

# BOWHUNTING

INFORMATION SERVICES TEAM

NOVEMBER 2022

## HUNTING WITH TRADITIONAL WEAPONS IS A CULTURAL RIGHT

Bowhunting is a traditional form of hunting that has existed for many thousands of years, while crossbow hunting has existed for many centuries. They are an effective and ethical means of harvesting game animals and eliminating pests in skilled hands.

Hunting is a natural right, so it follows that people have a right to possess the practical means of hunting, which cannot be a firearm in most nations as the ownership of such weapons is deemed a 'privilege' rather than a 'right' due to the danger they pose to public safety, while traditional weapons like spears are not suited to people who are weak, sick, injured, have a disability, or simply lack the coordination to use them effectively, which means bows and crossbows must be allowed for hunting use, though steps must be taken to promote responsible use.

It is also unreasonable on equity grounds to prohibit the use of bows and crossbows for hunting as doing so disproportionately impacts the poor who would find it prohibitive to use firearms due to the expense associated with shooter licensing, firearm registration, safe storage, et al.

Such bans also brings the law into disrepute as bowhunting and crossbow hunting have not been proven to be inherently less humane than many other forms of hunting such as with spears,



Sarpeye warriors (northern Queensland) with tradition hunting bows.

throwing axes or firearms, the primary killing mechanism for all being rapid blood loss as the heart/lungs are the normal target as they are far larger than a small brain protected by a skull. In many cases it is unethical to shoot at the brain as it often results in a wounded animal with an intact heart/lungs that can easily escape and suffer a slow death, typically due to infection.

Banning such hunting also results in more people using firearms (some illegally if unable or unwilling to obtain a firearms licence), which pose a far greater threat to public safety. A rifle round like the .30-06 is capable of killing a person over three kilometres away, while unscrupulous gun lobbyists and gun manufacturers covertly support a ban on bowhunting and crossbow hunting as they want to

promote the sale of firearms, while animal rights groups are ideologically opposed to all forms of hunting and want to use a ban on one type of hunting as a precedent to ban many more.

Traditional forms of hunting are a cultural right, thus banning them is a form of cultural genocide, with such bans having been imposed on indigenous people by invaders and colonizers who routinely depicted them as "barbarians" who should source food from [their] farms.

In closing, said bans are often justified on the grounds that some people misuse them, notably casual users who lack the skills and experience needed to routinely make clean kills, but this punishes responsible users so is a violation of natural justice and would not stop irresponsible people using them illegally. ■

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Hunting is a natural right.
2. The use of traditional hunting weapons is a cultural right.
3. High wounding rates with bows and crossbows are a result of casual users who lack the skills and experience possessed by most indigenous hunters.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Enact laws protecting hunting and the use of traditional hunting weapons like bows and spears.
2. Promote responsible hunting via a hunting permit (not needed by people of indigenous decent using traditional weapons).

## PRIMARY SOURCES

*The Ethics of Bow Hunting for Deer*, Arthur Jaggard, AuthorHouse, 2004.

*Inquiry into Issues Related to Bow and Crossbow Hunting in South Australia*, Forty-Fifth Report of the Social Development Committee, Parliament of South Australia, 2021.

*Recognition and Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, Sue Gordon, Nelson Modern History, 2014.

*The Role of Bowhunting in Wildlife Management*, Technical Review 99-1, The Wildlife Society, 1999.

*STAY ON TARGET: Be an Ethical Bowhunter*, Department of Primary Industries, NSW Government, 2017.

*United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, United Nations, 61-297, 2007.

## BOWHUNTERS WITH A DISABILITY

Archery is a popular sport for people with a disability, some of whom are bowhunters. Most are unable to use traditional hunting weapons like spears, while many prefer not to use firearms due to the danger they pose to public safety, the noise they generate, or the expense and red tape associated with ownership as

such people are more likely to be poor than able bodied people, thus banning such hunting disproportionately impacts them. As with able bodied shooters, people with a disability enjoy the challenge and physicality of harvesting game animals or eliminating pest species with a bow or crossbow. ■

