

Dump Bracks, says Levy

By PAUL SELLARS

VICTORIA'S best-known anti-duck shooting campaigner has urged the RSPCA to dump Premier Steve Bracks as its state patron.

Coalition Against Duck Shooting campaign director Laurie Levy said RSPCA president Dr Hugh Wirth could not justify Mr Bracks' status as the organisation's Victorian patron.

"How could the RSPCA have any credibility at all when its patron in Victoria is responsible for Australia's largest recreational wildlife slaughter?"

Mr Levy said. "Premier Steve Bracks has again this year sanctioned the unnecessary slaughter of native waterbirds, just to keep a handful of duck hunters in this state happy."

Mr Levy said Mr Bracks should follow the example set by Labor premiers in Western Australia and NSW by immediately banning the recreational shooting of native waterbirds.

"There is a contradiction here. Mr Bracks may be considered a good premier and a nice bloke, but he cannot be allowed to remain a patron of an anti-cruelty organisation while he

sanctions Australia's largest recreational wildlife slaughter," he said.

Dr Wirth told *The Weekly Times* the issue had not been discussed by the RSPCA state council, but hinted future premiers would, in fact, not be offered patronage of the organisation.

He said Mr Bracks was the RSPCA's Victorian patron because he was the premier of the state.

But, Dr Wirth said, the national council of the RSPCA had already decided to no longer offer national patronage of the

organisation to future prime ministers and opposition leaders.

This was because the council had concluded it was inappropriate to offer the position to people who were making "a decision on welfare matters that is not necessarily their personal view".

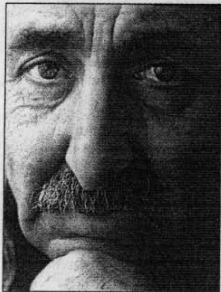
"John Howard is one of the patrons of the RSPCA nationally at the moment and he will be the last (prime minister to be offered that position)," Dr Wirth said.

"The reason why we made that decision nationally — and it

will probably flow on to the states — is John Howard's government backs live animal exports and we don't know if that's John Howard's view or the Government's view.

"So, rather than put him in a difficult situation and us in a difficult situation, we have decided to no longer offer the position to the prime minister or opposition leader."

Dr Wirth said he would be raising the issue of whether Victorian premiers should be RSPCA state patrons at the organisation's council meeting early next month.



Laurie Levy