

## **SICA Position Statement – Proposed Hog Deer Hunting on Snake Island**

### **“SHOOT PHOTOS NOT BULLETS”**

The Snake Island Cattlemen Association (SICA) has been involved in the management of Snake Island for over 100 years and it is committed to maintaining its traditional stewardship of the island. The SICA encourages and supports many other groups and individuals to visit Snake Island and not only share in its rich history but also to enjoy the unique vistas and the up close interaction with the wildlife which proliferates on and around the island.

Snake Island is located within the Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park and provides habitat for many species of fauna including endangered migratory birds. As a result, Snake Island has been listed as a site of national environmental significance under the RAMSAR convention since 1982. The region is a popular tourist destination as it adjoins Wilsons Promontory which is recognized as Victoria's premier National Park and is managed on behalf of all Victorian citizens by Parks Victoria. Although as a RAMSAR site the Commonwealth Government may have jurisdiction in overseeing activities which may adversely impact on the biodiversity of the region.

Hog Deer were introduced to Victoria around 160 years ago and populations have lived on the island for most of this period. The well-established and stable Snake Island population, of this now globally endangered Hog Deer species, has thrived under the protection of successive governments and all forms of hunting are currently banned on the island.

Unfortunately, the current Andrews Government has decided to withdraw this protection by supporting a trial of balloted hunting of Hog Deer. To make it very clear, the trial has not arisen as a result of over-population or other related adverse impact as has occurred with other deer species in other areas but rather to expressly provide recreational hunters the opportunity to collect trophies, in particular stag heads.

This decision has been taken without any public consultation with other stakeholders or the general public. Past attempts to introduce hunting on Snake Island has been met with significant community opposition.

The SICA has always opposed and remains opposed to the proposed trial on the basis that if it proceeds the access, potential safety and overall experience of other users of the island will be significantly and irreversibly diminished.

Hunting will not just impact on the Hog Deer but also many other native species of birds and animals living and relying on the island. Fauna will understandably become wary and nervous of people, hiding when approached rather than accept close observations and interactions as is the current circumstance for all users of the Island. Many individuals including organized bushwalker groups, kayakers and campers regularly access to the island from multiple access points to explore the island and its fauna. The peak period for these activities being during summer and autumn when the prevailing weather conditions are at their mildest. This is the same period as now being proposed for hunting.

Park Victoria as the land manager has been charged with the responsibility to implement the Governments decision. Given the lack of prior consultation the proposed timelines are very short and an implementation plan is hoped to be completed by early Nov 2016. The SICA, while we remain opposed to the trial, we will continue to work with Parks Victoria and all other users ensure the best possible outcome for Snake Island, in both the short and long term.

There numerous unanswered questions and many details are yet to be articulated regarding the proposed hunting of Hog Deer and time will only tell the true consequences. Groups and /or individuals wishing to follow or comment on this issue can do so via the SICA website [www.snakeisland.com.au](http://www.snakeisland.com.au), directly to Parks Victoria, the Minister Energy, Environment and Climate Change or your local member.