

Duck shooting puts people in the firing line too

Native bird hunting comes at a cost to human health and safety, writes **FIONA BYRNES**

ONE of the last to appear at the Inquiry into Native Bird Hunting, Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting last week gave insights into impacts of bird hunting on Victorians and their animals living nearby.

Asked how the public know where bird hunting may occur, we said it was very difficult.

Native bird hunting is allowed at many public sites not shown on hunting maps. Neither the Game Management Authority nor DEECA has been able to estimate whether it's closer to 8000 or 20,000. Most shooting sites are neither signposted nor monitored.

The committee heard how feeling unsafe, anxious and disturbed by gunfire noise were standout issues for those near duck shooting. RVOTDS' latest survey, which attracted 821 respondents in just three weeks, showed

nearly a quarter lived within 1km, 16 per cent within 350m and 5 per cent within 60m.

A typical shotgun is 155 decibels (A). According to an acoustic engineer, at 60m, the noise would likely still be 100 db (A); at 350m, 85 db (A). This is well above health and safety guidelines set by EPA.

The committee also heard that millions of taxpayer dollars have been awarded to hunt clubs. Many would agree, taxpayer funds currently going to hunting clubs should instead be directed to community conservation groups and private landowners doing year-round conservation at their own expense, which does not involve

shooting native birds for fun or putting lead and plastic shotgun components into our environment.

Latest Tourism Research Australia data shows domestic overnight tourists who are birdwatchers (an activity widely known to be hampered by duck shooting), spent \$635 million in our country. This is up 50 per cent in three years and excludes additional revenue from domestic day and international tourists who birdwatch.

It's not rocket science to see the better deal for regional Victoria.

● **Fiona Byrnes is the RVOTDS health and safety director.**