

OPINION

Crown land access: Public land grab by a minority continues

Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting has weighed into the debate to allow camping on licensed water frontages. See what their spokeswoman Kerrie Allen has to say.

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Farmers and regional landowners are strongly opposed to a Bill before the Victorian Upper House, allowing camping and hunting on crown land water frontages. Picture: Peter Ristevski

AS OUTLINED in Peter Hunt's article "Campers win right of access", [a Bill before the Victorian Upper House to allow camping on licensed water frontages](#) is said to be welcomed by hunters and anglers while farmers are strongly opposed.

Almost 26,000 kilometres of crown land water frontages, most of which are licensed to adjoining landholders, is believed to be soon opened to campers, largely driven it appears, by hunters and fishers.

As the Victorian Farmers Federation have stated, "Farmers pay for these licenses and manage this land. Camping poses too greater risk of fire, littering and trespass".

A recent survey showed farmers are concerned enough as it is with hunter's trespass. Disturbance to stock, litter, habitat removal and risk of runaway campfires are real issues.

Notwithstanding the safety fears for families who may be nearby.

Seemingly oblivious to the negative impacts the minority choice of bird shooting has on community, Sporting Shooters Association's hunting development manager has "welcomed the move" given the "opportunity it created for duck shooters".

The leaders of these groups seem to frequently forget many of their members are opposed to what they spruik.

Less than half of one per cent of the population shoot ducks.

And at their disposal already are thousands of public lakes, creeks, streams, rivers, reservoirs, waterways and wetlands – so many in fact, authorities are unable to map, signpost, list or even estimate their number let alone monitor shooters' compliance with any rules.

Less than 1 per cent of the population are hunters of any kind, yet as part of a deal between Labor and the Australian Deer Association before the last state election, hundreds of thousands of hectares of public land were quietly opened up to recreational deer hunting earlier this year, despite the fact it's been proven to exacerbate pest problems and farmers/licensees opposed it.

To quote from a SSAA newsletter: "hunters no longer have to gain permission of the licensee to hunt on that land. SSAA Victoria along with ADA has worked for years to see this.."

So much for respect.

Frankly, regional landowners and businesses need support now more than ever, and let's not forget the regional campgrounds relying on business to survive.

A sure way to do that, is to allow their towns to tap into jobs and cash from the growing nature-based tourism trend like the 866,000 domestic birdwatching tourists last year, tourists known to be respectful of their environment and spend big bucks.

We don't need to impede on farmers for that.

• Kerrie Allen is Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting Inc. spokeswoman