

Hunt anger

By Peter Bannan

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AN anti-duck hunting group says it's disappointed that after years of "consultation" its interests have been left out of the draft Victorian Hunting Regulations.

Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting made a submission to the draft document, which would govern hunting in vast swathes of public areas across the state, for the next decade.

"While the government says it has a 'policy to grow hunting' - which in our opinion is odd as there are more important things in 2024 - in the lead up to the 2022 Victorian election, the Labor Government also stated policies of 'protecting our waterways so our wildlife can thrive', and 'standing up for safety'," a RVODS spokesperson said.

"The current draft regulations do neither."

Recommendations from RVOTDS were to implement mandatory hunter education/proficiency training (a recommendation of a recent parliamentary inquiry), an immediate ban on toxic lead ammunition and non-biodegradable plastic components, a vast reduction in public areas available to hunters (also a key finding of the inquiry), a reduced hunting season length and hunting to only occur after 8am to before sunset, to ensure appropriate light conditions.

Other groups agreed the age of hunters should be raised to 18 years of age, that hunting licence fees were too cheap, forcing taxpayers to cough up significant subsidies, and that claims of "economic benefit" from hunting were false.

RVOTDS said it hoped to see the interests of non-hunters reflected in the regulations.

"We'd like to see hunting groups fund their own pursuits and the government promote other outdoor activities instead which are safer, more popular and financially beneficial, such as wildlife watching - a multi-billion dollar industry globally and growing," the spokesperson said.

"This is what could really set our country apart, given our unique wildlife."

In the submission, RVOTDS said the draft

regulations failed to consider the "significant adverse" impacts of hunting on regional residents, landowners, or other recreational users, "let alone the fragile and worsening state of our ecosystems".

"It ignores key recommendations and findings of the recent parliamentary inquiry to do with hunter training, pollution remedy and reduction in public areas for hunting," the submission said. "It ignores glaring issues of public safety."

"Public safety is not increasing public areas available to unmonitored hunters, refusing to conduct risk assessments, allowing hunting to occur in poor light conditions, and in so many thousands of public areas that authorities can't estimate the number let alone monitor them."

"Public safety is also not lengthening the shooting seasons, ignoring noise pollution, postponing hunter education or proficiency training, delaying acting on toxic lead or non-biodegradable plastic pollution."

"And it certainly isn't failing to ensure hunters advise authorities in advance of where they will be hunting and when, like they do in other states."

The Victorian Government said the game regulations were a critical component of Victoria's regulatory framework for recreational game hunting (including deer, game ducks, and stubble quail).

They are made under the Wildlife Act 1975 and set out a range of matters for recreational hunting, such as licensing requirements, default bag and season limits for game and key restrictions and offences related to game hunting.

"The remaking of the current regulations provides an opportunity to introduce common sense changes and reforms to make recreational hunting even more responsible and to ensure it can continue to remain safe and sustainable," the government said.

There were several changes and reforms in the proposed regulations, which were informed by the government's response to the Legislative Council Select Committee Inquiry into Victoria's Recreational Native Bird Hunting Arrangements.