

DUCK SEASON

Anti-shooters aim to quack open Government resistance

By **MATHEW MURPHY**

AT 7.20am today, the first shot will have been fired signalling the start of what some believe could be Victoria's last duck-hunting season.

Anti-hunting groups, including ALP members, want the sport to be banned before the Commonwealth Games next year. Trevor Poulton, from the ALP Members Opposed to Duck Shooting, said support was growing within the party to follow Western Australia and NSW and ban duck hunting.

"I think they will (ban it) because it is about political will," he said. "We would expect an announcement before the Commonwealth Games, but it will be on the agenda at the May state conference." Mr Poulton said the Government had

been reluctant to impose a ban because it was scared a backlash could cost country seats.

"The Government believes that if it banned duck season it would lose marginal seats, but we have figures that show only 2 per cent of registered duck shooters are from the country," Mr Poulton said.

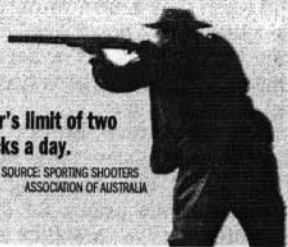
Member for Ripon Joe Helper said his support for duck hunting was not out of fear of losing his seat, but rather an opportunity to stand up for shooters' rights.

"I'd rather stand accused of trying to represent the interests of the people of my electorate than pampering to HIKS (Hypocrites in Koala Suits) outside of my electorate," he said.

He said the Government did not have a valid enough reason to enforce a ban. "I don't

KILL BILLS Facts and regulations for the hunting season

- Victoria has 120 game reserves. Shooters are also permitted at various public waterfronts and lakes.
- The season starts at 7.20am today (March 19) and runs until June 13.
- Shooters can use anything up to a 12 gauge shotgun. However, 10 gauge shotguns should be avoided.
- Black duck, chestnut, hardhead, grey teal, mountain, pink-eared duck and wood duck may be shot.
- Shooters are allowed five ducks a day and an extra five wood ducks on the first weekend. This is up from last



year's limit of two ducks a day.

SOURCE: SPORTING SHOOTERS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

believe that it will happen and my opinion is that it shouldn't happen," he said.

"If other people want to put up a proposal as they did at last year's state conference and have it knocked off again, well, I find that tedious."

Environment Minister John Thwaites said there were no plans to legislate against duck shooting, but the issue was constantly under review.

"There are a range of views

among individual members (of the ALP) as there are in the community," he said.

"Duck hunting is carried out in Victoria in a safe and sustainable way after extensive environmental analysis."

With more than 120 protesters trying to thwart shooters' efforts at sites such as Hird Swamp and McDonalds Swamp near Kerang, there is concern about safety.

Coalition Against Duck

Shooting campaign director Laurie Levy said protesters in bright clothes would arrive at 5am to scare away ducks before shooters were allowed to fire.

"Our role is like the Red Cross," he said.

"We go out into the war zone and are there to help the innocent victims."

Editorial **INSIGHT 10**

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