

# Duck season divide

By Djembe Archibald

Changes to the 2025 duck hunting season have polarised different sections of the community.

The Victorian duck hunting season will begin on March 19 and run for 83 days until June 9, up from 56 days in 2024.

Hunters can bag nine ducks a day, up from six, with seven duck species allowed.

Field and Game Australia chief executive officer Lucas Cooke said he feels good about the upcoming season, while Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting campaign manager Elizabeth McCann had the opposite view.

"The main changes I was seeing this year are positive so we're seeing a definite shift towards the world's best practice of adaptive harvest management," Mr Cooke said.

"I was seeing the implementation of a science-based system when it comes to setting the season, and we're seeing a reduction of political ideological interference with what should have always been a scientific process."

Although Mr Cooke sees it as a step forward, they are "quietly positive" as there are some points of tension for the team.

"We do still have some concerns about possible bureaucratic interference, political interference with the season setting," he said.

"The adaptive harvest management has still a couple of trigger points in it where changes can be made so that's our concern — its not



Wood ducks are among the seven species allowed to be hunted this season. Photo: Eleanor Dilley.

an entirely scientific process.

"It still has to be turning points where department and minister still get to make a decision based on whatever it is that they use to make a decision.

"I think the other part that concerned us about is ... groups trying to close wetlands for some pretty questionable reasons that obviously limit the places we have to hunt so we're also watching that space keen to see what they want to cook for us.

"But overall, it's overwhelmingly positive."

Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting campaign manager Elizabeth McCann had the opposite view.

"Unfortunately, there is nothing positive about the government's announcement," Ms McCann said.

"We have been flooded

with texts and emails from our supporters who are shocked and appalled at the complete disregard by the government for not only our struggling native birdlife (many species unique to our country), but our regional communities."

Their position is not one of animal welfare alone, with concern for the people impacted by the noise and shock.

"Duck shooting is a financial disaster for Victoria — especially the regions. It keeps tourists away," Ms McCann said.

"People can't work from home and shift workers can't sleep. The gunfire sends children into tears and distresses animals.

"Less than half of one per cent of the population shoot ducks these days, so why do they need to be able to do so

at so many thousands of public areas?"

The other concerns are the impact on the environment and the Victorian Government's position.

"From a sustainability point of view, the best available science shows duck numbers have crashed," she said.

"Ultimately, in ignoring the key recommendation of the Parliamentary Inquiry to ban duck shooting, and now extending the shooting, the Allan Government has thumbed its nose at the Victorian public, particularly those in the regions.

"This is not about science but about political desperation for union money and votes.

"The government doesn't give a damn about rural communities, they care about their union mates."