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**Hunting Feral Animals in State Forests: a Step Forward for Conservation**

The International Coalition for Women in Shooting and Hunting (WiSH) has congratulated the New South Wales Government for proposing to use hunters to control feral animals in State Forests.

“Feral animals can have profound effects upon delicate ecosystems, and pose a significant threat to native birds and small mammals. With conservation funding in Australia limited and overstretched, the important role of volunteers in species-specific feral animal mitigation strategies cannot be overlooked,” explained WiSH Chairwoman Ms Samara McPhedran.

The proposal will allow accredited hunters to obtain a special licence to take part in control programs in various State Forests. South Australia, Victoria, and Tasmania have already implemented similar initiatives, with great success and community support.

In 2004, the Pest Animal Control Cooperative Research Centre stated that feral pests cost Australia more than \$720 million each year. These figures do not address the indirect or long term effects of land degradation and loss of biodiversity.

“The New South Wales Government must be commended for their willingness to embrace proven management initiatives and to look for alternatives to poison baiting. The ability to place evidence-based environmental protection methods ahead of emotional anti-hunting rhetoric is a step in the right direction for conservation in Australia,” Ms McPhedran finished.

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