

Updating duck shooting regulations

Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting (RVOTDS) claim Regional Victorians have been ignored in new moves to update the state's hunting regulations.

A meeting with non-hunting stakeholders last week flagged several overdue reforms but did nothing to address longstanding concerns: too many hunting grounds, too close to homes and businesses, and the three-month duck shooting season is excessive.

The number of active duck shooters has plunged 90 per cent since the 1980s, from an estimated 100,000 to 8,000 last year. Yet the number of public State Game Reserves (where the public are restricted so shooters can shoot with no-one around) has actually INCREASED to 200.

And there are thousands of other (non State Game Reserve) public lakes, streams, creeks, wetlands, reservoirs and rivers open to shooters too. No government authority has been able to estimate their number, or provide a legal

basis for their use as hunting zones. It's impossible to monitor shooting at so many sites. And other users of these wetlands and waterways are effectively locked out for a quarter of the year. It's also time we called out the noise



Australia's rarest native duck, the Freckled Duck, thought to be one of the world's rarest. Collateral damage in recreational duck shooting. Pic Eleanor Dilley

pollution (as well as the poor behaviour and inevitable cruelty) of duck shooting season. And we're tired of paying taxes to prop up this unwelcome activity.

Just before Christmas the Andrews government quietly announced another \$5.3m "Sustainable Hunting Action Plan" which commits to such programs and promote the unpopular activity for another four years

The plan mentions no increase in licence fees to make game hunters pay for these burgeoning costs of researching and "managing" their hobby. Hunting bureaucrats spruik controversial "economic benefits" from duck shooting. Government shows no interest in holding a real cost-benefit analysis or the negative impacts of duck season.

Regional residents have no way to seek an end to duck shooting at even one location despite the gross over-supply of shooting sites. Well-argued community appeals to create a bird sanctuary at Cairn Curran, Lakes Bullrush and Linlithgow, and Richardson's Lagoon have hit a brick wall. The Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions and the Game Management Authority say it's a land classification issue but the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning says it doesn't handle hunting policy.

An alliance of more than 70 groups and growing – First Nations Clans, business, union, wildlife, animal welfare and environment groups - recently placed advertisements in newspapers across the state seeking a ban on duck shooting.

Stay tuned for details of the public consultation likely in Feb-March, but still to be announced by the Andrews government.
