

Duck me - is anybody happy?

SUPPORTERS and opponents alike of recreational duck hunting have criticised the state government's decision to hold a shortened hunting season.

It was announced on Friday, February 24 that the 2023 duck hunting season will begin on Wednesday, April 26 and run for 34 days, shorter than the previous year's season of 89 days.

Additionally, hunters have been imposed a bag limit of four ducks per day, less than the legal limit of 10 per day.

Those who support the practice have condemned the shortened length and bag limits, while those opposed to hunting had been seeking an outright ban.

Member for Gippsland South, Danny O'Brien labelled the decision "an insult to the vast majority of law-abiding hunters" and "clearly more about politics than science".

"The fact is the vast majority of hunters do the right thing and this is a sustainable activity that brings significant economic activity to regional areas, including Gippsland," Mr O'Brien said.

He added that the decision "is further evidence that Labor is beholden to a city-green mentality and cares not for the sustainable, legitimate activities enjoyed by many Victorians."

Upper house Member for Eastern Victoria and Shooters Fishers & Farmers MP Jeff Bourman echoed those claims in a statement released Friday.

"The Government talks about science and evidence, yet at its first opportunity in the 60th parliament has dropped the ball and given into craven inner-city lefty ideologues," Mr Bourman said.

"I'll be pushing the Government to refund the lost two months of licence fees already paid."

Field & Game Australia (FGA) said the shortened season "is a dramatic departure from Labor's previous position of supporting safe, responsible and sustainable duck hunting."

"FGA has expressed extreme concern that the regulator and legislators have chosen to cite poor hunter compliance and wounding rates as justification to modify the season, even though

the government's own figures show hunter compliance to be exceptionally high," it said in a statement.

"FGA will seek clarification as to why the government has cited low bird numbers as a reason for season length and bag limit reduction."

RSPCA Victoria chief executive, Dr Liz Walker said she was "dismayed" and "deeply disappointed" by Friday's announcement, reiterating her organisation's call to end duck hunting in Victoria.

She added the decision does not reflect the evidence that supports a ban on the activity.

"As calls for a duck hunting ban in Victoria grow louder due to animal welfare concerns and species abundance declines, the research indicates that two in three Victorians (66 per cent) oppose it, therefore we are surprised to hear of the government's decision to proceed with a season and urge them to reconsider the decision based on the very clear evidence," Dr Walker said.

In a statement, lobby group Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting (RVOTDS) said it was "more than disappointed the Victorian government doesn't have the strength to ban bird shooting like other states have done".

Less than half of one percent of the population shoot our native birds for fun, and polls continue to show most Victorians want the pastime banned and for good reason - its cruelty extends way beyond the birds.

Animal Justice Party group leader for Eastern Victoria, Austin Cram also expressed his opposition to the announcement, saying that duck hunting "is not consistent with our values as Victorians and as Gippslanders."

"The government's changes to bag size and season length don't solve the issue at the centre, which is that we shouldn't be shooting our native animals at all," Mr Cram said.

More information about this year's duck hunting season is available via www.gma.vic.gov.au/hunting/duck