

Latrobe Valley Express January 11, 2023

Call to cancel duck and quail shooting

REGIONAL Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting (RVOTDS) have called for the 2023 native duck and quail shoots to be cancelled based on continued alarming declines in the bird populations, lack of breeding, and adverse impacts of hunting on protected species and regional communities not yet adequately investigated by the hunting regulator.

RVOTDS provided detailed examples of those impacts in a 20-page submission released on January 5, including tables obtained through Freedom of Information showing thousands of threatened species killed as collateral damage, tourism operators' concerns for customer safety and economic loss, and landowners' fears for their

families, trespass, and the spread of Foot and Mouth Disease.

A copy of the submission was also sent to Premier Daniel Andrews and Minister Tanya Plibersek.

"Mr Andrews needs to know the impacts to regional families," an RVOTDS spokesperson said.

"If he knows and ignores it - that's on him. Minister Plibersek needs to know what Victoria is doing to our country's dwindling native birds."

The 40th annual aerial survey, one of the largest wildlife surveys in the country and the only objective long-term dataset, has again shown game duck populations are declining, in some cases by order of magnitude.

Ninety-six per cent of bird breeding was observed in Ibis, Pelican and Egrets - not game ducks.

Government authority has yet to be able to provide an estimate on the number of public waterways open to shooters or confirm whether it is closer to 8000 or 20,000.

Unlike outdoor shooting ranges, the vast majority of duck shooting areas are neither signposted as shooting areas nor monitored by any authorities.

No health and safety risk assessments have

ever been conducted for nearby residents or other recreational users, other than at two wetlands in Mildura in 2019, which were subsequently closed to shooting for safety reasons.

The GMA Act (Game Management Authority) states that it is a function of the regulator to promote sustainability in hunting, to research social/economic/environmental impacts, and make recommendations to ministers in relation to declaring public land open or closed to hunting and open and closed seasons.

RVOTDS is adamant the regulator has to date, failed in those functions.

"It has never closed a shooting season despite presiding over the worst environmental conditions recorded," RVOTDS stated.

"Previous governments closed shooting seasons in 2003, 2007 and 2008 for less dire circumstances. It refuses to close public waterways to shooting when the community have requested it, despite there being so many thousands of them open to shooting they can't possibly be monitored.

"Why does less than half of one per cent of the population need to have access to tens of thousands of public waterways to kill birds for fun?

"Don't landowners matter?"

Recreational bird shooting is banned in NSW, QLD and WA.