



David Shoebridge MLC
Member of the NSW Legislative Council

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Submission
8 October 2014

The General Manager
Eurobodalla Shire Council
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RE: Huntfest Licence Amendment E12.6277

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission and formally respond to council's current consideration of Huntfest's license.

I write on behalf of the Greens NSW to lodge an objection to the Huntfest licence amendment that seeks to allow event organisers to apply for an unrestricted Arms Fair Permit with the Firearms Registry and to operate a mobile air rifle range.

My office has received a numerous representations from local residents and community groups raising their substantial and, in my opinion, justified concerns about the proposal. Objections from the community relate to the impact the proposal would have on the culture, tourism and local environment of Narooma.

The community representatives that have contacted my office have stated their strong opposition to the pro-gun and pro-killing culture that Huntfest already promotes and celebrates. Allowing the sale of firearms and ammunition during Huntfest will only entrench this culture and assist in the normalisation of increased gun ownership in the community.

The original application for Huntfest that was approved by Council in 2012 put the event forward as a photo and DVD competition which glorifies the hunting and killing of animals.

The original development application is now proposed to be radically amended to become, quite literally, an arms fair. Narooma should never be known as the home of an arms fair and the centre of a gun and hunting culture. It is a beautiful south coast, seaside town renowned for its unspoiled local and regional environment.

There is significant legal uncertainty as to the lawfulness of allowing this amendment which has deviated significantly from the original development approval. Section 96 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act only permits a consent authority to grant an amendment only if "it is satisfied that the development to which the consent as modified is substantially the same development as the development for which consent was originally granted."



Clearly an arms fair and the exhibition and sale of weaponry is a substantially different development than the originally approved photographic exhibition. A common sense test must be applied by council and on any common sense view of the matter a photographic exhibition cannot be said to be substantially the same as an arms fair. Therefore, it would be unlawful for the council to grant approval to this application by way of Section 96 of the Act.

Of particular concern to the community is the fact that Huntfest is an event which markets itself as “family friendly” by encouraging the attendance of children through free admittance to anyone under the age of 12. The legitimisation of guns through their sale in a festival environment would send an inappropriate message to children. Exposing children to a culture that aims to normalise guns and promote the killing of animals is both dangerous and unnecessary and I would urge council to take this into account in considering this proposal.

Residents are rightly concerned about the impact of guns being made accessible and brought into the community. The sale of firearms and weapons also promotes recreational hunting, a practice which has resulted in an increase in the targeting of not only introduced, but also native animals. There are many disturbing incidents of animal cruelty associated with the hunting culture in NSW with evidence regularly received by my office of native animals and birds wounded and maimed by hunters. A small sample can be accessed by council here: <http://animalsinthewild.info/>

Though firearms do have a valid place in our society, access to firearms should be limited to people who can demonstrate a genuine reason to own one rather than promoted and glorified through public exhibition.

Residents have also expressed concern about the impact that strengthening Huntfest as an event will have on tourism. If this amendment was granted it would promote a gun culture in Narooma which is at odds to the belief in the broad cross section of the community that Narooma is a peaceful and tolerant town renowned for a love of nature rather than a love of hunting and killing. It would be both senseless and short-sighted to have the area’s tourism rely solely on just one weekend of the year.

Local government exists to give a crucial voice to residents and is an essential part of our democracy being in the best position to identify and respond to the needs and wishes of the community. A petition of more than 40,000 signees have called for an end to Narooma’s Huntfest and its glorification of guns and killing.

I would urge council to support the Eurobodalla community who have serious and genuine concerns about this proposal and reject the proposed amendment to Huntfest’s license.



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Please do not hesitate to contact my office at david.shoebridge@parliament.nsw.gov.au or (02) 9230 3030 if you have any questions regarding this submission or require further information.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Shoebridge', written in a cursive style.

David Shoebridge

NSW Greens MP and Firearms Spokesperson
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