

Duck hunting creates stress, survey finds

SHOOTING

SARAH MENNIE

People are suffering stress and anxiety due to being near duck shooting activities, a new survey has found.

Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting (RVOTDS) commissioned the survey to assess the impacts of duck shooting on the community.

About 800 people completed the survey, with more than half of the respondents saying they had concerns for safety and had suffered stress and anxiety due to bird shooting nearby.

Over a quarter of respondents said they had reported what they believed to be illegal hunter behaviour to authorities.

Only 18 percent said they were satisfied with how their reports were managed.

The RVOTDS survey results have been submitted to the state parliamentary inquiry into Victoria's recreational native bird hunting arrangements.

The inquiry has received more than 9000 submissions.

"Residents are suffering from adverse impacts on mental health and income, children and animals are traumatized. Farmers are on edge," RVOTDS project officer Sue Williams said.

"These are folks paying significant rates, with a legal right to peaceful enjoyment of their properties. They're suffering for the whims of less than half of one percent of the population who choose to fire shotguns at native birds for recreation."

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The parliamentary inquiry is investigating the social and economic impact of recreational bird hunting and its 'environmental sustainability and impact on amenity'.

The operation of native bird hunting seasons and how other states manage bird hunting will also be considered.

Duck shooting is banned in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia.

This year's Victorian duck shooting season ran for five weeks from April 26 to May 30.

One RVOTDS survey respondent who listed their postcode as 3465 said they had found injured birds as a result of shooting.

"For a 'sport' that has less than one percent of the population of Victoria, there should be no taxpayer dollars used. We who live in regional Victoria would be happy to share more beneficial ways to use our money. I have, and members of my club, the Maryborough Field Naturalists Club, have found injured birds as a result of shooting,"

the respondent said.

During the 2023 duck shooting season, the Game Management Authority's (GMA) officers conducted 469 patrols at 216 wetlands across Victoria.

"Most hunters we spoke to were complying with the law and enjoying their time on the wetlands. However, some hunters and protestors were in breach of game hunting and public safety laws," the GMA said in a statement.

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A total of 45 breaches were detected including people hunting without a valid game licence and entering a wetland without authorisation.

In a submission to the parliamentary inquiry, the Parliamentary Budget Office estimated recreational native bird hunting would contribute \$12 million to the Victorian economy in the year 2023-24.

It also estimated it would support 81.3 full time equivalent jobs across the state.

One of many submissions made to the inquiry in support of duck shooting was by the Sporting Shooters Association Australia Victoria (SSAA).

"The recreational hunting of duck and quail in Victoria is safe, sustainable and well-regulated," the SSAA said in its submission.

"The motivations of recreational bird hunters are varied; however, common among them is a connection with nature, overcoming the mental and physical challenges of hunting successfully and the reward of wild, free-range game meat."

The parliamentary committee is due to report its findings and recommendations by August 31, 2023.