

## Nationals' blind support for minority

THE Nats' blind support for a minority group of bird shooters continues, oblivious to the mayhem and madness it causes to regional landowners around the state.

Like her predecessor who was a keen member personally of hunt clubs, Emma Kealy suggests (*Sunraysia Daily*, January 25) that a handful of recreational bird shooters who represent less than half of one per cent of the population, is welcome stimulus to our rural towns. We suggest she does not represent regional Victorians on this matter.

She appears to have missed the polls which continue to show most Victorians support a ban on bird shooting, with the strongest support for a ban coming from regional areas (UComms, January 2021).

It appears she also missed the fact a major concern of farmers is hunters' trespass. The inability to work from home or for shift-workers to sleep due to shotgun blasts from before sunrise is all too real. The instances of stock and horses running spooked through fences, of children being traumatised and shotgun pellets (too often toxic lead) landing on roofs seems missing from Ms Kealy's knowledge base.

As we wait for her to meet with us so we can show her these impacts, we can't blame her totally for her lack of awareness of them. No Victorian government has ever conducted an

impact study on anyone other than a small group of hunters.

But let's focus on finances. The Parliamentary Budget Office in 2021 put the net spend of bird shooters at just \$10 million across the state. Conversely, the first year birdwatching data was collected in our country (2019), tourists who birdwatched spent a mammoth \$2.88 billion.

It is widely known that shooting deters tourists. When a billion dollar industry is hampered by a minority destructive pastime, it would seem clear to most what should be favoured by anyone concerned with the social or economic health of our regions. Gannawarra Shire, for a start, is blessed with stunning wetlands internationally recognised for environmental significance. Rather than allowing a handful of bird shooters to blast the peace with shotguns, imagine the benefit to the local towns of allowing birdwatching tourism to flow in instead?

**Kerrie Allen,**  
Regional Victorians Opposed  
to Duck Shooting

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