

CALLS UNHEARD

Proposed hunting regulations do not reflect non-hunter views, according to local group

PREALENE KHERA

Victoria's new draft hunting regulations have ignored "non-hunter" views and interests, a local animal welfare group objecting to the proposal has said.

Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting (RVOTDS) has expressed its disappointment following the release of the State Government's proposed Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2024.

Despite years of consultation, the group said, the draft did not reflect the concerns of

stakeholders who don't participate in recreational hunting.

It also "does not consider the significant adverse impacts of hunting on regional residents, landowners, or other recreational users, let alone the fragile and worsening state of our ecosystems".

The current draft seeks to update the guidelines set in 2012, which expire on September 7, to be replaced by its finalised successor.

Continued on Page 3

Maryborough
Advertiser 20/8/24

Changes to draft regulations proposed

Continued from Front Page

Before these recent regulations are cemented, RVOTDS wants the government to amend the draft and incorporate a number of key changes, including:

- A reduction in the number of public areas open to hunters.
- Hunting to only occur in a specified smaller number of areas which can be monitored, and are at least 3 kilometres away from residents or other recreational facilities like walking tracks.
- A reduction in hunting times, from a quarter of the year, down to a maximum of one month.
- Mandatory species ID tests and shooter proficiency tests of all hunters.
- Hunters to advise authorities of where they will be and when, prior to hunting, like they do in other states.
- Increase in hunter licence fees so taxpayers don't have to subsidise hunting.
- Immediately ban toxic lead ammunition and non-biodegradable plastic cartridge components.
- Remove false and misleading

statements from government communications — "like hunting is 'economically beneficial' (there is no cost benefit analysis to show this) or 'sustainable'. Toxic lead in our environment, loss of species... none of this is sustainable".

According to RVOTDS, some of these suggestions are also reflective of the recommendations made by the State Government's own parliamentary inquiry into duck and quail hunting.

"[The draft] ignores key recommendations and findings of the recent [inquiry] to do with hunter

training, pollution remedy and reduction in public areas for hunting," the group said in a letter to relevant authorities from the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions.

"It ignores glaring issues of public safety."

While noting needed changes to the regulations, RVOTDS reiterated its ongoing stance on the contentious activity.

"Our making this submission should in no way be construed as condoning the continuation of native

bird hunting in Victoria," the group said.

"On the contrary, we submit there are other far safer, more popular and financially beneficial recreations such as wildlife watching, which should be encouraged by the government instead."

With a number of amendments proposed, RVOTDS believes ignoring its advice could adversely impact community members.

"For some reason the government has only ever surveyed hunters," the organisation's Tim Haddad said.

"RVOTDS has surveyed non-hunters. We know the costs to rural mental health, to lost productivity, to lost tourism, to potential environmental clean-ups are significant.

"In addition, taxpayers are coughing up millions to subsidise hunting because license fees are too cheap.

"Obviously we would like to see recreational native bird hunting banned in Victoria — until it is... we believe [our recommendations] will help ensure it can have a hope of being safe or sustainable."

Instead of providing anticipated

clarity, Mr Haddad said the release of the proposed Wildlife (Game) Regulations has raised more questions.

"Like other environmental and animal welfare groups, we are disappointed [that] certain parts of government seem to have their head stuck in the sand..." he said.

"There needs to be an inquiry into why the interests of non-hunters (the vast majority of Victorians) have not been reflected in the draft regulations.

"Victorians deserve better."

Feedback on the draft regulations are open until August 29 — following which, the government will review submissions and publish the final version.

To view the draft, or to make a submission, visit engage.vic.gov.au/proposed-wildlife-game-regulations-2024-and-regulatory-impact-statement