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Herald Sun

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Minister Steve Dimopoulos ignores departmental advice on game duck regulations

The Allan government went against their own department's advice on hunting regulations in Victoria, allowing for a threatened native species to be included in the game duck list.



[Ian Royall](#) Exclusive

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Environment Minister Steve Dimopoulos went against his own department's advice on hunting regulations in Victoria, allowing for a threatened native species to be included in the game duck list.

Mr Dimopoulos, also the Minister for Outdoor Recreation, used his position to also approve the use of controversial electronic bird callers – against the recommendations of his department.

Internal documents, obtained under Freedom of Information laws, show that the final departmental advice to government had been prepared just three days after more than 5500 public submissions and survey responses had been provided to a review of the state's wildlife regulations.

Mr Dimopoulos personally signed and ordered a change to the recommendations last August, writing: "Please leave blue-winged shoveler on the game list."

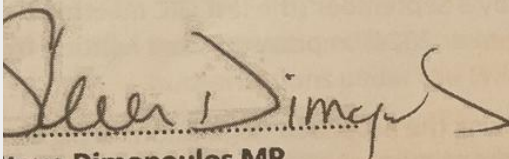
Even though the blue-winged shoveler is on the game list, it is classified as a threatened species and hunting of the native birds was previously banned, including during the 2024 duck-hunting season from April to June.

Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting spokesperson Kerrie Allen described as “concerning” that an Environment Minister overruled his own department’s advice.

“And instead he allowed known environmental hazards to continue.”

The ministerial decisions made it difficult to see how public feedback was at all considered by the government, she said.

“The regulations concern critical matters of sustainability, animal welfare, public safety and amenity at over 50 per cent of Victoria’s public area at a significant expense to taxpayers,” she said.

to be notified of your decision:		Not Relevant (DJSIR) - Senior Regulatory Policy Officer;	Not Relevant (DJSIR) - Manager,
		Outdoor Recreation Policy	
 Steve Dimopoulos MP Minister for Outdoor Recreation Date: 7/7/24		Comments: 1) Please leave Blue-winged Shoalies on the game list. 2) Continue to allow use of electronic calls for duck hunting. 3) Amend the game licence prices to remove the extra 50c for non-residents 4) Update the letters to reflect the above	

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The revelations come as the state government considers its position on this year’s duck shooting arrangements after last year’s season [controversially went ahead](#) despite the [recommendations of a parliamentary committee](#) calling for the [divisive practice](#) to be banned.

The documents – secured by the FOI process from both the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action – showed that the minister’s calls were made on August 7, just nine days after the public consultation period ended.

Mr Dimopoulos also personally overrode bureaucrats' advice on the contentious electronic duck callers which are banned in many parts of the world.

“Bird callers are banned in many regions globally due to concerns about unsustainable harvesting,” the DJSIR report said.

It also said the state's hunting regulator, the Game Management Authority, had called for a permanent ban on the callers “for all indigenous gamebirds”.

Even some hunters supported a ban saying the callers were “unethical and against the spirit of a fair chase”.

But Mr Dimopoulos ruled that the callers should stay.



Victorian Minister for Outdoor Recreation Steve Dimopoulos.

A Victorian government spokesperson said duck hunting was a “legitimate activity”.

“But more than that, it supports regional communities and economies.

“We’ve consulted extensively to ensure that the right protections are in place for both the environment and the public.”

The Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2024 did ban the use of electronic callers for hunting stubble quail and non-indigenous game birds but allowed for their continued use for duck hunting.

But Ms Allen said the regulations were clearly rushed.

“On top of that, latest University NSW Centre for Ecosystem Science data shows our native ducks have crashed in number to well below long-term averages and aren’t breeding.

“We are calling on the minister to do the right thing and call off the impending bird shoots.”

No decision has yet been made on the 2025 duck hunting season in Victoria. The sport is banned in the ACT, NSW, Queensland and Western Australia.

