

# Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting calls for duck season cancellation

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Picture: Eleanor Dilley.

Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting inc (RVOTDS) has called for the 2023 native duck and quail shoots to be cancelled.

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The call for the ban is based on continued declines in the bird populations, lack of breeding, and significant adverse impacts of hunting on protected species and regional communities not yet adequately investigated by the hunting regulator.

Previous governments closed shooting seasons in 2003, 2007 and 2008 for less dire circumstances.

RVOTDS' Director of Health and Safety, Fiona Byrnes said it was appalling that health and safety risk assessments hadn't been conducted for nearby residents and that the restrictions did not work.

"It can't be monitored and it costs taxpayers significant dollars even trying," she said.

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Ms Byrnes also argued that the economic impacts of a total ban would be positive.

"The Parliamentary Budget Office in 2021 put the net spend of duck shooting at just \$10 mil across the state with Melbourne obtaining most of it," she said.

"Tourists who birdwatched spent \$2.88 billion in the first year data was collected.

"It's widely known that shooting deters tourism. So when a minority pastime hampers a billion dollar industry, it's clear to most what's better for the social and economic health of the region".

The group said regional Victorian wetlands were a golden tourism opportunity.

"Consider Phillip Island Nature Parks - which brings \$120 million just to the local Bass Coast area," Ms Byrnes added.

"Unlike most species of our native ducks and waterbirds, penguins aren't even unique.

"It's time to say no to the shotguns, and welcome the binoculars instead." Recreational bird shooting is banned in NSW, QLD and WA.

In Victoria, less than half of one percent of the population participate in it, while polls show most Victorians, particularly regional, want the pastime to end.