

**Submission
No 588**

**INQUIRY INTO VICTORIA'S RECREATIONAL NATIVE BIRD HUNTING
ARRANGEMENTS**

Name: The Hon. Kelvin Thomson

Date Received: 9 April 2023

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
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Subject: INQUIRY INTO VICTORIA'S RECREATIONAL NATIVE BIRD HUNTING ARRANGEMENTS

Categories: Submission



The Hon. Kelvin Thomson

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Dear Select Committee on Victoria's Recreational Native Bird Hunting Arrangements, I wish to make the following submission to your Inquiry into Victoria's Recreational Native Bird Hunting Arrangements. My address is as above, and my phone number is [REDACTED]. These are provided for verification, not publication. I am happy for my name to be disclosed as the submitter.

SUBMISSION

It is time that Victoria followed the example of other states and territories which have banned recreational bird shooting – Western Australia, New South Wales, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory. I particularly acknowledge the initiatives of former New South Wales Premier Bob Carr, and former Western Australian Premier Carmen Lawrence, in this regard. Both have advised me that these initiatives have proved very successful.

Nature based tourism is flourishing in States which have banned recreational bird shooting. This is not surprising, as studies indicate that tourists avoid shooting areas. The economic value of nature based tourism in areas where duck shooting is banned exceeds the economic value of duck shooting in areas where it is not. A range of nature based activities, such as boating, kayaking, birdwatching and fishing, are undermined and diminished by bird shooting.

Other States have banned recreational bird shooting for the simple reason that shooting birds with shotguns is inhumane. This is why the practice has been condemned by the RSPCA and by the Australian Veterinary Association. High numbers of birds are not killed outright, but are wounded, flapping away to die a slow painful death elsewhere. Non-kill rates are estimated to be between 25-50%. This is an unacceptable animal welfare outcome.

Bird shooting also has impacts on other species, including threatened ones. Critical feeding and resting of migratory species prior to their epic journeys across the globe is disrupted. Protected and threatened species of all descriptions have been found dead at waterways during duck shooting season. Swans are frightened off their nests, abandoning cygnets. While the accuracy ID tests for duck shooters don't seem to prevent the shooting of protected species, I understand there are no accuracy ID tests required of quail shooters at all, to be able to tell one species from another. Only one species of quail is allowed to be hunted. The fast and erratic nature of quail movements makes identification very difficult. This is the first strike on quail shooting. The second strike is the fact that toxic lead ammunition is still allowed to be used in quail shooting, posing significant health issues for wildlife, farmers, and the general public. Lead does not break down in the environment, and poses health risks to people and wildlife even in tiny traces. The third strike is that estimates of the species numbers are totally unreliable. The recent claim, based on a survey finding 101 birds, that there are 3 million quail in Victoria, seems to me absurd. I cannot think of any other scientific extrapolation on such a scale.

Duck shooting is allowed at thousands of wetland locations, but they are poorly identified, signposted, and monitored. The public does not know where they are, and the Game Management Authority is only able to monitor compliance by shooters, and the impacts of shooting, at a fraction of the permitted areas. Residents and landowners have their right to the peaceful enjoyment of their properties disturbed by shooting. Noise pollution is significant.

It is likely that the net economic impact of bird shooting on the economy is negative. Estimates of the economic impact of duck shooting typically fail to take into account (a) what recreational or other activities shooters would undertake if shooting were not an option, and (b) the costs of compliance monitoring, lost tourism, lost productivity from disturbed neighbours, disturbance of stock, broken fences etc.

Finally, Australia, Victoria included, is suffering from a relentless decline in its birds, animals and plants. Their numbers have essentially halved in the last 50 years. We need to get much more serious about protecting what we have left, and not allow the numbers of birds – including ducks and quail – to continue to decline.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Kelvin Thomson