

# Council reaffirms hunt stance

By Jena Carr

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Surf Coast Shire Council has responded to two petitions regarding duck shooting in the Modewarre area.

Council acknowledged the petitions during its Tuesday, June 25, meeting after formally being received during its May meeting.

The petitions were titled 'Petition of Permanent Closure of Lake Gherang and Lake Modewarre to Duck Shooting', which opposed the closures, and 'Closure of Brown Swamp and Lake Modewarre to All Native Bird Shooting', which called for the closures.

Council also reaffirmed (8-1) that it would write to relevant state government authorities to inform them of safety concerns from duck shooting in parts of Modewarre and request permanent closures of those areas.

Councillor Heather Wellington said it was important to hear both sides of the issue but that the council's response should reflect Surf Coast Shire's residents.

"It is extraordinary that we wouldn't activate for residents impacted by shooting...when there are opportunities for hunters to go elsewhere,"

she said. "Children are being woken up by gunshots...and there is no doubt that having shooting activities happening near residential homes can be disturbing."

Cr Paul Barker said in a previous meeting that shooting had been taking place across the Modewarre area for many years.

"These petitions could impact how these areas can be used by individuals who currently enjoy duck hunting, a legitimate recreational activity," he said. "Since this issue was raised, I've met local hunters and have been thoroughly impressed with their conservation efforts and voluntary contributions to managing waterways for decades."

Council will notify the lead petitioners of its resolution and provide contact information for the relevant state government bodies responsible for duck hunting in Victoria.

The duck shooting season finished on June 5, with Lake Modewarre closed to hunters three days after the season started on April 13.

Game Management Authority issued 22 notices for breaching public safety laws by hindering and harassing hunters and recorded 26 hunting-related offences during the season.