



OPINION

The other side of the barrel

By Tim Haddad

Government data shows less than half of one per cent of the population shoot native ducks for 'recreation.'

The fact is duck shooting is not, and never has been, 'tradition' for the vast majority of Victorians.

Most Victorians abhor any kind of animal cruelty.

The Australian Veterinary Association, RSPCA, Humane Society International and every other respected animal welfare organisation condemns duck shooting.

Why? Because it's cruel.

Ducks are shot — or should we say sprayed — with masses of shotgun pellets. Most don't hit the target.

If they're lucky, some of these birds (many species unique to our country by the way) are killed outright.

Many others are only wounded, flapping off to die a slow and agonising death elsewhere.

Ballistics experts put the wound (non-kill) rate at 25 per cent. Documents obtained through Freedom of Information (FOI), tell us the Victorian hunting regulator

believes it could be up to 60 per cent or higher.

If this occurred in an abattoir there would be prosecutions.

It's not pleasant seeing birds with bills blasted off, wings shattered, legs broken and bodies bleeding limping desperately across our paddocks in search of safety.

Sadly it's the lived experience of many regional Victorians each 'recreational' native bird hunting season.

Due to antiquated law (not that it's written in any legal instrument, mind you), 'recreational' native bird shooting is permitted at more than half the state's public area.

Victoria's population is now 6.8 million. A quarter of us live regionally, often unwittingly near unmarked outdoor shooting ranges.

It's regional residents and landowners who know the brutal truth about duck shooting. In fact, a good many of us are outright disadvantaged by it.

Unsustainable and unwanted

Shift workers can't sleep and people can't work from home due to gunfire in close



proximity from before sunrise to after sunset every day for three months.

Horses are sent through fences because of it. Children are traumatised. Friends won't visit. Farm practices are

curtailed for fear of wayward shotgun spray. Tourism dies.

Thousands of public lakes, rivers and reservoirs around Victoria are rendered unusable for the 99.8 per cent of Victorians who don't shoot

birds and would like to enjoy their public amenity in peace.

From an environmental perspective, conservation does not equal pumping millions of non-biodegradable plastic components from

shotguns into our precious ecosystems.

Via FOI we know the regulator puts it at 2.2 million bits of non-biodegradable plastic each duck shooting season.

Nor does it equal killing and maiming native duck populations which are in alarming decline, or the threatened species caught in the crossfire reported as collateral damage each shoot.

Show us the money

Economically, taxpayers have forked out more than \$100 million to support hunting and shooting in Victoria just in the last decade.

Our regions would be far better served protecting our unique native assets and being able to benefit from the global birdwatching boom — already worth \$3 billion to our country, according to Tourism Research Australia.

NSW and Queensland, where recreational bird hunting was banned decades ago, are doing far better than Victoria for tourism.

It's time we got our share.
— Tim Haddad is a member of Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting.