

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Question No: 2496

Asked by: Ms Fiona Patten (Northern Metropolitan)

Question:

To ask the Minister for Agriculture: In relation to the Game Management Authority (GMA) and bird shooting season:

- (1) How many compliance patrols did the GMA perform on the opening weekend of quail shooting and at how many areas.
- (2) How many compliance patrols will the GMA perform on an ongoing basis throughout the quail shooting season.
- (3) What percentage of the allowed quail hunting area is monitored by the GMA.
- (4) Why did the GMA fail to include in their recommendation to the Ministers on the 2020 native bird shooting season, that the wetland area index, which is directly equitable to waterbird abundance, was the lowest ever recorded since surveys began 37 years ago and that there was little breeding with swans and ibis which accounted for 97 per cent of the record.
- (5) Why did the GMA fail to report that birds observed in Victoria had declined by 40 per cent since last year and that due to lack of water habitat between states there was little opportunity for movement.
- (6) How will the GMA ensure 'sustainability' when 'harvest estimates' are by their own admission unreliable.
- (7) What is the justification for a later 8.00 a.m. start time on the weekend.
- (8) What is the legally required distance that recreational hunters must be away from —
 - (a) residents' homes;
 - (b) public roads; and
 - (c) populous places.
- (9) What is the working definition for the word 'populous'.
- (10) How does the GMA monitor that recreational hunters are maintaining the legally required distance from the locations in (9).

Reply:

The 2020 Stubble Quail season commenced on Saturday 4 April and closed on Tuesday 30 June 2020. The hunting of Stubble Quail is permitted from half an hour before sunrise to half an hour after sunset during the open season. The open season for Stubble Quail is timed to occur when the population is at its maximum and to avoid periods of vulnerability (e.g. breeding; moulting).

In Victoria, hunting of Stubble Quail is primarily conducted on private property in addition to 16 State Game Reserves. The GMA takes a risk-based, intelligence-led approach to its compliance and enforcement operations. Patrol areas in 2020 were based on areas known to have quail in previous years and were focussed on grasslands and stubble paddocks. I am advised that Game Officers spent 89.75 hours patrolling approximately 8,700 km² over the first several days of the season.

Questions about the application of the *Firearms Act 1996* in respect of a person possessing, carrying or using a firearm should be directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.



Jaclyn Symes MP
Minister for Agriculture