

**Submission  
No 1616**

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

**Organisation:** Goulburn Valley Environment Group

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## **The Goulburn Valley Environment Group Inc.**

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### **Parliament of Victoria Select Committee Inquiry Victoria's Recreational Native Bird Hunting Arrangements**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into this important Parliamentary Inquiry.

Goulburn Valley Environment Group is one of the peak environmental groups in northern Victoria and our members have advocated for improved protection and management of the natural environment in the Goulburn Valley and Goulburn-Broken catchment since our formation in 1990. More information about the group and its work can be found here: <https://gveg-enviro.com/>

Our comments to the Inquiry are set out below, using the terms of reference as a guide.

#### The operation of annual native bird hunting seasons:

The operation of annual hunting seasons for ducks and Stubble Quail does not make sense ecologically, as populations of both groups of birds are highly dependent on the environmental conditions in any given year. It is of particular concern to us that in seasons when these species are already under pressure because of limited habitat and scarce resources, the hunting season applies additional pressure on each species through the mortality of many thousands of individuals. The policing of hunters during these open seasons with limited resources continues to be problematic. This lack of resources has resulted in illegal shooting on public and private land and the loss of protected species.

#### Arrangements in other Australian jurisdictions:

We note that hunting of ducks is already prohibited in four other Australian states and territories, which have recognised the inappropriateness of allowing hunting from environmental and animal welfare concerns.

The Victorian Government's [Biodiversity 2037 Plan](#) makes a commitment to ensuring that the net outlook for all native species improves by 2037. We consider that the impacts of hunting on populations of ducks and Stubble Quail directly contradict this Government ambition and encourage the Government to end hunting as part of its Biodiversity 2037 commitments.

#### Their environmental sustainability and impact on amenity:

Our members live in one of the most highly cleared and altered landscapes in Victoria and many of them have observed the loss and decline of natural habitats and species from this area just in our lifetime. We consequently put a high value on the need for every protection possible for our natural world. Long-term datasets show significant, continuing declines in the abundance of all waterbirds in eastern Australia over the past 30 years ([Porter et al. 2022](#)). While this is primarily the result of over-extraction of water from the natural system, the additional impacts caused by hunting and the consequent annual average mortality of 320,000 individual ducks ([Moloney & Flesch 2023](#)) are unacceptable in an environment that is under so much stress.

Data on Stubble Quail harvests over time also show substantial long-term declines ([We've been heard! regionalvictoriansotds.com](#)). Grassland habitats preferred by this species have also declined dramatically

and we therefore reiterate that hunting is an unwarranted additional pressure on this species' capacity for survival.

Their social and economic impact:

The impacts of shooting affect local communities situated near these wetlands and grasslands. Many of these communities take an active interest in these sites with environmental restoration projects, passive recreation (walking, cycling and paddling) and clean up days. The social and mental effects on these communities should be considered.

The economic benefits these hunters bring to rural communities has always been overestimated very few relying on local purchases. These hunters do not arrive with empty fuel tanks, no ammunition or food. There is also a need to consider the economic impacts of these open seasons, the cost of policing, the cost of allocating wetlands at the expense of other recreational users, and damage to ongoing environmental works.

In summary, the members of the Goulburn Valley Environment Group strongly support a permanent end to Victorian Native Bird Hunting.

Yours Sincerely,

**Meg Pethybridge**  
**Goulburn Valley Environment Group President.**