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Safe havens for people and wildlife

Kerrie Allen, Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting Inc.

Submissions are now closed re the draft Victorian Hunting Regulations, set to govern hunting in vast swathes of public areas across the state for the next decade.

Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting inc is disappointed that after years of 'consultation', the interests of non-hunters, specifically regional residents, landowners and other recreational users, have been left out of the draft.

RVOTDS' main recommendations re the draft, were to implement mandatory hunter education/proficiency training (a recommendation of the 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.

It's recommendations were echoed by many other groups including regional field naturalist and environmental groups in their submissions.

Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, which has been a key player in conservation since 1880 and is opposed to native duck and quail shooting, said "(the) shooting exposes all visitors and personnel to considerable risk and limits safe access to our natural resource for the vast majority of Victorians who wish to use these places for peaceful recreational activities".

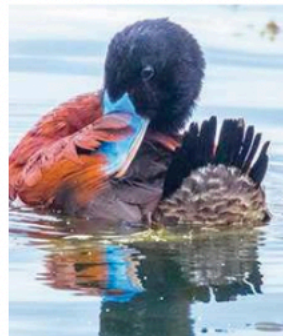
Many groups agreed that the age of hunters should be raised from 12 to 18yo in line with the National Firearms Agreement, that hunting licence fees were too cheap, forcing taxpayers to cough up significant subsidies, and that claims of 'economic

benefit' from hunting were false.

FNCV said "funding is borne by the taxpayer and amounts to millions of dollars that would be far better spent in the interests of the majority of Victorians on environmental protection and conservation".

RVOTDS hopes to see the interests of non-hunters, who represent 99% of the population, reflected in the Regulations. We'd like to see 1. hunting groups fund their own pursuits and 2. 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. This is what could really set our country apart, given our unique wildlife.

– Kerrie Allen is a spokesperson for not -for-profit group Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting inc. which promotes "A better way for our waterways".



The blue-billed duck is a threatened species and not supposed to be shot, but almost every year there are incidents of it being killed as collateral damage. Photo: Nalini Scarfe