forests to recreational hunters in NSW in February 2014 there is a growing awareness amongst bushwalkers and

mountain bikers that they are sharing the forest with very dangerous fellow users. This inherent conflict is only exacerbated by more people seeking to recreate with lethal weapons in our National Parks and State Forests. We certainly don't need more weapons sold locally.

6 Weapons sales at arms fairs assist in the gradual normalisation of increased gun ownership in the community. This is part of the agenda of the Shooters and Fishers Party which believes in the right to bear arms as in the USA. There is no need in this submission to go into the terrible price that Americans pay for the right to bear arms. But it needs to be noted that HuntFest emulates of many such "fairs" in the US. Frustrated with power of the gun lobby in the US certain Councils are acting to remove arms fairs entirely.

"Defending the majority of the City Council that voted to ban gun shows on city-owned property, Glendale Mayor Frank Quintero on Tuesday said it was well within the purview of local officials to set guidelines for use of public facilities.

"If we've reached a point where a local jurisdiction cannot decide what goes into their Civic Auditorium and their parks, then we're in sad shape," Quintero said. "The idea that there can't be any control, that you have to just kowtow to the [National Rifle Assn.] and the gun lobby, I disagree."

Source: http://articles.glendalenewspress.com/2013-03-19/news/tn-818-0319-glendale-votes-to-ban-gun-shows-from-city-property_1_glendale-gun-show-ban-gun-glendale-votes

Given the momentum against arms fairs in the US, Eurobodalla Shire Council can take heart that it is not alone in making a stand against the drift towards increased gun ownership in the community.

Indeed Coastwatchers believes Council must take the socially responsible leadership role in this matter. It will be argued by proponents of the application that Council has no right to stand in the way of legal activities. However there are many instances where authorities have limited the extent of legal activities. For example, jet skiing is perfectly legal but we accept boundaries placed around its extent.

Similarly if a proponent applied to Council for a controversial activity such as SEXPO 2015 we would expect Council to examine proposed activities and approve some whilst rejecting others. For example, Council might approve stalls promoting sexual health but reject cubicles where people over 18 could pay to have safe sex despite payment for sex being legal in NSW. The civil liberties argument could be raised by both jet skiers and sex clients but Council would set limits. Similarly, we believe Council is perfectly correct to set limits at HuntFest. Coastwatchers would in fact have set greater limits on HuntFest 2 years ago had we been asked.


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***Coastwatchers Association urges Council to view the current application in the broader context of the issues raised in this submission and act accordingly to refuse the application.***  
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Nick Hopkins
for the Coastwatchers Association Inc.

12th September 2014