

12 August 2019

**Re: Support for Wildlife Amendment (Protection of Birds) Bill
2019**

We are writing in support of the **Wildlife Amendment (Protection of Birds) Bill 2019**, introduced by Animal Justice Party MP Andy Meddick into the Victorian Parliament earlier this year. The Bill seeks to prohibit recreational duck shooting in Victoria.

We put forward five reasons why this ban should be supported:

1. Recreational duck shooters in Victoria have consistently failed to adequately comply with regulations;
2. Recreational duck shooting involves unavoidable cruelty;
3. Recreational duck shooting is not supported by Victorians;
4. Recreational duck shooting has been banned in three Australian jurisdictions;
5. Alternatives to duck shooting in Victoria's wetlands are more profitable for the Victorian economy.

1. Recreational duck shooters in Victoria have consistently failed to adequately comply with regulations

In 2017, Victoria's Game Management Authority engaged Pegasus Economics to provide an independent assessment of the Authority's compliance and enforcement function. The assessment found that "[w]hile many hunters are law-abiding and responsible, non-compliance with the game hunting laws is commonplace and widespread".¹ This finding did not come as a surprise, given the many media reports exposing non-compliance by Victorian duck shooters every year.²

From a conservation perspective, this non-compliance is particularly concerning, as it has been revealed that protected threatened species (such as the Freckled Duck) are regularly shot.³

2. Recreational duck shooting involves unavoidable cruelty

Australia's animal welfare regulator, the RSPCA, "opposes the recreational hunting of ducks because of the inherent and inevitable pain and suffering caused".⁴ They acknowledge the unavoidable

¹ Pegasus Economics, *Assessment of the GMA's compliance and enforcement function* (2017)

<https://www.gma.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/435551/2017-Assessment-of-the-GMA-compliance-and-enforcement-function.pdf>

² See for example: ABC News, 'Discovery of nearly 200 dead ducks dumped in pit reignites debate over hunting' 29 March 2017

<<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-03-29/illegal-duck-shooting-prompts-hunting-licence-arrangements/8396430>>

³ SBS News, 'Endangered ducks killed on Vic wetlands' (2017)

<<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/endangered-ducks-killed-on-vic-wetlands>>

⁴ RSPCA Australia, 'What is the RSPCA's view on duck hunting?' (2019)

<<https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-is-the-rspcas-view-on-duck-hunting/>>

cruelty involved in shooting free-ranging wild animals with shotguns:

Some of these ducks will be killed outright. Some will be wounded, brought down and killed on retrieval. Many others will be crippled or wounded and will die within a few hours or days. Some will suffer prolonged pain before they die.

Shotguns fire a cluster of pellets rather than a single bullet as with a rifle. Shotguns rely upon hitting vital organs (mainly heart and lungs) in the body to cause death. As there are always open spaces in the pellet cluster, many ducks are hit with shot but are not killed outright. That is, wings and other body tissues and organs may be hit causing injury but not death. Even the most accurate shooters cannot kill reliably. Thus, large scale cruelty is inevitable. Some ducks will drown, whilst others may be unable to fly, or feed, thus leaving them exposed to starvation, the elements or predators.

Inadequate compliance, monitoring and enforcement compounds this problem, resulting in wounded birds suffering every hunting season.

3. Recreational duck shooting is not supported by Victorians

A 2007 Roy Morgan Research survey (funded by Voiceless and the Coalition Against Duck Shooting) found that 75% of Victorians support a ban on duck shooting in the state:⁵

A large majority of Victorians (75%) think that the shooting of native water birds for recreational purposes should be banned in Victoria. Twenty percent think it should not be banned, and 5% are undecided...

⁵ Roy Morgan, 'Majority of Victorians Want Duck Shooting Banned' (2007)
<<http://www.roymorgan.com/findings/finding-4239-201302262309>>

When informed that due to drought and climate change, the numbers of native water birds across eastern Australia have dropped by over 80%, that at least one in four native water birds shot at are wounded, and that duck shooting has been banned in WA, NSW and Queensland, the proportion of Victorians who want to see the activity banned increases to 87%. Then just 10% of Victorians think it should not be banned, and 3% remain undecided.

The failure to legislate a ban on duck shooting in the face of such overwhelming support constitutes inadequate representation of the interests and concerns of a majority of Victorians.

4. Recreational duck shooting has been banned in three Australian jurisdictions

Recreational duck shooting is banned in Western Australia, NSW and Queensland. By failing to legislate a ban on duck hunting, Victoria is lagging behind other jurisdictions, contributing to an unacceptable jurisdictional inconsistency in Australia's regulatory approach to animal welfare and conservation.

5. Alternatives to duck shooting in Victoria's wetlands are more profitable to the Victorian economy

There are approximately 26,000 registered duck hunters in Victoria, with only a portion of those registered regularly engaging in hunting.⁶ There are just over 6 million people living in Victoria, making registered duck hunters constitute less than 0.5% of the total population. Duck hunting benefits this small proportion of people, to the detriment of the vast majority of Victorians and the Victorian economy as a whole. Wetlands tourism would be a far more profitable alternative to this dangerous and outdated 'sport', which

⁶ Game Management Authority, 'FAQs' <<http://www.gma.vic.gov.au/faqs>>



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would also provide conservation benefits for both wetlands and native waterbird conservation.

We look forward to receiving your response, and please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to discuss this further.

Kind regards,



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